

*2025
State of Society
Reports*

Connecticut Valley Quarter

Hartford Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

State of Society Report

February 2026

This State of Society report provides a snapshot view of our Meeting as reflected during an 11th hour held February 8th, 2026. To understand how Meeting members and attenders felt about various aspects of our Meeting, we gathered to respond to five questions posed by our Ministry and Counsel committee. We also circulated the 5 questions on our Meeting listserv so people who couldn't attend the 11th Hour could share their thoughts and ideas via e-mail. After this report was written, it was reviewed by our Ministry and Counsel committee and our Meeting for Worship for Business. Our thoughts, concerns and ideas are shared below.

1) What is your sense of the quality of worship within our Meeting? How can we deepen our connection to Spirit?

While our views on our quality of worship vary by individual, there is general consensus that our worship together both in person and remotely via Zoom has been deeply sustaining for our members and attenders during the troubling and uncertain times that surround us. We find solace in Meeting. Sharing silence together provides a container for our worship, both individually and as an assembled body. Worship provides each of us with the freedom to express our despair, anger and grief over the current state of our country and our world. In allowing that expression, worship gives us individually and collectively strength, resilience and even joy in knowing we are not alone in our grief. The Spirit speaks to each of us in different ways and we need to continue listening carefully and receptively to each other. More often than we overtly realize, the messages we receive during Meeting for Worship reflect work we have been engaged in previously, for example, our annual retreat, our 75th anniversary celebration, our Christmas Eve service, and our practice of reading a query every 2nd Sunday of the month, to name but a few of the activities in which we have engaged as a whole Meeting.

The remote community's Zoom experience has been very rich, both spiritually and as a form of social community building. It has allowed us to engage a geographically dispersed, remote community of individuals who are unable to attend due to distance or physical limitations. This community exists both as an entity of its own and as a fully participating part of the HMM community at large. The Experiment with Light Zoom meetings have been very meaningful to those attending.

There are aspects of our worship service for which we may wish to consider making changes. Some concerns arose that while our worship and messages are rich and deep at times, there are other times when worship feels unsettled and messages seem more reactive than spirit-led. There appears to be a yearning for more adult education along the lines of vocal ministry, exercises to deepen our discernment and listening skills, and clearer focus on core Quaker practices and beliefs. In these times of great challenge, will our community cling to what is familiar and comforting or open itself to new structures and ways of doing things? Might we borrow some practices from Programmed Friends such as occasional bible readings or brief monthly 'sermons' from 'weighty friends'? Might we run a Quaker Speak video prior to Meeting once or twice per month? Can we shorten our current opening comments on the use of the microphone for sharing messages?

2) What do you most love about Meeting? What additional thoughts would you like to share?

We share a strong sense of trust in each other that makes us feel safe in each other's company and within the Meeting House. We may have differences as individuals, but we are all good people with good values, who succeed in interacting respectfully and kindly with each other despite the

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occasional challenges of individual interpersonal relationships. Love infuses the sense of care and concern we carry for each other amidst the generally widespread grief we all hold for our nation and our world. There is a strong sense of connection many of us have for our Meeting House, its simplicity, and the quiet sacredness of our Meeting Room, which supports our expectant waiting Worship practice. Worship, conducted as a group sitting together in person and on Zoom, provides the foundational center for our community.

Beyond the connection to our Meeting House and grounds, there is a strong affection for our communal practices in getting things done – our maintenance of the building and grounds, our committee work that ensures we maintain a living community by sponsoring events like our 11th hours, our potluck lunches, creative listening groups, Friendly Eights dinner groups, book discussion groups, Experiment in the Light group, long standing Faithfulness Groups, and the like. Our listserv provides us with daily connections to events and activities that witness to our core Quaker beliefs and practices and invite our participation as we feel led. Some expressed deep appreciation for commitment of the many members and attenders who lead and support the HMM community while simultaneously engaging in outward facing causes and activism. There was deep appreciation for how the Meeting came together to organize and host the recent Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting.

3) How has the Meeting been supportive of people over the last year? How can our support be strengthened?

There is a widespread consensus that our Meeting has been strongly supportive of members and attenders at both the community and the individual levels over the past year. That support ranged from openness in welcoming newcomers without pressure, without judgement, and with transparency to support for member projects such as ‘Hope out Loud’, “Experiment in Light”, “Quaker Cook Teams”, and meeting wide support initiatives for South Park Inn, Food Drives, and Christmas drives for those in need. The theme of Meeting providing a location and a community of refuge from our individual engagements responding to the gross dysfunctions in our wider local, national and international communities arose again.

Other expressions of appreciation for support included our practice of sharing joys and concerns at the close of Meeting for Worship and the support we provide to our Meeting Clerk and to the committees that attend to the business and activities of our worship community. Our mutual acceptance of each other, “As we are!”, was cited by several Friends, one of whom summarized our support culture as: “Warmth, Welcome, Wisdom and Worship”. With respect to pastoral care for injured or ill members, one individual proclaimed, “I’ve been an object lesson in Meeting support! Go get yourself hurt and find out. You will be swamped with cards, phone calls food and visits.” Some Friends cited the value of continuity of community and support over a lifetime of engagement with Hartford Friends, particularly in situations where families are far flung across the nation and our Meeting provides a touchpoint of connection across time and space. Finally, there was appreciative recognition of our support over the past 3-4 years for an individual returning to Meeting after a long prison sentence. The process of careful discernment and meeting engagement to address both the returning individual’s request and the understandable reservations among some members and attenders about allowing this return was cited as an example of the care and concern with which Hartford Monthly Meeting of Friends supports seeking “That of God” in each of us.

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Hartford Meeting cherishes our families and children. First Day School is planned for every second and fourth Sunday with the testimony of Community as the theme for the year. Each fifth Sunday, we have a family worship with a theme so everyone can participate. We offer weekly childcare for worship, 11th hours, Business meetings and special events. Unique children's programs were planned for retreats, 75th celebration, Christmas, Easter and Quarterly Meeting. Even though we have a small group of children in attendance (1 to 5 from the ages of 2 to 11) our dedicated Religious Ed clerk plans and makes sure there are lessons with some volunteers to teach. We are particularly excited to have a new family expecting a new baby. As we include younger families, we wonder what we can offer to continue to attract them? As some of our present group of children enter middle school, how can we meet their needs? How do we ensure that the entire meeting knows about what the children are doing downstairs and vice versa? How do we encourage our adults to be more engaged with Religious Education? There is a strong desire to have greater integration of the children into Meeting for Worship. We value our sharing with the children during our family fifth Sunday's, but we yearn for more. We know that the children are an important part of the future of our Meeting.

One area of support with room for improvement was noted. As a community we could strengthen our awareness of and our understanding of how to support mental health challenges and disabilities – particularly those that are less visible.

4) What has been your sense of fellowship within the Meeting? How can we increase fellowship among members and attenders?

There is a strong consensus that our hybrid Meeting for Worship structure and our preplanned fellowship programs such as social hours, potluck lunches, creative listening groups, friendly eights dinner groups, and other programs have contributed to a strong sense of fellowship with our Meeting. At the same time there is clear recognition that Meeting membership and attendance has declined significantly over the past 10-15 years and that in addition to initiating stronger outreach to the local community around us, we could be doing a better job of welcoming visitors and newcomers to our Meeting. Specifically, we need to be more proactive as individuals to speak with newcomers following the rise of Meeting and during social hour to make them feel seen and welcomed. We also need to be more proactive with returning newcomers to invite them to join committees, incorporating them into the wider body of our community. Being invited can give a newcomer a sense of being seen and valued, but at the same time we need to allow them time to feel comfortable with our community. There is a balance here between inviting additional participation and allowing newcomers some time to adjust to our practices and consider for themselves how and where they might start to participate through our committees. In concert with inviting returning newcomers to consider joining a committee that aligns with their interests, we need to make our committee structure(s) and how our committees support the life of our Meeting more transparent so that those structures and that support are more widely understood among both members and attenders.

Some specific steps to support the welcome of newcomers and returning newcomers that arose in the discussions included ensuring that we: a) continue to send notes to 1st time newcomers, thanking them for coming and inviting them to return, and b) remember to bring newcomers into our Meeting sponsored social groups such as Friendly Eights and Creative Listening groups on an ongoing basis rather than making them wait a year or more to be included in the next round of

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reformulating these groups. There was also a concern that our current “newcomer intake” process is overly scattered and confusing with separate locations and tracking systems for signing the visitor’s register, requesting a name tag, signing up to be on the listserv, and picking up a seeker packet. Each one of these ‘sign up’ procedures has evolved over time, under different ‘sponsorships’ and without an overarching view of simplifying the process for the newcomer.

With respect to current members and attenders, while there is strong appreciation for the preplanned fellowship programs, there is a desire for ‘unprogrammed’ opportunities to get together informally, particularly as the weather gets warmer.

5) With all the upheaval in the world, how are we, as a community, putting our faith into action?

We are witnessing with love and non-violence to a wider world consumed by strife, dissention and violence. Our Meeting, while relatively small in numbers, is witnessing in many ways, both internally and externally, to our faith:

- Peace and Social Concerns has 12 active sub committees, each with their own concern for social justice, food security, ecological stewardship, civil rights, etc.
- Beyond the P&SC Committee, our Meeting community provides spiritual, social, emotional and material support to individual members and attenders who are carrying their faith into action as they stand up to respond peacefully and lovingly to the rise of authoritarianism in our local, state, national and international communities.
- One individual expressed the support he felt as “Experiencing God within, when I’m trying to affect positive change in the communities around me”.
- Our Meeting gives individuals support in their individual responses to the world around them. Each of us has our own way of expressing our own vision of love, justice and caring in the world.
- Our Meeting as a corporate body of the whole, as a composite of small groups with shared common concerns, and as individuals with specific concerns is engaged with local, state, national and international organizations, both Quaker and non-Quaker, to work on issues ranging from human, civil and environmental rights, to social justice, peace and reconciliation, respect and integrity, and care for caregivers.

Our Meetinghouse is a resource for people to use in putting their faith into action, and serves as the home for a cooperative nursery school, which though not Quaker affiliated per se, teaches small children the kinds of values we would seek to instill in our own children. One member commented on the support he has had from Meeting members and attenders for a Substack feed he maintains to share information on Quaker organizations and programs (and, on occasion, to vent his frustrations with the rampant furies running wild in this world.)

In this report we are summarizing the sense of the Meeting as represented by members and attenders who participated in person and on Zoom in and 11th hour, held in early February 2026. Our Meeting Community provides a place of solace as we process the collective trauma of growing authoritarianism and vitriol in our nation and the world. Our shared time together helps each of us individually find solace and the means to get through this time of deep uncertainty and upheaval.

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While our Meeting remains strong, cohesive, and vibrant, serving its current members and attenders with strength and love, community and support, we are also cognizant of several factors that need to be addressed:

- Our attendance has declined significantly over the past decade or two, and we need to do a better job of welcoming the visitors and newcomers we do get to encourage and facilitate their ongoing engagement with our worship community,
- We need to discern and implement ways in which we can more fully integrate our children and our children's programs into the programs and activities for our adults,
- Both our new attenders and some of our long-standing members would welcome adult education on foundational topics in Quakerism such as principles, practices, articles of faith and vocal ministry. Consequently, we need to consider how best to implement the suggestions for changes in our adult religious education.
- While our 'sponsored' fellowship programs are highly valued, we need to consider how to encourage more spontaneous opportunities for individuals to get together.
- Our members and attenders in leadership positions are currently in their 60's and 70's. In ten years, many of them may no longer be able to carry out their current responsibilities. So, we need to develop succession plans that ensure younger members and attenders receive the mentoring and guidance they will need to assume these leadership roles in order to ensure that Quaker values and practices continue to be a "light" for our own and our wider community that endures well into the future.
- One 11th hour attender said in conclusion "what I'm finding is the feeling that we are someplace between a conventional community and a conventional family".

Our Ministry and Counsel Committee will review this report, taking all its suggestions under advisement, and will work with other committees as appropriate to maintain and enhance those values, qualities and programs that our community values and to address the concerns that have been raised to the best of our ability. Knowing that our Meeting is always "a work in progress", that will continue to grow and change, we will seek to maintain the loving, supportive community we have as it strives continually to be even better.

STATE OF SOCIETY, MT. TOBY MEETING OF FRIENDS, 2025

Mt. Toby continues to flourish as a religious community centered on worship, social justice action, service, and social activities within our meeting. Members and attenders express a sense of being welcomed and supported in times of need and in seeking clearness for life transitions. At the same time, we perceive a need for more intentional care for newcomers, which includes encouraging participation by newer and younger attenders, as well as for assuring that core committees have enough members.

Meeting for worship remains a primary source of spiritual nourishment at Mt. Toby. Friends express their appreciation for the diversity of spiritual orientation and the openness with which Friends receive messages of vocal ministry. We seek to listen across social, political, and generational differences and to understand how our unique perspectives shape our experience even as we draw on shared values of Quaker tradition such as the peace testimony and the universal Light. Friends generally express a feeling of safety. One Friend observed, “People come out of worship looking brighter.”

Other forms of spiritual and community nourishment include work days, Tilling Hour programs, singing before meeting, a monthly concert series, the Inquirers Group, workshops on Compassionate Communication, Craft Night, Walking the Land, Fellowship Hour, and the revival of a monthly Fellowship potluck. Service on committees is held by many to be a vital form of spiritual and corporate connection. As one Friend put it, “The work of caring for others nourishes me.” As a large monthly meeting, Mt. Toby maintains a long list of standing committees that function alongside self-nominated working groups including Race and Class and Immigrant Solidarity.

As much as these many offerings reflect our attunement to a diverse set of needs and a vibrancy in meeting participation, there has been substantial concern about a shortage of Friends for the core committees that keep the Meeting going. Some have voiced the need to consider simplifying committee structure, posing the question, “How can we become easier with laying things down?” Relatedly, concern has been expressed regarding the burden of responsibilities falling on a relatively small number of Friends. Greater support and training

for our committee clerks could be helpful in this regard. As we lose an older generation of Friends in the Meeting, many feel we need to enhance efforts to welcome and orient newcomers. While universal praise is given for the excellent child care our Meeting provides, some have lamented the absence of child care during Tilling Hours and meeting for business—which could be tied to lower meeting for business attendance. (This situation has been remedied in 2026.)

With the many groups and activities at Mt. Toby, nurturing a spirit of unity in community is paramount. While Friends appreciate the options of gathering in the meeting room and online, in the Champney room or, weather permitting, outdoors, it has been observed that some Friends do not return to the meeting room for the sharing of announcements, joys, and concerns. And with the number and variety of social justice groups animating Friends, some would like to see a united action that would bring the Meeting together as a whole.

In the past few years we have greatly grieved the loss of several beloved elders, and the community has shown itself to be resilient. Financial contributions to meet our regular budget, while always a challenge, continue to come in. As we journey through 2026, a new Harm and Healing initiative to mend relationships that have been injured is activating. Our library's catalog, through the hard work of a few, has now been digitized. And soon, we envision small circles of chairs set up at Fellowship Hour encouraging more focused conversations, helping us to better understand what we share and how differences can enrich us.

We are grateful to that Spirit which continues to move among us!

**New Haven Friends Monthly Meeting
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It is with much gratitude that New Haven Friends report that we are feeling deeply blessed: we are enjoying a wonderful mix of generations as new people continue to visit and return to become engaged participants. So often our children grow up, go off to college or move out on their own and do not return to the community. Our childcare provider is a young woman who has grown up in our meeting and another young woman who grew up in meeting has returned, married and with a young son attending First Day School childcare.

This year most of our pre-Covid community has returned to in-person Meeting for Worship, we have a constant flow of new people, and those who cannot attend in person faithfully attend via Zoom. Many have remarked on a sense of rejuvenation. We are experiencing regular vocal ministry and have witnessed the spiritual growth of younger and new people. Fellowship Committee had been laid down because of Covid. With the spirit of renewal in Meeting for Worship, people have stepped forward to bring back the tradition of gathering in the lower level upon the rise of Meeting for Worship to share light refreshments and conversation. We also held all-Meeting potlucks four times per year, coinciding with the first day of First Day School in September, our beloved annual Christmas pageant, Easter and the final day of First Day School in June. The use of Zoom has allowed Friends from afar or unable to attend in person due to illness to remain active in our Meeting. Building relationships takes time and commitment. We have felt the joy of our Meeting growing stronger this year.

The influx of new attenders has created the opportunity for our Meeting to offer Seeker Sessions on various aspects of Quaker history, faith practices and traditions. These sessions allow long-time Friends to share their experiences and knowledge of traditions within this Meeting, again deepening friendships and understanding. Quaker Study programs, Spiritual Formation groups, Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Sufferings, Stitching group, Poets group and potlucks have profoundly broadened and shaped this local religious society. While it has been difficult to fill many volunteer positions, it was a surprise and joy for Stewardship Committee members when they announced difficulty finding a recording clerk: two people volunteered on the spot and have shared this task during the year.

The room we meet in for worship sets the stage and enhances the ability to sit in reverent, waiting silence. The connection between the inner space and creation provides comfort and grounding for long time attenders and those new to our form of worship. Many people from other faith traditions who have used this space remark on a sense of the Holy being present. This year the Mending Minyan, a group of area Jews concerned with Palestine and Israel issues, requested regular use of the building for their Friday evening and Saturday worship services and events. Sisters in Spirit, a

group of women from the Abrahamic faith traditions, returned to meet in person after the hiatus caused by Covid.

This year we welcomed four new members: Abigail Adams who transferred her membership from Storrs Meeting and Amy Howland who transferred her membership from Smith Neck Meeting. Gabby Redwine and Joanna Meyer became members after having been active attenders for many years.

We have also experienced sadness: Two longtime and involved members, Bill Walkauskas and Sharon Ellsworth, moved to Maine where they could be near their daughter. Not long after their move, it was learned that Bill had cancer and he died shortly thereafter. We are grateful that, through Zoom, Sharon continues to worship with us. We celebrated Bill's life on September 27, 2025 welcoming back Sharon, their children Leah (and her husband) and Jesse and granddaughters, Winter and Raven: two generations Bill and Sharon raised in our community.

That same month Lesley Higgins-Biddle's husband, John died. We celebrated his life on February 16th. John's memorial service brought together many people throughout the greater New Haven community and state: he was a professor at Yale Divinity School from 1972-1981 before moving into his primary calling to create and implement science-based programs for the treatment of alcoholism that resulting in screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment as standard practice in primary care settings worldwide.

The legendary Phyllis McDowell died at the age of ninety-nine. Her seeking of a faith that lived through one's life brought her to Quakers and our Meeting. Among the many community programs she supported, Phyllis was led to create a haven for people with mental illness where they could express themselves creatively, build and govern their meeting space. Fellowship Place has grown and become a major service and creative arts program in the heart of New Haven. The last 10 years of her life, Phyllis could not attend meeting so many of our newer people did not have the opportunity to know this vibrant, funny, loving visionary.

Members of meeting have expressed their gratitude for the support the Meeting has provided them as they followed their leadings whether in their vocations or special community projects.

We celebrate the success and growth of Friends Center for Children (FCfC) and Haven's Harvest, two leadings that began quietly many years ago in our meeting. FCfC has grown from one site on our campus to four centers throughout New Haven. Haven's Harvest is celebrating a decade of rescuing food from the greater New Haven area and brought to various churches and other organizations to feed the hungry, malnourished and families needing to supplement their food budgets. Many members of Meeting volunteer in these programs.

Every year Peace and Social Outreach carefully considers the many charitable causes in the greater New Haven community and then proposes which charities the Meeting

will give the designated 10% of its income. This was a year many members of Meeting came together on the New Haven and other town greens to protest ICE and the Trump administration. Meetings with a concern for Sufferings were also held for reflection and deeper understanding of how this Federal administration and the rise of racism and violence has affected us and our neighbors. Members of the Meeting have actively followed their personal leadings in the areas of environmental concerns, immigration issues and past Quaker involvement in the treatment of Native Americans. Several members of our Meeting are actively involved in CONECT (40+ Congregations Organized for a New Connecticut), of which our Meeting is a member.

Our greatest area of ongoing need is for more people to serve on various committees. Many of these committees are tiered so that as one group of committee members leave, a new group joins a group that has served a year. Older members of Meeting feel they have carried the weight over the years and are hopeful of younger people taking on this work. Younger people are busy with young children, graduate work and careers that often include travel. We need a second person to be a recording clerk for Meeting for Business. First Day School is another area of concern. There are many children of school age in the Meeting. However, the number of children in attendance varies greatly from week to week making a curriculum that builds from one session to the next difficult. The age range of children spans several grades requiring a staff that can teach a group similar to the one room schoolhouse. We have experimented with children in Meeting for Worship for the first fifteen minutes, joining the last fifteen minutes, volunteer teachers and paid teachers. We have not found the right medium.

And yet, we are flourishing. Both Zoom and in-person attendance is steady. We are active within meeting as well as in community events, state and national concerns. We are hopeful, trusting in God's continuing presence moving in and among us. We are mindful of the this state of grace.

STATE OF SOCIETY REPORT 2026 for the year 2025

New London Friends Meeting (NLFM) continues to be a stalwart community maintaining Quaker presence in southeastern Connecticut. Although this part of Connecticut is known for its military/industrial-based economy, we note that over many years we have welcomed military members and their families to participate in Meeting worship and activities. These relationships have enriched the Meeting.

We nurture each other. This past year has called upon each of us to offer support to members in need. Our numbers have dwindled slightly as health issues, outside family demands and geographic distance have affected attendance. Relationships are very good and times when we all meet together are even more meaningful to us.

We value the wider Quaker fellowship of Quarterly Meeting and we have been able and willing to participate in the Quarter's Woolman Hill retreat each autumn in addition to other Quarterly Meeting responsibilities. Yearly Meeting attendance is low, partly due to family commitments. Also, married members of Meeting have spouses who support us but are not Friends. One member still enjoys meeting monthly with a cohort of Friends originally set up from Yearly Meeting.

