

Falmouth Quarterly Meeting

Hosted by Brunswick Friends Meeting at Curtis Memorial Library

April 27, 2024

How does Truth prosper among us?

Present:

Brunswick: Marian Dalton, Christine Holden (zoom), Molly Elmali, Tom Kelly, Colleen Crowley,

Durham: Craig Freshley, Sarah Sprogell, Leslie Manning, Bob Eaton, Wendy Schlotterbeck (co-clerk)

Portland: Sally and Alan Farneth, Heather Denkmire, Julie de Sherbinin, Maggie Fiori, Meg Klepack, Jay O'Hara, Tom Antonik, Paula Rossvall, Genna Ulrich, Maggie (Mags) Fehr, Fritz Weiss (co-clerk), Ann Dodd-Collins (recorder)

Southern Maine: regrets from Louise Sanborn

Windham: Juliann Moore and Janice Beatty (zoom)

Guest: Janet Hough, Cobscook (zoom)

Opening worship began with our singing "Julian of Norwich". We were reminded that the words *All shall be well again* is the beginning of a sentence attributed to Julian of Norwich: *All shall be well for there is a force of love moving through the universe that holds us fast and will never let us go*. We held Diana White, who is in hospice, in our prayers. Fritz shared her sense that she was being closely accompanied as she encountered the mystery.

Land acknowledgment:

Today, and every day, we walk on stolen land. We pray on stolen land.

We are meeting here where the sovereign people of the Wabanaki Confederacy, including the Maliseet, Mi'Maq, Penobscot, and Passamaquoddy, have lived for thousands of years. As Quakers, many of our ancestors, both by blood and by spirit, participated in the theft of this land, and the attempt to end Indigenous culture.

Today, we mourn the lives and ways of living that were taken. We honor the resilience and power of our Wabanaki neighbors.

As we continue to live and govern in ways that harm this land and its people, it is past time for reparations. For learning the truth. For listening. For taking action. This is our work to do.

State of Society Reports

Brunswick Friends Meeting

Marian Dalton reported that more people have been attending in the last 1-1/2 years with an average of 8-10 each Sunday and regular attenders that are seasonal.

The Brunswick Meeting started in 1981 and has always been very a-procedural although some of their members have connections in the wider Quaker world. They look forward to having visitors. A Brunswick College Interfaith Group had planned to include Brunswick Friends in a “Congregational Crawl” this spring but that has been postponed until fall.

Marian is treasurer of NEYM. She spoke of a former NEYM staff member who talked of her work as ad-ministry and that feels right to Marian. Numbers sing to her and tell her stories and her job is to translate those stories for people who do not hear the numbers sing. Both Marian and her spouse have gifts in financial work, translating numbers into service and action. Marian was asked if she has the support she needs to do her work. She said she has been asked that before and needs to think about it.

Marian and others have a concern about the lack of vocal ministry in meeting for worship but some attenders are happy with the way things are. The tension between vocal ministry and silence is not unique to Brunswick. It is work we can do together as a quarter.

Durham Friends Meeting

The State of Society report for Durham Friends was read by Wendy Schlotterbeck (Attachment # 1)

Portland Friends Meeting

The State of Society report from Portland Friends was read by Mags Fehr, Ministry and Counsel co-clerk (Attachment # 2)

Southern Maine Friends Meeting

Southern Maine is a small meeting which did not meet over the winter. We were asked to hold Louise Sandmeyer in prayer. Her husband came home from rehab on Friday. Fritz and Wendy will continue to try to meet with them.

Windham Friends Meeting

The State of Society report from Windham Friends was read by Fritz Weiss (Attachment # 3)

Due to technical difficulties we were not able to hear the report of Janice Beatty, pastor of Windham Monthly Meeting. We were asked to hold Janice, who has been carrying her ministry for 27 years, in the Light.

Reports of Ministry

Maggie Fiori left her position as Young Friends Coordinator at NEYM about a year ago and has been listening for if she is still called to ministry in a public way and how. She is discerning that although she is no longer working with teens, she is doing the same work with different people and in different mediums.

Maggie has always done art; it is a spiritual call and she cannot make art without listening to spirit. In making art about God, she talks to a lot of people – many unchurched, younger, and seeking – and says what she means without using Quaker language. She explains what she means by God by describing it as the love that

doesn't let you go, an open hand, an offering. She tries to describe this powerful transforming love and help others to feel it too. Her life revolves around being in community, being constantly reminded that being convinced by spirit is what we're about, and is why we are here and why we are here together.

Maggie shared a wood cut she had recently made of hands reaching towards the view with text: "*I consider what your hands have done, I spread out my hands to you, for to you I entrust my life*" and she shared the following poem:

*"God has me in a yoke. Like-
the yoke of a shirt, hands
on each of my shoulders and
thumbs around my neck.*

Warm.

*It yokes me to you
and I cry in the night
because I love you so much it
hurts.*

*And I may never run
tho I dream of such a free road.
No, I may never run
but to you, each one
the face of my beloved.*

Each one who will break my heart."

Heather Denkmire began by affirming that PFM is caring for her. She usually attends by zoom and appreciated the both/and of hybrid worship and noticing those on zoom who are so often forgotten.

Heather comes from an activist family which connected their faith with making the world a more just place. In the last 25 years she has been pulled to antiracism work, freeing herself to be in her body to be part of the greater world. As she has become more aware of having money, white supremacy, patterns of oppression, and of the resistance to changing these patterns, she has felt that there is no question that she's going to do antiracism work. People have offered support which led to a clearness committee and now a ministry care committee. Part of responding to her call is a willingness to "be the weirdo" (Resmaa Menakem). She doesn't want to be the center of attention but is receiving something that she wants to share. When she first came to PFM she wasn't ready to be in community but wanted her daughters to have that experience. Now she finds that the more she is able to be in real community the more she is finding other people who are also longing for that. She cannot do this work on her own, she needs God's help, and support to bring her whole self to do the things she can. She is hopeful and sometimes devastatingly hopeless.

