



NEW ENGLAND
YEARLY MEETING
OF FRIENDS
QUAKERS

Talking Points from Sessions 2018

Please share the news and joy from NEYM Sessions 2018 with Friends at home. Consider posting these talking points and making a report to your local meeting for business.

The theme for this year's Annual Sessions was *In Fear and Trembling Be Bold in God's Service*. During the plenary session we heard ministry from Adria Gulizia (Chatham Summit, NJ-New York Yearly Meeting), Sarah Walton (Vassalboro, ME) and Meg Klepack (West Falmouth, MA) sharing experiences from their journeys of faith.

Diane Randall (Hartford, CT), Executive Secretary of Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) spoke in the Bible Half Hours each day about the role that her faith has played in her work in the political sphere, and the ways in which the practices of Friends have influenced public policy. Recordings of the Bible Half Hours and the plenary session will be available soon online at neym.org and on the [NEYM YouTube channel](#).

Of the more than 620 people gathered, close to 15% were attending for the first time. For the third year in a row youth attendance was at a record high. We continued to celebrate strong representation from each of the New England states; from visitors including Friends from Kenya, Bolivia and El Salvador; and from several other North American yearly meetings; as well as ecumenical representatives. Though we mourned the U.S. government's continuing denial of visas which prevents representatives of our Cuban Quaker family from being with us in body, we felt their presence with us through a series of video clips, which captured their greetings and prayers for us. They were with us in Spirit.

Throughout the week Friends gathered at Castleton University engaged in a continuing conversation about the need to identify and interrupt the patterns of *seeing* and *doing*—within each of us, and within New England Yearly Meeting—that lead to complicity in white supremacy and oppression. The need for this continued work was identified in committee reports, during several items of business, in ministry during our sessions and worship, in the writing and approval of minutes and in ongoing conversations among small and large groups of Friends. We—as individuals, in our meetings, and in our organization—must continue this conversation. We must continue to follow the Spirit wherever it leads, trusting in the Grace that is with us always.

Here's a summary of important news from the week

Responding to Previous Years' Commitments:

Continuing Support for Immigrants and Refugees: Friends shared news of the responses to Sessions' minuted commitment (Minute 2017- 42) to support the rights and dignity of all

of our neighbors who are threatened in this time, including especially undocumented immigrants, refugees, and Muslims. We heard about some of the myriad ways that Friends and Friends Meetings throughout New England have been responding to this commitment. Friends approved the formation of an Immigration Justice working group to bring together Quakers across New England who are under the weight of this concern, and committed the support of the yearly meeting to this group. *If Friends in your meeting are engaged in ministry in support of these concerns and would like to connect with others similarly involved, please contact the Yearly Meeting office at neym@neym.org.*

Continuing to Respond to the Climate Crisis: At the recommendation of the NEYM Earthcare Ministries Committee, those gathered affirmed a commitment to using the Cape Cod Climate Change Collaborative's [carbon calculator](#) to calculate their carbon footprint and commit to a 10% reduction from baseline measures this fall by December 2019, and to encourage Friends throughout New England to do the same. More detailed information on support for this work will be forthcoming from the Earthcare Ministries Committee.

Consideration of Minutes brought forward from Quarterly Meetings:

Poor People's Campaign: At the recommendation of Vassalboro Quarterly Meeting, Friends approved New England Yearly Meeting endorsing the [Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival](#). Sessions encourages Friends and Friends Meetings to "...unite with the Poor People's Campaign by working to change the war on the poor to a condemnation and eradication of poverty itself, and to become involved through volunteering, organizing and/or financially supporting the coming together of many people across many different spectrums to further the witness of the Poor People's Campaign."

Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons: Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting brought forward a minute asking that the Yearly Meeting "...encourage Friends in New England to seek ways to support [the 2017 United Nations Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons] and... inform people about it." Friends approved sharing this minute with local and Quarterly Meetings.

Criminal Justice Reform: Salem Quarterly Meeting asked Sessions to support a minute stating their "...support [for] comprehensive criminal justice reform in Massachusetts that will promote restorative justice, support alternatives to incarceration, reform the pretrial process, and reduce the criminalization of poverty and race." The minute further invites Friends, and meetings across New England to "join [Salem Quarterly Meeting] in the work of repairing and restoring our communities by reforming our criminal justice system." Friends affirmed this minute as well seasoned, and asked that the Clerk share this minute with other quarters for discernment and further action.

Other Important Reports and Decisions:

Legacy Gift Funds: Friends gathered were moved by a slideshow of images of the many ways in which the Funds have been being used to support the ministry of New England Quakers in the areas of racial justice, climate change, outreach, religious education and more, coming soon to the [NEYM YouTube channel](#). A list of recent grant recipients can be found [on the NEYM website](#). The deadline for the next round of grants is October 1, 2018. For more information and to apply, visit neym.org/legacy-gift

Faith and Practice Revision: As part of the Yearly Meeting's ongoing process of revising the book of Faith and Practice for Quakers in New England, Friends considered a draft paper on *Membership*. Important questions arose, including consideration of the effect that approving a practice of dual membership might have on our understanding of the core commitments of our tradition. [Two additional draft papers](#) were presented for comment—one on Pastoral Care and one on Death, Dying, and Bereavement. Meetings are encouraged to further engage *corporately* with the material presented, and to share with the Faith and Practice Revision Committee what unity and wisdom they receive, trusting in the guidance of the Spirit in our midst. The [draft chapter on membership is available here](#). For further information, or to share your meeting's responses, contact Phebe McCosker (Hanover, NH, Friends Meeting), Clerk of Faith and Practice Revision Committee, or visit neym.org/fp-revision.

Transforming our Relationship with Money: After five years of dedicated and faithful work, its charge fulfilled, we celebrated the laying down of the Ad Hoc Long Term Financial Planning Committee. The Finance Committee's proposal of a balanced budget for the coming fiscal year—the fruit of a diligent process including both expense reductions and increased income—included a reduction of the total amount of New England Yearly Meeting's donations to three of the organizations of which NEYM is a member (Friends United Meeting, Friends World Committee for Consultation, and Friends General Conference). This provided Friends in attendance an opportunity to engage with the dynamic tension between our responsibility for fiscal stewardship, and our responsibility and commitment to support the work of the wider Quaker movement of which we are an inextricable part. After much discernment and with a sense of God's continual provision, Friends approved maintaining our current level of support for these three organizations, recognizing that further increases in contributions from meetings and individuals will be needed to prevent a deficit in the coming year.

Further details, video & audio recordings are posted at neym.org/sessions. Minutes of Annual Sessions will be posted soon and distributed to all local meetings.

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. New England Quakers also have an active and growing presence on social media through Facebook, YouTube and Instagram. The next Annual Sessions will be held August 3-8, 2019 at Castleton University, in Castleton, Vermont. For questions or more information about anything mentioned in this document, contact neym@neym.org.