

**Friends Foundation for the Aging
Year-end Report & Reapplication Proposal
New England Yearly Meeting ARCH Project
September 2024**

Submitted by: New England Yearly Meeting of Friends

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Amount Requested: \$17,790

Project Summary: New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM) seeks funding for a third year of part-time service for a New England Based Aging Resources Coordinator, working in partnership both with New York Yearly Meeting's (NYYM) Aging Resources Consultation and Help (ARCH) staff and NEYM leadership in order to better equip New England Quakers (both individuals and meetings) to respond to aging related challenges and opportunities.

What is the problem you identified? Has it changed? The vision identified in our original proposal and reiterated in our last report (linked [here](#)) has not changed; the wider understanding of this vision among New England Friends has grown. We still aim to connect, equip, and accompany individual Friends and Friends Meetings in New England as a community of practice bringing our spiritual experience as Friends into dialogue with aging related concerns. As we step into our third year of intentional tending to this shared leading, there is a wider and more visible circle of Friends in New England paying attention to the intersection of aging and our spiritual journey as Friends and Friends Meetings, including the particular role of local meetings in the life of Friends in the final chapters of life. As I write, we are preparing for our next monthly call with Friends serving in leadership roles in local meetings in NEYM; the theme this month is "the power of local meetings," a conversation fewer New England Friends would have been ready for three years ago. Nurturing the ARCH ministry in New England has been one of weaving together a growing understanding of the spiritual opportunities of aging and the particular possibilities found within communities of Friends.

What actions did you take to address the problem?

We were successful this year in taking the steps we committed to in last year's proposal:

- Continuing and deepening our **monthly End of Life Reflection Group**. While drop-ins are welcome, many participants are consistent and a growing number have now served as

co-facilitators, signaling a shift away from Patti as the sole person responsible for the group and towards a culture of mutual accountability and shared care. The group completed reading all the Pendle Hill Pamphlets on the end of life and were able to discern together their next selection, *The Light of the Evening: Meditations on Growing in Old Age* by Reflection Group participant and New England Friend, Gunilla Norris.

- Offering a three-part **advance planning workshop** distributing and utilizing NYYM’s newly revised workbook. The 29 registrants for this workshop series came from 12 local meetings, including one beyond New England. Participants reported finding the workshop “very helpful” and were especially appreciative of Patti’s depth of experience and “sensitive leadership opening up new thoughts” within small and large group conversations.
- **Visiting local meetings** upon request. Patti customizes what is offered at local meetings depending on the particular needs and leadings of the meeting and visits in the spirit of a traveling minister rather than “expert” outsider, offering not only structured workshops but also focused fellowship for the purposes of relationship building, worship sharing, and accompaniment.
- Formal and informal **opportunities for connection** for New England Friends to connect around aging-related experiences. It has been evident that with two years of Yearly Meeting of service now under her belt, many Friends in New England now know and seek out Patti for conversation. These opportunities have taken the form of Patti’s lunch table conversations at NEYM’s major in-person events throughout the year as well as three workshops at our annual Sessions this August, which highlight Patti’s wide-ranging abilities as a facilitator, and engaged 36 Friends across on-campus and online formats:
 - *Playing with Darkness*: using art, guided meditation, and authentic movement which allowed participants to explore spiritual themes related to aging and death outside of the typical discussion-based format.
 - *Exploring My Life’s Work and Purpose*: See photos below of participants as they playfully reflected on the connections between the different “hats” they’ve worn in their lives.
 - *Letting Go and Affirming*: utilized writing, worship, and conversation as participants explored some of the more emotionally challenging aspects of aging and disability.
- **Cultivating partnerships** within and beyond the Yearly Meeting (see partnership question below for details).
- In addition, in March Patti served a guest presenter on a monthly gathering of Friends serving in leadership roles within their local meeting, exploring the theme of *Grieving in*

Community where Friends were invited to share stories of how their meetings have grown through grief as well as grief resources.