Jay O'Hara Began by sharing the history of how he has felt God's leading. He transferred to Portland Friends with a named ministry and a request from his former

support committee that PFM have care of his ministry. His ministry, which began with concern for climate and with relationship to one another, has led to an opening relationship of understanding and letting go, of being faithful in the midst of risk. There was joy in that faithfulness.

Jay's ministry moved from being an outward witness of climate change to ways we support/depend on a radical dependence on God. During this period he would wake so hungry for God that he would skip breakfast to spend time with God before work. Coming to Portland he still felt a bit of that clarity, but since that time he's experienced it slipping away. A year ago he asked that his ministry care committee be laid down because he was no longer clear what his ministry is and whether it fit the PFM definition of ministry: public, persistent, life changing. His care committee was not clear that ministry should be laid down but it has also not been clear what Jay's ministry is or where it's going.

St. John of the Cross's *Dark Night of the Soul* describes the beginning, sensuous experience of spiritual matters, which is nourishing, feeding the hunger the spiritual seeker brings. It then describes the maturation of spiritual life as a weaning process where the sweetness of heavenly milk is withheld so that the spiritual seeker might find a devotion that goes beyond positive reinforcement, to a deeper and further strengthening beyond that warm sense of being held in God's love. This is where Jay is now, unsure yet trying to persist in the discomfort and sense of abandonment, praying for the experience of early Friends who experienced a sense of desolation and in which can arise the revelation and perhaps the reality of the new creation. Jay prays for restructuring in a way that will heal patterns of domination and control. In letting new creation speak through one's inward life we may bring it into the world as a pattern and example.

Craig Freshley addressed three questions. Is the work alive and how is it expressed? How is the work shaping my spiritual life? How is Meeting supporting me? He hadn't initially thought of his work as ministry even though Durham Meeting had named a care committee until he was asked to give a report.

Outside the meeting Craig is a professional meeting facilitator and carries his Quaker values into his work. He has written a book, *Together We Decide - Transforming Conflict into Collaboration*, and in all his talks and trainings he tries to help people move into a cooperative/collaborative stance. Craig tries to take Quaker spiritual principles into the mainstream world and tries to make a difference. He often brings messages to Durham Meeting, which are posted on his website. Many of his messages are about prayer. Craig draws on connection with his God within in his work. Lately his leading has been to encourage interpersonal interactions. He feels very supported by his Meeting, his care committee, and very blessed.

Craig closed with a prayer he has been writing and rewriting.

God, thank you for making the universe.

Thank you for making me a part of it.

Thank you for providing me with all that I need, and more.

You are the light upon me.

The heat within me

And the time that carries me along.

*I want to see clearly and act peacefully,
always ready to receive, give and forgive,
without expectations.*

*Help me with my faults.
Help me like me.*

[Craig's complete report is Attachment #4]

Leslie Manning began her report with a quote: *“Live adventurously. When choices arise, do you take the way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of your gifts in the service of God and the community? Let your life speak. When decisions have to be made, are you ready to join with others in seeking clearness, asking for God’s guidance and offering counsel to one another? – Britain Yearly Meeting, Faith and Practice, 5th ed. Advices and Queries #27.*

Our responsibility is to care for the ministry, not the minister. The gifts are not given to us but through us and our trepidation and fear needs to be stilled. God does not call the equipped but equips those who are called. For years Leslie knew what she was not and never looked at what she was capable of doing. She was speaking personally and for many of us. This changed by being named and supported. She wonders how she got here but knows this is where she is supposed to be. Sometimes she feels more comfortable in FUM than locally because prophetic ministry is not a “done” thing in New England.

Leslie said it would be easy to cut off her Quaker roots and work with other faith groups but God won't let her. To be a disciple is to put God at the center of her life and let that be the place she is supposed to be. For years she worked with victims of violence, her entire career is working with those who are injured and harmed, but now she is being called to work with the perpetrators and sees that they are victims too, the wounded child. Her job is to love those who would harm her and to pray for those who persecute her. She can do this because she knows she is beloved by God. Let's act as if we believe the truth is true. We are all beloved of a beloved God, especially when we feel we least deserve it. Blessed be. May it be so.

Sally Farneth noted that she is “from away”. She is a Friend from Philadelphia who recently moved to Maine. She grew up in Philadelphia and believes in divine intervention. As young mothers she and her friends wanted to share stories of Quakers with their children. They didn't think the books they had gotten as children were in the right direction, so they created *Sparklers*, a resource for teaching children. It has since been revised with the name *Sparkling Still*. The value is in the wondering questions, for example, How/where do you see yourself in this story?

Sally is now working with Friends Peace Teams. The *Sparklers* authors were asked if they had book suggestions for children in Rwanda to help children learn to work together. Their work includes getting books into libraries that have messages, offering free books on the internet, helping teachers and children learn how to communicate,

leading workshops in Rwanda, and finding books. They've had to come up with creative ideas and think outside the box since classrooms have as many as 60 students and funding is limited. She has learned a lot.

A part of Sally's work, which she was asked to speak about, is the bilingual part of the program. At the beginning of the program they wanted to bring books to the seven libraries in Rwanda and printed books in English and in Kiswahili. Now books are printed bilingually, and available on a website (<http://tlcrwanda.org/our-program/libraries/>). Training students to use English is important because the government declared 10 years ago that English is the official language, but most parents speak French.

Sally has done this work for decades. She stated that reaching out to others is what Quakers do, so she didn't think of it as a ministry, it's just what she's always done.

Ann Dodd-Collins didn't know it at the time, but her ministry began seven years ago when she offered to be the Portland Friends coordinator for Greater Portland Family Promise. After PFM hosted families for the first time and she began volunteering at other churches, she realized God was saying, "You've been wondering what you're going to be doing for the rest of your life. This is it. You are supposed to be working with asylum seeking families that are arriving in Portland."

She knows that God has called her to work with asylum seekers, but God has not given her a road map. She now senses that her ministry may be evolving. There is an acute need for family shelters in southern Maine, for transitional housing, and for affordable housing. She doesn't yet know what her role is, if any, but she is holding the space, waiting, open to possibilities.

Portland Friends has walked this path with her from the beginning. She's made a lot of mistakes along the way and has learned a lot about forgiveness and grace and trust from the families and generosity from Portland Friends. She has never been able to find the words that truly express what this work means to her, how it has changed her life, opened her heart, and given her gifts beyond measure.

