



NEW ENGLAND
YEARLY MEETING
OF FRIENDS
QUAKERS

*Spring forth, O well, inside my soul
Spring forth, O well, and make me whole
Spring forth, O well, that lets me see
That Light that shines in me.*

To Friends Everywhere,

Greetings from the 366th Annual Sessions of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends. We gathered from July 31st to August 4th, 2026, on the campus of Mount Holyoke College, in the homeland of the Nonotuck, one of the many tribes who have lived for countless generations in the valley of the Long River (the Connecticut).

We live in trying times; we live in a world torn by many wars. The rights and gains hard won by generations of people working toward a better world are slipping away under the onslaught of hate, authoritarianism, and attention-fracking, but we are the inheritors of a powerful faith. Though we are lost in the desert, we are nourished by the living water of God. Our Sessions theme, “Spring forth, O well and make us whole!” (from Numbers 21:17), spoke to us within the wider context of Numbers verses 10 to 20 of a people suffering through severe challenges of their journey in the parched desert to Moab. When Moses gathered the people together, God gave them water. We were inspired to seek joyfully to answer the questions, “What does it mean to be a people called together by God? What does it mean to be nourished by living water even in the desert?”

We heard testimony from Friends called to do God’s work in these trying times. We are volunteering with aid organizations, raising bond money, and becoming notaries. We are accompanying immigrants to their hearings, and standing up to care for children. We are working within our communities, strengthening the bonds between neighbors. We need not wait to be struck down like Paul on the road to Damascus. God guides each of us toward our own way of serving, and provides gifts and on-the-job training to enable the service that is ours to give. Each of us needs to listen for what our own role is, and not be buffeted by the winds of the discourse into imitating someone else. What seems like a minor or insurmountable leading can put us in the place to develop our gifts, make connections, and be in the right place at the right time.

We learned from Bible half hour speaker, Adria Gulizia DiCapua, who explored the ways we might tap into the living waters that give us the courage to carry forward the work of God. We must learn to live outside the blandishments of mainstream society, rejecting its coercive mechanisms, to be a people gathered in hope and joy seeking the waters of a new and Spirit-led course. She called us to be together in a spiritual household grounded in a relationship with God and each other, that calls us out, transforms us, and gives us as gifts to each other. She offered guidance on how to step into the work of being a gathered people, including being tender with one another, releasing us from fear and shame, being a people of peace, and celebrating God's good work.

From our plenary speaker C. Wess Daniels we learned about the power of attention and silence in an age of distraction. Every day we are force-fed a slurry of ads to force out our attention as fracking forces out natural gas. If "attention taken to its highest degree is prayer," what happens when our attention is drawn away from what is life-giving? Daniels urged us to make space in our lives for boredom, and for silence. He drew our attention to Fox's year of wandering through the countryside. He had no audiobooks, podcasts, or music beyond the song of the birds. From that silence, Quakerism was born. We lose a great deal when our minds are filled up with distractions, and set not as Colossians 3:1-2 urges us on the things that are above, but on the things that are on the earth. When we listen to the Inward Teacher, we can resist being pulled away from what is important and live in the Light.

Karla Jay, Global Ministries Coordinator for Friends United Meeting, introduced the work of FUM to support Latino, Cuban, and Ramallah Friends.

Kirenia Criado Perez, joined us again this year from Cuba Yearly Meeting. She spoke with friends at mealtimes, gave an evening information session along with the Puente de Amigos Committee, and led a workshop about the Alternatives to Violence Project in Cuba. "Given the disintegration of civil society on the island, brought on by the US embargo" (from her workshop description), her reports on the conditions existing now in her homeland are alarming. In speaking of her own calling to travel in ministry, she reminded us that if we ask God for guidance, when they give it we must listen. Jorge Luis Peña, clerk of Cuba Yearly Meeting, shared a message during our meeting for business via a pre-taped video. In it we heard a cry of desperation about the conditions Cubans face in day-to-day life in their homeland. He wanted us to know that even in these desperate times, limited as they have become, God is still finding ways to lead them into serving each other and their neighbors. We are grateful to have a strong spiritual relationship with Cuba Yearly Meeting and be able to support them in their life-giving ministry.

We heard of the extreme challenges faced by the people of Palestine from the head of Ramallah Friends School, Rania Ma'ayeh. She described the extreme restrictions and violence of life under occupation. Her words were profound: Hope is a discipline, a choice, a resistance to the forces of discouragement. In community, the well does not run dry.

The messages brought to us by these Friends felt organically interwoven with the work of the week in our meetings for worship for business. We felt a shift in our attention with more space made throughout the week for worship, discernment, and joy. There was new energy in the revisiting of old questions that we've been wrestling with for many years, and uplifting energy in the consideration of important new initiatives. We truly enjoy being together and exploring, as well as struggling, to find a way forward. We celebrated our community and Friends' calls to service within our community. We sang, we made things, we held a celebration of the Friends in our community. The currents of the Spirit flowed with energy and vitality; new waters in new channels carried us far from the despair of recent experiences. We seemed to breathe into this moment of gathering together, breathing into our work and our play, a people, as one.

And yet Friends present spoke of places where Friends feel in conflict and there is continuing pain. We recognize that part of becoming a gathered people is continually learning how to work through conflict and engage in repair. The formation of a Conflict Response Team provides an avenue to address past and future ways we hurt one another, helping us learn and grow together. We need to truly commit to the work.

In this gathering we are called forth by God to acknowledge our Quaker responsibility for the harms we did in the past to Indigenous communities and that continue today. We are seeking to acknowledge our mistakes, and we recognize that we have a long way to go in this work of repair. This too is a painful process. Building relationships is the starting point to moving beyond charity. We have begun the work of reparative justice and of building right relationships with our Indigenous neighbors. We created a procedure to allow financial resources from a fund held by the Yearly Meeting to go directly to Indigenous people. To respect the sovereignty and self-determination of Indigenous communities, we will give gifts, not grants, wherever possible, releasing the money from our control. We are reminded of the unfinished reparative work NEYM still has before us with African Americans and other marginalized peoples. We are continuing to more fully understand and respond to the history of New England Friends' engagement in chattel slavery and systemic racism. We are creating a Retrospective Justice Working Group to begin this work. We will endeavor to do this with humility and a consciousness of past mistakes.

Having drunk deeply from living waters of the well God has called us to, let us go forth in faithful obedience to divine leadings and in service to the world.

Yours in peace, love, and light,
New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Phillip Veatch
Presiding Clerk

It has been our practice to send out our epistle into the world with the epistle of Cuba Yearly Meeting. There is no epistle from the Annual Assembly of the Yearly Meeting of Friends in Cuba this year because it was impossible for them to meet in the ongoing disaster caused by the US embargo on Cuba. Our hearts are with our Cuban friends.