

Quaker Convening on Aging 9.7.23

Present: Susan Hoskins & Lisa Ogletree, FFA; Frances Kreimer, Pendle Hill; Kevin Lovelady, NYYM; Patti Nesbitt & Sarah Gillooly, BYM; Sheila Sorking, PYM; Nia Thomas, NEYM; Greg Woods, Beacon Hill Friends House. Regrets: Rachel Stahlhut, FGC/OVYM.

The meeting commenced with deep silent grounding before each person spoke about their current projects.

Frances showed the Pendle Hill website, recently updated and easier to navigate. She showed where to find free online programming, which is more accessible and getting better publicity. These include First Monday lectures, Online workshops, and reading groups on Pendle Hill pamphlets. There are also several fee-based programs hybrid and onsite. New staff brought new energy. Frances is excited about conversations about collaboration with other organizations to offer more online programs (Woodbrooke, Earlham Quaker Leaders Center, etc).

Sheila noted that most of her work is with the clients served by the PYM aging granting groups. She has been writing articles about notable older Friends for the PYM News and hosted a Spirituality and Aging workshop with Kevin for PYM. She has not been asked to do workshops for meetings (is part time). She also conducted a survey about the Quaker Aging Resources website, learning that the most popular parts were related links, with little interest in pamphlets. Popular topics are housing, aging in place, finances, spirituality and aging, and caregiving. She has cleaned up broken links and envisions a nation-wide resource.

Kevin is pleased to have been appointed the full time NYYM ARCH Director. There are 5 regional coordinators with a range of related skills and 1 in prison ministry. The model used is mutual accompaniment rather than helper/helpee. They offer a virtual Foundations workshop twice a year so that new people can learn the model, barriers, boundaries and their calling to do this work. He also provides support to meetings and the coordinators are offering several virtual groups (across YM) including children of aging parents, death + dying, spirituality and aging, seasons of life, cognitive difference, tiny meetings. New groups may be added on menopause, ageism, prison transitions. Workshops have been offered on advance directives. He envisions having a template like 12 step programs that could be followed anywhere. Sarah noted that she and Kevin will continue their theological reflection at ESR.

Patti was happy to report that the BYM End of Life workgroup is moving forward on their publication of *A Tender Time: Quaker Voices on End of Life*. It will be edited by Janaki Spickard Keeler, published by BYM and distributed by Pendle Hill and FGC. Content will be available to all. Several meetings have requested workshops and they include one workshop each day at Sessions. Popular topics are green burial, grief, estate planning. She wants to create lesson plans so any meeting could use the materials to conduct their own programs. She has written guiding queries, which are available by request. She also spoke of accompanying a dear friend in her last weeks and using material from Auckland MM (New Zealand) on writing one's own memorial minute. It was agreed that this is a treasured practice that should be revived. ***Please send the queries and memorial minute material to all.*** Sarah added that she has noted an increase in "social work calls" and asked how others handle the **boundary** between professional services and spiritual support. Kevin replied that he alerts the regional coordinator to help seek local resources and other care connections. We can provide spiritual and emotional support and information

& referral as non-professional Friends. There is a lot we can offer through mutual accompaniment, helping carry the pain and difficulty. Perhaps there is a workshop for care committees needed.

Nia reported that they found Luma software helpful for virtual program registration; it syncs with Zoom. Patty has co-facilitated open support groups for NEYM. She usually carries a “third thing (Parker Palmer)” of a Pendle Hill pamphlet if needed to stimulate discussion on spirituality and aging, end of life, etc. They continue to work on how the ARCH model can best serve NEYM meetings. She noted the need for a **guide to memorial minutes** for small meetings without a designated committee. There has been a theme to peer group interests: who are we now that we are older, meetings smaller, we have less ability to serve.

Greg explained Beacon Hill Friends House’s vocational discernment program and how they have discovered significant interest among adults 60+ in exploring the themes as related to aging and retirement. The same questions have been raised, centering on “what am I called to do now?” How can I find purpose, how can I serve, what is God calling me to do? They are revising their workshop and workbook to focus on this population, running the pilot workshop on October 7. They would **like to partner** with others to offer the program throughout the country. Greg also noted the need to consider disability impact and accommodation as people age.

Sheila noted that during PYM Annual Sessions, an Affinity Group on Disabilities was attended in-person and hybrid. Attendees included a Friend who is blind, leading the discussion. On-line communication continues with this group as they’ve found a place for support and information sharing.

Patti asked if there were pro bono lawyers who could help people write simple wills, as things are so difficult without them. This lifted the question of whether there is a way to **share resource people and key online resources**, or a way to capture (video) presentations of workshops for wider use. Sheila replied that Quaker Aging Resources might be one answer.

Sarah noted that the problem is not content creation but content distribution. **Is there a way for Friends Journal or other publication to share about the end of life work being done around our community?**

Friends, FFA is proud to have served as a catalyst for these Quaker Convenings on Aging. We see that our communities are aging and seek to back efforts to support aging Friends. We are proud to have provided grants to most of these projects and are excited by the dedication, innovation and collaboration evidenced here. We look forward to your conversations, reports and proposals to continue this ongoing, ever-evolving ministry. It is clear that meeting again in **6 months** is desired. Let me know what you want to discuss, perhaps deeper dives into the bolded issues noted above.

Susan W. Hoskins, FFA Executive Director