

# Monday Morning

## 3.1 Epistle

We heard the Epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting, held at Friends House, London on 4 - 7 May 2018.

Encouraged by the voices of younger Friends among us, we have united joyfully, to embark on a Spirit-led process of revision from much-loved foundations. We know that this will take time and energy. We are clear that we have the resources to undertake this, while continuing our witness in the wider world.

In listening to one another we have been both inspired and challenged by our religious diversity. Viewed from a distance, our Quaker community may seem like a single body. Up close, it sparkles in its infinite variety. Diversity in our beliefs and language is a richness, not a flaw. We each choose our own words, and together our stories make a whole. We are not only individuals, but also part of a church. We want the language of our book to be accessible, and also to reflect the wealth of our tradition, and of our experiences today.

Making space to reflect our religious diversity may be painful. We should not shy away from expressing who we are. We accept our vulnerability. We need to be tender with one another, balancing truth in one hand and love in the other. By listening open-heartedly to one another, we will hear where words come from.

Change brings both excitement and apprehension. We have faith that our Quaker processes will help us follow the leadings of God, and take us where we need to be.

## 3.2 Greetings from Cuba

Our Friends from Cuba have again been barred from visiting, as our government refuses to grant visas to them. We therefore received their video greetings with mixed emotion -- sorrow at their absence, and joy at the way the love of Christ, aided by technology, helps us maintain our *puente de amor* across barriers of distance and politics. We cannot be separated by governments or by oceans.

## 3.3 Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness

The Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Working Group (elders Polly Attwood, Eppchez Yes, and Melissa Foster, and Working Group members Lisa Graustein (Beacon Hill), Lorena Boswell (Friends Meeting at Cambridge), Becky Jones (Northampton), Pamela Terrien (Westport), and Heidi Nortonsmith (Northampton), shared the work they have done thus far this year, as well as the work they will carry forward this week.

The Working Group isn't composed of experts. They are facilitating a process that encourages everyone's wisdom and gifts and celebrates inclusion and the shared work. They invited each of us to notice patterns of oppression so that we, as the corporate body and as individuals, can discern faithful next steps. The group invited us to participate in the many opportunities to engage in this work. They reminded us that this is an experiment and we will learn from both our messiness and from our faithfulness.

### **3.4 Treasurer's Report**

Shearman Taber (Northampton) gave the treasurer's report. Those who wish to communicate with the treasurer should email [treasurer@neym.org](mailto:treasurer@neym.org).

He noted, with admirable humility, a significant error that he made in his report: reserves are actually substantially below the numbers required by YM policy, and this fact was not correctly reflected on all lines of the balance sheets. He and the Finance Committee are working to ensure that such errors do not occur in the future, and concerned members are directed to that committee for further discussion. We appreciate and love our treasurer even when he makes mistakes, and our forgiveness for the error was expressed by the body.

Specifically, the "Net Surplus/Loss" amount for last year was not correctly transferred to the "Working Capital" line, which, along with our Quasi-Endowment fund, comprise our reserves. This "Net surplus/loss" line showed a loss of \$48,000. Thus, our reserves were actually \$176,000—which is \$38,000 below the \$214,000 required by policy. Based on the FY19 and proposed FY20 budgets, we will begin next year with reserves of \$168,000 or \$52,000 below the \$220,000 required by policy.

We remain on track with the projections that we made five years ago. At that time, we forecast that FY '19 was the year that our reserves would reach their lowest point, well below the amount required by policy. We had also projected that our finances would "turn the corner" this year, and indeed, we are close to balancing the budget—but only if giving stays on track.

The treasurer's full report is appended.

### **3.5 Finance Committee**

Bob Murray (Beacon Hill) presented the FY '20 budget for the finance committee.

This is the first year that the newly adopted funding priorities funding process was used to create the budget. Therefore, the budget reflects some modest increases from last year in order to align the budget with those corporately discerned priorities.

We supported the priority of funding “learning, practice, and leadership” by shifting Nia Thomas’ work to that of Quaker Practice & Leadership Facilitator, and including funds to continue the work of Maggie Nelson as Young Friends Events Organizer.

We supported full participation of parents at business meeting by extending the hours of childcare at Sessions, and we increased the funding for childcare concomitantly.

We supported YM communications by continuing funding for social media and graphic design.

We supported an increased capacity for financial management by funding a 3-hour/week increase in the Account Manager’s hours.

The budget details are appended.

As we reflected on the budget, we gave thanks for the long years of service that Eileen Cummings (Winthrop Center) gave to this work.

### **3.6 Good News from Africa**

Beth Collea (Wellesley) and Judith Nandikove brought good news about a growing shared ministry between East African and North American Friends. Judith expressed her gratitude for NEYM’s support of this work, and the sense of connection it fosters between Kenya and New England. Judith also lifted up the ministry of women in the three Swahili speaking Friends Meetings in Quebec. Great appreciation was expressed for the years of service of Marian Baker (Weare).

### **3.7 Nominating Committee**

Jackie Stillwell (Monadnock) gave the report from Nominating Committee. While many opportunities remain open, the committee will not be bringing further nominations for approval later in the week.

This is a conscious decision made both to facilitate more faithful discernment, and also to avoid a perceived pressure to “fill slots” rather than discerning gifts. Therefore, Friends who begin a discernment process during the excitement and energy of Sessions are asked instead to complete that discernment process in the more reflective space of their home and local meeting. Additions to the slate will be brought to Permanent Board for approval throughout the year.

### **3.8 Development Program**

Noah Merrill thanked us for our participation, prayers, encouragement, and contributions for NEYM’s shared ministries.

This year we are charged with raising \$593,500. Friends who have already made three-year pledges or have become monthly donors will bring us to within \$56,000 of our goal. There are some who have suggested that this goal will be a stretch, but this is the number we are led to request in order to support our ministries. The Yearly Meeting does need more income. This isn’t a problem to be fixed, it is a culture to be nurtured—a culture of abundance, of equity, and of joy.