Weekly worship often comprises silent "waiting worship" with a few occasions of spoken ministry. This quiet does not affect the richness of spirit. We always share warm, rich fellowship at close of Meeting for worship, along with good bread, tea and coffee, and we often discuss shared needs of members. One First Day a month is allocated to discussion of Peace and Social concerns, another to Ministry and Counsel topics. We also have been doing a monthly discussion of assigned readings from Quaker sources and sections of the new Faith and Practice. The member who provided impetus and guidance for these enlightening sessions is moving to a different state, and we will sorely miss her. Additional monthly scheduled events are a potluck lunch and a potluck breakfast. Sometimes a discussion topic is included though mostly friendly conversation takes place.

In work outside of our Meeting we have endorsed minutes in support of FCNL's work. Two members continue to be involved in *Start Fresh*, an immigrant re-settling project based in New London, Connecticut. Others are active in local social justice efforts including nuclear arms reduction, human rights, justice issues and climate change. Our Meeting has been supportive, with reservations, of "*One Standard of Justice*" (OSJ), an advocacy group working to have more reasonable registration requirements for people on the Connecticut Sex Offender Registry. After much prayer, examination of conscience and threshing due to multiple Meeting members' negative personal experiences, our Meeting agreed to allow our Meetinghouse to be used by OSJ for an information session with community members and those on the Sex Offender Registry in a safe environment. (We are pleased to report that legislation

prepared by OSJ for more practical, less burdensome reporting for registrants was passed by the Connecticut General Assembly in 2026.) Another deliberation for our Meeting regarding Sex Offender registrants was to determine at what radius distance from the Meetinghouse we might personally invite individuals to attend our Meeting. This process has served to open up general discussion of other groups to whom we might extend our reach.

Since COVID we have made efforts to include on-line access to our worship and business meetings. We reached out to our membership requesting support to purchase some basic equipment, which we have and use as needed. There is ongoing discussion regarding the cost/benefit of providing permanent Wi-Fi.

Our special Meetinghouse, an old summer chapel that we purchased over thirty years ago for \$1 with a covenant to keep it as a house of worship, unites us physically and spiritually. Over the years we have improved it to meet our needs. Thanks to one of our members, an architect who contributed her expertise and many years of providing Meeting funds, we have a structurally sound and accessible building, town water and sewer, a new kitchen, toilet room and enhanced social space. We added a wonderful meditation garden in honor of Bettie Chu, one of our beloved founding members. This exterior project was fifteen years coming to fruition - at welcome, but considerable cost borne by NLFM and grants from New England Yearly Meeting. We used the occasion to acknowledge the heritage of our land from the Nehantic Native Nation. Like any building, ours has maintenance needs. Financial responsibilities for a building can be considerable. The cost of providing heat and electricity is a constant over which we have no control but requires the financial support of a dwindling number of members and attenders.

The New London Friends Meetinghouse embodies our sense of community. We remain a very small meeting with an ageing though active and welcoming membership. Weekly attendance ranges from five to ten people, sometimes more. Members are committed but there are not many of us and administrative tasks fall to few people. Although there are serious conversations to have about the future of our Meeting, there is no waning of commitment at this time.

We greatly value our staunch Quaker community in spirit and in peace.

For Leeland Cole-Chu (SD-M)

Leeland Cole-Chu, Co-Clerk

Stephanie Degen-Monroe

Stephanie Degen-Monroe, Co-Clerk

State of the Meeting 2025 Northampton Monthly Meeting

General

Meeting is a strong and supportive community, one in which spiritual needs are nourished.

One Friend said, “For me [our faith community] is alive, it is strong...So many of the different threads are woven together in a feeling of strength and unity. I am looking through the lens of gratitude for a strength that I never knew existed. I think it is worth celebration.”

Community

A Friend expressed, “As Friends, we connect to Spirit in community...There’s a loneliness epidemic during these times, so few people have community. To keep coming together in community, that’s the most powerful foundation for all the work we do.”

In expressing her love of the Meeting, another Friend said, “It spreads out into my life, all over the place. I also feel that this Meeting provides me with an opportunity to listen to leadings and fail at them, or try them out and be scared away from them, and come back to them...It makes me a much better embodied spirit, a much better listener to the Spirit in myself, that of God in me. It also makes me a doer.”

There were many expressions of appreciation for the efforts of the Meeting committees (especially for Fellowship and Youth and Family) and groups such as the holiday fair ad hoc committee. Gratitude was expressed for the individual support committees, clearness committees, and the various working groups supporting the life and ministry of the Meeting. As one Friend said, “[These] people are ministers, but what they do is the ministry of the whole meeting.” Being invited to serve on committees is a doorway to enter more deeply in the life of the Meeting.

Worship

Friends expressed an appreciation both for the depth of the waiting worship and for the vocal ministry given during First Day worship. The First Day meeting for worship is “blended”, with many Friends in the meeting room and many other Friends on the Zoom bench. The blended nature greatly increases engagement and spiritual connection among us, including those who have physical, medical, or geographic barriers to attending in person. People now attend meeting for worship from their homes and

hospital beds, from outdoors, and from as far away as Pennsylvania, Oregon, and England. A Friend described feeling the Spirit moving in the meeting house, moving among those on Zoom and flowing back into the meeting house, saying, “That’s when it’s really rockin’, that’s when it’s happening, and it happens a lot now.”

There are two other meetings, both on Zoom only: midweek worship on Wednesdays at 9:30 am and a programmed Quaker Taizé worship on Thursdays at 7:00 pm. Taizé is an offering for all NEYM by our own Peter Bishop; it includes prayers, readings, and chants designed to help meditation and prayer, as well as traditional waiting worship.

In midweek meeting, the time is split between waiting worship and worship sharing. The mid-morning time here is evening in England and early morning on the west coast of the U.S. There have been such positive and supportive comments about the richness of worship and the fellowship afterwards that Friends who have schedule conflicts try hard to adjust their schedules.

Adult Education Classes

Appreciation was expressed for the variety and richness of the First Day 9:30 hours, arranged by two members of Worship and Ministry. These sessions have included threshing sessions, worship sharing around readings, sharing of personal spiritual journeys, and the sharing of information by small groups, working groups, and committees

“Elements of Quakerism,” a class taught by member Phil Fitz, was held up as a valuable way for Friends (from newcomers to longstanding members) to learn more about Quaker practice and their own spiritual journey, and to become more engaged in the community.

Spiritual Nourishment

Friends felt that our Meeting nourishes our spirit, hearts, and minds. One Friend stated that the Meeting had matured to become more truly welcoming and accepting of the variety of spiritual traditions, including those at the root of Quakerism. A newer member said, “I’m in a continuing transition from a solitary spiritual life to living a spiritual life in community. I have found that Northampton Friends Meeting has been kind of the perfect fit for helping that transition happen...the Meeting is also reaching out to me, creating more and more connections of faithful love.”

Concerns of New Attenders

Friends expressed joy at the influx of newcomers, including families with young children particularly.

A newer Friend spoke of going to elders with questions. Another attender expressed not being sure of who the elders were, or how to become involved in the life of the Meeting. This Friend sought additional understanding of "...how to become part of this community that I've now sat here and listened to you all talking about in such an extraordinary way that I want in."

Peace and Social Justice work

A Friend said, "I carry this Meeting with me all the time. It's just knowing that it's here. When I stand out for demonstrations, I carry that sense of justice and peace and spirituality that this Meeting gives me."

The Meeting has a Peace and Justice Discernment Committee to help individuals discern clarity about leadings involving work on peace and justice issues. We also have active working groups on Immigrant Solidarity, Race and Class, and Antinuclear work. Some Friends felt the lack of a Peace and Social Concerns Committee.

Directions for the Future

Although the listserv and the newsletter disseminate information about Meeting-related activities, newer attenders are seeking more information about how to more fully enter the life of the Meeting. In response to a request, forming a Peace working group is being brought forward to business meeting. There was interest expressed in adding a midweek meeting for worship in the evening.

What is our growing edge?

One Friend reflected, "I think we have a number of growing edges in our Meeting... new people who have begun attending in the last few years. They remind me of why I'm here and how I came to be here." Another Friend suggested, "I really feel like our challenge for these young people who have come to us is to... bring them along into the fabric of the meeting, and into leadership."

Another Friend shared that the intergenerational community, being around elders and young parents and children, felt very powerful and “is something [I’m] really glad that I have in my life right now, and that I want to keep.”

Dover Quarter

State of Society – April 2026

Concord Friends Meeting sees attendance of around 22 people in person and on zoom each First Day. As a smallish meeting, we notice newcomers, and we are aware of those we may not have seen for a while. Our hearts are warmed when friends who have come to Meeting only sporadically decide to really make it their spiritual home. 2025 was a year that warmed our hearts in this way, and we are especially grateful that these new Friends are lowering the average age of our attenders. We are generally an older meeting, and we are sad to admit that the year ended with no children in our First Day school. The Meeting is hopeful the new year will bring change in this regard.

While the demographics are undeniable, we do not dwell on these circumstances. Our primary concern is to be present for the spiritual care of those who are here. The natural result is a stronger Meeting. Our heart's desire is to be worthy of description as a beloved community. We realize that this only comes from attentiveness and an investment of time in continuous recreation. We find many ways to nourish each other: we offer Quakerism study groups for newcomers, camping trips, canoe adventures, and Christmas caroling. We visit our homebound Friends, and provide rides to Meeting, send loving birthday greetings, and create opportunities for socializing with Friendly 8's, an annual spring party, and monthly gatherings to "sing your heart out" with songs of joy and resilience.

The ministry in Meeting for Worship has been strong and powerful, and there are a growing number of friends who are able to heed the call to rise and speak. We are reminded that sharing our doubts and vulnerability is just as important as sharing wisdom. We need to encourage one another to bring our full humanity into the Meeting Room. One Friend expressed gratitude for the way in which Meeting for Worship helps them to slow down. We appreciate the power and effect of simply sitting together in worship week after week. This is our core. It feeds our desire to live worshipfully.

When we rise from Worship, the challenge of living into our testimonies begins as we interact with one another and return to our lives in the wider community. What happens as we share potluck or work together to wash dishes, sweep the floors, rake leaves, or join in committee work? What may appear to be mundane tasks present themselves as opportunities for connections to be made and deepened — to experience and express the Divine in our midst.

When we bring our best selves, these everyday activities build community and strengthen the Meeting. Our best selves bring laughter, song and love, but we know that sometimes we fall short; we can offend, we can be overly sensitive, we can be insensitive. But amidst our human error we strive to see and appreciate the unique gifts each person brings to the Meeting. It is crucial that we continue to find ways to be open with one another and to connect more deeply so that we are conscious of one another's joys and sufferings. So it is not just the offering of an adult study course, or any one of the Meeting's activities or roles that is significant, but the care we bring to all that we do. Our aim is to engender an atmosphere that allows us to explore questions and Truths, to express our vulnerabilities, and to form meaningful relationships. We know this to be the engine of caring and the foundation of the beloved community. We hope to plan more support groups around specific topics, books groups, or prayer groups.

Arising from our Monthly Meeting experience are important connections to the wider world of Friends. Fourteen of us attended NEYM summer sessions (13 in person, 1 via zoom). One

member described it as a precious experience for the Meeting. We have members involved with AFSC Corporation, AFSC-NH Support Committee, Beacon Hill Friends House, FCNL - NH Group, FUM General Board, and NEYM committees. We are grateful for those who find the time to support the Quarter and Yearly Meeting in this way.

We are enriched by the actions of individual members and attenders who actively witnessing to our testimonies through their work in the world. We know the ability of our members to have the energy to let their lives speak comes from worship that we share.

Friends' lives give form to our testimonies, actively expressed in the community. There has been consistent support for the vigil for peace and justice in Gaza by two members of our meeting. We participated in the Concord Crop Walk, raising funds for food security locally and around the world. One friend has collected car loads of warm clothing and supplies from the Meeting for the unhoused. There is a stirring among Friends to have the Meeting more involved with immigrant support work, especially around raising funds for people whose lives are being upended by ICE activities.

New Friends have been attracted to Meeting through these witnesses by Friends who act as "patterns and examples." These are not "outreach" activities, but they have that effect. Activities specifically aimed at outreach have their place, and we believe we could be better organized to share the Quaker message. Outside the context of specifically "Meeting" activities, many Friends have been organizing and demonstrating in the face of unloving, anti-democratic, and xenophobic governmental actions. Individuals are actively supporting and leading a multitude of volunteer organizations, raising up a variety of concerns inspired by the centrality of the testimonies in our lives.

This year a family with three children had to relocate to another state due to the New Hampshire Legislature's actions targeting transgender people, particularly children. We are ashamed this is happening in our state. We are deeply saddened and very much aware of how much is lost when dedicated Friends choose to leave for whatever reason.

Other activities in 2025 not previously mentioned include special worship sharing meetings which helped us come to terms with deeply troubling national events. We planted a Peace Pole in our front yard and celebrated it with an interfaith service that resulted in a fair amount of outreach to the community. We are deeply grateful for the work of all of our Meeting's committee volunteers and organizers of community building activities. Of particular note is the faithful weekly issue of our e-newsletter that extends well beyond our regular attenders. So much work is done by so many, and so well. Our gratitude abounds.

Gonic Monthly Meeting

State of Society Report 2025

Gonic Friends Meeting is a peaceful refuge in a distressing and unpredictable world. Our community has continued to grow throughout the year with frequent visitors and some new regular attenders. We are thankful for the energy and spiritual wisdom they bring. We have been fortunate to have Friends from Pennsylvania sojourning with us, bringing new vitality to our meeting. We also welcomed a Friend back to the area who had moved away in 2024. Though she is not able to join us for meeting, she continues to offer support and encouragement. Friends have enjoyed visiting with her at her nearby senior living community.

Our meetings continue to be mostly silent. Our worship feels strong and nurtured by the spirit. We have sometimes had as many as ten in Meeting for Worship including at least one regular attender via Zoom. Frequent after messages sometimes lead to discussion on spiritual concerns and also on political matters which have caused Friends some distress.

Our meeting bonds are strong and the work of caring for the meeting has been more evenly divided as Friends are more able to participate. A spring picnic, held at the home of a housebound Friend was a welcome social time. Friend Steven Bhardwaj and family from Nairobi monthly meeting visited Gonic in June. Steven was on a walking vigil through New England to raise awareness about his work with preschool children in Kenya.

A substantial donation from Rachel Carey-Harper, a New England Friend, led to donations to four community service organizations. We were inspired to look for more ways to support the local community. A Community Service Committee was formed and several potential projects were identified. This work is ongoing. In addition, Gonic Friends supported several Dover Friends in a visit to Cuba.

Outside the work of the meeting, members and attenders are active in supporting the local community in their daily lives. Work of community members includes delivering for Meals on Wheels, supporting unhoused people in our area, offering free counseling to veterans, assisting at a local soup kitchen and participating in vigils for peace.

The needs of our 1891 meetinghouse continue to require regular attention. Grant funds from a local energy company are being pursued as a possible way to increase the efficiency of our uninsulated building.

We feel a bond of kinship among our meeting regulars and always look forward to welcoming newcomers to our peaceful sanctuary.

State of Society Report for 2025

North Sandwich Friends Meeting

What is our condition as a faith community within the Society of Friends?

North Sandwich Friends Meeting has been growing together as a community. Although we remain a small Meeting, we have also grown in numbers; we have seen significant growth in attendance at Meeting during the last three years. In addition to attending Meeting together, we enjoy a meal together in our once-monthly query discussions. Several members have met together in developing outreach programming, including carrying our NSFM banner at a Conway “No Kings” march. We are a blend of local people, people with Quaker roots, and people from afar.

At times we have felt like an isolated outpost of Quakerism, but this year we hosted the Dover Quarter Meeting in September 2025, which helped us recognize our existing Quaker connections. We feel well connected with the Dover Quarter and we are also communicating with a Quaker worship group that has formed in Jackson, NH.

Our Greatest concern is that we still lack the next generation, particularly families with children.

How is the spirit moving among us?

In recent years, we have rarely shared vocal ministries during Meeting for Worship. Instead, after settling, a member reads brief Quaker passages, and we often share reflections on the worship experience after the rise of Meeting, especially when guests or new people attend. We meet once a month to discuss queries, and we continue to seek ways of supporting individual member’s spiritual journeys.

We have been reaching out to the broader community and have scheduled both programmed and unprogrammed events at the Meeting House, in conjunction with holidays, and historical events that have significance for current concerns. A recent example was the Armistice Day program of poetry reading and reflection we held on November 11, 2025.

One member of our Meeting has for some years had a deep leading to witness for peace for the people of Palestine. The Meeting approved a Travel Minute for her pilgrimage to Palestine, after which she was led to share her insights with a variety of audiences including our local community. Since that time, the Meeting approved a Minute of Travel in the Ministry for her continuing to share her experiences with different audiences and has provided an ongoing committee of support for her ministry.

We are having on-going discussions about how to best use our Meeting House space to further expand our presence and value in the local community. These discussions have led us to restore the 1920s reed organ that we have inherited from our programmed meeting origins. We anticipate using the organ during an occasional summer programmed meeting that we hold in deference to our heritage, as well as for future community musical events.

Where have we found sustenance and nurture?

Much of our sustenance and nurture comes from each other and from our expanded interaction with the community. Our transition to a shared clerkship has lessened the load that used to be carried by one person. With three Co-Clerks more ideas have been brought before the Meeting, and our ability to try new approaches has been expanded.

We have recently conducted a memorial for a long-time member which provided closure for family and many friends, both within the meeting and outside. We are supportive of each other in response to deaths and other life-changing events.

We have been working together to build a stronger community inclusive of members, attenders, and occasional visitors.

How have we sought to hold up and care for our meeting?

Sharing the clerk job has been a foundation, but collectively working together in Meeting for Business strengthens our structure and guides our actions. The big public events we have held over the past few years are an example of how we are expanding our horizons and enhancing our cooperation and trust.

What is our growing edge as a spiritual community?

We have been seeking new ways to bring more people to the Meeting House through occasional programs focused around current events and holidays.

We continue to work to find ways to increase our spiritual understanding at all levels. Even though we are still a very small meeting we are very diverse in terms of experience, politics, and spirituality. Working to honor different views leads to both individual growth and adds to the strength of the Meeting. We plan on offering a several-week “course” on Quakerism in 2026.

This was a big year for North Sandwich Friends Meeting. We are a motivated group willing to take risks and try new approaches.

Weare-Henniker Friends Meeting State of the Society Report 2025

The year began like many others for our Meeting. In January we heard the report regarding our annual December Solstice Sing. Thirty-Seven people attended the event despite difficult driving weather. Guests brought candles, firewood, and snacks, which were added to the food prepared by Meeting members. Our Carbon Tax contributions to Quaker organizations working to alleviate climate change averaged \$300 a quarter in 2024. The Meeting has donated over \$10,000 since the program began in 2016.

The Meeting has begun the practice of worship sharing on some Sundays after meeting for worship. Members who attend find this time of great spiritual benefit.

We happily celebrated Marian Baker's 80th birthday in January and noted receipt of a letter from Quaker Women Traveling in East Africa Ministry expressing gratitude to Marian for her work and to those who support her work financially. In May Marian shared her work in Africa, relayed travels in PA, including attending Pendle Hill, where she had the opportunity to dialog with one of the African leaders of FUM. In October, Marian returned to Africa. During her trip she planted trees in Uganda, participated in a religious education workshop in Kenya and attended a prayer day for the United Society of Friends Women with several thousand Kenyan women and visiting friends from many other Friends meetings.

With sadness we were informed by Souhegan Preparative Meeting that it wished to be laid down. Its membership had dwindled as members were moving away. Souhegan sent us the remainder of its funds, \$128. We received Brian Drayton's annual report on his ministry. Brian has transferred his membership from Souhegan to Wellesley Meeting in MA. In June we received the State of the Society report for 2024 from Souhegan, in which they describe the demise of the Meeting. This report was added as an addendum to ours.

Over the course of the year the Meeting made some contributions outside of our usual gifts to various Quaker and other local nonprofits. In January we donated \$100 to help cover the costs of Dover MM members traveling to Cuba. In February, our Meeting was surprised to receive a donation of \$2,000 from Rachel Carey-Harper. Rachel had made the same contribution to every Meeting in NEYM in 2016 and repeated these gifts after the 2024 election. This donation was to be used to support people who were already or were likely to be subject to suffering due to the new administration's policy choices. We took time to consider possible uses for this gift. Help for immigrants, LBGTQ+, domestic abuse and people of color with attacks on DEI, Planned Parenthood and AFSC Peace Action were several ideas under consideration. In August, the first donations from the Carey-Harper money were made, \$200 each were sent to the three food pantries in Weare and Henniker. After further discussion, in October \$200 donations were made to Family Promise, which provides housing and support to families in transition, the Manchester UCC Church's rainbow program for trans families and the American Rescue Committee for Gaza.

In terms of Yearly Meeting business, our Meeting spent the 4th Sunday in March discussing possible revisioning of Annual Sessions. In May the files regarding South Pittsfield Meetinghouse were sent to NEYM, as the Yearly Meeting had taken over responsibility for the property. In May we discussed the various aspects of the controversy regarding UMass Amherst as site of annual sessions. Friends were in unity that a letter of support should be written in support of NEYM for its position. In June we

considered NEYM's request for a contribution to the Equalization Fund. We had budgeted \$500 for that purpose, so that money was sent. We received the draft for the chapter in the new Faith and Practice on Testimony. Friends held two discussions on the chapter and sent our comments back to the NEYM committee. Seven members of the Meeting attended annual sessions and shared their experiences with us on their return.

Upkeep of the Meetinghouse included the hiring of a tree service to rake the roof, as it was decided that this was a safer alternative than doing it ourselves. In April we began a discussion regarding the replacement of the old millstone, which serves as the stair to the backdoor of the Meetinghouse, but we quickly recognized that a ramp to make it easier for those with mobility issues was the better solution. An investigation into viable options and costs was begun. Over the summer the ramp committee reviewed various ideas and their costs. A draft plan was presented in November, but Friends agreed that more information was needed to make a decision. Dick agreed to facilitate a meeting with the ramp committee and to come back with a more detailed plan. In December, a ramp plan was brought forward and approved by the Meeting. Work will begin in the spring.

This was a year to discuss FCNL Priorities. The Meeting set aside one 4th Sunday for that discussion. A final list of priorities was then approved at the April Meeting for Business and sent to FCNL. A first draft of the 2024 State of the Society report was also received at April Meeting for Business, approved in May, and sent to NEYM.