Elizabeth Szatkowski submitted her report in writing (Attachment # 5)

Martha Shelden submitted a written report on her spiritual journey which we are not distributing at this time. The report deserves our careful attention and we will read and reflect on it at a further gathering of Falmouth Quarter.

There were three recurring themes in those who spoke about their ministry:

- A sense that they could not do with work without God, that they are a beloved child of God
- A sense that accompaniment is necessary, that this work needs the support of others
- A sense that we are yoked. As the yoke of a shirt connects all the other parts of a shirt, a ministry needs to connect with God, with those who have care of their ministry, and with those who receive the ministry. As we take the yoke up we also find that the work also makes us whole.

Blank sheets of paper with the name of each person who spoke were available for attenders to make comments about what they heard. We were grateful for the stories that were shared.

Memorial minutes

Margaret Wentworth, read by Leslie Manning as part of her report on ministry (Attachment # 6)

Sue Wood, read by Sara Sprogell (Attachment # 7)

Charlotte Ann Curtis, read by Craig Fresley (Attachment # 8)

Helen Clarkson, read by Leslie Manning (Attachment # 9)

The four memorial minutes were Accepted and will be forwarded to New England Yearly Meeting.

Travel minute Portland Friends Meeting has issued a Travel Minute for Maggie Fiori, Genna Ulrich, and Jay O'Hara supporting their intention to visit other meetings in Maine, to listen, and to speak if led.

Falmouth Quarter ENDORSED their travel minute.

Bible Half Hour, Genna Ulrich

Genna will be offering the Bible Half Hours at NEYM Sessions this year. They shared their preparation and the shape that the messages they are preparing.

The time since 2019 has been a really deepening time for Genna in which experiences in worship led them to seek more spiritual companionship and to reach out to find more to feed them. Reaching out to Quaker writings, midweek worship, then wondering about what in our tradition is about, and wading into the "living stream" brought them back to the Bible and needing to be in a conversation across time as well and place and culture and diversity.

The Bible is that tradition that grounds us and Genna is feeling more and more clearly that if someone has waded into that stream [of living water] they can know the water by the water others feel. They have felt moved by the experience of being worked upon by God and in a loving way. The experience of being loved is so foundational and when experienced it makes them feel less afraid. With that comes a growth in freedom.

Genna has a committee of elders as they prepare to bring the Bible Half Hour. There is a sense that Genna may be offering a diagnosis of what is holding us back, and that the medicine is the experience of God. We have the best intentions but many of us have experienced the trauma of religion and we often allow weeds to choke the ministry, we choke the seeds that are beginning to sprout. We need to learn how to

welcome gifts of ministry, knowing we are loved. We need to celebrate each other's gifts. Some of the healing work is naming the gifts of service.

Genna is drawn to Bible stories of the disciples who are confused and still trying to figure out who is the best, then giving over to trust in God. IN particular, they shared the story of the rich young man who thinks he's checked all the boxes, but who is not willing to give up everything; that's too much. It's not about checking the boxes of faith but living the faith. Giving up everything is giving up the systems that lead to oppression; we actually have to give up something to experience the good news. Genna feels their preparation in the next few months is to do a lot more listening and is still finding out what this means in their life. Sometimes we have to listen to the bad news and there is fear of what this all means.

Minute regarding the War in Gaza

A Statement of Portland Friends Meeting regarding War in Gaza and a Minute from Durham Friends Meeting were read by Fritz Weiss (Attachments #10, 11)

It was noted that although Portland and Durham did not consult, their minutes were similar. It was also noted that NEYM published a Statement on Conflict in Israel-Palestine November 3, 2023.

(<https://neym.org/news/2023/11/statement-conflict-israel-palestine>)

Falmouth Quarter expressed gratitude for the faithfulness of those who wrote minutes and unites with their concerns.

Leslie Manning was asked to carry the two Minutes to the Israel/Palestine Working Group with the recommendation that a minute be brought to annual sessions.

It was proposed that Falmouth Quarter's summer meeting be held at Betsy Meunch's beach house in Georgetown. Betsy has invited the quarter for the second weekend in June (June 8 & 9). **Friends approved.**

During waiting worship before lunch, in response to the testimony of those who have a named ministry, we were reminded that the nature of humility is not being agreeable but taking up faithfully what God is calling us to do. Another Friend was struck by the openness of Friends to share their experience, the efforts of individuals, and the support behind them.

We ended our time together in worship listening to the words of the hymn,

"Here I Am, Lord".

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?

I have heard you calling in the night.

I will go, Lord, if you lead me.

I will hold your people in my heart.

Respectfully submitted
Ann Dodd-Collins, recording clerk

4/27/24

Attachments to Minutes of Falmouth Quarter April 27, 2024

Attachment #1

Durham Friends Meeting **State of Society Report 2024**

With the desire to seek after God's will and to faithfully minister to one another, Durham Monthly Meeting of Friends continues to worship as a semi-programmed meeting. Through prepared messages, active ministry and service to each other, we also extend beyond our faith community. With a resilient and welcoming spirit, and Divine assistance, our spiritual state is strong.

Faithfulness and service are a strong part of our community. Both members and attenders give of their time to our meeting, from music ministry, to care of the meetinghouse, recording the sense of meeting decisions and discussions, and maintaining an attractive and informative website, durhamfriendsmeeting.org.

Members of our meeting give their support to our new immigrant neighbors and bear witness to the effects of war, gun violence, and climate change on our state and in our world. We continue to support the sovereignty of the Wabanaki people living in Maine, including through contact with our legislators and supporting the renaming of the 250th Anniversary Park in Brunswick to Pejepscot Park or Abenaki Park.

We joyfully welcomed a new member who has shared his gifts with us for some time.

We accepted the resignation of a member with sorrow but with a sense that we prayerfully considered all avenues for reconciliation and healing.