What did you learn? Will you make any changes in the coming year? Patti has deepened her understanding of what approaches work best with both online and in-person formats as well as the gifts and skills of individual Friends in New England who can serve as content resources, co-facilitators, and elders.

This year, we plan to continue and/or repeat what was offered last year with the same key program components and a goal of meeting visits happening quarterly. In addition, this coming November, Patti will co-facilitate a Pastoral Care workshop with Noah Merrill at NEYM's [*Meeting Care Day*](#), sharing aging-support models from local meetings of all sizes. As conversations about experiences with disability have arisen organically in Patti's offerings so far, this year Patti intends to cultivate connections with Friends who have more depth of experience in this area who may be a resource to both Friends and meetings. At the next offering of the Advance Planning workshop series, Patti plans to finalize and distribute an advance planning manual she has drafted which includes information (including New England-specific information) as a compliment to the reflection-oriented ARCH workbook. Patti hopes to continue her learning and widen her connections through professional development opportunities including by attending Bartimore Yearly Meeting's *Hand in Hand* workshop series. Finally, a small group of Friends offering support and care for Patti's ministry have begun meeting regularly.

How have you engaged any partners/collaborators in implementing or funding? Have you considered how to sustain the program?

Patti has been intentional in collaborating with Friends from across the Yearly Meeting on her programmatic offerings whether it be as thought-partners, co-facilitators, content area experts, or elders. Beyond our Yearly Meeting, connection with other Quakers serving in related ways has been a source of inspiration and steadiness. NYYM's ARCH staff have continued to offer Patti a community of practice for focused reflection, idea sharing, learning, and mutual support. This circle also allows Patti to connect New England Friends with NYYM's ARCH offerings which may be of particular interest and would otherwise be unavailable in our Yearly Meeting. This cycle, we look forward to collaborating with NYYM to extend their online "Building Blocks" offerings to New England Friends. We are grateful for the continued "Convening" opportunities provided by FFA to explore further points of connection.

In terms of funding, NEYM is currently exploring increasing the staff and volunteer time invested in longer-term development initiatives including the potential creation of endowments to carry forward our ministries in a more sustainable way. We are hopeful that FFA will continue to invite us to reapply for continued funding for this specific project while servant leaders in New England work hard to ensure the overall long-term financial health of the Yearly Meeting, the container for ministries specifically geared towards New England Friends.

How do you know your actions had an impact? Please describe those who participated, outputs and outcomes. Stories or photos are welcome.

Our ARCH programmatic opportunities have engaged participants from over 25 local meetings in New England, across urban, rural and suburban settings as well as a notable number of meetings from beyond New England. While there are returning participants, the roster of Friends participating continues to grow steadily. The majority of participants are over the age of 60, but not exclusively so. This year's youngest participant was a 20 year old first-time Sessions attender who found *Playing with Darkness* "truly wonderful". Beyond consistently encouraging participation numbers, the participant feedback has been very strong with Friends identifying high value in having expertly facilitated spaces to explore the explicitly spiritual aspects of aging. Some feedback highlights include: "the group is very welcoming and the 90 minutes just fly by...a wonderful sense of sharing!"; "invaluable"; "very powerful...the sharing was personal and deep,"; "especially rich sharing today, from many hearts, all so eloquently expressed, as if each were touched by the divine,"; "a deep and meaningful workshop facilitated with great care and love. It was refreshing to move and connect with Spirit in this way- different from using words. Listening to our bodies was both freeing and powerful."

While these individual testimonials bring smiles to our faces, it is the impact we see as evidenced by meeting's annual State of Society reports that carry the most weight for us, as they reflect the way Friends' communities as a whole are growing in their understanding of the particular spiritual opportunities that come with aging. This year, six local meetings discussed aging in their state of society reports and while they mentioned the anxiety, grief, and challenges that accompany aging, they also discussed aging in connection with spiritual transformation, mutual support, the call to deeper relationship with one another and God, the opportunity to adapt together, an invitation to healing and wider connection/interdependence in the local community, and the opportunity to clarify and more fully live into the meeting's purpose in the lives of its members. While the ARCH ministry cannot claim credit for all of this, it is clear the intentional tending of conversation, connection, and reflection related to aging has contributed meaningfully to the overall spiritual condition of Friends and Friends Meetings in New England.