Our statistical report for 2024 showed that Weare-Henniker Meeting had an increase in average attendance from six to eight. The number of Meeting members remained unchanged. This year we were happy to approve a new member, and a welcome was held at Bass Farm with worship followed by lunch. It was a wonderful time for all. We learned with sadness of the death of the wife of Meeting member Jerry Frost in December and a condolence card was sent.

Other social/outreach events included the Summer Solstice Sing on June 29. We moved the event to an earlier time, 4 PM, as we hosted the Quarterly Meeting that day and hoped attendees would stay for the Sing. It was a happy event with various songs and hymns and lots of pie. The meeting was also visited by the third grade from Henniker Community School in June. Marian Baker and Dick Ludders greeted the children and teachers and told them about the building and answered other questions. The children were most interested in the beaver post in the worship room and the outhouse. The annual yard sale was moved to August from October, as Marian Baker would be away in October. The proceeds from the yard sale are used to facilitate Marian's work in Africa. \$962 was raised this year. The Carol/Solstice Sing was set for Sunday December 22.

One of the happiest events of the year was the celebration of Betty Straw's 100th birthday organized by her family. Betty was surrounded by many friends and relatives throughout the afternoon and looked extremely happy with it all. Betty died in 2026, but we were glad that she was able to worship with us until the last two months of her life. Her knowledge of the Meeting's history and of the town of Weare was amazingly detailed. Her warm smile and kind eyes are deeply missed.

The latter part of the year became a time of transition for us. In September Ann and Dick Ludders informed us of their upcoming move to a CCRC in Concord. Therefore, Dick needed to step down as clerk. We all felt relieved when Ann said that she would continue to serve as treasurer. The larger issue was all the other jobs that Dick and Ann did around the meetinghouse, most of which would

normally be managed by a property committee. Consequently, we found ourselves in the midst of major changes to the Meeting's structure. Dick and Ann were asked to draft a list of all the things they do for next business meeting. As we considered the activities of the meeting and the list provided by Dick and Ann, we agreed that we ideally should have a clerk, a recording clerk, treasurer, and a Property Committee. Ministry and Counsel and Social Concerns Committees would also be useful. In November Bob Brookes was approved as the new clerk for one year to begin in January. Ann affirmed that she would remain as treasurer for the meeting and for Marian's support fund. The Meeting approved the creation of a property committee and David Erickson agreed to serve on this new committee. In December, Bob Brookes was again approved as clerk of the meeting for one year, Mark Hewitt as recording clerk, and David Erickson as the alternate recording clerk. Many thanks were expressed to Dick and Ann for all their years of service.

Weare/Henniker Meeting continues to work through this transition holding each other in the Light.

Falmouth Quarter

Brunswick Friends Meeting State of Society Report (2025)

Friends of Brunswick Monthly Meeting gathered on March 8, 2026 after Meeting for Worship in our current location at the Chocolate Church Annex in Bath, Maine to share responses to the following interactive questions.

1. How is Spirit moving among us?

Friends spoke of gratitude for the increase in vocal ministry, adding that “there is a surge of energy happening in this Meeting that is beautiful to witness”, even calling it a “renaissance”. As one Friend shared, “When we center down, the silence can feel so deep”. Friends also spoke of Spirit moving in our active witnessing outside of Meeting, such as participating in the No Kings rallies on the Democracy Bridge in Bath/Brunswick, supporting our neighbors (and meeting members) in Lewiston and Bowdonham during the recent ICE raids, and contributing our support to a local Midcoast Hunger Prevention Program (paper products, diapers, non-perishables) as coordinated by one of our members. As one Friend said, “When I see other Friends witnessing, it almost feels like a gathered meeting—it uplifts and feeds my spirit. By our showing up, I can feel Spirit at work in this dark night.”

2. Where have we found sustenance and nurture?

In considering this question, one Friend described her experience of Brunswick Friends Meeting by using the metaphor of a God candle in the middle of our circle, with candles all around offering additional support. Another Friend spoke how after experiencing “that deep silence from which ministry may or may not arise, I leave I feel truly grounded and ready for another week.” Particularly in these challenging times, during which Friends may enter the silent worship feeling ungrounded, a member spoke of how “messages that start with anguish or doubt tend to end up in hope, and I have found that very helpful in sustaining me during my week.” Many Brunswick Friends spoke of feeling buoyed spiritually beyond a given First Day, grateful that the “ministry and messages are enduring, sustaining and personally compelling” during the week after Meeting officially ends. Another member spoke of the importance of individual concerns brought to Brunswick Meeting, adding that “you can come to this group with any particular issue and you will be supported”. One Friend spoke of “how nurtured I have felt by your smiles, your handshakes, your hugs—that each one of you provides a bit more nurture” that is both needed and deeply appreciated.

3. How have we sought to care for our meeting communities?

To our great delight, our numbers are increasing due to several transfers of membership within New England Yearly Meeting, as well as people finding us from the local Bath, Topsham and Brunswick communities. Typically, approximately twenty individuals (sometimes a parent arrives with a young child) worship together on a given First Day, even in the winter. Brunswick Friends tries to welcome new attenders—including being greeted at the door upon arriving—so that all can experience the gifts of Spirit available to those open to receiving them. We also have tried to address accessibility issues as best as we can, including providing a sound system with a handheld microphone, offering a quick helping hand for those with walkers who could use a little extra assistance, and general snow-shoveling when needed, often happening because the need is seen and responded to. We have discovered that there are many kinds of ministry in our Meeting! In addition, some of our members have participated in Falmouth Quarterly Meetings

as well as New England Yearly Meeting workshops and annual Sessions—including some Friends attending for the very first time when Sessions happened at UMass-Amherst in August 2025.

While we traditionally have been a “mostly inward focused monthly meeting”, our participation is growing within the quarter and yearly meeting as well as the local communities previously mentioned. Concerned about the state of our democracy, the rights of immigrants, persons of color, indigenous peoples, and transgender individuals, as well as the consequences of wars in Gaza, Ukraine, Venezuela, and most recently, Iran, many of us are active with our local Indivisible chapters, protesting ICE raids both locally, in Minneapolis and elsewhere. Furthermore, at least one Brunswick Friend serves on the following Quaker organizations: the Maine Friends Council of National Legislation advocacy team, the NEYM Friends Camp Committee, a NEYM representative to the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), a member of the AFSC Corporation, plus one of our members continues to serve as the New England Yearly Meeting Treasurer and another serves on the NEYM Israel/Palestine Working Group. Our budget is also “pretty activist”, supporting the rights and humanity of persons of color, immigrants, indigenous peoples, and transgender individuals. We also support the Maine Council of Churches and interfaith work.

4. What is our growing edge as a spiritual community?

One of the challenges facing Brunswick Friends Meeting is that we are spread geographically from Phippsburg to Lewiston, resulting in our sometimes not meeting pastoral care needs. We are considering ways to improve communication, especially to Friends who do not attend as frequently due to health or other reasons, whether this happen through personal written notes, phone calls, offering rides, holding more potlucks, etc. Fortunately, thanks to the newsletter and our email chain of addresses, we are able to stay in touch with our off-season Friends who live in Florida, Montana and New York City. In terms of outreach, we are wanting to be more welcoming to younger people, knowing what a wonderful part of community children can be, as well as identifying ourselves as Quaker during rallies (perhaps with a Brunswick Friends Meeting banner) as another form of outreach. Finally, while we generally have been very happy meeting at the Chocolate Church Annex after meeting at the Morrell Meeting Room in Brunswick’s Curtis Memorial Library for years, we have not discerned the Annex to be our permanent meeting location after June 2026. We are aware of the importance of stability in our meeting location—particularly for outreach purposes—and so we look forward to being in a permanent home, even if Brunswick Friends Meeting ends up not being in the town of Brunswick itself.

In summary, Brunswick Friends continue to find that writing this State of Society Report together provides a rich opportunity for reflection, rededication and gratitude. This process helps us learn where we need to grow further as Friends, both locally, within Falmouth Quarter, New England Yearly Meeting, and among Quakers worldwide.

State of Society Report 2025

Durham Monthly Meeting of Friends

Durham Monthly Meeting of Friends celebrated our semiquincentennial anniversary in 2025, which is a fancy way of saying what the banner that hangs from the old horse shed proclaims: “250 years old and still Friends!” In October, we welcomed Friends from all over to a celebration of 250 years of gathering for worship in Durham, Maine. Beginning in 1775 in private homes, followed by worship in the first of three meetinghouses in 1790, we have drawn strength from each other’s presence and connection to the divine. More recently, we have become aware that the land we worship on is a homeland for the Wabanaki, the Indigenous peoples of this region, with the responsibility and gratitude that comes with that awareness.

In February, DMMF held a retreat to gather and hold a concern about how we go forward as a smaller community to build community and support each other in challenging times. As part of this process, we created collages that expressed our hopes for the times ahead. We also participated in an exercise to discern our wants, needs, and capabilities as we sustain our semi-programmed meeting. During the retreat, the issue of past conflicts arose, conflicts that were not fully addressed in a manner to bring healing and reconciliation. We have been led to call upon the Meeting Accompaniment Group of New England Yearly Meeting for guidance in bringing about this healing.

We have found that our semi-programmed format continues to work well for us, and that having a prepared message three times a month and at least one week of unprogrammed worship is a good fit. The quality of our worship, even when conducted on Zoom, is deep and meaningful, including the fuller silences after the prepared messages. Since we frequently feature messages from members and regular attenders, it gives us increased opportunities to get to know one another in the Spirit. We continue with the Monday morning prayer group, where we lift up the concerns and celebration shared at our Sunday worship. This small but faithful group is another way we hold each other in love and care.

Tensions around the use of technology continue, and our current solution is to provide Zoom on the weeks when we have a message and to not use it for unprogrammed waiting worship in the meeting room. It remains a subject of review and discernment.

The Maker Cafes that began in 2024 as a Friend’s leading to create an offline space where folks could gather to learn hands-on skills, listen to music, and enjoy a potluck dinner continues to bring us much joy. Drawing in neighbors from outside our meeting, we get together monthly, with a break for summer, and are grateful to everyone who shares their skills and contributes to the potlucks.

After a pandemic hiatus of about four years, DMMF has revived our adult religious education, first through a sharing session on Joanna Macy's *Active Hope* then with a "Quaker Basics" session that used chapters from the current NEYM Faith and Practice to introduce Quaker thought to newcomers and members as well.

In 2025, we continued the practice begun in 2023 of rotating the role of Meeting clerk through the committee clerks, which has been an enriching experience for the clerks and the Meeting as a whole. Our Meeting Care Coordinator has arranged for a variety of people to bring the message, both those within our Meeting and from outside the Meeting. If you feel led to offer us a message, either in the meetinghouse or over Zoom, please reach out to durham@neym.org.

Our Trustees continue their care for the meetinghouse as it enters its third century of providing a gathering space for Friends and others in the wider community.

Woman's Society remains one of the most consistent and faithful ways for our Meeting to put our faith into action. This small but effective group meets monthly for devotions and to support a variety of opportunities to benefit local and international groups, knit our community together in festive fellowship, and support the life of the meeting during memorial services and other planned gatherings. We are grateful for all the ways they share God's love among and beyond us.

The Peace and Social Concerns committee continues to bring issues in front of us and offer thoughtful and tender suggestions about how to move forward. During our anniversary year, we made a commitment to more visible activism in our local communities. We saw a planned conclusion to the five-year project on Social Justice in the Classroom, although the seed has taken root and will carry on in nine schools in the area. We remain grateful to the Obadiah Brown Benevolent Fund and the local educators who have made these efforts so successful.

We continue to participate with other area churches in preparing meals at the Tedford Shelter in Brunswick (under the auspices of the Woman's Society) and to support the Lisbon Area Christian Outreach food pantry, as well as continuing our engagement with the Brunswick Area Interfaith Council.

We welcomed two new members, one a seasoned Friend and the other a newly convinced Friend, who both bring vibrancy to our Meeting. We lost one venerable Friend, whose wisdom and cheerfulness profoundly contributed to our community. A number of new attenders have come to us, which speaks to the welcoming place Quaker churches offer in a time of distress, fear, anger, and cruelty.

We remain committed to offering hospitality and welcome to all, both in our meetinghouse and in our state and towns. We have remained steadfast in our support for immigrant and refugee neighbors, providing financial, spiritual, and logistical support to individuals and organizations that offer resources and compassion to all those who are under attack. We are equally steadfast in speaking out about the need to "welcome the stranger" and engage with our elected officials in addressing the policies that criminalize their presence in our midst.

“For as you treated the least of these, you treated me.”

We are aware that we have a special place as a Meeting community and in each other's hearts. We want to share this more broadly with the world, through invitation and with intention. We do this by supporting each other in showing up, speaking out, praying for, and standing with all those whose wish is to not only find a sanctuary, but to become one. We seek to become One with the Tender Presence, the Creator and Healer of this challenging and hurting world.

Received by Falmouth Quarter 4/25/26

State of Society Report for 2025 (Final)
Portland Friends Meeting
1837 Forest Avenue
Portland, ME 04103

In 2025, Portland Friends Meeting celebrated the arrival of many new attenders seeking a new spiritual home.

We experienced worship with incredible depths of silence and vocal ministry and worship with vocal ministry that felt ungrounded or talkative. We have heard both gratitude for worship, and concern about its quality. We experimented with ways of verbally introducing worship to encourage greater depths of listening, expectant waiting, and faithfulness.

There is hunger in our Meeting for opportunities to gather, both socially and for spiritual formation. This year we began a successful experiment with breakfast programs before worship on most second and fourth Sundays. We have continued to offer potlucks every first Sunday after worship and before Meeting for Worship for the Conduct of Business. On many Sundays, there is a small group that meets for “Afterthoughts” about experiences during worship. Many report that these opportunities are deeply nourishing.

We now have childcare every Sunday, and we have separate, dedicated leadership for young children, middle schoolers, and for high schoolers. Attendance in these programs has increased and so has the sense of energy and vitality. But we are still unable to provide adequate childcare to support parent participation in opportunities beyond regular Sunday worship, and our youth programming remains vulnerable to turnover in adult coordinators.

We have struggled with concerns about respectful and loving treatment of each other. We know that further dialogue and engagement when tensions arise offer opportunities for deepening the ways we cherish our community. An ad hoc group has begun to reconsider our procedures for transforming conflict, and we have intentionally slowed Meetings for Worship for the Conduct of Business down to ensure that we are listening deeply to one another.

One major issue for us has been how to support our unhoused neighbors, some of whom have used our cemetery as a place of refuge in the past year, as Portland faces a growing housing crisis. We have struggled together, unsure of how to be helpful and how to balance our care and respect for our neighbors with the other uses and obligations of the cemetery.

We have been grateful for the diligent work of an ad hoc committee who has led us in discernment and enabled us to listen to one another and move forward gradually. We have also found ways to actively support two women who continue to reside in our cemetery, even during the winter into 2026.

Ministry in worship has reflected our struggles with the tumultuous events of 2025. It has also reflected our need for encouragement, hope and resolve. There has been increased involvement in a variety of issues of social concern, and we have become more coordinated and supportive of one another in these efforts. We find we are growing in a variety of ways, both internally as a Meeting and in how we respond faithfully in the world.

When Kirénia Criado Pérez, pastor of Havana Monthly Meeting, visited us in 2025, she shared in worship that, in challenging times, joy and community are necessary for a resilient spiritual community—Portland Friends Meeting members experience both in our lives together.

Approved Portland Friends Meeting

Received by Falmouth Quarter 4/25/26

State of Society

Windham Friends Meeting April 2026.

Submitted by Rev. Cheryl Cuddy

We continue to meet as we gather in a small but robust meeting. As this year presented an ending and beginning, each was met with appreciation and celebration. While there is an ending and beginning, it feels more like a circle of strength and support for in the coming and going.

We celebrated the gift of generosity, loyalty and faithfulness in the 32+ years Janice Beattie served as Pastor. Julie Moore graciously opened her home as the WFM “family” gathered to honor Janice as she retired. In community, we shared laughter, memories and food made by the hands and hearts of the congregants. Pastor Beattie has been more than helpful throughout the transition and always at the ready with continued support for the current pastor.

We have had an opportunity to fill the meetinghouse with the gift of music during the Christmas Season as well as Palm Sunday. Talented and faith filled musical guests included a soloist with the voice of an angel, Bizzy Oudlin and two members of the New Hampshire Symphony Orchestra. The sounds from the violin and cello; both exquisite! The Christmas gift of music ended with a sing along of Christmas Carols and a lovely and full and lively fellowship hour in which the musicians joined us.

The Palm Sunday gift of music was more reflective in nature. It was indeed both exquisite and stirring in the most beautiful of ways. We ended our meeting again with a well attended fellowship hour filled with voices of joy, laughter and the delicious baked wonders from the WFM community. Both services saw a significant increase in attendance and many new faces. We continue to welcome new guests and repeated visits from new congregants on any given meeting day. They are warmly welcomed by the members of WFM! Our Easter service brought a beautiful and bountiful array of flower arrangements in memory of loved ones and friends. Each flanking a gorgeous , custom and large floral centerpiece donated by the Chin Family.

In social awareness, we continued to support community and world in areas of need. We gathered and filled several Operation Christmas Child boxes for the Samaritans Purse outreach program. Our WFM “family” were very generous in this area. Boxes were filled to the brim, packaged and ready to be shipped worldwide. Under the gentle direction of Penny Loura, the gift boxes left WFM in due time.

WFM continued in the spirit of community as it offered grocery gift cards during the holiday season as well as supporting the local food pantry and participating in community events. We had a successful day as we participated in a day long event with the Windham Historical Society. Our booth was a bustling attraction delighting in conversation, offering homemade canning delicacies such as jams, jellies, pickles, relishes, baked goods and the like. We also displayed beautifully handcrafted items such as knitted and crocheted items, beautiful quilts and a stunning handmade quilt to be raffled, donated by the very talented WFM member , Stephanie Chin.

As with any building, we continue with ongoing maintenance, including but not limited to lawn care, snow plowing, shoveling, and salting of the stairs and ramp. We secured the gutters and added screening to prevent build up of leaves and such. In great need, we replaced and/or repaired sink pipes and faucets in the kitchen . We replaced a cracked toilet seat in the men's room. The necessary repairs and expedited securing of contractors, overseen by a very dedicated WFM member, Julie Moore. We will be engaging in conversation regarding the replacement of two more windows. The work will be performed free of charge at the offering of Bill Cuddy, a congregant and well established commercial contractor. WFM will purchase the windows at Bill's contractor's cost. We look ahead at maintaining and ensuring upkeep of our historical and loved meeting house.

We continue to find meaning and direction in our time of silence and inviting our guests to learn about and absorb the sacred space and time.

God has been good and faithful in His guidance as we look ahead.

WFM would not continue to be a presence and a continued place to worship, if it were not for the dedication of those that so warmly and generously give of their hearts, time and talents.

And finally, this little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine! Our light ~together, at WFC becomes a beacon of hope, love and support.

In gratitude and faith~

Pastor Cheryl Cuddy WFM

Received by Falmouth Quarter 4/25/26

Northwest Quarter

Burlington Friends Meeting 2025 State of Society

In 2025, Burlington Friends Meeting held much—heartfelt grief, anxiety, and concern alongside deep joy, celebration, and gratitude. We mourned losses, witnessed change, and felt the weight of a world in turmoil, even so we gathered together in love; a safe space for peaceful people to gather, reflect and find support in the embrace of Meeting for Worship. Out of this fullness, we continued to seek the Inward Light together.

Burlington Friends Meeting deepened our relationship with the tensions and fruits of paradox. Highlights and joys were often brought forth by discomfort and loss; so much growth and strength was born through grief and conflict. The death of important elders in our community continued in 2025 to reveal what great care they provided, as well as the many needs that continue to demand attention from our hands, hearts, bank accounts, and vision. Friends found themselves stretched as we tended both the practical and spiritual life of the Meeting, and searched for a sustainable way forward.

Some programs and committees were gratefully revived from pre-COVID times and grew to meet the needs of our community. While others, like the Property Committee, were dissolved to focus our attention on the Bassett House remediation and restoration, bringing important decisions to the body as a whole. State of Society listening sessions clearly revealed particular and sustained appreciation for the First Day School, Peace and Justice Committee, Finance Committee, and the newly formed Library Committee, encouraging and supporting the growth, stewardship, and public facing work of the Meeting in 2025.

Countless individual and collaborative efforts also continue to strengthen our community. The newsletter was widely appreciated in 2025, weaving us closer by keeping us connected, informed, and exploring our faith in diverse ways, especially for those attending the Champlain Islands Worship Group (CIWG). The faithful facilitation of CIWG, as well as two weekday meetings at Wake Robin and Burlington Meeting House, have widened and deepened our community of worship. Our use of Zoom and the in-room OWL technology, while contentious at first, has allowed for regular attendance for those near and very far to remain connected to the BFM community regardless of circumstance. Between all offerings, 30–60 people regularly attend Meeting for Worship each week. Hospitality and fellowship after meeting grew in 2025, with many Friends staying after worship to share in a miraculous “loaves and fishes” abundance of whatever was present, often supplemented by food from our very own gardens.

Area colleges continue to bring students, college employees and other community members who are curious about Quaker faith and practice. We have eagerly welcomed all. We have directed

Burlington Friends Meeting 2025 State of Society

newcomers to Friends General Conference literature, various organizational newsletters (from the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL),

Friends United Meeting (FUM), and our own Newsletter, among others. However a common concern persists: the unprogrammed nature of our worship and the lack of a defined clergy can make it difficult for newcomers to understand who we are and what we believe. We recognize the challenge and embrace the ambiguity that those unfamiliar must learn through our actions, ministry during worship and conversations after Meeting. We've also encouraged newcomers to attend our Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Business, encouraging their own direct experience in real time. We will consider this challenge, finding more ways to give newcomers an authentic window into the life of our community. Additionally we offered an Adult Education program: Quakerism 101, which focused on Quaker history and process. The program was well received by those who attended, which included many outside of our Meeting.

Meeting for Worship for Business provided significant opportunities to deepen faith through outward practice. At times, Friends held differing perspectives, particularly regarding the care of our buildings and grounds. Our desire was to be faithful in our outward practice, allowing "iron to sharpen iron" and to allow Friends to step into their true leadings. Communal discernment practice rooted in Quaker testimonies helped to reveal the way forward, but was not appreciated by all. While in process, it was difficult to listen and to trust each other during these times of conflict. In our disagreements, however, love led the way and we continue to discern together however imperfect.

