



NEW ENGLAND
YEARLY MEETING
— OF FRIENDS —
QUAKERS

January 29, 2021

Dear Friends,

Each year Quakers in New England are encouraged to stop and reflect on our collective condition as Friends. As part of our local meetings, we listen to where Spirit has moved among us, how we have responded to leadings and learnings and how we have sustained and nurtured our lives in loving community.

This year has been one of significant challenge and remarkable resilience. Many Friends have experienced hardship and stress in lost or remote work, in school disruptions or in the concerns around a political climate where violence seemed an ever-present possibility. Through this period, many of our usual forms have been taken from us—the solace of physical proximity, the grounding of familiar worship spaces, the joy and communion of potluck. In these challenges, new ways have been found to stay connected and take care. Friends have learned about Zoom and other ways to check in on each other rather than over coffee after worship. Many have marked the passing of family and friends in virtual services while yearning to be together. Friends have valued the times of gathering in the checkerboard rooms of online worship.

The writing of a State of Society report is an opportunity to reflect on how the Spirit has been present and at work within the meeting and among Friends, a practice especially important in this time of disruption and separation. The process is set out in Faith and Practice, which suggests consideration of how the spiritual health of the meeting is impacted by:

The quality of worship and spiritual ministry; efforts to foster spiritual growth; stands taken on Friends' principles; personal and family relations; relations with your local community and other religious groups; participation in general activities of Friends; and significant activities, outreach or concerns of the ... meeting; youth of the meeting; meeting community.

In this time of pandemic, some additional queries may be useful as we engage in this reflection.

- How has the worship experience in your meeting been impacted by changes you have made in response to COVID?
- Have Friends been enabled or excluded by these changes, whether by circumstance or preference?
- What is the quality of ministry among you and how has it been affected?
- How is religious education faring, for adults and for younger Friends?
- Are there things important to the life of the Spirit the meeting has been led to take up in the past year, or that felt right to lay down?

- Has the meeting been able to respond to the pastoral care needs among you, whether ongoing or directly pandemic-related?

Although as part of an ongoing process of experimentation, the traditional form of Yearly Meeting Ministry and Counsel has been set aside for now and the Yearly Meeting is exploring new ways of supporting our spirituality and ministry, please continue to share your meeting's State of Society report. It is important for us, as a gathered community of monthly meetings and worship groups, to hear how Spirit is at work in our midst. Friends holding the spiritual condition of the Yearly Meeting will prayerfully consider them, both to guide our ongoing service on behalf of Friends, and in creating a State of Society report for the Yearly Meeting as a whole. Please send your report to your quarterly meeting clerk and to *SoS@neym.org* by early May.