Our meeting continues to offer hybrid worship thanks to a small group of volunteers. Technology continues to offer us a way to include everyone in worship and to facilitate the work of the meeting. However, we are aware of the distractions that technology brings and that some among us long for the deeper silence present when technology is not used. During the latter part of the year we began a practice of technology-free fourth and fifth Sundays, encouraging in-person worship on these unprogrammed Sundays.

Overall our building, grounds and cemeteries are in good shape and continue to be loved and cared for by our whole meeting community.

Our trustees continue their care of our beloved meetinghouse as we approach 250 years as a meeting, having been founded in 1775. 2023 was the first full year that we relied on heat pumps for all of our heating needs. We found that they functioned very well for us, even during some very cold periods last winter. To help with this, we added window inserts in the vestry,

classrooms and front hallway. All in all the heat pumps are less expensive than the oil furnace was and we are less reliant on fossil fuels.

The meetinghouse was used by a number of outside groups that we were pleased to support. A Native family group meets here once a month, the Maine Poets Society used it twice for an all-day gathering, and a teen advisory group affiliated with University of Southern Maine (USM) had several meetings here in the fall. Three memorial meetings were also held at the meetinghouse.

Two Friends from Durham represented us in the wider Quaker world. One traveled to Cuba with Puente de Amigos to visit our sister meeting, Velasco Friends, and to attend Cuba Yearly Meeting in February 2023. She was profoundly moved by the depth of faith in that community. Another Friend attended the United Society of Friends Woman's International and FUM's Triennial, which were held in Nakuru, Kenya. She was able to travel with an older Friend who has traveled extensively in Africa and with the well wishes and support from many sources, and shared pictures and stories of this "trip of a lifetime" with us on her return.

Our Peace and Social Concerns committee continues its work on the Social Justice Enrichment Project, supported by the Obadiah Brown Benevolent Fund, bringing a set of books that teach the values of diversity, kindness, love, and affirmation to a group of area teachers. This ministry included outreach to the local community on Indigenous People's Day when many community members enjoyed some of the literature from the project and learned more about us and our Meeting.

In June we held a celebration of the life of Margaret Wentworth, a life-long member of Durham, whose devotion, deep faith, and generosity of spirit continue to inspire us. We have renamed our library as the Margaret Wentworth Library in honor of this beloved Friend.

One of our members was raised up as a recorded minister by our Falmouth Quarter with the loving support of our community, and at the end of the year accepted a part-time position as the Meeting Care Coordinator.

In October we held a meeting for grieving to give our community an opportunity to express sorrow and loss for the members we lost and our own response to the cares of the world.

* * *

Durham Friends Meeting has emerged from the restrictions of the Covid pandemic and from the loss of some stalwart members with a deepened strength to nourish our beloved community and invite others into its love, challenges and care.

Attachment #2

Portland Friends Meeting State of Society 2024

Final Draft for consideration at Meeting for Business, March 3, 2024

¹Unless God builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.

Unless God watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.

²It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for God grants sleep to Their beloved. (Psalm 127)

God is at work building our Beloved Community as a more resilient open place. As separated as we were, we seem to be coming back together. This has been a year of big transitions, including a long discernment process about how to use our resources. Now there is openness and a forward-looking shared sense of responsibility. We know that God is the architect, as Friends speak of finding worship more comforting, spacious and filled with Light.

We began the year with masks required in the Meeting room. Over the summer, our outdoor Meetings for Worship at Friends School of Portland created a generous invitation to return to worship in person. In the fall we transitioned to masks welcome. Most people are unmasked. So many of us are finally face to face again. Our weekly Meeting for Worship continues to be hybrid, as we have folks every week who need to attend on Zoom. We find we cannot *not* do hybrid.

Throughout the year, many Friends have been sustained by and immensely grateful for small groups such as Faithfulness Groups, early, midweek, and daily meetings for worship, as well as by their individual relationships with supportive Friends. A re energized Welcoming Committee has sparked interest in the many ways we might build community. A talent show reminded us that we can connect with no agenda, just a chance to be with one another and share.

God is at work in our financial discernment. We began still in labor, after more than a year and a half, discerning how best to use our resources. The process was a huge commitment, often leading to the feeling that our differences were insurmountable. For example, the abundance perspectives and responsible stewardship perspectives are often in tension. All labored. A steering committee wrestled and designed discussions, regular committees calculated needs, and particularly, Finance Stewardship Committee did extra work. The whole Meeting community read materials and attended extra meetings each month. Our work together was difficult but also joyful.

Last spring, we finally reached unity to divide our invested fund into five separate funds: Shared Witness Fund, Cemetery Fund, Youth Religious Education Fund, Capital Reserve Fund, and General Meeting Fund. The latter four funds meet our internal community commitments. Shared Witness Fund is money freed for discernment about how it might be put to work in the world. We have already used our Shared Witness Fund locally to buy beds and dividers for Family Promise and internationally to help Indigenous Bolivian Friends fight a climate-driven hunger crisis.

God worked with us as we did repair work during our time of community reflection from June to September. Friends' experiences with the Meeting, with the pandemic, and with the world at large have varied, but most agree it has been challenging and exhausting. We devoted several meetings to invite God in to help us heal the tension in Meetings for Business and other Friends' gatherings. Some parts of the conversation have been dominated by voices of certain parts of the community, some parts by others. This conflict has been particularly painful for some of us. One Friend noted how hard we are on each other, even though we have so much to share.

With gratitude to Spirit, there is now broader involvement within the community. We have had a reset in which a number of Friends who had stepped out of the community conversation have stepped back in. We view our own perspectives as more robust, more malleable, and less precious. There is more talking with each other and less talking about each other.

What might God teach us through the life of Kate Potter? After years of decline, we lost a beloved longtime member. Kate was a lively emphatic and empathetic soul who believed fiercely in the power of the Spirit to heal through active imagination. Her therapy practice included a sand tray and a vast eclectic collection of miniatures. She used it to invite people to step into difficult spaces and envision new embodied healing. She would be energized by the way we are more tender with one another as we move forward engaging big questions.

