

Advance Document, Permanent Board Clerk Report to Sessions 2026

The members of Permanent Board (PB) have been nominated, and serve on behalf of all NEYM Friends, to implement the decisions and priorities of the Yearly Meeting as directed by Sessions, when the Yearly Meeting is not in Session. Our work of collective spiritual discernment is dependent upon both our human efforts to fully engage in that work, as well as our individual and collective commitment to Spirit-led discernment and deep Listening. Permanent Board meetings are hybrid and open for Friends to attend as visitors, either in person, or by Zoom. We welcome your interest and participation. General information and background documents pertaining to Permanent Board, and a link to register to attend, are on the **NEYM Permanent Board page**, and minutes of previous PB meetings are on the **NEYM Decisions and Discernment (D&D)** link.

Our regular meetings this year began, and ended, holding a concern for the humanitarian and political crisis in Cuba, with PB's endorsement of travel for Noah Bishop Merrill and Jackie Stillwell among Cuba Yearly Meeting Friends in September, and receipt of a heartfelt and spiritually compelling report of travel to Cuba from Benigno Sanchez-Eppler, and from Richard Lindo, clerk of Puente de Amigos in May. NEYM is blessed with faithful and inspiring Friends who travel in the ministry to bring spiritual nurture, fellowship and practical support to others, on behalf of all of us.

In October, as charged by Sessions 2025, PB sponsored a Called Meeting with a concern for Gaza, clerked by Phil Veatch, NEYM Presiding Clerk, and guided by the work and recommendations of the Israel-Palestine Resource Group. Approximately 80 Friends participated. Minutes of that meeting are on the NEYM, D&D page, for the October 18, 2025 PB meeting.

The Quarterly Meetings have been an important focus for Permanent Board, facilitating interconnections among QM leadership via two PB-sponsored Evening Conversations; sponsoring a large, and successful, all day sharing and encouragement at the QM Visioning Day in April; and hearing a thoughtful update from leadership of the Salem Quarterly Meeting (SQM) about the status of their ongoing hiatus of administrative activities. Although PB continues its role in overseeing administrative functions of SQM, it was uplifting to see that the greatest number in attendance of any quarter at the April QM Visioning Day was Friends from SQM! A core of SQM Friends, sponsored by their monthly meetings, are committed to re-imagining the future of SQM, assisted by a working group of PB members. PB continues to offer support as SQM discerns its path forward.

At every meeting PB accepts the memorial minutes of Friends who have died, throughout the YM. Hearing these names – and the MANY names this year, of these beloved Friends, is

an occasion for sorrow at our loss, as well as an occasion of deep gratitude for the inspiring examples expressed in these moving memorial minutes. We are grateful, as well, for the faithfulness of the local meetings in carrying out the tender task of remembering and witnessing to the gifts of the Spirit expressed through these beloved Friends.

Annual Report from the NEYM Earthcare Ministry Resource Group June, 2026

The group formerly known as the Earthcare Ministry Committee is now called the Earthcare Ministry Resource Group (EMRG, quite fitting to be called “emerge”).

As we meet online each month, we grow deeper in our knowledge of each other and have enriching discussions. We begin with worship, followed by check-ins about our lives since we last met. We learn from one another and bring new learnings to share with the group.

At Sessions last year we hosted the early morning outdoor worship, as we have done for the last several decades. This year we had a large attendance and were often told how important it was for people to begin their day in worship outdoors.

We also hosted a well-attended workshop titled, “Bringing Sustainability Home.” According to the description, “This workshop will encourage participants to discern, through interactive activities, our inward—spiritual, bodily, gut-level—responses to the state, national, and global issues that are concerning us. Together we will imagine the spiritual and concrete ways we can respond to these issues in our personal lives, neighborhoods, and communities.”

Throughout the time at Sessions, we gathered with others to share and listen about the concerns facing the future of this beautiful, sacred planet. We found that many were deeply concerned and were trying to find ways to make a difference.

During the winter we hosted an online book discussion, using the book *Alfie & Me, What Owls Know and What Humans Believe*. The discussion was lively, heartfelt, and spiritually enriching. The author, Carl Safina, agreed to visit with us via zoom after we finished our six weeks of discussion. He was delightful, answered questions thoroughly and with much wisdom, and brought us up to date about the continued wild life of the screech owl Alfie and her connection to Carl and his wife.

As members of EMRG, we continue our commitment to work as led on behalf of planetary health for all. We welcome Friends to discern what the Holy Spirit is calling you to contribute to our resource group and learn what we can offer you as we join together to make a difference as members of our individual communities and as the Religious Society of Friends.

2026 Report for Advance Documents
Indigenous Relations Resource Group (formerly Right Relations Resource Group)
Summary of activities since Sessions 2025

The Indigenous Relations Resource Group (formerly Right Relations Resource Group) revised our Policies and Procedures to clarify that our focus has been with Indigenous peoples beginning with the Apology in 2021-2023. We also considered whether it was time for NEYM to start an Indigenous Relations Committee as the previous Indian Affairs Committee was laid down in the early 2000s.

Since 2025 we have led workshops on Reparative Justice at Framingham, North Shore, and Fresh Pond Monthly Meetings, and at Sessions 2025. In April 2026 members led a workshop for Dover Quarterly Meeting. In most settings, Friends express deep remorse for the harms of our spiritual ancestors, but feel overwhelmed with what to do. We acknowledge the complexity of past Friends who were following what they thought was God's leading but were also blinded by their own sense of cultural superiority.