Honoring the physical space we occupy as guests on land taken from those who came before us and serve well generations beyond us is a major responsibility we hold at the forefront of our practices; this is mightily balanced by the deep nourishment provided back to us. The physical needs of our community, most recently manifesting in the lead removal and window replacement (to be complete in 2026), have been driven by and succeeded from a focus on our common desire to be good stewards of the land, resources, community, and spirit we tend together. Our Meeting elders remember that there have always been conflicts and extended discussions about the physical needs of our community. From the rug selected in earnest so many years ago and the chairs we continue to appreciate years after the fraught decision was made, we continue to trust the faithful efforts of all involved to support a place-based spiritual thriving that depends on a diversity of voices for Way to truly open. Countless members and attendees in 2025 cited the gardens and grounds as the larger vessel of our worship providing flowers, food (even intergenerational elderberry syrup!), the ministry of birdsong, beauty, metaphor, and peace to our community. May the land we worship with continue to be a living prayer in 2026

Burlington Friends Meeting 2025 State of Society

Through significant efforts from the Peace and Justice Committee (PJC) and others organizing to face the violent and racist realities of our nation, we have continued to take both broader and hyper-local action to respond with care and integrity. PJC established an Action Newsletter, a weekly sharing of what calls to action are available in our community and they built a relationship between

Burlington Friends Meeting and Vermont Interfaith Action. The committee also planned and organized collective peace and justice actions to bring to the Meeting for consideration and discernment.. Alongside this work, we continued to take hyper-local action to feed the hungry in Burlington. Small Potatoes continued preparing food for and feeding 30–50 people in need each week. Even First Day School children chose to donate the \$250 proceeds from their Craft Festival to Small Potatoes. This effort to feed the hungry each Saturday (when most resources are unavailable) continues to bring families together to serve a vital need in our community. 2025 also brought a new partnership with Ohavi Zedek to bake “Bread for Peace,” which has raised significant funds for peacekeeping and relief efforts for Palestinians and Israelis. These intergenerational, interfaith humanitarian efforts feel characteristic of the work we have undertaken in 2025.

Our spiritual health and depth demands similar attention and care, which we are also growing toward in a time of great transition within and outside of our community. Many feel the deepening of community and connections among individuals, and many also crave more depth and deep knowing of one another and our testimonies. Many members and attendees expressed their experience of Meeting for Worship as calm within the storm—a continual pursuit of peace, truth, and justice without a too-deep lapse into despair. The difficult times we face societally seemed to drive people to Meeting, where they reported finding what they were seeking, be it refuge, peace, communion with spirit, fuel for the light within, community, and/or opportunities for activism. The state of the world stoked a desire for both newcomers and returners to be together in common values and to explore the Quaker testimonies in community.

Finally, a theme of song and music emerged in 2025 for Burlington Friends Meeting. While we have lost some long-faithful members who often gave vocal ministry through song, in 2025 Meeting for Worship for Business often opened with song. We continue to gather on the fourth First Day of the month, 30 minutes prior to meeting, to sing together. The popular Solidarity Singers group began at the Meeting House in 2025 before recently moving to a new location to accommodate ever-growing participation. Finally, we also adopted a new song to sing to our children as they depart to the Bassett House for First Day School after the first 15 minutes of unprogrammed Meeting for Worship, the words to which seem fitting to wrap our arms around 2025 and say: “Go now in peace. Go now in peace. Let the spirit of love surround you. Everywhere, everywhere, you may go.”

Hanover Friends Meeting 2025 State of Society Report

With the backdrop of turbulent political times and headlines that grab our attention each day, we find sustenance, courage, thoughtful action, and spiritual grounding in the richness of Hanover Meeting.

Reflecting on the state of society in Hanover Friends Meeting this year, Friends mentioned the strong quality of worship and an increase in attendance at Meeting for Worship. They also noted good participation, a strong sense of community, and regular vocal ministry in the Kendal worship group. The Tuesday morning online meditation and discussion group, begun in 2022, continues to meet, enriching the spiritual life of our meeting and creating community among Meeting members and beyond.

Our current practices after the rise of Meeting contribute to our connection with one another: joys and sorrows, introductions, announcements, and then fellowship with snacks. Hearing joys and sorrows helps Pastoral Care members notice possible needs. Friends appreciate the loving caretaking...described as kind, generous and flexible...that is offered to members in need by both the committee and others in Meeting. In addition, we have a grief support group that meets monthly.

We appreciate the multifaceted work of Fellowship Committee in welcoming newcomers, providing snacks for fellowship after meeting, and collaborating with Ministry and Council Committee to hold quarterly multigenerational gatherings. These combine an intergenerational activity such as baking cookies with family-friendly worship including songs and storytelling, followed by a potluck dinner.

Children and teens attend the first 15 minutes of Meeting for Worship before leaving for First Day School, Pre-school and Young Friends groups. These groups provide meaningful and engaging experiences. Sometimes groups do special activities together, such as a short hike with a pause for worship or a trip to a local nature

center. The two older groups contribute to our annual Alternative Gift Mart, whether through researching the charities to receive the funds raised or by making handmade crafts to give as a token thank you for the donations received. We continue to explore how to create opportunities for young parents to gather for mutual support on Quaker parenting. A recent gathering with older parents was appreciated.

Friends expressed great appreciation for the faithful work of our Communications Committee to connect all our members. We offer a Meeting for Worship every Sunday via Zoom or in person, with technology that makes Zoom attenders visible and audible. This has allowed Friends to participate who live at a distance or cannot travel due to health, weather, or for other reasons.

Some Friends prefer a technology-free worship experience. One Sunday per month we offer a technology-free Early Worship before the 10 am Meeting for Worship. This meeting closes and has joys and sorrows followed by fellowship. Another Sunday per month we offer an Extended Worship, technology-free for the first hour and continuing into the 10 am Meeting for Worship, without a closing and with Zoom turned on at 10 am. People arriving for 10 am worship join the Extended Worship in session. We continue to review how these worship formats are working and to look for additional ways to provide alternative, creative, or technology-free worship experiences, such as outdoor worship at a person's house.

Our Clerk continues our recent practice of gathering a meeting of the committee clerks on the Thursday before a Meeting for Business to pull together the agenda and improve coordination and communication between committees. Our Meetings for Business have continued to be spirit-filled experiences that do far more for our community than just "getting things done." The Clerk receives spiritual support from an anchor committee and practical support from Assistant Clerks.

Ministry and Counsel facilitated and extended process this year for considering the draft chapter on Testimony from the NEYM Faith and Practice. It became a deeply enriching experience. We examined who we are as Quakers, our beliefs, the value of Quaker

process, and the importance of putting faith into action. Using videos from the QuakerSpeak project of *Friends Journal*, Ministry and Counsel held an introduction to Quakerism discussion group at Kendal. Well-attended, it prompted reflection on our beliefs while fostering deeper connections among those who attended.

A discussion group offered by the Adult Education Committee focusing on Amanda Ripley's book *High Conflict: Why We Get Trapped and How We Get Out* generated a number of insights on better ways to handle conflict in communities and in our society at large.

With the help of the Fellowship Committee and the Library Committee, we have been improving in how we welcome, orient, educate and integrate newcomers into the life of meeting. We have yet to live up to our potential in reaching out to the college community on our doorstep. We know that we need to do more to attract new members, particularly from younger age groups. The aging of our community is a challenge.

Our House Committee and our Caretaker have worked hard to keep our aging physical plant going and to reduce our impact on the environment. The Finance Committee has shown enduring excellent stewardship in helping us to pay for improvements and sometimes unexpected repairs. Our caretaker has provided leadership for the meeting in several areas beyond the usual caretaker role, including our climate action activities and efforts to prepare as a community for potential visits from governmental or police agencies.

The Climate Priorities Working Group has also provided leadership in activities related to caring for the environment such as landscaping with less lawn and more native plants and setting up an Abenaki-style "3 sisters" vegetable garden. The group has sought ways to involve children and youth in some of their activities,.

Friends expressed gratitude for the balance our meeting has achieved between activism and spiritual nourishment. Our Peace and Justice Committee and our Faith into Action working group have helped us to keep our activism grounded in deep spiritual experience. Many Friends have been very involved this year in

peaceful protests, making efforts not just to say what they don't like but also to make visible a constructive vision of our aspirations for a better future. They have also encouraged other protestors to approach those with whom they disagree in a spirit of love, rather than hate. Some have served as safety and peace marshals at protests. Some have sought to provide a space for silent witness at rallies, while others have been involved in organizing a "singing resistance." Several members collaborated to create a giant peace dove puppet that often appears at local protests. Other ways Friends have acted to put faith into action this year include lobbying through ASFC and FCNL, finding practical ways to support immigrants experiencing persecution, raising funds to support those in need of help in Gaza, and more.

We are holding our Cuban friends in the Light as they suffer real deprivation from the energy crisis and related economic crisis in Cuba. The activities of our Cuba Sister Meeting Committee have been deeply enriching, including an annual fundraiser "Noche Cubana" event with potluck, music, dancing, and a silent auction that invites members of the community to offer bids on things or experiences/activities together. It is amazing how this committee combines fundraising with fun and fosters community and connectedness among our members at the same time. During the summer, it hosted a visiting Cuban Quaker minister from our sister meeting in Havana. She contributed to a workshop on how the spirit is moving among us that was attended by 25 people. Our exchanges with our Cuban friends continue to nourish our spiritual growth.

Many find our meeting to be a vibrant community that helps them to live out their faith and to navigate the world. We feel like we are growing spiritually and finding new depths. In the face of challenging times, our community has found rich sharing of spirit, warm fellowship, support for one another, and many ways to spread our messages to the world.

Keene Monthly Meeting 2025 State of Society

Our little meeting has grown to occasionally be 12 of a Sunday, with two new members and two new attenders this year. We are feeling strong and healthy, and are caring and thoughtful of one another. Perhaps because of our small size our bonds with one another are strong, so we are blessed to have no discord or tension among our members. We work together well, listen well to each other, sometimes hearing well what isn't said, and have love and compassion for one another.

One person expressed it this way: "My experience here is that we let people be who they are. One of us is really into witness, and the YM, and the world, another is a hermit. . . This container holds things that could be tensions but aren't, because no one is forcing or asking anyone to be who they're not." Another, who travels an hour and a half to meeting, finds our meeting to be a sanctuary of love.

Though we are happy with our size as it is, we have found such richness here that we wonder whether we should reach out more, so more people could have the opportunity to join a wonderful community and thrive here.

We are also fairly isolationist as far as wider Quakerism is concerned, but two of our members are active in Yearly Meeting, and can therefore act as sources of information about it.

A number of people in our meeting do a lot of traveling, but report back to us that they are always grateful to be back among us. One member has moved far away, but comes back to visit at least once a year. One couple said that they are more connected to our group than to anyone else outside their family.

We do not have a meetinghouse, but the longtime Quakers among us consider that a blessing, since they have experienced that a meetinghouse can be a sink for money and energy, and frequently a source of tension in a meeting.

We experience our primarily silent worship as deep, that the occasional messages are excellent, and that we find our after-worship sharing can be just as deep. This time begins with sharing what happened for us during worship, expands into further discussion, and usually morphs into conversation with much laughter, which we find to be a real strength and sign of health. We usually stay at least an hour after worship, and occasionally as long as two hours.

In spite of all this strength and health, we are having trouble finding those among us willing to be clerk or any other official position of service in the meeting. Another

lack is that we have not been careful about keeping our minutes over the decades. There are those of us who wonder whether we act more as a worship group than as a meeting.

Plainfield Friends Meeting State of Society – 2025

Approved at Business Meeting on April 19, 2026

It has been a tumultuous year for Plainfield Friends Meeting. Some events and some programs have brought us together, but we have also been confronted with a major issue on which we are laboring to find unity.

Early in the year we lost our member LVM (La Verne Maria or Elviem) Shelton. Plainfield and Burlington held a well-attended memorial meeting for her in May. A memorial minute has been forwarded to the Quarterly and Yearly Meetings.

Monthly programs bringing us together have included discussions on faith such as “Who Is God Anyway”, “What Does It Mean to Hold Someone in the Light” and “Does Prayer Really Work?” interspersed with several rich presentations of individual faith journeys. We supported a Friend in her journey as president of a refugee group, and hosted our third Death Café, welcoming community members to join us for small group conversations around issues of death and dying while enjoying cake. Zoom participation allowed us to start a monthly Seekers and Finders group locally, and to support a distant Friend in his hospital chaplaincy. An annual picnic and a December carol sing, along with our monthly potlucks further built community among our group of seekers.

More difficult work together began last spring with worry about the Meetinghouse driveway which has been impacted by flood damage. Will we buy property and move the driveway back from an eroding bank? Will we wait to see whether the driveway bank will hold, or will we receive flood control help through a federal grant? Will we sell the property and move to a different rented or purchased location? Should we be a Zoom-only Meeting? All these options are being considered and worked on at length, along with the help of the New England Yearly Meeting Accompaniment Group.

We are a small Meeting, and there are lots of ideas about what would be best for the future of the Meeting. At times this search has been a painful and tiring struggle, with as yet no resolution. Extra meetings in the form of worship sharing, a threshing session, and business have been held. One of our partners from NEYM, however, has remarked at the consistent presence of about 17 of us at all these myriad meetings. “It does not look as if you are a dying meeting,” he shared. “People care deeply about this community.”

These Meeting concerns are an area of continuing exploration for us. Over the winter, we experimented with closing down the Meetinghouse because of concerns about the safety of the driveway in the winter. As of this writing, we are still working to find what direction the Meeting should take and there is as yet no clear path.

Members of Plainfield Meeting continue to be involved in wider Quaker circles. We hosted Northwest Quarterly Meeting together with the Northeast Kingdom Meeting. Plainfield Friends sit on the interim committee of the Quarter. Some Friends attend New England Yearly Meeting Sessions and/or Friends General Conference, The Gathering. One of our members finished up

his term as clerk for the New England Yearly Meeting Ministry and Counsel. Another regularly attends the NEYM Clerks' Monthly Meetings. Some of us join other Quaker groups including the Plainfield, NJ Meeting and Northern Friends in St. Johnsbury, VT. We have a representative to Friends Committee on National Legislation and discuss priorities. We are enriched by these connections.

It has been a year of lightness and darkness, as one Friend commented. We remain a "small but mighty" group as another said. And we remain committed to discerning together what direction Plainfield Meeting will pursue.

State of Society
Putney Friends Meeting
Spring 2026

Putney Friends Meeting began its celebration of its fiftieth anniversary as a meeting five years ago, just at the beginning of the pandemic. Before we knew what was coming, our clerk proposed that we consider the year that followed to be a year of Welcome. We contemplated what welcome to the meeting might look and feel like from every committee's point of view, well beyond the greeter at the door, and the general welcome to meeting for worship.

Within two months we were closing the meeting house all together by order of the governor. What is "welcome" in the face of pandemic? And now five years later where are we in that commitment, to become a genuinely and profoundly welcoming meeting for worship.

In those early days, we learned to be computer literate, and gathered together on Zoom. When we were allowed, we met outside in the courtyard with chairs that we pulled out of the closet and set up in circles for those who felt safe enough to gather in this way. Most of the traditional activity of the meeting was halted. No gatherings in the hallway, no potlucks, or committee meetings. But there was a deep commitment to meeting for worship online. People joined us from afar. Some felt the connections and felt seen and heard in a way they had not experienced previously.

Within a year, we began to gather in the meeting house again. We struggled with hybrid meeting, and invested in technologies to make this more inclusive of those in the meeting house and those online. We slowly took up old roles and routines. There was a deep desire to keep the doors open to all the ways we gather. The singular commitment to the purpose of meeting for worship was distilled in the refiner's fire of the pandemic.

As we started to emerge, new roles such as weekly greeters, tech people, and most prominently a hospitality committee were organized. We were yearning for connection. Each of these arose out of individual leading that invited others into service together. Younger people began to come.

Nominating Committee has undertaken the role of connecting with every member and attender every year, not just to fill committee slots but more importantly to ascertain how the meeting fits into our lives. Our Social Concerns committee was laid down and has evolved into a monthly gathering called Bearing Witness in Community. We share individual and corporate leadings. The gathering acts as a seed bed and support for minutes of witness, for actions and community education on many peace and justice concerns. We do not attempt to force a decision to act as a body, but allow this to emerge amongst us, before moving to Business Meeting.

There are other examples, but holding the question of welcome before us has engendered an undergirding to all our lives. **How do we welcome the spirit into all aspects of our lives?**

We have a number of concerns for the future, among them support for the parents and young children who are beginning to arrive.

Are our finances transparent to everyone? Are we giving away enough money? Is there energy for more engagement with Quarterly Meeting? We are aware that there are gifts and encouragement we could gain in Quarterly.

We hold the knowledge that ministry is not just vocal ministry, but includes eldering, holding ministry, worship, prayer. How do we invite one another into the collective awareness of intentionally knowing how we do these things.

WELCOME:

We are intent on being welcoming and part of that is helping newcomers become aware of the gifts and ministry of Friends through time, the founders of our meeting, as well as the history of Friends since the inception. How are we doing this? How do we continue to renew this welcome?

JBF April 25, 2026



Sara Hubner <office@neym.org>

[State of Society] State of Society report from South Starksboro

1 message

Patty Heather-Lea <pattyheatherlea@gmail.com>
To: sos@neym.org

Sat, May 9, 2026 at 8:33 AM

State of Society Report
South Starksboro Monthly Meeting
Society of Friends
April 2026

What is our condition as a faith community within the Society of Friends?

As South Starksboro moves towards the 200th anniversary of its building in 2028, we are grateful that there are Friends still worshipping in the meetinghouse. Our intention as a faith community is to hold all in the light.

How is the Spirit moving among us?

There has been more vocal ministry this year. Occasionally the ministry is an outgrowth of the reading of a monthly query or the preamble to the queries. Friends are more often also speaking from their hearts after the rise of Meeting.

As part of the regular rotation of Northwest Quarter, a number of Friends from South Starksboro participated in the March Quarterly Meeting, which was hosted by our meeting along with Middlebury Meeting. We shared our tradition of singing before settling into silence and singing briefly after the rise of Meeting. Middlebury Meeting shared their tradition of a healing circle before settling into silence. South Starksboro Friends remarked that by attending Quarterly Meeting they had learned a lot by attending a larger gathering of Friends.

South Starksboro also brought a Minute Regarding the War in Ukraine, which we had approved, to the Business Meeting at Quarter. Northwest Quarter gave us permission to share the minute beyond just the community of Friends.

How have we sought to hold up and care for our Meeting community?

Friends are asking each other for companionship and light during times of loss, or hard times; that companionship and assistance is freely offered.

Friends formed a clearness committee upon the request of a couple. One Friend met regularly with one member of the couple and their child, sewing a quilt with them and building community beyond just Meeting for Worship.

The Meeting had a discussion about whether it was time to lay the Meeting down, as several older Friends facing health challenges, asked to step down from long held positions. The discussion led to others stepping forward to take on the responsibility of Clerking Meeting and recording minutes. Three Friends stepped forward to guide the Meeting as co-clerks.

The Meeting read the "World According to Mister Rogers" and held a discussion of the book and how the themes and ideas presented related to Friends principles.

At the request of Friends, we held a series of three discussions, led by Carl Magruder, on death and dying. We greatly appreciated Carl's ministry and guidance. He was surprised by how much we had already thought about the topic.

The Meeting was given \$2000, by a New England Friend, to disperse within our local community as a way of building peace and community. During the discussion we decided that there were three organizations which would benefit from a donation of \$1000 each, so we raised another \$1000 so that we could donate \$1000 to each of the organizations.

Where we have found substance and nurture:

We lost two Friends this year. One was the father and grandfather of a Friend who died at 100, the other a longtime attender who lost his battle with cancer. Two Friends were asked to sing to the attender the day before he died. The two who were death doulas to his passing found it to be a rewarding experience.

The wife, who was not a Friend, asked the Meeting to help her hold a Celebration of his Life in the manner of Friends, after his passing. It was a meaningful experience for both Friends and attenders, with even one of the man's grandchildren feeling moved to speak.

The celebration of life for the 100 year-old Friend, was a joyous affair remembering his life and the gift of the spirit he had given to others.

Care from our community:

Friends are grateful to those who have donated time to help us maintain our building and grounds—to the Friend who has been re-glazing the windows in the Meetinghouse, to those in the community who have assisted us with shoveling the snow on the walks and plowing the driveway, to those who have spread gravel on the drive, maintained the ditch, and cut some of the dead trees and branches. This spring, the entry way to the parking lot is no longer a mud hole threatening to swallow cars.

Growing Edges:

The youth of the Meeting are a great joy, and we appreciate nurturing them. We also have warmly welcomed some newcomers this year.

As we reflect on the year past we look forward with hope that the Meeting brings to each of us despite the travails of the world.

Salem Quarter

2025 State of Society Report for Amesbury Monthly Meeting
prepared by the Ministry & Counsel Committee

Our Monthly Meeting continues to grace Amesbury, Massachusetts with its gentle presence. With a combination of members and attenders, we average 15 worshippers every First Day. We welcome new attenders and our little group has grown through 2025. Participation in Council of Churches activities such as the annual Palm Sunday walk, local vigils, and other outreach has widened our visibility into the local faith community.

We offer Zoom access on First Days, which has increased attendance and given distant, infirm and elderly folks access to our group worship, to Meetings for Business and various other committee meetings. This opens our committees to greater participation. And it is our active committees that prove our commitment to reaching out and assisting where we can. Spirit comes with us and moves in us.

Our Building Committee has been busy stewarding our 175-year-old meetinghouse and we hope to maintain this gem in good order for the coming years. Last year we were able to get a new sign for the building and paint the exterior. Our wildflower garden and daffodil hill grace the grounds. The committee is now setting up a plan to conserve the building and its workings.

We are facing some significant challenges that we didn't know when we made our 2026 budget. For example, the space we rent downstairs to Montessori has not replaced its floor in over 30 years and it is showing its age. We have agreed with Montessori to fix the floor this year. A lot of the renovation work done when the meeting was revived is reaching the end of its lifespan and we can expect more breakdowns with time. Many hours of work have been donated, but this is getting harder for us as our community ages. Fortunately, careful financial stewardship has resulted in our having a good cushion for renovations, which we keep in the NEYM Pooled Funds.

