

April 24, 2025

Dear NEYM Quarterly Meeting Leaders,

On April 12, I, and more than 50 other Friends, traveled to Wellesley Friends Meeting to attend the Distillation Day to consider results of the year-long Sessions Visioning process. Friends throughout New England engaged deeply together on Saturday, to hold important questions of *why we gather* each year in Annual Sessions, and how we are called to meet the future before us. I have long held an image of the mystical life-blood of the Spirit, circulating throughout our geography, to all parts of NEYM, in the institutional forms that unite us (worship groups, monthly meetings, quarterly meetings, and yearly meeting), as well as through the unifying mystery of our collective discipline to discern God's call to us as a people. The clarity of that call at the Yearly Meeting level depends on the faithfulness of each of us, within our home meetings, to speak about, and live into what Spirit is calling us to do, and to be. I lift this image up to you, our quarterly meeting leaders, in appreciation for the ways that you faithfully nourish the life-blood of the Spirit, as it flows through your spiritual community, towards the Yearly Meeting, and as the quarterly meetings, and monthly meetings, receive, season and return the life and energy and faithfulness of the Yearly Meeting back, to nourish our local roots.

The other image that has recurred to me in this tumultuous and uncertain time is the Chinese word for "crisis". The Chinese characters for "crisis" are often translated as "*danger and opportunity*". But a more nuanced understanding of the characters includes both "*danger*", as well as: "*a crucial point, when something begins to change,*" or "*a turning point*". I suspect that few people would argue that that is not where we find ourselves in 2025, here among Friends, and in our national culture.

The year-long Sessions Visioning process was carried out in response to the immediate practical "dangers" of an unsustainable Sessions model. The causes are many and include the pandemic "hang-over", changing demographics in NEYM, and larger economic realities affecting budget and finance. To me the Distillation Day on April 12 began to shine a light on the "opportunities", highlighting that yes, we are at "*a crucial point, when something begins to change*", AND- we are coming awake, we are deepening our wrestling with the crucial question of *why* we must gather, what we most long for, what is essential? Invoked again and again was the imperative of worship. We acknowledged that we are not at our best when we know we are longing for Kairos while we are preoccupied, and bullied by Chronos. We named the blessing and necessity of sinking deeply together, as a people, into the inexhaustible well of God's Grace and guidance, that transcends all earthly powers and principalities.

This is an important and ongoing conversation. The April 12 gathering did not yield a clear, practical sense of unity of direction for 2026. Our staff and Sessions Visioning volunteers have shepherded us faithfully to this point. The May 10th meeting of Permanent Board will carry the discernment forward, holding in tender care the practical concerns about how much “worldly lead time” is required for Sessions 2026 to take place. Thus, should we linger in our uncertainty, we may risk the closing of some doors. The DRAFT report of the Sessions Visioning Process will be available as an Advance Document for the May 10th Permanent Board meeting, to be held at the Framingham Friends Meeting, and on Zoom [May 10 Permanent Board Meeting](#). All are welcome to attend. When you receive the report, please reflect deeply on Nia Thomas’s distillation of the full process, including the April 12th sharing, and thoughtful reflections sent following the Wellesley gathering.

To continue the conversation, I would like to propose a mid-summer gathering of quarterly meeting leaders, date to be determined in coordination with already scheduled quarterly and yearly meeting activities. I welcome your sense of how our time together might best serve you and your quarters.

And looking towards Sessions 2025, Rebecca Leuchak, our Presiding Clerk has some thoughts about the ways hearing from quarters may serve us in the time we are in meeting for worship for the purpose of business. She asks you, as servant leaders, to please think about the ways that Spirit is present and moving within your quarterly meeting and what news you might share with Friends in a brief presentation at Sessions.

I invite, and encourage, you to share this letter with your quarterly meeting contact lists.

In faith,

Susan Davies

NEYM Permanent Board Clerk