What does Quakerism look like in Portland Friends Meeting in 2024? We are putting more energy outward and joining with other faith groups. A Gay Pride flag is hanging in our front window and many participated in the Pride Parade. We approved minutes recognizing Maine tribes' sovereignty and calling for support for asylum seekers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Following the mass shooting in Lewiston, Friends have led prayer circles at a local gun dealer and in Augusta to protest gun sales and to promote new laws countering gun violence. Some of us are giving prayerful witness during the trauma of clearing encampments of unhoused individuals. We hosted three Family Promise families in our meetinghouse for two weeks. Members of Meeting are working in monthly food distribution of culturally appropriate food to New Mainers, and some at Family Promise's new static shelter. Our New Mainer neighbors could help us learn more about how to live with open hearts and open hands.

We began the year very divided about how to participate in a sister meeting relationship with Velasco Friends Church in Cuba. A traveling delegation to Velasco returned to report on the physical poverty and spiritual riches they experienced. The Velasco sister relationship in partnership with Durham Meeting was approved and reaffirmed. Financial support to the Velasco Sister Meeting Fund will be part of our budget for the next two years. We found that we as a whole community can support work that speaks deeply at this time to a group within our community.

What does support of ministry look like in Portland Friends Meeting at this time? What should the process be for naming ministries? What language do we use as Spirit breaks forth in individuals, when some friends have come to Quakerism hurt, even in some cases abused, by those with the title "minister," while for others the language of ministry is a reclaiming of vital Quaker roots?

Who do we welcome as our teachers? Our Youth Religious Education Committee has gained insight into how the pandemic affected the involvement of youth and their families in our Meeting. This is based on input about the past four years and the last two decades. Many youth continue "in the orbit" of the life of the Meeting, but few engage in youth activities. The spirit of experimentation forced upon us by the pandemic continues to inspire new ideas as we seek to begin gathering our youth into community again. We are committed to funding our youth program positions as they evolve, but financial support is not enough. We are especially challenged by the absence of adults led to claim a group of youth as their teacher.

What is rising in Meeting? This is the opening query used by our new clerk's support group. It has been our practice for decades to have co-clerks work with overlapping terms of service. This spring the nominating committee reached out to many without finding a new co-clerk. We were led to experiment by having a single clerk whose committee of support includes a range of voices. Our Meeting's Afterthoughts group where all are welcome is a place to hear what is rising. This is a space where we can begin from our shared experience of worship each Sunday and use that as a starting place for deeper exploration together.

God is at work building our Beloved Community as a more resilient open place. Our path forward will require risk-taking, vulnerability, listening, and suspension of judgment and ego. We can't say, "I love you and you should change in this particular way." With Spirit's help we can share unconditional love, the only kind of love that can be transformational. Some have suggested that we move forward centered on queries and reflection, inviting God to help us put aside the bread of anxious toil as we look at big questions. We begin with those before us: Who do we welcome as our teachers? What does Quakerism look like in Portland Friends Meeting in 2024? What is rising in Meeting?

Kate Potter would delight that this fall at last we are again singing before Meeting for Worship.

*My life flows on in endless song, above earth's lamentation.
I hear the real, though far-off hymn that hails a new creation.
Thro' all the tumult and the strife, I hear the music ringing;
It finds an echo in my soul, how can I keep from singing?*

Attachment #3

STATE OF SOCIETY REPORT

2024

Windham Monthly Meeting of Friends

Windham, Maine

As our *Faith and Practice* states, "The Quarterly Meetings are designed to bring together the larger group for inspiration and to consider the varied interests ... to enjoy time and shared experience. Our faith is rooted in personal contact with God from whence comes leadings and concerns which shape our lives by entering reverently into communion with God and one another yielding ourselves to His Divine Presence." Therefore, greetings to each of you with warm wishes and shared perspectives. With the help of the Holy Spirit, may we always strive to learn and contribute.

We share with you now a report of the Faith, the experience and the thoughts touching our Meeting by way of the spiritual life, individually and corporately in thankful awareness of God's constant presence and influence ... That said, we'll begin with a quote by Michael Hodgin, on the subject of preparation: "Dig the well before you get thirsty..."

Again advice from our *Faith and Practice*: "Encourage private prayer, meditation, and devotional readings which promote growth in the Spiritual Life; and for each worshiper to prepare for the corporate worship." A church bulletin once noted "Faith is the daring of the soul to go further than it can see." And with that we can reflect on the saying "We know not what the future holds, but we know who holds the future." Windham Friends Meeting is "in motion" with these revelations. Do we love one another as becomes the followers of Christ? Do we share joys and burdens? Yes. We at Windham Friends Meeting are learning and growing, working with one another in life's challenges needs and concerns, firmly holding the hand of God along this earthly journey ... in the fellowship of worship and keeping each other in our thought and

prayers, as well as our fellow beings when their journey requires a helping hand as awareness presents itself. That also includes the usual endeavors that require our attention and abilities in all times and seasons.

A recent message to the congregation included an insight on the difference between man-made and God centered worship with reminders of the difference; and it seems we are God centered. We strive to adhere to three basics in our Quaker faith awareness which are of course, simplicity, integrity and fidelity. When third graders visit on their Windham history tours, those ideals are emphasized.

Our congregation of members and attendees is small in size but great in capacity. We enjoy and are blessed by visitors and those who "visit" then decide to continue in attendance. And it's been noted that no matter the need or call set before us, there is a willingness to participate and contribute whenever and however. We continue to support local charities as we are able. The meetinghouse is in need of painting, and we recently presented a request for assistance from the Obadiah Brown Fund. We had several major expenses in 2023 including the cemetery road, tree removal after a storm and replacing our sign which was destroyed in that storm. Our annual Christmas Fair was a big success with welcome assistance from other members of the Falmouth Quarter.

In closing, we hold to four words that reference Faith ... we pray... we believe... we trust and we receive. Those have come to illumine our comprehension and to expand our spiritual dimension as we endeavor to reach mutual goals, thus to learn and to grow, coming to know the Heavenly Father more deeply as Creator, Redeemer and Friend, thus expanding our appreciation and adoration as members of the faith family. "Blest be the tie that binds" (Galatians 3:28). Blessings to our brothers and sisters in Christ..

Respectfully submitted,

Janice L. Beattie, Pastor, April 2024

Windham Monthly Meeting of Friends

Attachment #4

Report from Craig Freshley on his ministry, Falmouth Quarter, April 27, 2024

Hello Friends.