Our Peace & Social Concerns Committee has done a lot this year—helping our city and the community at large—by standing up for our democracy and gun control in Amesbury Market Square and helping those in need. We support organizations such as Our Neighbors Table, Pettengill House, Ramallah Friends School, the Greater Boston Food Bank, the Greater Lawrence Health Center and many other worthy causes through our Living Our Vision resources. We also provided dinner for elderly residents in a local housing complex in Amesbury. A musical Friend invited fellow musicians to provide a sing-along program that makes us a favorite with the residents.

Ministry and Counsel support and nurture Friends and attenders. We held our annual retreat “Living in the Light in Dark Times” which was well attended and helped members become closer as we shared more of ourselves and our hopes and dreams. M&C holds monthly First Sunday sessions. We reviewed the new Advices and Testamonies from NEYM Faith & Practice and listened with awe and gratitude to three Spiritual Journeys. We continue to contribute essays four times a year to the “In the Spirit” column of the NewburyportDailyNews which puts our Meeting and Quakerism in general in front of a broad audience. We are also updating our website and have recently revised our welcome brochure. We held a show and tell where Friends brought in items that speak to their spiritual histories. And we had our usual Lessons and Carols celebration followed by a potluck luncheon that is a favorite time for Friends and their families.

For a small Meeting, we are a known and respected presence in Amesbury. We hold in our hearts the many who have worshiped in this meetinghouse, and together we create a warm and welcoming community. Spirit comes in through the light that shines in our windows and sets our hearts alight.

State of Society
Beacon Hill Friends Meeting
June 2026

"Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit." (John15:2)

This year our meeting experienced both pruning and new growth. It has been a year of losses, joys, renewal, and challenges.

We grieve over the deaths of two members, Anne Chamberlain and Elaine Mar, but we rejoice at the births of two babies, Henry and Holly. We joyfully welcomed five new members since last June, but we were saddened by the transfers of other members due to relocation. The number of new attenders and visitors feels greater than in past years. People seem to be searching for sanctuary of community and healing during this time of division, grief, and cruelty. We cherish all who have been with us as we seek to make our worship strong and fruitful.

Our Nominating Committee works hard to find people to serve on committees, but we continue to struggle to fill the slots. The low committee participation has been ongoing for several years, and we wonder whether there is a different way that we could envision committee work. However, people happily step forward to serve on clearness committees when asked by Clearness and Membership, when Pastoral Care asks for assistance on behalf of an individual, or for other short-term needs.

We are substantially behind on contributions this year. Declining contributions coupled with increased expenses have caused a noticeable depletion in our General Fund. We are not in a crisis, but the trend is concerning, and our Finance Committee continues to monitor it. We struggle with what this means for the life of the meeting, both financially and spiritually, and we don't always agree. What is the Spirit calling us to do? What new growth is the Spirit leading us to discover?

Last spring and into the fall, Ministry and Counsel developed and approved an ICE protocol in the event that ICE personnel arrived at the door. It was a lengthy process and included collaboration with Beacon Hill Friends House. We educated ourselves and gathered input from others outside of our meeting. We felt energized by this process. After approval of the protocol, we held a training (dry run) for about 25 people. We know that we will need to continue to evaluate the document, and we ponder the possibility of what will happen if ICE arrives.

We have a Faith and Justice committee after many years without one. There are core members, but anyone can participate. Meetings often begin with worship sharing; it allows space for Friends to express their fears, joys, and sorrows for us and for the world. So far, the committee has focused on issues related to the environment, immigration, and LGBTQIA+ issues. The committee has planned and organized participation in community events: the No Kings rally, Gay Pride march, and environmental justice events. We have a new banner that lets others know that Quakers from BHFM are present. In November, Faith and Justice initiated a monthly meeting for worship at the Burlington ICE office on the third Tuesday of the month. About a dozen worshipers from six monthly meetings participate.

Our Young People's Ministry and Education (YOPME) committee has made the commitment to increase first day school from bi-weekly to every Sunday. This has made it easier for families to be confident that when they join us in worship on a Sunday, even their most precocious learner will be tended to with our best effort. It has been a challenge at times to find teachers and support people. Friends feel stretched but also nourished by the time spent with the children, and the children look forward to First Day School. Our childcare provider, Aicha Bendagha, has been with us for many years, and her presence is a joy for both children and adults. Even young adults come back to see her because she has been such a strong presence in their lives.

The reinvigorated library working group has been hard at work. They are better organizing our library, cataloging books, and making decisions about the purchase of new texts that they feel would be of interest to the meeting.

Based on the commitments made by BHFM (2021) and NEYM (2022), when we endorsed our “Apology to Native Americans” and through our understanding of the profound effect that NEYM’s support of the U.S. Government’s Indian policies—including the boarding schools—has had on Native Tribes, three Friends from our meeting, Gordon Bugbee, Mary Zwirner, and Suzanna Schell, were led to travel once again to Oklahoma. They met with members of five Indian Nations. Their reception was warm and generous and provided hopeful ground for renewed relationships based in candor and respect. We have been moved by the accounts of their travels and the depth of their leadings.

FRIENDS MEETING at CAMBRIDGE

STATE OF SOCIETY REPORT

In April 2026, Friends Meeting at Cambridge held a Forum to elicit reflections from community members for the state of society annual report. Participants were asked to respond to several queries including “What do you value most about our FMC community?” and “What are some of the challenges that the community has faced over the past year?” In addition, to the forum a variety of smaller conversations (in committee meetings and informal gatherings) provided additional opportunities to gather thoughts. The following highlights are a summary of the perspectives gathered during those conversations.

What Is Most Valued by the Community?

- Meeting for Worship was noted consistently as the center of our community. Several people spoke to the importance of Meeting for Worship as they personally seek a deeper relationship with God (Spirit, the Divine) and the community. It was noted that in the silence, some find nurturance as the preparation for the upcoming week. Others noted that it is important to them that there be a balance between vocal ministry and a stillness that allows them to feel a connection to Spirit and others gathered in worship.
- Witness and a range of advocacy efforts for social justice concerns were also highlighted as something community members value greatly. Corporate efforts focus on the International Day of Peace, Good Friday Witness, FCNL legislative priorities. For the past fifteen years, FMC has held a Meeting for Worship on the third Sunday of each month outside of Raytheon, one of the largest producers of weapons of war. In addition, there are witness and advocacy efforts supported by a significant number of individuals in the community and active processes for communication of key events and opportunities for participation. Some examples of these efforts include the Silent Witness outside of the ICE Detention Center every Tuesday morning, the Visibility Brigade stand outs, accompanying refugees / immigrants to court hearings, participation in No Kings Day events, participation in the Mother’s Day Walk for Peace, participation in Pride events, as well as engagement with prisoners and supporting those returning to the community after incarceration. It was noted that supporting the Material Assistance and Advocacy Program serving unhoused individuals is an important reflection of our commitment to issues of social justice. In addition, there is an active group that meets to advocate for humanitarian needs in Gaza. These, and other similar activities, are a concrete demonstration of “letting our lives speak.”

- Another value raised up was the community itself and the importance for many of a sense of belonging, shared values, and the opportunity for nurture and fellowship. Among the activities that were noted as important to building that sense of community were the Simple Lunch held after Meeting for Worship on many Sundays, the wide variety of small groups for spiritual nurture and companionship, participation on various committees, and Meeting-wide retreats. It was also noted that an active Young Adult Friends group have come together to coordinate a monthly potluck and a variety of social opportunities. While our First Day School program has dwindled a bit in terms of number of children attending regularly, it still provides an important focus for families in the community. This past year a group of parents have been gathering monthly for a Pizza Night which provided an important opportunity for sharing and reflection on raising children in a Quaker household.

Primary Issue That Continues to be Addressed

The primary issue that has continued to need the attention of the FMC community is the use of technology in Meeting for Worship. Addressing the needs of those who find it a challenge to worship with technology present and maintaining our commitment to ensuring that Meeting for Worship is accessible is a difficult balance. Over the past year we have explored alternative structures for using technology for one Sunday per month. Although hybrid worship is available every Sunday, on fourth Sundays both the hybrid worship and a low tech, in-person-only worship are available at two different times— both are held in the meeting house. We continue to explore how to best use technology to enhance worship for those on-site and remote, while understanding the value of access to non-hybrid worship. We continue to try and find a balance. FMC is hopeful that way will open to an alternative structure that addresses as many of the needs as possible while maintaining our grounding in Spirit and supporting the various needs of members of the community.

State of Society Report for Framingham Friends Meeting
March 15, 2026

Despite reports of the declining numbers in various denominations in New England, Framingham Friends Meeting is growing and thriving. We have welcomed a sizeable number of enthusiastic and gifted newcomers to our Meeting, we have a robust First Day School, and while there are areas for improvement, our worship and vocal ministry are deep and serve as inspiration and foundation for those in our community.

At a worship sharing gathering to discern the state of our monthly meeting, Friends commented that, while at times we let the outside world derail the depth of our gatherings, more often we are moved and enriched by the vocal ministry that is shared by long time attenders and newcomers in what has become a safe space to speak from Spirit. We are a community that is comfortable with silence in our worship, allowing time to truly listen to Spirit's guidance, which was not always the case in years past. Our practice of offering Joys and Concerns before the close of worship is a useful means of building capacity for more folks to speak without fear. One person spoke of the "multiple instances of beautiful synchronicity" when several speakers share a part of the total message Spirit has for the Meeting.

Our spiritual lives are nurtured by a loving community. Our newer attenders tell us that Framingham Friends are providing the tools, space, and time to embark on a spirit-centered life. Whether through organized activities like Quaker Questions and First Firsts or through individual encounters, we are growing together in Spirit. As our members take actions toward love and justice in the world, the importance of these actions being rooted in Spirit is evident among us.

We are living in dark and chaotic times. We know that we, as Friends, are called to bear witness in a real and thoughtful way to the power of love in the world. We find hope in worship and the active witness in our meeting. Our spiritual understanding is strengthened by the testimony of Friends and their actions in the world.

We continue to meet in weekly hybrid worship and recognize the value this brings to our community. For some of us, it is the only way possible to join in worship. For some of us, the relative intimacy and calm of joining on Zoom strengthens the connection to worship. All of us together can deepen the experience for everyone. Technological glitches are annoying and the Meeting needs to consider how best to respond to them, particularly when those in the Meetingroom and those on Zoom can't hear each other. In one instance, the meeting was fortunate enough to have a person fluent in American Sign Language on Zoom and another in the Meetingroom to facilitate communication. But that is not a

sustainable solution. We were reminded that technology is a mixed blessing and is both helpful and frustrating as we continue to grow in its use.

Framingham Friends have been blessed with an influx of newcomers and there is a shared sense of delight, with newer attenders feeling welcomed and supported and long-time attenders celebrating the new energy and enrichment the newer folks bring to our community. Our committee of Greeters were named as one of the best, most welcoming aspects of coming to Framingham Friends Meeting. We could do a better job of explaining our acronyms, Quaker oddities, and how we do business to lessen fears of breaking “unknown rules”. We have made several efforts to welcome newer folks, including our Quaker Questions gatherings, the fall Open House, signs describing what happens in silent worship, and Friends stepping up to recommend resources and readings to newer attenders. The vocal ministry of new attenders has been a blessing to this community, and we were reminded that thanking someone who overcame their fear to rise and share a message is a good way to reassure them that their gift is welcome among us.

The First Day School committee is doing an excellent job with the Meeting’s children. We are continuing to build stronger relationships between the adults in the Meeting and the children in the First Day School. The children are an integral part of the spiritual life and community of the Meeting and it is the responsibility of all of us to know and nurture them in their spiritual development. More intergenerational activities that provide opportunities for children and adults to learn what it is like to connect with Spirit would benefit all of us.

In the coming year, we want to replicate the successful welcoming of newcomers by reaching out to those who have stopped attending the Meeting to see if they might be invited back to join us. More events, such as shared dinners and space and time to build community together, are important opportunities. We need each other in this divisive, troubled time to hold our spiritual center and grounding so we can resist the pull of the world into divisive ways, operating always from the Spirit that is love.

Fresh Pond State of Society Report

4.5.26

Despite the dire state of the world, Fresh Pond Meeting continued to nurture ourselves and grow as individuals and as a community.

What is our condition as a faith community within the Society of Friends? Fresh Pond remains a small to medium sized meeting in Cambridge, MA, now with many people of retirement age who have been members of the meeting for decades. The meeting honors seasoned friendships and connections that have grown over the years, while engaging in deepening connections with our broader faith community, and with newer attenders and visitors.

We added 2 new members this year, and lost two to death. We have a number of attenders who come regularly. We also have had about a dozen different visitors from the community, most of them young-adult seekers. We have readied ourselves, and occasionally welcomed, several elementary-aged young people, and toddler visitors with parents.

The meeting held two memorial meetings for worship this past year, welcoming the chance to remember lives of ones dear to us spent in faithful service. We loved the chance to worship and also enjoy each others' presence, as well as that of friends and families of those who died.

Fresh Pond has an outsized presence in and engagement with New England Yearly Meeting, counting a recent presiding clerk, a current presiding clerk, and a high percentage of Yearly Meeting attenders and participants on various Yearly Meeting committees. We continued to participate in active dialog with New England Yearly Meeting leadership about decisions and actions taken in the last three years which harmed the Three Rivers Meeting community. As a community we faithfully accompanied Three Rivers during its years-long preparation for becoming a meeting. Rather than joyfully celebrating the birth of this thriving new Quaker meeting, we find ourselves filled with unresolved hurt and anger due to the damage done to those involved. Trust has been broken. We yearn for the healing that needs to take place. We plan to continue working towards it.

Fresh Pond's monetary contributions to the Yearly Meeting, on a per capita basis, remain high.

We as a meeting embrace a goal of thoughtful welcome. We feel that we are better welcomers to newcomers than we were before the pandemic. An action that contributed to our relative openness was the formal laying down of all committees but Pastoral Care during the pandemic. We now strive to meet our meeting's needs by ad hoc groups. This creates more opportunities to invite newer attenders to join others in working groups, and helps us all get to know each other better. For instance, we have a group considering our

response to the NEYM minute on Israel-Palestine. An ad-hoc nominating committee searched and found our most recent meeting co-clerk.

How is the Spirit moving among us?

As a community, Fresh Pond continues to lean into experimentation and curiosity in listening to the still, small voice. Meeting for Worship, 10 AM each First Day, remains central to our identity and cohesion. Some meetings are marked by periodic spoken messages, others by nourishing quiet. We have a sense of deep comfort together, and in that an awareness of God's presence.

We are also continuing a long Fresh Pond tradition of Care and Accountability Committees. Such committees of 3-4 people meet regularly to support members following individual leadings in the world. These include ministries of racial justice, of spiritual ministry, and of teaching to Quakers and Quaker organizations. The committees report regularly to and are seasoned by attention at our monthly meetings for business. These accompanied ministries, though carried out by an individual, emanate from and are the responsibility of our spiritual community as a whole.

Where have we found sustenance, and how have we cared for our meeting community?

In the face of challenges in our country, Fresh Pond has found sustenance in connection. For many years, we've had a 10-15 minute sharing of joys, sorrows, and concerns at the end of meeting, bracketed for us by whomever has care of meeting. That time is never quiet. It keeps us all aware of important events in the lives of those present.

A subgroup which began gathering monthly thirty years ago as Women's Group now meets as Sharing from the Gender Margins. Both groups have been open to all so identifying, and it has been a fruitful place for many to find fellowship and validation of their experiences.

Our second Sunday meetings are followed by a potluck community lunch, sustained by wonderful cooks among our numbers, open to all. These meals, while not lacking in healthy offerings, include delicious desserts especially prized by young and old alike. We enjoy mixing and catching up.

We also gathered in October to share and hold one another as we all grapple with the political and social injustices of our time and nation. This was a sort of meeting for sufferings, an attempt to support each others' actions taken for a variety of causes.

What are our growing edges as a spiritual community?

Our growing edges relate to navigating the balance between nurturing what is strong and established and thoughtfully welcoming new people, and new and renewed opportunities and ideas.

We labored this year to navigate this balance with respect to our engagement with the technologies that make hybrid worship and conversation possible. About 30% of those attending our meeting for worship do so on the screen. We experience issues engendered by conducting hybrid meeting, both with respect to the use of the DTEN technology we use, and by human challenges. For example there are those who are turned off by the screen, those on the screen who struggle to hear those in the room, and those in the room who struggle to speak in loud-enough, declarative voices. These issues are regularly with us, and we are committed to finding a path through them. We have no intention of abandoning the hybrid meeting. We have discussed ideas like having mid-week, at-home “all-invited” meetings, 100% virtual meetings, including people online in small groups at Cambridge Friends School and more, and we have tried out a few of these ideas. As we explore these options we are moving from being a community with hybrid events to being a true hybrid community, with virtual and in-person aspects throughout our activities.

The Treasurer, recognizing growth both in the meeting’s needs and in the meeting’s wish to support a variety of justice movements, has this year researched and educated the meeting on improving stewardship of our reserve. The meeting has plans to discern together what our most faithful ways of spending or stewarding our surplus might be.

Fresh Pond was historically a meeting with many children, and we have missed their presence in post-pandemic years. This year we have rounded a corner in our hope to be a meeting with young people. We began by preparing ourselves, even in the absence of regularly attending families, to welcome children, by having volunteers to spend meeting with visiting children, and having activities for different ages ready and on hand. We have since had the blessing of being joined more frequently by children and being able to put these preparations to good use. By the end of 2025 we were contemplating recruiting a paid child care worker. We also designated potluck Sundays as days when we would more actively invite our members’ and attenders’ children to attend, with activities, food, and a small spiritual lesson all included.

In 2025 we considered reviving our committee on Ministry and Worship. At Fresh Pond, this committee was laid down during the pandemic, but has traditionally been a committee of the whole. We have felt a strong caution not to try to duplicate what we had before, and a strong need to identify a new form, as well as new concerns for the group. How are we led to encounter the Divine more deeply? How do we to encourage ministry and spiritual growth both within our numbers and in worldly efforts? How can we support our children’s spiritual growth, and meaningfully support those who are led to work with them? How can we best support and carry out struggles for justice in our various communities? How can we joyfully continue to nurture both longstanding and newer members of our community into paths of faith? How can we best support the needs created by the aging of many of our members? How can we dislodge our attachments to material wealth and other worldly endeavors in the service of clear calls to faithful action?

North Shore Friends Monthly Meeting

Religious Society of Friends

State of the Society

For the Year 2025 and the first quarter of 2026

"Silence can be so loud as to give me guidance on the way forward."

We offer this report as a prayerful account of our common life, mostly in 2025 and the first quarter of 2026. It has been a year shaped by an unsettled world and a deepening gathered spirit. As a community we have been drawn more consistently toward the silence at the heart of our worship, toward one another in care and fellowship, and toward honest reflection on where we are strong and where we are called to grow. What follows draws on the voices of members and attenders who gathered to reflect on our condition as a Meeting on March 15, 2026.

The Quality of Worship and Vocal Ministry

The quality of our worship is improving. Friends note that vocal ministry carries less political content than in recent years — messages that once might have entered worship have found their more appropriate place among announcements. We are experiencing more fully silent meetings for worship, and the quality of that silence has been notably deep and peaceful. Several Friends sense that this deepening stillness may itself be a response to the turbulence of the outer world: as chaos has increased beyond our walls, something in our gathered community has been drawn more insistently inward.

One Friend observed that words can function as a shield or a mesh between ourselves and deeper movement of the Spirit, and that it is valuable to begin with listening. The experience of being drawn in, as Friends have noted, comes specifically from sitting together in community — it is qualitatively different from the quiet available at home alone. Our Meeting aspires to the value of simplicity and minimizes unnecessary discourse, and these qualities are felt and valued.

A simple but meaningful change in our physical arrangement — forming our chairs into a circle — has contributed to a sense of pleasant unity in worship. We have also been intentional about holding the worshipping space: greeters at the outer door, coats and boots removed before entering, and those who arrive early holding the gathered quiet

for later arrivals. One member expressed some unease with silent worship; we hold his perspective alongside the many voices who find in it a source of genuine depth. There is something tangible and real in our worship together.

One member expressed a wish that the word God might be more freely spoken in our vocal ministry. He offered this not as a criticism but as a longing — a sense that naming the divine directly might enrich our worship. This reflection, offered alongside a comparison with his recent experience at a Catholic retreat, invites us to consider how we speak of the sacred among us.

The Strength of the Meeting Community

We remain a strong community. When members and attenders face hardship, we show up — with workdays, meals, prayers, and visits. This faithfulness in mutual care has not diminished, and it is a true expression of our common life. One new attender described feeling not merely welcomed but cherished, and spoke of experiencing a remarkable depth of spirit and of living faith in our midst. We receive this witness with gratitude.

The hospitality hour following Meeting for Worship continues to be a vital point of welcome and connection. Sociability is essential to authentic community, and food — as one Friend put it plainly — is also ministry. We have worked to enhance the conditions of welcome: updated email contacts, greeters at the door, and a worshipping space carefully tended before others arrive.

This same new attender also spoke honestly of perceiving wounds in the Meeting — personality differences that need to be held and healed lest they threaten the fabric of community. Where tensions arise around participation in vocal ministry or other aspects of meeting life, we seek to find Quakerly ways to address them. Individual outreach to those who cannot attend regularly, and deeper dialogue with one another, are among the paths we are exploring. How we hold and respond to these tensions will itself be part of our growth.

Efforts to Foster Spiritual Growth and Evidence of Growth

Our potluck evening gatherings have become a meaningful site of spiritual deepening. Several of these brought Friends together to share stories of their spiritual journeys and experiences of Meeting — conversations that moved beyond the social into genuine reflection. The level of intentionality in these exchanges indicates a maturity developing among us. We also held potlucks focused on significant Quaker topics, including Right Sharing of Resources, and Quaker involvement in Indigenous Boarding Schools.

In response to the NEYM Faith and Practice Revision Committee's draft chapter on Quaker Testimony — which we reviewed and then commented on in a rich worship sharing session — our Meeting chose as the topic of our subsequent monthly potluck gathering to write and share our own testimonies. It turned out to be a wonderful evening in which we got to know each other more deeply.

