



NEW ENGLAND  
YEARLY MEETING  
OF FRIENDS  
QUAKERS

## News from Annual Sessions 2019 New England Yearly Meeting of Friends

*Please share the experience of NEYM Sessions 2019 with Friends at home. Consider posting this summary and making a report to your local meeting for business.*

The theme for Sessions was *Provoke One Another to Love*. In the plenary we heard ministry from Lisa Graustein (Beacon Hill Meeting, MA) inviting us into “re-membering” connection—with ourselves, with one another, and with God. She helped us to remind one another that each of us are seen, forgiven, beloved, and needed in the work of growing into the Beloved Community.

Colin Saxton (North Valley Friends Church, Oregon) offered the Bible Half Hours, inviting us as faith communities to a life and witness that is “absurdly joyful, entirely fearless, and always in trouble.” Audio recordings of the Bible Half Hours and the plenary sessions will be available soon at [neym.org](http://neym.org).

Of the more than 620 people gathered, close to 11% were attending for the first time, and many Friends who attended for the first time last year returned. Participation by Friends under 18 increased for the fourth consecutive year. Generous contributions through the Pay-As-Led approach to Sessions fees continued to support the presence of all.

We celebrated substantial representation from each of the New England states, visitors from Kenya, Bolivia, and Ramallah and from several other North American yearly meetings, as well as ecumenical representatives. The U.S. government’s continuing denial of visas prevented representatives of our Cuban Quaker family from being with us in body, but a series of video messages captured their greetings and prayers for us. As always, they were with us in Spirit.

*Here’s a summary of some news from the week to supplement your sharing:*

**Naming and Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness:** Throughout the week, as part of the ongoing work of “naming and noticing patterns of oppression and faithfulness,” Friends acknowledged moments when we acted in ways that contributed to oppression and separation—from ourselves, from one another and from God—and celebrated moments of faithfulness as we sought to admit mistakes, ask for forgiveness, and adjust behavior to align more fully with God’s invitation. This work was supported

by appointed Friends who observed the conduct of the business meetings and reflected back on this overall work at the end of the week.

This messy and imperfect work goes beyond Annual Sessions, and is being held and supported by many as we continue to implement and practice what we are learning as Friends across New England.

*Learning from the time together at Annual Sessions will inform NEYM Ministry and Counsel, which has been charged with ensuring that this work continues.*

**Inviting Friends into Leadership and Removing Barriers to Service:** Friends gathered approved significant, specific steps—structural, financial, and cultural—that will support our efforts to better steward the gifts of service among us, and better develop and support leadership. Work will continue on the approved steps throughout the coming year.

*A progress report will be given by the Quaker Practice and Leadership Facilitator, Nia Thomas (nia@neym.org) at Sessions 2020.*

**Funding Priorities Process and Budget Approval:** We heard a report on the first year of the new funding priorities process which helps guide the Finance Committee as it prepares the annual budget for the Yearly Meeting. The priorities for this year—leadership development and deepening Quaker practice, expanding support for childcare, improving communications, and strengthening financial management—were incorporated into the budget that Sessions approved for the coming year.

*If you or your meeting have ideas or suggestions for priorities that you believe should be included in the discernment of funding priorities in the coming year, please share them with the Yearly Meeting Secretary at ymsec@neym.org.*

**Supporting the Ministry of Publications:** Friends approved a new process for supporting publications, including a new mechanism for stewardship of the Mosher Book and Tract Fund. We celebrated the use of these funds for the first time since 2014, to promote the new Spanish translation of John Woolman’s Journal completed by two New England Friends as part of their work at [raicescuaqueras.org](http://raicescuaqueras.org).

*If you have ideas, suggestions, or questions about Quaker publication projects, contact NEYM Office Manager Sara Hubner at office@neym.org to begin a conversation.*

**Continuing to Respond to the Climate Crisis:** Following a report on progress made in the past year, those gathered renewed commitments to work together to further reduce the carbon footprint of Friends and Friends meetings across New England.

One way for your meeting to participate is to use the Cape Cod Climate Change Collaborative's carbon calculator to calculate your carbon footprint and discover workable steps to reduce it. Visit *climatecalculator.org* for more information, or check the advance documents for Sessions 2019 at *neym.org/sessions/advance-documents*.

**Affirmation of the Lives and Ministry of LGBTQ Friends, and Update on NEYM Withholding Policy:** Friends affirmed that every person is deeply beloved in the eyes of God, and united in our love and care for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) Friends.

Sessions directed the presiding clerk to write to the clerk of the Friends United Meeting (FUM) General Board expressing the pain and sorrow that a portion of the FUM personnel policy causes, and asking that a faithful alternative be sought. Sessions asked NEYM's representatives to work with the representatives of other yearly meetings, including those holding different views than those held by NEYM, to help seek this alternative.

Ten years ago, Sessions created a temporary way for local meetings to withhold that portion of their contribution to Yearly Meeting that would go to FUM. In 2014, Friends approved extending that mechanism until 2019. This year, Friends were not able to reach unity to extend the mechanism again. In order to respect the discernment of monthly meetings that had approved budgets assuming the mechanism would continue and to invite Friends to find new ways forward, the current withholding mechanism will not end until October 1, 2020.

*A letter from the new presiding clerk of NEYM, Bruce Neumann (clerk@neym.org) will be sent to all local meetings along with the relevant minutes in the coming weeks. If Friends have specific questions, please contact the Yearly Meeting Secretary, Noah Merrill, at ymsec@neym.org, the presiding clerk (email above), or the clerk of Ministry & Counsel, Honor Woodrow, at mc-clerk@neym.org.*

**Encouraging deepened engagement with the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict:** In response to a request from Northwest Quarterly Meeting, Sessions urged Friends and local meetings to prayerfully consider how they might further promote a just peace in the Middle East, with particular attention to the ongoing crisis in Gaza.

**Approval of Two New Papers for Faith and Practice:** As part of the Yearly Meeting's ongoing process of revising the book of Faith and Practice for Quakers in New England, Friends gave preliminary approval to papers on Membership and on Dying, Death, and Bereavement. These texts will be available on *neym.org*.

*Meetings are encouraged to use the new edition of Faith and Practice, available both in print form and online at neym.org (including the new texts), and to share with the Faith and Practice Revision Committee any comments, suggestions, or guidance that may arise from that experience. For further information on the process of writing and revision of Faith and Practice, contact Phebe McCosker (Hanover, NH, Friends Meeting), clerk of Faith and Practice Revision Committee, or visit neym.org/fp-revision.*

**Celebration of Witness and Ministry:** Friends celebrated some of the many ways New England Quakers are engaged in the work of Love throughout our region and beyond, including particularly those of the recipients of grants from the NEYM Legacy Grant Funds. More information on recent Legacy grantees is available at neym.org.

***More Information:***

*Further details and audio recordings will be posted at neym.org/sessions. Minutes of Annual Sessions will be posted online soon and will be emailed to all local meeting contacts.*

*To receive news and updates on the life and ministry of Friends across New England, subscribe to the monthly email newsletter at neym.org/mc-signup, and find New England Quakers on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram.*

*The next Annual Sessions will be held August 1–6, 2020, at Castleton University in Castleton, Vermont. For questions or more information about anything mentioned in this document, contact neym@neym.org.*