My name's Craig Freshley, for those whom I haven't met. Fritz offered that I might address three questions. Is the work alive and how is it expressed? How is the work shaping my spiritual life and how is meeting supporting me? The work being my gifts of ministry? I was surprised to hear that term; that someone in my meeting said that I had such a thing and asked me to come here and give you a report. So here it goes.

First, my work outside the meeting. I'm a professional meeting facilitator, moderator. I have a company called Good Group Decisions. I think of myself as a peacemaker and I carry Quaker values into my work. I wrote this book called *Together We Decide* it was published in 2023 under the guidance of a ministry care committee.

I will read - I'm looking at you Heather - I will read the dedication to my wife. "Carol, thanks for walking with me. Even though I'm such a weirdo."

I do quite a few talks and training and in all of that, I try to help people get along. Just to name a few that are on the docket right now: In a couple weeks, I'll be going out to Salt Lake City and giving a keynote address to the National League of Cities. It's called *Together We Decide - Transforming Conflict into Collaboration*. I'll be talking to the Maine Library Association later this month: *Let's talk about it - Empowering librarians for controversial public sessions and one-on-one conversations*. This past week, I gave a talk at a Maine Family Planning conference, helping sex educators cope with a divisive environment, right? Parents are more involved in schools and have things to say about how sex ed is taught. Parents are more involved in city and town council meetings and school boards and have things to say.

It seems to be an increasingly divided environment, and I'm being called upon to help with that. When Donald Trump was president, I organized what I called Make Shift Coffee Houses to try to bring Democrats and Republicans together simply to understand each other. The first one was right in this room. I facilitated 40 of those and won a national award for that work.

I offer e-learning courses on my website: conflict resolution, meeting facilitation, consensus decision making. And recently I was led to do away with the pricing, and I have a new system now. It's called Pay What You Want. And I allow a sliding scale and let people pay what they want. I publish regular newsletters and social media posts, and in all of these things I try to bring Quaker values.

In fact just yesterday evening, I received an email from a colleague on the West coast. She too is a professional meeting facilitator/moderator, and here's a quote that she

wrote. "I so appreciate your Quaker spirit and the fact that you ground your practical advice in a larger spiritual context." I love that. That's kind of what I'm trying to do - is take spiritual principles (Quaker principles in particular) out there into the mainstream world and to make a difference.

In meeting, I often bring messages. We are a semi-programmed meeting. Those among the meeting are asked to step up and bring a message if and when called. And I've been called to do that a number of times. The last one I gave was, I don't know, two or three weeks ago, four or five weeks ago, called *Let the Mystery Be*.

I've been in the practice of recording my messages and they're at a website called QuakerMessages.com. One of my messages was recently featured on Thee Quaker Podcast. John Watts and Georgia Sparling reached out to me and that one was called *What If God Is The Rest of Your Body?*

My practice in bringing messages is to really be thoughtful about discerning what I'm supposed to say and make last minute changes. And I don't write out scripts. I write bullet points, a little bit like I've done today, but I often go off script. Let me rephrase that. I often change the script depending on what's speaking to me in the moment. I was asked to give a talk to Friends World Conference on Consultation of North America at their North American conference. I don't know what the talk was called, but it was the same kind of thing: bringing people together across divides.

Several of my messages have been about prayer and the nature of prayer and what it means to pray. And for many years I've been writing and rewriting a prayer. This is a part of my own spiritual discipline. If I could write a prayer, what would I say? And I've been revising it over and over again. And I've said this prayer several times to my meeting, each time a little bit of a different version. I'm gonna share with you this prayer at the close of my talk here.

But first I want to try to question two, how is the work informing your life or shaping your spiritual self?

Fritz brought to me the words from Brian Drayton, who when he was recognized with gifts of ministry, said he made a commitment to be watchful day by day for guidance and for opportunities to use the gift and to be diligent for such openings. And I think that I'm doing that. I draw on my connection with the God within a lot in my work out there. Every meeting I facilitate, before, I say a little prayer to myself: "help me bring peace to these people." When I write speeches and plan trainings, I spend a lot of time. My method is to kind of pace around the place trying to discern what am I supposed to be saying here?

A particular leading I've had lately is to encourage more in-person interactions. I believe that in-person interactions are increasingly valuable, highly valuable, in fact, imperative

I've come to believe, for peace and resilience. I'm making a deliberate push in my work towards more in-person engagements rather than online engagements. And I'm find myself called to encourage more in-person experiences at Durham meeting. And in all parts of my life. I live in a co-housing community. In my co-housing community, I am encouraging more in-person face-to-face live, real time conversations and interactions. That's kind of a thing for me these days.

Question three: how is your meeting supporting and nurturing you?

My notes say yes. Exclamation mark. I feel very supported by my meeting. I've had a care committee that has been very helpful and it almost every impulse I have to share or do something, I receive encouragement. I feel very blessed in my, in my meeting.

Here's my prayer.

God, thank you for making the universe.
Thank you for making me a part of it.
Thank you for providing me with all that I need, and more.

You are the light upon me.
The heat within me
And the time that carries me along.

I want to see clearly and act peacefully,
always ready to receive, give and forgive,
without expectations.

Help me with my faults.
Help me like me.
Help me do what's light.