Several members have valued the opportunity to participate in NEYM online programs, including Brian Drayton's midweek meditations and the monthly Meeting Leaders' Calls. Our Clerk has made consistent efforts to share these opportunities with the Meeting. We note, however, that attendance at these programs remains limited, and the resources circulated after the monthly calls do not appear to be widely read. This is an area where we might find ways to invite more engagement.

One member expressed her joy in attending Meeting for Worship each week and the spiritual sustenance she finds in our community worship. Her faithful presence is itself a gift to the gathered meeting.

Possible Tensions in the Meeting and How Friends Are Responding

We continue to feel the effects of the dissolution of our Peace and Social Concerns Committee several years ago. The fallout from that period has been difficult to move beyond, and we have not yet found Friends willing to reconstitute the committee. In the meantime, our Ministry and Counsel Committee has carried the additional weight of P&SC responsibilities — including Minutes to government officials on Gaza, unfettered speech at US universities, and ICE enforcement activities. We are deeply grateful for the Ministry and Counsel Committee's faithfulness in holding this expanded role, while recognizing it is not a sustainable long-term arrangement.

One attender is currently gathering feedback on Friends' views on peace and social testimony, with the hope of building toward reconstituting the P&SC committee. We hold this effort with hope and encourage broad participation. Individual members continue to be active in peace and social concerns work on their own initiative — participating in standouts, communicating with elected officials, and engaging with local organizations.

We have also labored with the challenges that arise when individuals' singular personal needs place strain on the community as it shifts the focus on communal, God-centered devotion to more individualistic experiences centered on those needs. This work — of inclusion, of right relationship, of holding difficult dynamics in the Light — has been ongoing and at times costly. We name it honestly as part of our condition.

Significant Events and Activities in the Meeting's Year

Our work on creating an oral and documentary history of the Meeting has been a joyful project for long-time members of our meeting, bringing back memories about good old times and about members who are no longer with us. We have also reviewed our boxes of historical paper files, to begin organizing an electronic repository through the NSFM Google Folder, and made contact with the NEYM Consulting Outreach archivist. We are aware of the importance of this work.

Last summer, a work party at the home of one of our older members accomplished a great deal that would have been daunting for any one person. It was, as one Friend

noted, a wonderful example of the strength in numbers — and of our willingness to show up for one another in practical as well as spiritual ways.

The Meeting has navigated a transition in its financial stewardship, with a longtime Treasurer passing the records to a new Treasurer. We are grateful to the departing Treasurer for years of faithful service.

Social Justice Concerns and Stands Taken

Though we lack a functioning Peace and Social Concerns Committee, our Meeting has not been silent in the face of the concerns of our time. The Ministry and Counsel Committee has transmitted Minutes to government officials on Gaza, free speech at universities, and ICE enforcement. Individual members have participated in standout demonstrations, often organized by town Democratic parties and larger resistance movements, in towns and at ICE facilities in our area.

We have twice received grants from a Fellow Quaker from Cape Cod, Rachel Carey-Harper, to support people affected by federal immigration policies. Members and attenders contributed additional monies to support local organizations responding to ICE enforcement activity. In addition to such pass-through gifts, we include in our annual budget financial support for various organizations that provide services we deem important, such as the Friends School in Ramallah, AFSC, FCNL, World Central Kitchen, Casa Mariposa in Lynn, the Ipswich Refugee Program, and the House of Peace in Ipswich. We also supported one member and his partner in their ministry of travel to Ukraine to serve Ukrainian individuals and groups.

We continue to hold the situation in Gaza in our corporate life, though reaching a unified Meeting response has been difficult. We name this honestly as a place where we are still discerning.

Participation in Activities with Friends Beyond the Local Meeting

Our primary organizational connection beyond our Meeting is through ECCO (Essex County Community Organization), where we have one member of our community serve as clergy liaison and a few other members are active in work focused on immigrants, housing, and solidarity with those affected by federal policies. Several members of our meeting participated in multiple demonstrations at the ICE facility in Burlington with religious leaders from around the region in support of the immigration hearings for ECCO founder Blanca Martinez - a moving experience! Members also participate in events organized by AFSC and other Quaker-affiliated bodies.

Several Friends participate in NEYM online programs — the midweek meditations and monthly Leaders' Calls — though as noted, wider meeting participation in these opportunities remains an aspiration. One member maintains contact with Portland (Maine) Friends Meeting through their newsletter and notices of significant gatherings.

Two members participate in a local church's Bible study, a quiet expression of our openness to the wider religious community.

Two members maintain contact with Dover Friends Meeting by participation in Friendly Kitchen and Midweek Meditation.

Relations with the Community and Other Religious Groups

We must acknowledge honestly that our outreach to the wider community has weakened. The community meals we once hosted — at First Baptist Church in Beverly and at the Open Door in Gloucester — are no longer being held. The Friends who most enthusiastically carried those efforts are no longer able to do so, and no one has yet stepped forward to take up the work. We feel this absence. It sometimes seems that our community is less energetic than we would wish in taking on tasks that feel central to who we are as Quakers.

We offer no simple diagnosis for this. Some among us are aging and are dealing with their own or the health needs of family members. Others are engaged in demanding political and social action. Others may simply feel stretched by the sheer weight of what the moment asks. Whatever the cause, we name the gap and hope that, as our internal community strengthens, we may find renewed capacity for ministry beyond our walls. Our outreach to local schools and families has also diminished and would benefit from renewed attention.

In Closing

One longtime member offered words that speak for many of us: "I feel our Meeting is stronger than ever. I've been coming for many years and really want to be here with all of you." We receive this as both a gift and a charge.

We are a Meeting with genuine depth in our worship, faithful care for one another, and a growing capacity for honest reflection on our condition. We are also a Meeting with real gaps — in our committee structure, in our outreach, in our energy for the work the world asks of us. We hold both the thriving and the tender places in the Light as we move into the year ahead, trusting that the same Spirit that gathers us in worship will guide us in the work still to be done.

Submitted on behalf of North Shore Monthly Meeting, Spring 2026

State of Society Report for Three Rivers Monthly Meeting for 2025 (Approved 5-21-2026)

Three Rivers Monthly Meeting is a new monthly meeting in New England Yearly Meeting, beginning as an online worship group in 2020, and becoming a monthly meeting in February 2024. We are one of the few new meetings in NEYM in many years. Our semi-programmed worship has been held on Zoom, and we enjoy growing attendance of Friends with geographic and theological diversity, as well as many attenders who hold membership in other Friends meetings. We enjoy the presence of a number of experienced Friends, and also love to welcome attenders newer to Quaker worship. As we have transitioned from a worship group to a monthly meeting we have encountered both joy and struggle in this time of growth. Through it all we have worked to remain true to our identity as a “Queer, Christian, Quaker meeting, working to reclaim and reinterpret Quaker practices for our current times,” as we say in our welcome before each meeting for worship.

Three Rivers, as a new monthly meeting, is engaged in the work of building meeting structures to support the movement of Spirit in our community. We appointed an Interim Clerk for a one-year term, and seated our first Ministry and Counsel. Additionally, we added regularly scheduled monthly meetings for worship with a concern for business to our calendar of fortnightly meetings for worship and weekly Vespers gatherings. Perhaps the largest project we have begun is the detailed process of Ministry and Counsel (and other meeting structures and bodies as they develop) assuming care and responsibility for the work of the original worship group Hosts, in anticipation of eventually laying down the Host group. And, joyfully, we have received our first handful of applications for membership.

Friends in the Three Rivers community gathered together in April of 2026 to draft our first State of Society report for 2025. In preparation for this report, Ministry and Counsel held two open Listening Sessions. This time of prayerful community reflection informed the words that follow.

How Did We Grow?

Growing and deepening relationships with folks beyond names and faces on the screen was supported through wider sharing of service roles. Expanded opportunities for service helped us to build community. Leaning into an upwelling of volunteer support from the community, our Interim Clerk embraced a practice of naming elders for Meeting for Business, as well as welcoming and pastoral care, just as is our practice for Worship. Our Tech & Docs group continued supporting our online community through quiet, often unseen work which streamlined communications and invited new tech hosts for our Zoom meetings. Other opportunities for service included holding Pastoral Care training to expand the pool of Friends who can offer pastoral care to the community, and deepening the bench of people actively welcoming newer folks to the community. Rooted in the understanding that our spiritual lives are not separate from our worldly lives, we made space for Friends to share their emotions around domestic and world injustices. One friend’s Spirit-led direct action was supported through a clearness committee and Meeting for Worship, where we held their ministry in community prayer. Prepared ministry often felt responsive to the times. Throughout 2025 community members shared prepared

messages. Subjects were wide-ranging, encompassing everything from Biblically-focused wonderings, to the gifts of Queerness, to stewardship and faithfulness, and many more. Our recorded messages, available on the [Three Rivers website](#), continue to nourish Friends within our community and beyond.

Where Were We Challenged?

As we continued the exciting work of building the structures and patterns of a monthly meeting, we came to understand that many of the dearly held “Quaker ways” that experienced Friends brought to Three Rivers were more varied than we knew. None of us had done the work of starting a Quaker meeting before, and we had few models to learn from. Some of our assumptions led to unexpected tensions and even conflict as we all tried to be faithful in our practices together. Conflict was present between Friends in leadership roles in the community, which was felt by the wider body. Other fractures were evidenced by unresolved conflicts between individuals in the community which even impacted our small group fellowship. As we began forming meeting structures, we often had to respond in an ad hoc fashion to arising issues, ranging from a safety concern which needed a timely response, to finding people to record minutes and seating a series of ad hoc Nominating Committees.

Where did we fall short, & how can we learn from, heal from, and grow through these shortcomings?

As a community we believe that deeper relationships provide the conditions for faithfulness, listening to the Divine, and following the leadings we hear. We continue to seek ways to connect with each other individually and come to more deeply know one another.

The Healing Process Working Group was set up in late 2024 and remains active, but as a body we have not addressed the pain and relational rupture experienced



Artwork created by a Three Rivers community member while the meeting prayerfully reviewed an early draft of this report

earlier, during our process of joining NEYM as a monthly meeting. Tending to pain within our community has taken precedence over engaging in repair work with NEYM. As we continue to walk a slow path to healing, Friends have named homophobia, invisible power structures, and personal attacks as some of the harms perpetuated against members of our community during that process. In 2025 we expanded the scope of the HPWG after recognizing that the ripple effects of past harms often influence and interact with newer injuries, but have not yet established practices for addressing these foundational wounds.

A number of unresolved or unaddressed conflicts reverberate throughout and bubble up in the larger community. As we struggle toward conflict transformation, we tenderly hold Friends whose need for safety requires separation from individuals until such time as true resolution and healing can take place.

We engaged with conflict in a lot of ways, and there is still more required of us. With faith, we hope to realize the capacity among us to develop practices that will help us name harms, seek repair, and participate in the sometimes-painful work of true healing, which involves facing and working through conflicts to grow into our beloved community.

How Did We Succeed In Living Out Our Community's Values?

Members of our community spoke movingly of ways in which we lived out our values together. Some excerpts of their comments are shared below.

Regarding our vitality of worship and spiritual life:

In small groups, I have often experienced the presence of God. If one or more people shares about a difficult challenge in life, the group often finds a way to hold that together with the help of God. That could be with intercessory prayer or silence, depending on the group. In these moments, I know that humans may not be able to hold life's challenges, but God can.

Because we meet online and do our best to archive and share messages, there is an opportunity for Friends beyond the immediate community of Thursday morning to experience not just semi-programmed worship but the ways that our flavor of semi-programmed worship gives life to the classic Quakerism, Christian Quakerism, and the form of our circles. It is a form of public witness to the wider world of Friends that would be impossible without this online venue.

What resonates with my experience of Business Meeting over the past year is the sense of committing to following leading without knowing where you'll be led. I like the image of a river journey because you have to surrender to the flow. In a broad sense, you know you're headed downstream - but you don't

know how the river may twist and change direction. You don't know when it will next be possible to get back to the bank and take a breather. You don't know how fast, or slow, or dangerous a passage it will be. The only choice you can make is whether to get in the water.

Speaking to **community, care and radical hospitality**:

As a person who carries a concern for indigenous relations in my home meeting, practice of gathering together and decolonizing ourselves from [the beginning] where we orient ourselves to the watershed, native nations who reside there, and the aspiration that will come around to action steps that embody that commitment, that means a great deal to me. It's a hopeful sign about our lives together.

Friends spoke of many ways in which this body is living into our shared values, and also acknowledged the places where we are still growing and learning. A number of folks mentioned times when people have identified, halted, and named harms occurring in real time, acknowledged and taken responsibility, and sunk into worship to recenter as a group, so we can move through and past the harm in real time. This has been a wonderful experience when it has occurred, and Friends spoke to longing to bring this level of care, courage and attention into all of our conflicts, recognizing discomfort as a possible source of growth, and not something to be shied away from.

Regarding the **stewardship of gifts and leadership transition**:

It has been my experience at 3R that we're not just trying to live in a Jesus-influenced way like a lot of Christian communities do. What I feel is that we're trying to live in a Holy Spirit way which is more difficult and more challenging to the dominant culture. There is a belief amongst Friends that true leadership amongst us is follower-ship and that this means to submit and obey, words that are challenging for us. But to listen to Spirit and be led to follow is at the heart of what I see Friends in this community seeking to do.

When I've been able to be open and honest about how I can't carry things anymore, within moments, someone has said they will pick up that burden for me, that the work is shared, and that my needs are important to them and those needs are met. I have been overcome sometimes with what a wonderful feeling that has been, and I hope and I pray that we can expand that kind of support and intimacy and willing[ness] to be vulnerable with one another and express our needs and meet them for one another to everyone who takes a leadership role in Three Rivers.

The past year brought Three Rivers a number of challenges and opportunities for growth, connection, repair, and faithfulness. Our community has stretched to take on new responsibilities and structures. We continue to work towards greater connection and deeper friendship with one another. And always we have worked to keep Spirit at the center of not only our worship, but all our interactions with one another and the wider world.

State of Society Report
approved by Wellesley Friends Meeting 4/12/26

In January, February, and March 2026, thirty-nine members and attenders of Wellesley Friends Meeting (WFM) met to discuss the state of our Society. Seven gatherings were facilitated by Ministry and Counsel, six in person and one on Zoom. Each gathering opened with fellowship and silent worship, with the following queries, organized into three groups, as prompts for worship sharing:

- **Spiritual growth of individuals and families**

What aspects of Wellesley Meeting add to the spiritual growth of individuals and families? Does the quality of worship and verbal ministry nurture your spiritual life? Do Religious Education programs for adults and children nurture your spiritual life? Is there additional support you wish the Meeting would provide for your spiritual growth?

- **The health of our community**

How would you characterize the health of the Wellesley Friends Meeting community? What has helped you feel more connected to the community? Are there ways the Meeting could help you deepen the connection?

- **Support from Meeting for our work in the world**

How does Wellesley Friends Meeting support you in your witness in the world? What do you need from the Meeting for your support?

Exploring the first group of queries, on spiritual growth—We recognize that our spiritual growth as individuals most often comes through interactions and relationships with others in the Meeting. Meeting for Worship is at the heart of our spiritual growth. It is special to meditate in community—being present with others leads to a deeper sense of the Spirit. One friend described Meeting for Worship as a mystical space, with the human and divine inextricably linked. In this rich space of encounter, we feel nourished and supported and therefore open to growth.

In terms of the quality of worship and verbal ministry, some who have attended WFM for many years feel that Meeting for Worship is not as rich as it was in the past (we remember deep messages given in the past by Wellesley Quakers who are no longer with us). During some Meetings we are able to go deep into the silence, and heartfelt messages contribute to that depth—we are blessed to have wonderful ministers amongst us. Some people wish for more messages and less silence, while other people feel a strong desire for the deep well of silence. There was some concern expressed that maybe there are too many barriers to speaking in Meeting, that silence is more encouraged than messages and that it is too intimidating to speak in Meeting. Often, there is more speaking in the Joys & Sorrows & Concerns portion of Meeting than in the preceding worship—which is a natural result of this structure and helps to preserve the depth of the quiet during the earlier worship.

Much energy is devoted to the spiritual life of the Meeting and the spiritual growth of the individuals and families that form the Meeting. Adult Religious Education (RE) sessions and Second Hours are well attended and highly praised. Bible discussions have been especially spiritually nourishing. We are grateful to those Friends who prompt us, both in Meeting for Worship and in study sessions, to look more deliberately at the Bible. The Elements of Quakerism class was also a wonderful way for both newcomers and long-time attenders to become more involved in the spiritual life of the meeting—many Friends express a desire for more such Quaker Studies programs and other Adult

RE opportunities. Small Spiritual Growth Groups (SSGG) are widely attended and are another source of spiritual strength for individuals. This year, monthly singing before Meeting has provided another way to center before settling into worship.

The Meeting is a wonderful place for families to learn to appreciate silence as a spiritual path. Having the children join worship for the first 15 minutes is working well—better than having them come at the end, during announcements. The resurgent Children’s RE Program is appreciated and Godly Play lessons are recognized as very rich. It is hoped that when there is a solid group of kids, they can be given a budget and learn to run their own Meeting for Worship with attention to business. Educating our children in Quaker process is important.

Exploring the second group of queries, on the health of the WFM community—We note that there are natural ebbs and flows, ups and downs in meetings. Right now, we seem to be in an upturn. There is a strong sense that the Meeting community is healthier than it has been in the recent past: more new members and attenders, more children, more participation—we are a “growing place.”

The Meeting Retreat in September was a wonderful boost to the WFM community. Keeping the retreat to one day allowed us to focus on community growth without having to spend time on the logistics of a full weekend retreat, and more people were able to attend because it was a one-day, local event. Great appreciation was expressed for this community-building experience, along with the hopes that we will do it again.

Many ways in which we build connections within the Meeting community were held up in gratitude, including: Joys & Sorrows & Concerns, Introductions, and Announcements; monthly singing before Meeting; coffee hour after Meeting; traditions of community gatherings at Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter; memorial services; social events such as All-Ages Fun Night; on-going groups such as Crafters, Songbirds, On Our Own, Friendly 8’s, and Small Spiritual Growth Groups; serving as a Greeter; participating in Clean-up Days; receiving an afghan upon graduating from high school; State of Society gatherings; Ministry of Cards; Valentine’s Day visits; the use of Zoom to keep us connected with members and attenders at a distance.

While WFM does a wonderful job providing opportunities to build connections, we recognize that it can be difficult for new attenders to break into established social circles. We can do more to minister to one another—as a spiritual community, part of our responsibility is to get to know one another and find out what people need.

One way to build connections with newer attenders is to encourage their participation in the work of the Meeting’s clusters. The core of workers in the meeting is stretched thin at times. There is a concern that the Meeting is leaning on a small number of Friends to fill many roles. Clusters can seek creative ways to engage newer attenders in the work of a cluster without being a member of the cluster. An established cluster member might mentor a person interested in the cluster, preparing them to become a cluster member in the future. And anyone can join a cluster for just one year—long-term commitments are not required.

Exploring the third group of queries, on our witness in the world—We feel supported by the Meeting as groups of WFM Friends witness with the New Covenant Church, Puente de Amigos, Tuloi Yearly Meeting, Massachusetts Correctional Institution at Norfolk (MCI-Norfolk), and at the Burlington Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facility. We acknowledge, with gratitude, the ongoing work of the Quaker Action for Racial Equality (QARE) Cluster. The lack of a functioning Peace and Social Concerns Cluster at WFM is noted with concern. Previously, the Peace

and Social Concerns Committee often focused on local action (e.g., food pantries) and this work has continued, but without a cluster to focus and share the work.

We appreciate efforts such as the WFM minute on Israel-Palestine and the candlelight vigil, organized by a Wellesley Friend, about the ICE attacks on the immigrant community. Is there an opportunity to continue this latter witness, perhaps as an hour of vigil followed by an hour of discussion—and involve more than just Wellesley Friends Meeting people? Can we help people in the broader community know us as a place to come together with a spiritual focus?

We wonder: How do we live day to day with integrity? Who can we trust? How can we show our own trustworthiness? When we are being activists, we need to be open to others who do not share our viewpoint. One way is to ask non-aggressive questions, such as (when perhaps disagreeing with someone's statement), "Where did you learn that?" Reach out, ask questions, try to see what we can agree on. Perhaps there are opportunities for Adult RE sessions that focus on Quakers who have done important work for social change and include examples of how to handle negative emotions about people you disagree with.

Troubling political, national, and world situations make us hungry for connection and outreach. Gathering with other Quakers feels very supportive, whether we are in our meetinghouse or at events in public spaces, such as the weekly Bearing Witness at the Burlington ICE Office or a Meeting for Worship held on the Cambridge Common. Worshiping together grounds us in the Divine Light and prepares us to bear witness in the world.

Sandwich Quarter

Martha's Vineyard Monthly Meeting
State of the Society Report
May 2026

Martha's Vineyard Monthly Meeting is a small meeting. Our numbers remain modest with approximately 10 Friends attending Meeting for Worship regularly. We benefit from the guest attendance of Friends from around the country who are visiting the Island on vacation and from the occasional curious passersby.

Friends took the preparation of this State of Society report as an opportunity to reflect on the Meeting's impact on individual members of our spiritual community. The content comes from Members' and attenders' reflections on the query "How has Truth prospered among us?" in a worship-share experience.

The Meeting is spiritually strong. Members and attenders demonstrate commitment to worship, mutual care, and spiritual seeking. A number of us live distant from the Island part of the year. Our hybrid format is very successful in involving Friends in the life of the Meeting regardless of where they live. We are sustained by a deep sense of connection that transcends geography.

Friends consistently describe the Meeting as a place of refuge, safety, and deep acceptance. One Friend says: "*The Meeting is a place of universal, unconditional acceptance and affection.*" Another says: "*Hearts feel more connected and spacious here.*" Long-standing relationships continue to deepen, while newer attenders are welcomed easily into the life of the Meeting. Community itself is experienced not only as companionship, but as a source of spiritual grounding in a fragmented world.

