

# Thursday Morning

## 9.1 Epistle

We heard the epistle from Sierra Cascades Yearly Meeting.

“In our business and committees, we are working on establishing our organizational DNA and on holding space for healing from the traumas of the past. Our speaker for the weekend, Benigno Sanchez-Eppler, under the care of New England Yearly Meeting, shared with us in a way that spoke to our condition of bravely facing into the work of healing. His words were a balm to our souls, reminding us of the ways in which we can draw upon our experiences of wounding to better carry the healing light to others among us.”

## 9.2 State of Society

We heard the State of Society report, which included quotations from Monthly Meeting State of Society reports as well as queries for reflection.

“As Friends, we are called to stand centered in hope and not despair. Divisions and obstacles have no power over the vision we share and the work we carry out with Divine Assistance. We are aware that we are and will be imperfect on this path but know that in our brokenness, Light enters and leads us through the power of Love to transformation and Grace. In the words of Margaret Fell: ‘Friends, let the Eternal Light search you, and try you, it will rip you up, lay you open. Provoke one another to Love.’”

(see full report and queries on page xx)

We received the report with gratitude for the faithfulness of these Friends. Others shared their experience of the joy and faithfulness we see around the Yearly Meeting.

## 9.3 Minute of Exercise on NEYM’s relationship with FUM

We heard again the minute of exercise presented by the clerks.

We know that *every person* is deeply beloved in the eyes of God. We unite unequivocally in our love and care for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Friends, and hold a particular concern for their lives and ministries. We continue to seek the ways we can best support these Friends in New England, around the country, and around the world.

We are clear that the FUM personnel policy causes harm to LGBTQ+ Friends, as well as all Friends who are sexually active outside of heterosexual marriage.

Furthermore, the personnel policy suppresses the ministry of these Friends, causing loss to the wider body. We seek forgiveness for the extent to which we are complicit in this.

All of this we hold to be true, and yet we *also* unite in our desire to continually engage with the wide diversity of Friends worldwide. We are a part of FUM, we love FUM, and we wish to live in our community with love and integrity.

In our struggle to hold these two unities in tension, for several years we have extended a temporary withholding mechanism (see minute 2009-54) that allows individuals to know that none of their money will go to FUM.

The withholding mechanism has served a meaningful and helpful purpose. For a decade it has supported the freedom of conscience of some Friends within our Yearly Meeting, and also given us a reprieve from the tension and division that the FUM personnel policy has created in our communities. During this period, significant work was done, seeking greater unity and understanding.

As the withholding mechanism expires, we have heard any number of proposed possible mechanisms that might allow us to hold in tension both the freedom of conscience of Friends exercised by the personnel policy, and the deeply held desire to remain in community with FUM. Given our lack of unity, we are concerned that any alternative proposal drafted in haste on the floor of Sessions will not be seasoned; will not allow input from individuals not present at Sessions; and would be an obstacle to finding the opportunity that God is giving us. We hope that a properly seasoned proposal may rise through our established structures (e.g., a minute from a monthly meeting seasoned by the quarter) and be brought to Sessions 2020 before the withholding mechanism finally expires. What new opportunity, what new possibilities, are we now being called into?

As we move forward, let us listen to one another and to that of God within one another. In the words of Toni Morrison, let us “take the time to understand other languages, other views, other narratives.” Let us seek that greater place where God’s full measure of grace is poured out.

A number of Friends stood aside from this minute. Others were unable to unite with the minute.

## **9.4 Events Coordinator Report**

Elizabeth Hacala gave the Events Coordinator report.

“This is the first time I have felt like I could bring my whole self to my work. Sessions is a vessel, and we can fill it; a map, and we can follow it. It is a 359-year relationship, and an opportunity to remember. It is a prayer, and we can pray it.”

Her report was received with immense gratitude for all of the work it takes to coordinate an event with as many moving parts as Sessions.

### **9.45 Appreciation of Speakers**

Friends expressed their deep appreciation to Colin Saxton for bringing the Bible Half Hours; to Lisa Graustein for Presenting our Plenary; and to Jean Zaru of Ramallah Friends Meeting for sending a video message from Ramallah Friends Meeting. All of this ministry was recorded and will be posted on the Yearly Meeting website.

### **9.48 Thanks to Castleton Staff**

Friends also expressed thanks to the Castleton University staff for their friendly and enthusiastic support. In particular, we extended gratitude to Olliver Young, our dedicated Clerks’ technical support person, and MacArthur Stine, Castleton’s Director of Technical Service.

## **9.5 Epistles**

We heard the epistles from our youth programs: child care, JYM K-1, JYM 2-4, JYM 5-6, JHYM, and YF.

LVM Shelton (Plainfield), Brianna Hallowell & Jay O’Hara (West Falmouth) read the New England Yearly Meeting Epistle. With deep appreciation for the work of the committee, Friends received this reflection on our condition and our work together. (see page xx).

## **10.3 Closing Worship**

Friends closed in worship, purposing to meet again at Castletown University, August 1-6, 2020. Our new Presiding Clerk, Bruce Neumann, offered a closing prayer.

NEYM JYM 2019

Epistle K-1

Dear Friends,

Ten energetic and exuberant children ages 5 and 6 came from all corners of New England to NEYM at Castleton University. We played inside and outside, shared toys, and read stories. We had a visitor from Kenya who helped us to make ice cream. We explored the outdoors with a nature scavenger hunt and made fairy houses with our treasures. The children had their favorite books that we read often. The children created a community paper quilt and made calming glitter jars. We joined together to make hospitals, airplanes and a really tall tower from Legos. We played parachute games outside and in a play house. Watercolor paint butterflies were created and we gave the gift of being present to each other when we listened and payed attention. Ten children came together to play, grow and nurture each other in a blessed community for these six days.

In Peace and Light,

The New England Yearly Meeting Elementary kindergarten and first grade

[All Epistles will be appended to the minutes]