Attachment #5

Denominational Endorsement Report
April 2023 – March 2024
Falmouth Quarterly Meeting

April 27, 2028

Hello Falmouth Quarter,

This has been a year of transition and challenge for me. The hospice where I had been working decided to restructure the organization and my position was eliminated on June 1, 2024. I had greatly enjoyed supervising the chaplains and social workers there, working collaboratively with an interdisciplinary team and providing community education. I brought a spiritual lens to the work that allowed staff to engage with patients and their families in deeper ways. After a vigorous job search I decided to work at Mercy Hospital Pediatric Behavioral Health as a psychotherapist for children. My position started in early October, 2024. Part of the reason I took this job is that I am able to work with the adult residents and children at Frances Warde House, a shelter for asylum seeker women who are pregnant. Frances Warde House is heavily supported by Mercy Hospital as an expression of its mission to help those in our community who are most in need. In Her Presence is an ethnic organization that runs the program, manages the staff and supports the residents 24/7. I created and presented a training on trauma for the staff who are mostly new Mainers. I have created classes for women residents about breast feeding, identifying and managing emotions, infant mental health, adult mental health, and behavioral health services in the community. I assist the staff in providing other educational programs including a weekly class on infant and maternal health. I facilitate a group for the children using games and art to talk about emotional regulation, loss and grief, safe boundaries, family relationships, school, bullying, racism and anything else they want to talk about. I meet with women residents individually to hear their stories and provide therapeutic support. As a psychotherapist at the Mercy Fore River campus I work with children aged 3-17 and their parents to address the children's emotional and psychological needs. Many youth in Maine are struggling with anxiety, depression and the effects of trauma. I work with them individually to build trust and find ways to empower their resilience. I work with parents to identify patterns and find ways they can create more stability and consistency for their children. I feel that I am using my skills and experience to see that of God in each person and advocate for each person on their unique journey.

My support committee from Portland Friends Meeting remains responsive, encouraging and acts as a vital sounding board. Two members have had to step away due to their changing health and need to reduce their outside responsibilities. We have added one person to the committee and will determine if adding a third person will be helpful.

I am grateful to be acknowledged for my work in our community and the spirit led energy and focus I bring to it. Having this Denominational Endorsement helps me to bring my whole self to this challenging work and be able to use a wider expanse of approaches and interventions. Please let me know if you have questions or would like more information.

Peace,

Elizabeth Szatkowski

Portland Friends Meeting

Attachments #6,

MARGARET WENTWORTH Memorial Minute

November 2, 1934 - November 2, 2022

Margaret was a dear Friend and friend who is missed. She was a life-long member of Durham Monthly Meeting of Friends and a reliable presence at Meeting activities. She was a spiritual leader, who mentored and taught others, including clerks and pastors. She knew how to pray and constantly prayed for individuals, the Meeting, and wider concerns. She encouraged us all to pray for the same every day.

Margaret reached out to people within and outside of Meeting activities. She was a great listener; even teenagers felt comfortable sharing with her. She was a teacher and librarian, and brought skills and knowledge from those vocations, putting life and character into the children's stories she told and captivating young and old alike. She taught Sunday School, helped organize and teach Vacation Bible School, and was a major force in organizing our Meeting library. She loved to sing and was in our choir whenever the choir was active.

Margaret was good-humored and optimistic. When difficult decisions had to be made in Monthly Meetings, people felt more willing to try new ways with her encouragement. Margaret served Durham Friends Meeting in many capacities, including being on the Library, Christian Education, and Nominating Committees, on Ministry and Counsel, and as a Trustee. She served for many years as our representative on the board of the Lisbon Area Christian Outreach, especially active in supporting their food pantry. For the Woman's Society, she organized our card ministry as well as a giant book sale, with proceeds going to support our own library. She kept up-to-date on the projects and programs of world-wide Friends organizations, especially Friends United Meeting, and brought prayer requests for many of those programs and workers.

Margaret attended Woodbrooke College in Birmingham, England, for a year, and this broadened her perspective of Friends beliefs and practices world-wide. She was active with Falmouth Quarterly Meeting, serving as its clerk for a time. She served the wider world of Friends, including as a cook at China Camp (now Friends Camp in China, Maine), and serving on

various New England Yearly Meeting committees, as well as being its Presiding Clerk for several years.

Margaret's deep faith, generosity of spirit, and willingness to share her time and gifts remain an inspiration to all.

Margaret was born in Durham, Maine, and earned a Masters degree at Gorham State Teacher's College. She taught in local schools and was a librarian in Lewiston. She served the wider community by serving on the Durham Select Board and volunteering in many ways. Margaret is survived by her brother James Wentworth (Vera) of Ashburn, Virginia, and her niece Alexandra Wentworth, also of Ashburn. Margaret was predeceased by her parents, Horace and Lida Wentworth.

Durham Meeting, 2/18/24

Falmouth Quarter 4/27/24

Attachment 7

Durham Monthly Meeting of Friends: Susan Wood Memorial Minute

Susan Jane McIntire Wood

March 4, 1944-September 2, 2022

As we reflect on the life of our friend and Friend Sue Wood, we remember her love and care for us. Her peaceful presence among us was characterized by her sweetness, humility, and depth of spirit. She gave generously of her gift for music, both in playing the piano and singing. She was patient playing and replaying parts as choir members learned new pieces, and she played with beauty and style. Sometimes she would adjust the pace of a hymn so that it became a prayer as well as song.

We loved to hear her bubbly giggle and appreciated her zingy wit and humor. She was often quiet, but when she spoke she could be very firm. Her incisive views were often shared in monthly meetings, as she might have a different perspective from others that had not been brought out. She served as co-clerk of the Meeting for a time and always held the Meeting in prayer.

Sue had friendships that were long lasting and deep. When she first came to Durham Meeting, in many ways it was still much like it had been for two hundred years. She found her way to becoming part of the community and then, as the meeting changed, she helped steady the change.

Sue was active on the Music Committee and with the Woman's Society. We always enjoyed meeting at her home, a dairy farm on Lunt Road where we were greeted by a variety of animals. She demonstrated quiet strength when suffering from cancer.

Sue's peaceful presence is missed by everyone who knew her.

Sue's parents were Ruth and Wilbur McIntire and she grew up in New Philadelphia, Ohio. She graduated from the University of Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, then worked as a school chorus director. After moving to Maine, she met and married Richard Wood in 1978. Sue was busy raising their sons and working at the Brunswick Veterinary Clinic. The family moved to New York in 1991, where they operated a dairy farm, and Sue played piano at several churches, becoming the regular organist at one. They returned to Maine in 2002. She was predeceased by her husband, Richard Wood, and is survived by their sons Isaac and Reeve Wood (wife Hannah Burroughs) and three grandsons.