In our reflections on how Truth has prospered among us, Friends spoke most clearly of lived experience rather than abstract understanding. "*The Truth of the Meeting is not intellectual—it is the experience of being at home, of being valued simply for being.*" Truth is encountered as acceptance, as presence, and as the recognition of 'that of God' in one another. Worship creates a sense of spaciousness that allows deeper listening and openness.

The quality of worship is experienced as reverent and grounded. Friends find that our style of worship speaks to their condition—neither overly formal nor casual, but centered and alive. "*I leave Meeting feeling challenged, strengthened, and refreshed.*" Vocal ministry is thoughtful and sincere, often both supportive and challenging. Friends noted that

We are mindful of challenges. Several Friends have faced significant personal hardships, and the Meeting has responded with pastoral care and compassion, holding individuals in the Light and aiding as appropriate. "*The Meeting has been a source of refuge and solace during a challenging time.*"

We remain aware of the aging demographic of our Meeting and the limitations that come with our small size. Friends have expressed concern that we may not be sharing the richness of our spiritual life as fully as we might. But Friends continue to engage actively in social and civic concerns. Members and attenders are active in community service, peace witness, and support of local organizations, primarily through individual leadings. The Meeting continues to support annual Embarking Peace Maker awards in collaboration with the Martha's Vineyard Peace Council to graduating high school students who express a particular interest in the work of peace, including a personal essay.

The Meeting remains connected to the wider Quaker world through active participation in Sandwich Quarterly Meeting and the New England Yearly Meeting. Individual Friends are active in Friends General Conference and as supporters of the American Friends Service Committee and the Friends Committee on National Legislation.

Our relationships with other religious communities on Martha's Vineyard remain strong and are grounded in mutual respect and shared concern for the community. Representation in organizations including the Island Clergy Association and Interfaith Climate Action Team is an important part of this.

Looking forward, we feel gratitude for the strength and authenticity of our worship and our relationships. *"God truly is within us all. When I remember this, all seems better, if not entirely well."* At the same time, we are aware of the call to grow—to welcome greater diversity, to share our spiritual practice more openly, and to remain faithful in our ministry. We are reminded that Truth among us is living and continuing, revealed through our ongoing worship and openness to the Spirit.

2025 State of Society Westport Monthly Meeting

We are a very close knit community and, although we are small, we have a solid core of Friends who deeply care for each other. Many of our activities outside of worship foster this closeness. We have many recurring significant events that have become traditions and create a kind of liturgical calendar, framing the year and binding not only individuals but generations together. In February we joined together for Soup, Song and Worship and in March we gathered for Bread Day and enjoyed community and the spiritual lessons that come from preparing dough and baking bread. In April we enjoyed our first ever indoor Easter Egg hunt and we look forward to our annual Book Fair in July. In September we celebrate together the successes of the Book Fair and our Looking for Light families returning from the summer. Finally, in December we gather together once again for our Advent Sunday with a potluck and much singing. There is so much palpable joy that radiates out at this meeting nurtured by the sense of community derived from these deep, rich gatherings.

Ministry and Counsel has organized a number of gatherings that deepen members and attenders understanding of our Quaker practices. These gatherings provide a much needed factual foundation for our community but also strengthens our bonds with each other and allows us to hold each other up. We learned together during our Quakerism 101-Discernment, how this Quaker process of deep listening to each other and for how the spirit guides us shapes our decision making as Quakers. We are planning more of these Quakerism 101 gatherings. Other activities such as our Soup, Singing and Worship allow us to connect with other meetings in the area. We look to continue this outreach. Seekers group remains a way for some of us to gather once a month to share our spiritual conditions and experiences.

Looking For Light, which meets on the first First Sunday of the month, nurtures spiritual formation in children and is for the families of the children. This group is often multigenerational. We seek to meet busy Friends where they are, as our families have to balance many family demands and are appreciative of being welcomed in even with occasional attendance. The Looking For Light participants have created their own connections via group texts in which they share portions of their lives in between First Sundays. This group has become a vibrant branch of our community.

We wonder if we can reach out to the wider community better to let them know what our faith is all about. There were questions raised regarding attracting new and younger members to our meeting. We wonder how to proceed given that as Quakers we aren't comfortable with proselytizing. Our Peace and Social Justice involvement in the wider community is one way our faith is visible in the outside community as is the Book Fair. The Quaker table at the Book Fair offers another chance for us to share our faith and

practices with the community. We have welcomed a number of new attenders and we invited them to hospitality, answered questions while allowing space for them to experience our community at their own pace. We are friendly without being pushy. We wonder what we can do to ensure that the meeting continues to thrive.

We have concerns over our aging membership and what our meeting may look like in years down the road. We are not gaining many young attenders and members at a pace to keep up with those who age. We deeply miss members who have passed away or have illnesses that reduce their attendance. We are in need of tender discernment on how to raise up the next generation of elders. In our society today, children often leave the area when they become adults so we are hopefully raising the next Quakers rather than the next local meeting members.

Overall we are grateful for the deep and connected social life of the meeting that extends far beyond the hour of worship.

Approved June 14, 2026

Southeast Quarter

PROVIDENCE FRIENDS MEETING DRAFT STATE OF SOCIETY REPORT FOR 2025 approved by M&C 4/1/26

Providence Friends Meeting is currently experiencing a time of vibrant growth and continued searching as to how best to serve its members and follow our sense of the Divine in these times. In the last year, attendance has increased with newcomers of all ages, including families with small children, and following the rhythms of the academic calendar, undergraduates from local universities. We feel that Meeting has a central role in our lives, and we experience both comfort and challenge in worshiping in our community. We note the consistent participation of members and attenders in bringing food contributions to our gathering time after meeting and to cleaning up. There is a warm sense of community at these events, and this helps to build friendships and collaboration on numerous projects. Meeting for worship and the gathering time are the center of our life as a meeting.

In 2025 we hired nursery staff, allowing parents of young ones the freedom to attend meeting without child care concerns. We celebrated several weddings this year, and we anticipate the arrival of several new babies! Our first day school is currently relatively small but is led by a faithful group of committed volunteers. Quietly, individuals have been supported by numerous clearness committees. Pastoral care committee learns about and helps individuals in need, and lets us know when a meal or visit might be helpful. In addition, this committee offers an “after-thoughts table” after meeting which is well attended and is an especially good landing place for newcomers. A monthly pizza party at the Meetinghouse builds friendships and allows for more extended conversations, especially for those who are in pain due to the current political environment. We make an effort to welcome newcomers to meeting, though we could be more attentive to be sure that everyone receives an individual welcome at rise of meeting. Other new initiatives in 2025 include the installation and successful use of the new assisted hearing system that helps those amongst us with hearing impairment to participate and the establishment of a new “Holding in the Light” zoom meeting on Tuesday mornings.

The quality of worship is generally experienced as deep, with a good mix of silent and spoken ministry. We hear spoken messages from a wide variety of attenders. Every week, first day school participants join the facing bench at the rise of meeting for worship and report to the adults on their own gathering. Our “Elements of Quakerism” course allows us all to learn more about Quaker faith and practice. We are continually learning about discernment related to spoken ministry at meeting. We are working on the perennial question of large numbers of late arrivals.

In the area of spiritual growth, we have been blessed by the opportunity to develop several corporate ministries in the last year. We have decided to support the

ministry of one individual in meeting who feels called to a public witness following initial discernment in 2024. The work of supporting this individual as well as the many others who also follow deep leadings has been the occasion of a number of deep discussions. We held a series of four discussions on supporting individual ministries, with visitors from NEYM staff, New York Yearly Meeting, and two visitors from other meetings who are working on the topic of individual ministry. This work continues in 2026, while at the same time we provide a committee of care and accountability to the individual who rose up in 2024.

Other corporate decisions that helped us to grow spiritually in 2025 included deep discernment on whether to offer the Providence meetinghouse as a warming center to unhoused people on cold winter nights. We tabled that decision for the present, but we have offered a “shower ministry” for those who are staying at a nearby church. This corporate decision demonstrates a commitment to share our resources with others. A number of members and attenders have participated, and report that the informal time spent relaxing with unhoused people in our space in the evening has been spiritually opening to them as well as to our guests. In addition, our meeting signed a minute of concern for the people of Gaza, and we continued to develop our relationship with a Quaker sister meeting in Cuba,

We have considered elements that have been the occasion of tension at Providence Friends Meeting in 2025 as well. One area that has required our listening skills is the management of the online meeting for worship attended by members and attenders which started during COVID and continues weekly. Some among us would prefer to separate the online and in-person worship services, while others would prefer to include those worshiping remotely in our meeting for worship. This has required prayerful attention by all to endeavor to set up a system that works for everyone. A second area that has been challenging is the degree to which we are a congregation focused on social justice, and the related issue of corporate action in the political sphere. Consideration of political action is a challenge for our meeting, but it is a good one.

Although we are a community that is increasingly diverse from a racial and socioeconomic perspective, we note that our location, our financial resources and our overall demographic put us in a place of privilege. This creates a necessary tension that we are working on. Many of us recognize that we are a subculture with norms not shared by people from different backgrounds.

Providence Friends Meeting is well grounded in its community, collaborating with other groups, both Quaker and non-Quaker. A number of us serve on the Moses Brown School board of trustees, helping to steer the school gently in a Quakerly direction. One topic that came up recently was the new sound system that the school uses for sports

events. We have worked with the school to prevent these boisterous events from disrupting our events at meeting.

We have two worship groups under our care, Saylesville and Conanicut. We work to accommodate the needs of these smaller Friends gatherings, and our community is enhanced by their presence. In addition, we have an active quarter, the Southeast Quarter, that shares information and activities including committee membership. We are building a stronger connection to Yearly Meeting programs including Youth Programs and Living Faith gatherings.

In recent months, we have worked more closely with the Rhode Island State Council of Churches and other area interfaith groups on social activism projects, including immigration and shelter issues. Many of us have a regular connection with Matthewson Street Church, a local Methodist church with a mission of including unhoused people. In addition, many have connections with Quaker organizations beyond Providence, including Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) and Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP). Individuals in our meeting are deeply rooted in community action projects, and we are reaching out to them to offer the support they might need in their ministries, as they enrich the ongoing work of our meeting.

In short, it has been a year of challenge and growth, as well as a year of celebrating friendships and working together to choose our best path, individually and as a community.



SMITHFIELD MONTHLY MEETING

Society of Friends

108 Smithfield Road

Woonsocket, RI 02895 TIN: 05-0137187

May 31, 2026

State of Society Report

The Smithfield Monthly Meeting continues to make incremental progress as an active Quaker congregation. Since December, Ron Belliveau and Natalia de Rezendes have each given wonderful monthly programmed worship services. No programmed services are planned for July and August. We also welcomed Natalia as a new member in January.

The Building and Grounds Committee remains busy. In November, we installed a new flu liner and boiler in the Parsonage. In the meetinghouse, we replaced the asbestos pipe insulation with new fiberglass insulation. A contractor installed new electrical circuits in the basement, we painted the basement ceilings and walls, and installed new carpet in the basement hallway. The Obadiah Brown Benevolent Fund approved a \$5,500 grant to repair the front portico. We also plan to paint the north side windows over the summer. Community Service volunteers continue to maintain the cemetery.

Natalia and Rich Keene completed a Quakerism 101 online course offered by Phil Fitz. Both thoroughly enjoyed the seminar and hope to share their experience with the meeting over the coming months. Several members attended “No Kings” rallies in Providence.

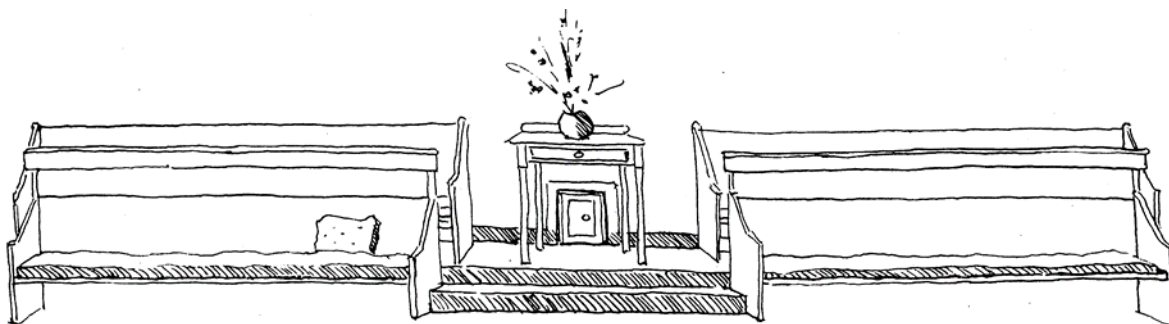
We again received a \$2,000 donation from Rachel Harper – Corey to support services for immigrants. Members approved the Peace and Social Concerns Committee recommendation to donate \$300 to each of the following groups: Fuerza Laboral, Haus of Codec, Thundermist Health Centers, Dorcas International, New Beginnings Inc. (Woonsocket), and the Milagros Project (Woonsocket), as well as \$200 for clothing to be donated to Dorcas International.

A ranger from the National Park Service made a presentation at the meetinghouse in April about Smithfield Quakers and the Revolutionary War to commemorate the U.S. 250th Anniversary. About 40 guests attended.

The congregation will visit the Saylesville Meeting on June 14, where Ron will offer a programmed meditative service.

Richard F. Keene

Rich Keene
Clerk



Report on the State of the Westerly Monthly Meeting 2025

As Friends have done in this meetinghouse for the previous 151 years, we gathered in 2025 at the beginning of each week for unprogrammed worship. Worship is at the center of our life as a Meeting. For some, worship was an hour of appreciation for the comforting silence. Others came looking for the guidance of vocal ministry in their spiritual journey. Some in the Meeting said they never experienced the presence of the Inner Light within the time of worship. Others recognized that our sense of the spirit waxed and waned, but overall, it united and comforted us.

The primary way most of us took part in life of the Meeting was to serve on one and, in some cases, more than one committee. The Meeting for Business helped to keep us informed of what was happening in other committees. Our weekly newsletter included national Quaker news as well as particular needs of our own Meeting, as in calling for volunteers to bring food to WARM.

A number of activities were held in 2025 to foster spiritual growth in our Meeting. Inspirational quotes from various faiths and literary sources were chosen by a group of poets in the Meeting and placed in a location where they would be easily noticed. The quotes were also included in the weekly newsletter. A discussion group on the nature of worship was held near the end of the year. This was well attended and gave Friends a chance to talk about their experiences, both rewarding and challenging, of unprogrammed worship. A Friend travelled to a number of extended worship services and upon her recommendation we hosted an extended worship day in Westerly.

We were concerned about sustaining the vitality of the Meeting in the years ahead. To help us to respond to this challenge, the Meeting extended an invitation to the NEYM Accompaniment Group. We were hopeful they would provide some tools to help us maintain the present vibrancy of the Meeting as well as open more doors to the spirit for us as a group.

Jeremy Langill, Director of the R.I. Council of Churches, came to speak to us about the counsel's efforts to defend transgender students' rights. This led to us having a called meeting to talk about how to respond to Jeremy's message. Friends felt called to act in a number of ways to causes they felt were important for us to become involved with. Among those actions were the following:

- A poet spoke about sharing environmental concerns through poetry and encouraging plantings of more trees in our town.
- A member regularly tracked environmental legislation in Connecticut.
- Some were led to support immigrants' rights by distributing ACLU "Know your Rights"
- A Friend provided transportation and support to medical appointments for an immigrant family through Start Fresh, a local immigrant support group. .
- Some were concerned about housing shortages and kept themselves apprised of new legislation and planning and zoning laws
- Some were led to attend Westerly School Board Meetings to bear witness to the rights of trans students.

We reached unity to continue to live into the Gaza Minute- specifically to "Stop Bombs and Send Food." Several of us attended the annual Peace Day at URI and distributed a questionnaire to find out what concerns the students had. In the Spring we, and others from the Southeast Quarter, dedicated our peace pole in the front yard. We chose Japanese, English, Spanish and Narragansett for the pole.

We took a new approach to our monthly meal donation to WARM, our local shelter. Instead of cooking alone, we had a few gatherings in the meetinghouse kitchen where we prepared the food together and also got to know one another better. A Friend continued to volunteer as part of a group at the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center's garden as he has done for nine years. The group tries to grow 2000 to 2500 pounds of fresh organic produce a year. We received two large gifts from a Friend to be used for social justice issues and reached unity in our distribution of these funds to a local shelter, food pantry, an immigration support system as well as a local clinic serving indigent patients locally.

Our First Day School of around a half dozen children continued to meet the 1st and 3rd First Day of the month. In December they sang amusing carols at a local Nursing Home. "Twelve Days of Christmas" was especially well received.

We were thankful for one member applying for an historic preservation grant to cover the cost of a new roof. We had the roof completed and we received the grant. In the

fall we dedicated the ramp in front of the meeting house in memory of a Friend who had been a member and strong advocate for handicap accessibility.

Individual Friends continued to engage with the wider Quaker community in various ways. This engagement was an important way to meet other Friends and learn new ways of doing things. Continued leadership and attendance at the Quarterly Meeting level and a Friend's membership on Permanent Board led to the care and support of individual ministries outside of the local meeting. Participation with the regional Advocacy Team brought a Friend to serve as the NEYM Representative to FCNL. Several of us attended the monthly Tuesday evening FCNL leadership training on Zoom. Several of us participated in NEYM's Living Faith Day. We hosted a visit from Marcus Mitchell who shared his work on opening dialogue with people while traveling on the train. Two representatives from Right Sharing of World Resources gave us a power point presentation on the loans around the world this organization has made to build self-sufficient businesses. The NEYM "Living Stream" committee shared with us the many ways that NEYM works to support NEYM monthly meetings.

In closing our group discussion on the State of the WFM Society, one member reflected: " Maybe I am looking through rose-colored glasses, but I feel we have had a successful and lively year here at WMM."

Read and approved at the April Meeting for Business
Westerly Monthly Meeting
April 12, 2025

**Worcester Friends Meeting State of the Society Report
April 2026**

What is our condition as a faith community within the Society of Friends?

We appreciate that messages shared in worship are rooted in spirit and personal experience of spiritual growth, rather than abstract concepts or political opinions.

We appreciate the variety within our Meeting community - gay/straight, theist/non-theist, politically involved and not - and the way that our community encourages individuals' spiritual journey without forcing conformity.

We continue to offer hybrid worship and business meetings. The hybrid option allows people to attend if they are ill or at home or at a distance. Friends at the meetinghouse have the option of sitting where they cannot see the screen and are not seen by the camera. We have an estimated 20 attendees in person per week and 1-4 on Zoom.

We are grateful for our financial stability and for the way that we have resolved conflicts of opinion.

We planted seeds that have come to fruition:

- Caring for our building has sustained the meetinghouse in keeping with our values as a space that is used by Friends and by community organizations.
- Some of the changes we made in the Meeting several years ago — fewer committees, co-clerking — have made us less over-extended within the Meeting, allowing us to participate more in community activities and other work.
- Preexisting relationships with Hadwen Park Church have connected us with valuable information and networks.
- The work that was done in building relationships with the Nipmuc community in working on the land acknowledgement taught us about how to work in community and forging relationships.

How is the Spirit moving among us?

Worcester Friends have done a lot to engage with and support other spiritual communities — making space for Havurah and Buddhists, financial and material support for other religious communities, bringing together nearly 20 different congregations in collaborative action for immigrant support. We can call this “spirit-led nonviolent action in our community, for our community”.

Friends noticed that the level of action we have in the wider community—forming WINIS (Worcester Interfaith Network for Immigrant Support), supporting the Center for Non-violent Solutions, participating as facilitators in AVP, etc.—has been largely a response to adversity in our country and society.

Where have we found sustenance and nurture?

Adversity is galvanizing: when there is a need, it motivates action. When times are difficult, we look for others with whom we can commune. It is sustaining to know that there are others with the same opinions and values.

How can we sustain action and collaboration when adversity is over?

- We now have better understanding of others than we did previously.
- We have relationships that we have built during our actions, and those relationships will remain.
- We have developed a communal and noncompetitive way of working with others in the community.
- The number of AVP facilitators within our meeting is growing. This commitment to and training in nonviolence will enrich our actions going forwards.

How have we sought to hold up and care for our meeting community?

We always appreciate our weekly potluck as a way to care for and get to know each other.

The Facing Race Book Group continues. It is a rich and enriching experience for those who participate.

Spiritual Enrichment sessions monthly are well attended. The sharing that arises is enriching.

What is our growing edge¹ as a spiritual community?

- Being more active in the community, in collaboration with other faith communities.
- The cross-pollination that happens when you collaborate.
- The softening of our hearts to suffering in the world, which is what motivates us to go forward with action in service to others.
- Membership and attendance, including younger adults. We still are saddened not to have children in attendance at our meeting.

How do we continue to make openings for people to be open and vulnerable with their different viewpoints and perspectives?

How can we make the meetinghouse more accessible to wheelchair users?

¹ The growing edge of an organization refers to the area where past behaviors are no longer serving the entity and new strategies are required to move forward. It is the threshold between the known and the unknown, where an organization faces a temporary plateau and must stretch its margins to achieve the next level of performance.

Vassalboro Quarter

Belfast Area Friends Meeting
State of Society in 2025
May 10, 2026

Friends met regularly in our rented space at Social Capital, with some attending via zoom. Given the change of administration and the increased anxiety in the wider society, we were pleased but not surprised to see more people showing up on Sunday morning, or making inquiries about our Meeting. Some were new, some returning, circling back — all were profoundly troubled by the turn of events and seeking spiritual community.

We felt gratified to be offering an open door, and accompaniment through this troubled time, and gratified that some of the newcomers have stayed with us. It was especially heartwarming to have the benefit of some summer residents come regularly to our Meeting, and to keep in touch through the winter.

We had a surprise gift in January of \$2000, which we happily distributed between Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (in Portland), and OUTMaine (in Rockland, a 30-year-old organization dedicated to providing support and cultural outreach to the LGBTQ community).

One of our house-bound Friends had taken on the facilitation of a monthly Quaker Book Group via zoom, and we had our first discussion of John Woolman's Journal during the afternoon of our February retreat. The focus was "Our Spiritual Paths, Our Ways of Being Quaker in This World - Past, Present and Into the Future." We spent the morning reflecting on and then sharing about the six queries we had put forward.