We share what we have learned about how Friends are engaged in building relationships and undoing past harms through steps such as "Real Rent" - direct payment to neighboring tribes for the use of their land; donating a percentage of the sale of real estate to a neighboring tribe; supporting Land Back and Language Reclamation efforts, getting to know our Indigenous neighbors by attending local events such as PowWows, the National Day of Mourning and Pokumtuck Homelands Festival; Wabanaki Reach, Friends Committee on Maine Public Policy and more.

Immediately following Sessions 2025, we collaborated with members of the Quakers and Indian Boarding Schools Research Group to propose that NEYM become an affiliate member of the National Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS). Although Friends felt clear to become Affiliate Members, we were unable to agree on a financial contribution towards healing past harms.

We continue to discern how to respond to the minutes from 2024 and 2025:

- Minute 2024-62 " ...If NEYM becomes clear to make financial reparations, a significant draw from the Witness & Ministry Fund and/or the undesignated funds could be used for this purpose." (from Legacy Gift Committee 10 year review).
- Minute **2024-41**"...“to open communications with the Indigenous Peoples of Ottawa and Pottawatomie Counties, Oklahoma (what had been the Quapaw and Sac and Fox Agencies), to explore opening communications towards offering a collective apology and asking what first steps might be acceptable in their view.”

In March, Gordon Bugbee, Mary Zwirner and Suzanna Schell, traveled to Oklahoma for a third time where they met with the Ioway, Modoc, Wyandotte, Eastern Shawnee, and Seneca-Cayuga and worshiped with Friends at Hominy Friends Church, a predominately Osage congregation and Council House Friends Church on Seneca land. [Please see the account off their trip for reflections on the experience.](#)

For more than 14 years, NEYM has been discerning how to engage in repair and healing. We have repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery, made a formal Apology, and researched NEYM's role in the Quaker and Indian Boarding Schools. But we have not yet been able to move from acknowledging past harms to engaging in substantive steps towards repair and healing, particularly when it involves money.

During their meeting with the Ioway Nation, the chairman accepted our apology for harms done by our spiritual ancestors. When asked, "how can we help?" Chairman Keyes responded that they need help restoring their language as the last heritage language speaker died in the 1930s.

That leaves us with the question, *"Is there no substantial way for the Yearly Meeting to help?"*

Suzanna Schell, clerk IRRG, Beacon Hill & Three Rivers; Gordon Bugbee, Beacon Hill; Sara Smith, Concord; Kim West, Friends Meeting at Cambridge; Don Campbell, Mt. Toby; Minga Claggett-Borne, Friends Meeting at Cambridge; Andrew Grant, Mt. Toby.

NEYM Ministry & Eldership Resource Group Annual Report 2026

The primary work of this group is to nurture the culture and practice of recognizing and upholding ministry among Friends in New England, and of acknowledging and sustaining Friends' tradition of supportive elders. According to *Faith and Practice*, care and accountability of ministers is rooted in the local monthly meeting, with additional responsibility and support held by the Ministry & Counsel of quarterly meetings. The role of the yearly meeting, and specifically of the Ministry and Eldership Resource Group, is to support monthly meetings and quarters in these vital responsibilities. [PB Minute 2024-102]

The Ministry & Eldership resource group was approved at Sessions 2024; the first members were appointed at Sessions 2025. We are available to nurture, inspire and offer support; to share wisdom that is not evenly shared and understood; to affirm there is a tradition and to help people find access to it through trust and relationship.

Our first year has been spent seeking to become aware of the conditions in the yearly meeting. In February, we wrote a letter of introduction to all monthly and quarterly meetings, including queries. We have engaged with four meetings, and we look forward to more inquiries.

We offered workshops lifting up emerging conversations around ministry and eldership in the fall at Meeting Care Day, and the spring at the Living Faith Gathering and Quarterly Meeting Visioning Day. These were widely attended by Friends concerned with strengthening understanding and practices around ministry and eldership in their meetings, as by individuals feeling calls to ministry.

We are specifically asked to "report annually on the group's sense of some of the growing edges of ministry and eldership within the yearly meeting."

We see and have heard

- Curiosity and expanding understanding concerning ministry and eldership in our meetings. Interest in how to respond to someone experiencing a call to ministry, when this is something unfamiliar to the meeting.
- Without shared clarity, Friends from different meetings experience widely different support, with gifts sometimes going unnoticed and unnurtured.
- Friends are struggling to hold conversations about gifts of ministry and eldership, when some in the meeting are eager while others resist.
- Concerns to nurture Spirit-led vocal ministry in meeting for worship.
- Interest in meetings for conversations about healthy eldership.
- Small but growing numbers of individuals with sustained calls to Gospel ministry (ministry that draws people deeper into the Divine life: transformational, encouraging, instructing, nudging, and sometimes admonishing) are receiving support from their meetings, while others are not.
- Meetings are recognizing and finding ways to support individuals with calls to public ministry outside of the meeting, including direct service, social witness, and outreach ministries.
- It is a true joy to exercise one's gifts!

Friends in the past took seriously that spiritual gifts are poured out on the meeting community, not just the individual. Having a call to ministry was part of the normal metabolism of the meeting community. The Ministry & Eldership Resource Group is seeking to re-enliven a culture where Quaker ministry and eldership thrive.

Members: Brian Drayton (Wellesley/Salem), Jennie Isbell Shinn (Mt Toby/Connecticut Valley), Jim Lyons (Mt Toby/Connecticut Valley), William Monroe (Providence/Southeast)

Ex-officio: Janet Hough, NEYM M&C clerk (Cobscook/Vassalboro), Sarah Gant, Accompaniment clerk (Beacon Hill/Salem), Noah Bishop Merrill, NEYM Secretary (Putney/Northwest)

Emeritus member: Carl Williams (Plainfield/Northwest)