Is there anything else you would like FFA to know about this project? Feedback on your interaction with FFA would be helpful. Are there ways we can help beyond the grant?

From Patti: I attended the FGC Gathering this summer and loved the wider connections I developed as ARCH Coordinator. I worked as an accessibility assistant, which connected me with disability concerns and with those with profound physical disabilities. Networking with others serving these populations was invaluable for exchanging ideas and sharing resources. Connecting with Susan Hoskins was especially valuable for exploring avenues where Quaker aging services might go. Talking with Patti Nesbitt helped me change two of my NEYM Sessions workshops, as she generously shared outlines from her own workshops. I conversed with someone living in PA, who later sent me notes from his former Maine Meeting aging events.

I am very grateful to FFA for bringing together east coast providers serving our elderly Friends. The need for support is large within NEYM but also beyond. Those outside this geographic area also seem eager to connect. FFA's financial and coordinating support are crucial.

In line with these reflections, we wonder what other in-person opportunities for connection might be possible.





Project Budget and Financial Report

Expenses

Item	Notes & Commentary	2023 Budget	Actuals ¹	2024 Budget
New England ARCH Coordinator wages	<p>Pay for 25 hours per month for 12 months at a rate of \$29 per hour (300 hours total)</p> <p>As of September 9th, the ARCH Coordinator has logged 334.25 hours this grant cycle</p> <p>Pay for 30 hours per month for 12 months at a rate of \$29 per hour</p> <p>[Increase to better reflect actuals this year. The swell in hours around NEYM’s annual Sessions was greater than anticipated.]</p>	\$8,700	\$9,693.25	\$10,440
ARCH Director wages	Pay for time spent on training and monthly supervision and coordinating meetings with ARCH Director (approximately 20 hours over the course of 12 months at \$75/hour)	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500
Coordinator travel	<p>Travel and meal reimbursement</p> <p>Patti’s travel reimbursed at IRS employee rate (\$0.67 per mile) plus NEYM Sessions fees</p>	\$1,000	\$1,803.46	\$2,000

¹ Actuals include funds that are in process at time of writing

	We anticipate both Patti's travel (including to Maine) will increase as will our annual Sessions fees with new Sessions site in 2025			
Materials	Postage & printing (letter to meetings; handwritten notes; 25 Coordinator's copies of <i>Quaker Values and End of Life Decision Making</i> booklet)	\$750	\$350 ²	\$450
Direct NEYM staff support	Regular meetings with senior NEYM staff to identify points of integration with other NEYM programs, events, and communications as well as to coordinate wider pastoral care efforts/local meeting relationships as needed. Approximately 75 hours at \$50 per hour As of September 9, 2024, best estimate based on hours logged (49) and hours anticipated to be logged by September 15 (8). Hours were slightly lower than estimated due to some unanticipated issues that limited availability to meet at our expected frequency this winter (Director needing to step into Yearly Meeting Secretary role due to YM Sec family tragedy; Coordinator medical issue)	\$3,750	\$2,850	\$3,750
Wider Presence	Conferences and other networking/partnership building/professional development opportunities Not budgeted in 23-24 cycle but would be very helpful	\$0	\$0	\$500

² As of writing, we are in continued conversation with NYYM about the cost of the booklets which we distributed. The number included here is our best guess of the booklet fees plus postage and other program materials purchased by Patti (reimbursement in process).

Indirect NEYM support (in kind donation)	Administrative staff time, as needed support and on-going overhead for NEYM systems (estimate based on 10% of overall project budget)	\$1,570	\$1,570	\$1,864
Program Income	We neglected to include program income in our application last year but did indeed receive \$820 in program income this year from the Advance Planning Workshop series which was offered on a pay-as-led scale.	\$0	\$820	\$850
Totals:		\$17,200	\$16,946.71	\$19,654

Total amount sought from FFA (project expenses minus in-kind donation and expected income): \$17,790