In the late spring, we were fortunate to have funds available to grant two scholarships (\$1,000 each) to deserving Belfast Area high school seniors who have demonstrated a commitment to working for peace and justice. This continues a tradition for our Meeting that was begun in 2005.

2025 was the first year we made a banner to march as Quakers in the Pride Parade in June, inviting High Street Friends to join us. Belfast always has a great turnout for this annual event, organized by high school students, and we were so pleased to be officially a part of it.

Other books we have explored together include *An Upriver Passamaquoddy* by Allen Sockabasin; Robin Ridington's *Trail to Heaven*; and most currently, Elise Boulding's *Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History*. [Incidentally, Robin Ridington is the elder brother of our co-clerk Jean Goldfine, so it was a treat that she could arrange for him to join us during our final zoom discussion on the book.]

We have been able to sustain our commitments to the Belfast Area Food Cupboard and Soup Kitchen, Ramallah Friends School, Friends of Kenya Rising, as well as NEYM and various AFSC programs. We also made good on the 2nd of 3 pledged donations to the Wabanaki Elder-in-Residence Program at UMaine Orono.

During the last month of the year, we began planning for our hosting of Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting (February 7, 2026), and had the benefit of collaborating with the High Street Worship Group in crafting the program. This consisted of a presentation on Quaker spirituality by a young Friend from Portland, and a presentation by one of our own attenders, a forester who gave an illustrated talk on Forestry for Maine Wildlife & Bird Species.

In conclusion, we look forward to sustaining our presence in the community and in keeping our door open to all.

Cobscook Friends Meeting State of Society Report 2025

When Cobscook Friends gathered in early February for a discussion about the state of our meeting, we huddled under blankets, wearing our winter gear, and in close proximity to the portable heaters in the worship room. Our furnace, original to the building circa 1990, needed many replacement parts in December and January. This period without a dependably working furnace seemed much longer, but Friends expressed tremendous gratitude for our collective efforts. We kept the pipes from freezing, were able to keep the temperature at about 50 degrees with the use of many space heaters, cleaned up standing water after a recently replaced gasket on the boiler gave way, and had individuals volunteer to open the building for repair technicians each time it was necessary. We are unclear whether a new furnace will be needed and this made apparent how tenuous our fiscal circumstances are, with so few of us responsible for the upkeep of the meeting house. We recognize how fortunate we are to have a spiritual home and want to be good stewards of it. We feel this experience is an illustration of our life as a Meeting.

Cobscook Friends took part in three memorial services over a period of four months. Two for long-time members who passed away from long-term declining health. The third was for one of our founding members, Suzanne Plaut, who died very unexpectedly. She was vibrant, engaged, and dedicated to living in service to the meeting, her family, and her community. Friends reflected that she was our go-to for coordinating and scheduling repairs and maintenance. We noted that Suzanne would have been right there as we've compensated for our broken furnace, laughing with us at life's ironies, and volunteering to assist with whatever needed tending to. For many, Suzanne's presence continues to be felt among us.

Along with the challenges, we also sense growing energy for deepening our faithful presence and sharing our Meeting with others. We've posted the time for Sunday worship on our sign, and taken baby steps toward using social media, including launching a facebook page with access to a welcome booklet. We are engaging in *Quaker Connect* for the next two years with a focus on relationships with the wider community. We have eagerly welcomed this exciting opportunity and committed to focusing on our spiritual growth, corporately and individually.

We're grateful for new and renewed opportunities for fellowship beyond meeting for worship. One Friend committed to bringing coffee and the fixings every Sunday to encourage others to linger over a cup and conversation. We have intermittently resumed monthly Sundays that include programming for younger Friends, some joint worship, and potlucks afterward.

Our worship has provided solace, challenged us, led to insights, supported continued questioning, and been a haven in the midst of wider unease. Each first day, a reading is shared once we have settled into worship. These speak to us in different ways which are, at times, drawn out in worship through messages that share a common thread, and at others, there's a wonderful confluence of inner offerings. We feel immense gratitude for the meeting, for each and every one of us, and for what draws us together in this community and supports us in being wholly ourselves.

Approved 1 March, 2026

SPIRITUAL STATE OF SOCIETY REPORT 2025

Midcoast Friends Meeting – May 2026

The Midcoast Friends Meeting, located in Damariscotta ME, remains a very small meeting with wide geographic distribution. The good news is that our membership now includes a few new younger members, bringing our median age down from 75 to closer to 65. During the winter months, the physical attendance at our Sunday meetings averages about 18 people and increases to about double that in the summer months. We usually also have 2 to 4 Zoom participants joining us for Sunday morning worship.

During 2025, we have been challenged, once again, by the heavy lifting required by the small number of people on our several committees. The biggest challenges have fallen to the small Pastoral Care committee. The good news is that many other Meeting members (those not on the Pastoral Care committee) rose to the challenge of supporting Friends in need during the course of the year.

Our meeting had some logistical challenges during several months of 2025, when road work created the need for a long detour to reach our Meeting House. Not surprisingly, attendance diminished during those months, yet our spirit and community were sustained and people were reaching out to one another to keep in touch and to help one another.

As one long-time member expressed it: "our small number and aging congregation hobble us, but I am very grateful to be able to attend the sustaining Sunday Meetings."

We now seem to have a lot of new attenders, some getting active or borrowing books and Pendle Hill Pamphlets from our Library. And some old-timers are returning after not attending for a few years.

The Quality Of Worship and Vocal Ministry

Based on feedback and continued attendance, we believe that most attenders on Sundays find a rewarding depth of shared worship. As one

member put it, "I am happy with the quality of our worship." Some meetings are completely silent, while others feature thoughtful, insightful, and heartfelt ministry. At the close of meeting, members and attenders are asked both to introduce themselves and to provide any insights that did not rise to vocal ministry. There are usually two or three profound sharings, during this post-meeting opportunity. After silent meetings, many people mention that they were grateful for the shared spiritual experience of meditating together, and some share insights that occurred to them during the silent shared worship. On the first Sunday of each month, a volunteer reads a query at the beginning of Meeting. That always stimulates a few sharings. More frequent vocal ministry would be welcome, yet fully silent meetings have felt centered and fully engaged.

We offer online participation in our Sunday meetings. Those who are home-bound frequently take advantage of this opportunity. Zoom participation is challenging, however, as Zoom participants' voices are not adequately amplified. For that reason, Zoom participants worship in silence, may or may not be able to hear everything people are saying, and, while they are introduced at the close of meeting, it is hard to hear what they are sharing, so they usually don't contribute much.

We often have a couple of new attenders at most meetings. These are people who are Quakers from other regions who are visiting, or people from our neighboring communities who hear about us through our outreach and come to sample the Quaker experience. We believe we are doing a good job at welcoming these newcomers and sharing information with non-Quaker seekers. Several of those visitors have now become members.

The Strength of the Meeting Community

Although small in numbers, our membership is strong and welcoming.

The meeting community is now more coherent and enjoys fellowship in shared times together--as in social time after meeting for worship and on special occasions. In the past, various tense personal relations have been troubling and hampered a sense of unity. While we are a small group

(especially in cold months) We express concerns for one another and reach out to Friends in need.

We also seem to have a viable set of checklists to help maintain the various functions (maintenance, cleaning, security, etc.) in a way that may help us contain costs. And, we make good use of volunteer sign-up sheets for providing monthly meals, maintaining supplies, and other tasks.

Our Library committee has been vibrant this year, trying to attract both new and older attendees by making available recent books that were reviewed in the *Friends Journal* and elsewhere.

Efforts to Foster Spiritual Growth and Evidence of Growth

Despite good intentions, there have been no formal workshops or learning occasions (i.e. Quakerism 101) to enhance the spiritual growth of newcomers to the meeting.

Nonetheless, we have seen a number of visitors who have become regular attenders and a few have taken membership. Spiritual growth is a private process and not easy for others to judge. Yet, several long-time members have shared their spiritual growth experiences in ministry during the past year, providing evidence that we are deepening and growing in spiritual communion. One member spoke deeply and passionately about the importance of forgiveness in our lives (of ourselves and others, including political figures). Others have acknowledged the spiritual depth and sense of community they experience as members of the meeting, even when they have been absent for many months.

In order to grow our meeting size, we need to continue our engagement with the local population. More engagement would be wonderful!

Possible Tensions in the Meeting and how Friends are Responding to these Challenges

We seem to have moved beyond some personal clashes that were evident in recent years. Some difficulties likely remain, but they do not affect the

meeting as much now. Several members have remarked on the sense of healing and communion that now seems to be alive and most welcome!

As one member describes it, "we've gone through a period of people being caught up in 'but we always do it this way' thinking." Adversity (personal hardships, global unrest, and social injustices) have brought us back together. "We have screwed up in the past, but now things seem to be moving forward." Another said: "I was very concerned before, but feel that there is a healing taking place, and people are respectful of each other."

We seem to be growing in the number of consensus-based decisions we take, rather than independent decisions. On the other hand, when it comes to supporting other members of the meeting, individuals often reach out proactively to offer support, rather than going through a committee process, which is a good thing. Instead of operating through committees, we seem to be evolving into "A Meeting of the Whole."

Significant Events or Activities in the Meeting's Year Together

Social time after meeting for worship seems a time of fuller engagement and enjoyment with each other. Our Shared Soup Sunday (first Sunday of each month) has become a popular event for members and attenders to share a meal and engage in longer conversations. We have also hosted summer barbecues and potlucks, which have been well attended by members and their extended families.

We also began a lunch and Quaker meeting program to support local LGBTQ+ people on two Saturday afternoons per month, which has become welcome in the community, drawing a small number of people of all ages from our surroundings. This invitational meeting not only fulfills an outreach effort, but also fills a felt need for those who don't come to meeting on Sunday. We advertise this opportunity online and by placing posters in local communities. At least one family have become regular attenders.

We also restarted our Wednesday meditation group. This allows both meeting members and others to drop in to worship together mid-week.

People are encouraged to drop in to visit our library, use our meeting/study area, and enjoy our WiFi (including from the porch when the Meeting House is closed). We like to have our Meeting House available for multiple uses to provide services to our community in many ways.

We have stepped up to host Quarterly Meeting and to provide a number of shared resources to help other meetings in their social justice initiatives.

Social Justice Concerns of the Meeting and Stands taken on Friends' Religious Principles

Despite the small size of our membership, we feel our social justice engagement is excellent. A full range of participation and service continues to manifest our commitment to social justice concerns by many members: the diaper bank and support for food distribution locally---responses to the ICE assaults on immigrants and other threats to the Constitution and the rule of law---concern for LGBTQ+ persons in the U.S. and Africa---support for efforts to secure the rights of Indigenous persons and tribes in Maine---support for FCNL and AFSC---participation in the annual Camden Conference, active engagement with environmental projects, support for local homeless persons, and active participation in pro-democracy rallies and civil rights demonstrations, just to mention a few.

We continue to fly the LGBTQ+ and the Black Lives Matter flags in front of our Meeting House.

Our Participation with Friends beyond the Local Meeting

In addition to hosting Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting this year, the Treasurer of the Quarterly Meeting is also now a frequent attender of our Meetings for Worship.

A number of our members are fully engaged with the Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy (on Wabanaki concerns--i.e. tribal/state issues) as well as with the American Friends Service Committee and the Friends

Committee on National Legislation through donations and relevant program opportunities.

Some Friends also work hard with Environmental groups and issues. Members have joined in public protests at the State House in Augusta on specific legislation (e.g. Poor Peoples Campaign). The meeting continues its witness against the hiring practices of Friends United Meeting which discriminate against LGBTQ persons.

Our Relations with the Community and Other Religious Groups

Midcoast Friends Meeting supplies the Quaker representative to the Maine Council of Churches and she brings communications back to us from there.

Our Meeting hosts meetings of the local Indivisible executive committee. We also provide rentals of our space for local like-minded organizations.

Through our Midcoast Outreach and Peace Center (MOPC) and as individuals, we are actively engaged in community outreach projects and local activism.

Our library committee has provided a "Little Library" with books, free for anyone on our Meeting House porch. We offer free Wifi there and encourage people to sit and enjoy the quiet, reflective outdoor space, benches and rocking chairs.

We support the Community Housing Improvement Project (CHIP) with donations and volunteers, the Ecumenical Food Pantry (with dollars and food donations and volunteers), and the Diaper Bank (for which we also provide a storage shed).

We believe that keeping our Midcoast Meeting open and our MOPC activities available as beacons and resources, we are doing what we can and it's worth doing.

Narramissic Valley Friends Meeting State of Society Report, 2025

We are a small, and close Meeting, welcoming visitors and attenders, both in person and on Zoom. We have regular attenders from the Caribbean, Iowa, Vermont and MDI (Maine). At one time or another, others use Zoom when away from home, or when health issues prevent them from attending in person. We consider ourselves very fortunate to have such great friends and Friends.

We continue to meet in a room at the Bucksport United Methodist Church, and have had the opportunity to attend breakfasts, suppers and get to know some of their members. Sharing space with others gives us a visual presence and offers the possibility of working together in the future.

Over the past few years, we have developed a pattern for activities after Meeting for Worship. The first Sunday of the month, we have a social time with refreshments. The second Sunday is our Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. On the third Sundays we have shared our thoughts and responses about books which we have chosen to read jointly. This year we read A Quaker Book of Wisdom by Robert L. Smith, How to Love by Thich Nhat Hanh, and chose Reason for Hope by Jane Goodall for our readings for the coming year. These books have provided insights, and often prompt discussions that lead in surprising directions. The fourth Sunday is dedicated to ‘advocacy’. One member, in particular, helps to keep us up-to-date on local and state issues. For that, we are very thankful.

In early 2025, we received a generous donation to our Meeting from Rachel Carey-Harper, with a suggested focus on immigrants, and others struggling in our area. We donated to four organizations:

1. The Wabanaki Swanville Farm is an indigenous project to grow foods common to local Native people, and to share those foods and approaches to farming with other Mainers.

2. Belfast has created the Family Harbor Project, an interfaith project providing shelter, food and education to homeless people.

3. We significantly increased our yearly donation to the Bucksport Food Pantry, which provides food and supplies to those in need in the Bucksport area.

4. We chose to donate to the Mainers for Humane Immigration.

5. Finally, we also chose to use some of Rachel's money to create something positive to counteract the current negativity in our culture. We designed bookmarks to distribute for free to others, focusing on common American democratic values. The bookmarks were put in local libraries, town halls and shops which agreed to display them. The name of our Meeting is on the back.

We are deeply grateful to Rachel Carey-Harper for her gift and for the opportunity to support the above groups at a level which we would have been unable to do by ourselves.

As always, there have been many changes in our Meeting. We have had two Friends, Robert and Diane Phipps, move to Vermont this year to be closer to family and friends. We miss them but are glad that they are able to continue to meet with us via Zoom. There have also been many instances of members and attenders

supporting each other in our Meeting as sickness, hospitalization and aging has brought new challenges. We continue to be grateful for these opportunities to help each other when getting through the day becomes difficult. In December, our beloved treasurer, David Thompson, who has served not only our Meeting, but also the Quarter, retired and Luki Hewitt volunteered as our new treasurer. Another long-time member, Margaret DeRivera, who had moved out of our area the year before, applied for membership in Durham Meeting. Margaret had been very active in the Meeting, in our community, and on behalf of our Native populations, and she has been sorely missed. We approved her transfer of membership, happy that she has found a new home Meeting.

Various members and attenders have been active in various areas of concern. Three of our group met with an interfaith group to share their concerns with Senator Collins about LD1883, the 'One Big Beautiful Bill' and how it concerned healthcare needs. Another attender is on the board of FCNL and reports its activities and the options that it provides individuals to advocate to legislators in areas of concern. Another attender went to Sri Lanka to do volunteer work through the Peace Corp. And one member teaches English to immigrants who now live in the USA but come from all over the world.

Although small in numbers as we write this report, it is amazing to us how many corners of the state, country and world we have penetrated. A new set of lyrics that we sing to an old African American spiritual (Rock a' My Soul in the Bosom of Abraham) comes to mind:

1. “Shine God’s Light in the Shadow of Darkness,
(repeat two more times)
Oh, Shine God’s Light”
2. “So bright, you can’t get over it!
So bright, you can’t get under it!
So bright, you can’t get round it!
Oh, Shine God’s Light.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of
Narramissic Valley Friends Meeting,

Margaret Marshall and Luki Hewitt

Winthrop Center Friends State of Society Report for 2025

This year has been characterized by soul work, accompaniment, and finding uplift in troubling times. The world, and each one of us, has experienced troubling times. There are very few other places in our lives to bring those feelings on behalf of ourselves and for the ones we love, and to hold them in the Light together. Health concerns and death have been walking closely with us this year as well as constant awareness of societal ills.

During difficult times we know we can count on one another to step up and do what needs to be done and to be there to support one another in practical and spiritual ways. Connection to one another and the luminous Spirit among us ranges from doing the smallest of things with love and builds to larger ways of caring for each other. The Meeting rallied around Friends going through a particularly challenging time in the Fall and Winter, assisting in practical ways, and stepping up to carry responsibilities in the Meeting. We feel the loss of music and strong voices in the Meeting with their inability to physically attend worship.

Members demonstrated willingness to step outside their comfort zones this year, stepping into new leadership roles to serve our community. Serving on Ministry and Counsel for the first time was a moving experience for one Friend, who was in awe of the community's love and care for each other. Role modeling for one another is an experience that's ongoing – being honest and open, being there for one another, mentoring, showing by example how to interact and communicate as well as sharing Quaker practice. A newer Friend says she has learned a lot from observing and experiencing this.

A strong sense of commitment to one another and to the Meeting stands out. It is a place of belonging, a space for growth, recognition of divine presence, vulnerability, intimacy, and service to one another. We are also nurtured by times to simply enjoy being together for monthly potluck meals and summer picnics that include spouses of members.

We appreciate the balance between nurturing our community, supporting one another's spiritual journeys and reaching out to the larger world with activities. Being together in this community feels like it achieves a balance

between being “in here” and “out there” and that is because God is at the center.

The Wabanaki elder-in-residence program in the University of Maine system, initiated in 2024, following the leading of one of our members, is proving successful and has spread in a number of ways. We learned how a generous movement by one Meeting, can inspire and motivate others to be involved and to give. In turn we have been inspired and guided by Acadia Meeting’s Peace Award to initiate an annual Earthcare Award locally.

Our sense of connection with and concern for the wellbeing of the Earth and its more-than-human beings has become more central to our shared life as a spiritual community. Five of our members completed the BTS Small Church Leadership Program focusing on small congregations being places of refugia in a climate-changed world. The literal and metaphorical idea of refugia continues to inspire and resonate with us whether we are able to be physically present in the meeting room or attend via zoom.

The BTS program both challenged and fed us. In the tension between producing and being true to ourselves we found a good balance. One of the things we were asked to do was to do a small experiment with “radical intent.” Here is how one of the leaders reported on how we responded to this: *‘As their first order of discernment, the group changed the language of “radical intent” to “root intent.” Their root intent was “we are a faith community offering space for spiritual exploration with a focus on worship, prayer, spiritual nurture, and spirit-led discernment. Our faith is inclusive of our human and more than human kin. We want to offer our particular gifts and abilities to serve and support one another and the wider community. And we wish to be visible and inviting to seekers.” Their small experiment was to host an event titled “Earth Stations.” The event was held on Good Friday and was an offering of prayer, lament, and presence for the more-than-human world. They held an awareness of earth’s pain whilst travelling through the fourteen stations. This journey included words and images, song, prayer, and silence. In their presentation, the group named their key learning as trusting “that new paths do open when we step forward together in faith and creativity.” Collaborating on something meaningful helped them deepen connections, and in working together there was “grace and appreciation for all forms of*

participation.” They also shared how being outdoors made the experience more spiritually grounding, and helped them to feel more connected to the more-than-human world. “It was a new way to pray together.” Despite initially questioning the Asset Mapping exercise, they cited this specifically as helping them acknowledge what gifts they could bring to this work.’

Throughout the program Friends participating in the program kept the Meeting informed and involved by sharing information, as well as the various exercises and activities. Beyond the end of the program the Meeting has continued to seek ways to follow through on our “root intent.” In the summer we experimented with outdoor worship at the camp of one of our members and hold the desire to find a way to offer more opportunities for worship outside. In the Fall we sponsored the first of what we hope will be a series of seasonal walks – a combination of observation, appreciation and meditative presence, assisted by the knowledgeable leadership of two local naturalists associated with the Meeting. We also initiated a \$500 annual award, mentioned above, for young people in our area engaged in Earthcare – either through hands-on projects or through advocacy that might be local or in the wider sphere.

During the BTS small church leadership program it was also helpful to have reflected to us how other congregations and the leaders of the program perceived us. These are just a few excerpts from the final report drawn up by the leaders:

“There exists between these people a great deal of interpersonal trust, and more emphatically, explicit trust in spirit”

“They are committed to a process of deep listening for Spirit’s will for them.

“Being with this group over the course of a year, I... sensed real security through their actions that only deep trust could bring.”

A Friend who lives in another state and attends worship regularly with us by zoom said that she experiences the Meeting as God-centered and community-focused, both in prayer and outreach. She contrasts our Meeting’s spiritual focus with others that felt more politically-focused to her. We in turn consider her a part of our spiritual community and appreciate the love she has shown for us and how she shares her knowledge, wisdom and grace.

At times we worry about being small in numbers. Can we embrace that maybe we are just the perfect size? It can be harder to feel connected in a large group and many of us feel more comfortable speaking in a smaller gathering. As the BTS small church leadership program reinforced for us, there can be power in being small. We do however, want to continue to find ways to be visible and inviting to newcomers.

Water imagery resonated for us this year. Sometimes being a part of our community feels like being a swimmer held, surrounded, and supported by the body of water that is the Meeting and ultimately the Spirit. We are aware of the ripples created from our times of worship and how we are impacted by the ripples that spread to us from other groups of Friends. Attendance at Quarterly and Yearly meeting gatherings have reinforced this sense. Just as currents flow and change, and as tides ebb and flow, so there is an ebb and flow of energy in the Meeting; energy flowing in, swirling around among us, and energy flowing out. Our energy was high through most of 2025 and then there was a time of lower energy because of things happening in our personal lives. Perhaps we are needing a time of rest and of gathering strength and energy for whatever may come next. Whatever it is we are confident in the Spirit's guidance and one another's support.