Durham Meeting, March 17, 2024

Falmouth Quarter, April 27, 2024

Attachment 8

Durham Monthly Meeting of Friends Memorial Minute for

CHARLOTTE ANNE CURTIS

June 15, 1941- Oct. 14, 2022

We remember Charlotte Anne (Char) with warmth and smiles. She loved Durham Meeting, uplifted and supported by knowing her family had been part of the meeting community for generations, which helped her feel close to God. She was especially welcoming to new attenders and paid attention to everyone's needs.

Char brought messages to our worship services, which were serious but also full of humor. She could make us laugh and also feel deeply about an issue or problem. Char reminded us to always leave something better than when we found it. She was humble, willing to share her human failings. She served as volunteer custodian for years and was a Trustee. She helped with Meeting and Woman's Society events.

Char loved the desert southwest and traveled there many times. She said her perfect world would be if Durham Meeting would move there. She was dedicated to family, friends, and her faithful companion dog Annie. She loved horses and shared her horse adventures with us. She also was an adept clog dancer, entertaining us at Meeting talent shows with this skill.

Her depth of spirit, infectious laughter and sincere compassion were evidence of her spiritual connection

Durham Meeting, March 17 2024

Falmouth Quarter, April 27, 2024

Durham Friends Meeting
Memorial Minute for Helen Cornelia Pratt Clarkson
August 21, 1925- July 16, 2022

Helen is especially remembered for her warm, loving, generous spirit. She had deep roots in our Meeting, being in the 4th generation of her family to be part of us. She grew up not far from the meetinghouse, and remembered going to the auction where the parsonage was purchased in 1938.

During college she met Vernon Albert Clarkson and they were married on August 2, 1947, at Durham Friends Meeting.

After Helen retired from a career in various locations as a social worker, professor of sociology, and Dean of Admissions, Helen and Vernon moved back to Maine. They did travel to Arizona for winters, but were active at our Meeting when here. Helen was especially active in the Woman's Society and had the gift of hospitality. We loved meeting at her home by the ocean in Freeport.

Helen was a creative, prolific quilter, who made hundreds of quilts for babies and children. She organized others to make quilts also.

Helen was born on August 21, 1925, in Somerville, MA, the oldest child of Albert Pratt and Marion Cornelia Pratt (Dwelley). She attended Bates College in Lewiston, ME, graduating in 1946 with a Bachelor of Science degree in sociology. Helen continued her studies at Washington State University, where she met her husband-to-be on the first day, and graduated in 1947 with a Master's degree in sociology. Helen was predeceased by her husband Vernon, sister Katharine, and grandson Lee Vernon Clarkson. She is survived by her three children- Bruce, Robert, and Joyce, four grandchildren, and four great grandchildren.

Approved at Durham Friends Monthly Meeting April 21, 2024

Falmouth Quarter , 4/27/24

Attachment # 10

Statement of Portland Friends Meeting regarding War in Gaza

Approved by Portland Friends Meeting, March 3, 2024

As Quakers we believe that there is that of the Divine in each and every person and therefore every life is precious. We are horrified by the violence and loss of life in Israel and Palestine. We feel the killing and inhumane treatment of civilians is abhorrent, whether perpetrated by the government of Israel, Hamas or other forces in the area. We recognize that we are complicit in the perpetuation of violence and abuse through the actions and policies of our government.

This crisis that began in 1948 when 700,00 Palestinians were displaced to make room for the state of Israel is complicated, but all people need a safe place to live where they can access food, shelter, healthcare, work, and education. We believe the violence we are witnessing today is sowing seeds for future conflict. Only with a ceasefire can we start to address the root causes of this and future conflicts.

This war has escalated violence in neighboring Middle East countries, disrupting lives of more innocent civilians. International laws have been broken. Here at home, we stand against the surge of Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in our local communities and throughout the United States.

We urge the US government and our representatives in Congress:

- To call for a permanent ceasefire;
- To fully support delivery of humanitarian aid in the area;
- To negotiate the release of all the Israeli and Palestinian hostages;
- To work diplomatically to address de-escalation in the region; and
- To stop supporting the Israeli military with funding and with weapons manufactured in the U.S.
-

In response to this horrific situation, Portland Friends Meeting made the following decision on March 3, 2024:

Portland Friends Meeting found unity to make a donation of \$75,000 from our Shared Witness Fund to the American Friends Service Committee to support humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza and the West Bank. While our priority is to address urgent human needs, we trust AFSC will use these funds wisely to confront the full challenges of the situation. In conjunction with this donation, we acknowledge that our work is not done, and we remain complicit in violence through the actions of our government. We challenge ourselves and each other to reach deeply and contribute what we can to address humanitarian needs, and to use our gifts of every sort for the expression of Love in the face of horror, which may involve actions that confront the policies and funding that perpetrate violence.

https://www.portlandfriendsmeeting.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/PFM-statement-on-Gaza_V2_4Mar24.pdf

Attachment #11

Minute from Durham Friends Meeting on Palestine and Israel
Approved at Monthly Meeting March 17, 2024

“We are heartbroken by the violence in Israel and Palestine. As Quakers, we deeply mourn the loss of all lives and pray for those who have lost loved ones due to this latest escalation. We unequivocally condemn Hamas’ attacks and inhumane treatment of civilians and call for the release of all hostages. We also condemn Israel’s indiscriminate bombing of Gaza that has claimed thousands of civilian lives. More war and weapons won’t bring peace. In the face of growing violence, lawmakers must push for a permanent ceasefire and address the root causes underlying this explosion of violence.”

American Friends Service Committee

As members of the Religious Society of Friends, and people of conscience and good will, we call upon our elected representatives to initiate negotiations for a permanent cease fire among the warring parties; to provide adequate funding for humanitarian assistance, including full funding for the United Nations efforts; and to end military assistance to Israel.

Quakers have had a long and sustained interest in Palestine, going back to efforts by Quakers from Maine to establish the Ramallah Friends School, for our support and care for Jewish refugees prior to, during and after World War II, and for our presence in Palestine and Jordan since 1948. Our commitment to peace through nonviolence is an essential element of our faith and our practice in the world. We can no longer stand by and watch the atrocities being committed with our tax dollars, our weapons and materials and our policies of unwavering support and complicity. We pray that this will no longer be done in our names.

Nancy Marstaller
Acting Clerk