

Friends Foundation for the Aging
New Grant Proposal

Date: March 5, 2025

Organization: [Heirloom Family Films](#)

Formal Organization Name and TIN: Fredonia Meeting, NYYM (fiscal agent) 22-2535245

Amount Requested \$10,000.00

Project title: *Faith Journeys of Our Elders: Preserving the Stories of Our Elders Through Film*

Summary Description:

Aging Friends have historical and spiritual insights to offer meetings, regions, and yearly meetings. Films of these Friends' stories create a legacy for future Friends.

Problem Identified and Who Identified It?

There are several problems at the intersection of an aging Friends population, and an influx of newcomers to meetings. My leading for the past five years has been to preserve the faith journeys of our elders, a leading supported by both my home meeting and my regional meeting.

Problem 1: There is an aging population of Friends whose stories and faith practices are being lost as they age, grow frail and pass away. They hold a history of both their home meeting and Friends' practices as well as their faith-based actions in the world. The stories of their involvement, informed by their faith, could serve to enrich the lives of current younger Friends engaged in similar issues.

Problem 2: Our faith is an experiential one. We expect Friends to live out their testimonies in the world. However, we have no creed, no dogma, no ritual, no readily visible traditions -- nor do we have a universally agreed upon sacred text (particularly among our newer, younger Friends). This can make it hard to figure out how to participate or what people are doing during worship.

Sharing films of older Friends describing how they came to Friends, and how they lived out their faith can both encourage and inspire newer Friends.

Problem 3: Our dominant faith practice is silent meeting for worship, or expectant worship. To a newcomer, this practice is opaque, offering little guidance on how to embrace the expectant waiting, nor methods that might be useful for "centering down" or entering into worship.

Hearing older Friends describe what they do to center down, deal with distractions or distress and how they discern the need for vocal ministry can reduce the opacity of our practices Older Friends can also share experiences they have during meeting that sustain them during the rest of the week.

Problem 4 Newcomers to meeting (at least meetings I have spoken with) do not seem to show much interest in Pendle Hill Pamphlets, Faith and Practice or other classic Quaker texts. For this new, younger generation of people, the internet is their chief research tool, and the preferred medium is video. Our films can be used on websites, during First Day School or Adult Education programs to convey our rich history through the lens of individual Friends. Links to films (or clips of them) could be attached to follow up emails when newcomers attend worship. These films become a resource library for what it means to be a Friend in a particular meeting, but also in the wider world of Friends.

Solution (Includes Population to be Served)

We propose creating a *Faith Journeys of Our Elders* film for 14 of the 15 meetings in Farmington Scipio region (we have already made three films for Buffalo). Our films will record the faith journeys of Elders in each meeting. We are not using the term “Elders” in the way it was used long ago in Friends’ practices. We identify Elders those who have lengthy experience as Friends and can help convey and illuminate Friends’ practices. If this project is successful, we propose describing our method in detail and encouraging other regions, meetings or yearly meetings to create their own films.

We will ask each meeting to determine the maximum amount they can contribute towards the expense of the film and make up the difference using funds from the proposed FFA grant. Once completed, each meeting will be free to download the films or link to our Vimeo channel. We will secure releases so that the wider body of Friends can view the films.

Partners for Implementation and Has the Solution Been Tried by Other Organizations?

While there are film companies that make films about individuals, we have not found any that focus on Faith Journeys. We do not have partners that we work with and have been making films since 2019. The company consists of two people, myself and my videographer, Jesse Deganis-Librera (resume available upon request).

Stability, Diversity and Leadership of Organization

I have been a member of Buffalo meeting in Farmington Scipio Region since 1992. During that time, I have served in multiple capacities, including clerking the region for almost 6 years, leaving the post only due to my late husband’s illness. I have been clerk of my own meeting for about 12 of the past 30+ years, though not all at once. My stability as a Friend is evident as are my leadership abilities as a clerk. As far as diversity goes, both Jesse and I are white, and Jesse is about half my age. We are eager to film anyone who the meeting recognizes as an Elder. The meetings will discern how and who gets asked to participate.

I have minutes from both my monthly meeting supporting my leading to do this work and a minute from the region agreeing to be the fiscal agent to receive and distribute funds. Funds will be used only to create the films and pay travel expenses. I will not take any funds for my personal use. This is a leading for me to try and preserve something I think is important.

Alignment with FFA Values and JEDI Principles

I think that our alignment with the values of FFA are clear. We value our older Friends and feel their stories are being lost. I feel that our work will embody JEDI principles but primarily through working with individual meetings.

Conclusion

When I retired from teaching at University at Buffalo in 2018, the idea of making films to preserve people's stories was an idea that wouldn't let me go. I had never had any interest in video and didn't know much about it. But the idea persisted and grew until it was clear that I needed to act. I began to learn about film and like many leadings, way opened. I found a new life as a producer of films to tell peoples' stories. I found a videographer whose graduate work was a film about his grandfather. Even during the pandemic, way kept opening to make films. I learned how to edit with Jesse's instruction, and how to create and update a website. None of these things were on my radar as I contemplated my post-retirement life. But there it is. In some ways, it testifies to the authenticity of my leading—it has led me far out of my comfort zone in terms of knowledge, but deeply into my place of joy in preserving stories. I think my love for this work is captured in these two aphorisms:

“You are a unique edition of the universal story”

Jim Finley (author, psychologist and former Trappist Monk under Thomas Merton)

“Whenever an elder dies, a library burns down.”

Amadou Hampâté Bâ. ” a Malian writer, historian and ethnologist (1901-1991)

No matter your story, others will be able to identify and appreciate some part of it. The permanent loss of those stories if they are not preserved is very real. I look forward to making more films celebrating the lives of older Quakers, capturing their wisdom for future generations.

Costs

- Jesse—(all rates are per hour)
- \$50.00 for filming,
- \$45.00 for editing,
- \$20.00 for pre planning meetings

Sue will not take a fee for these films, but the cost of website maintenance, mailbox rental, email, newsletters, video site, and web hosting runs \$150.00 per month. A portion of the monthly costs and any travel expenses will be added to each film. Almost all meetings can be driven to and from in a day.

Breakdown of Costs

Pre-planning meetings: 2	\$40.00
Monthly cost of maintaining services plus possible travel	\$200.00
Filming: 3 hours	\$150.00
Editing (interviews, adding slides, music, and B-roll)	\$675.00 - \$1125.00
Total film cost (range):	\$1065.00 - \$1515.00

Each professionally filmed and edited film has a unique link on our Vimeo channel. Meetings can download the film to a flash drive or to their own computers. They can share the link with anyone, copy it and distribute it. Short clips of the film can be used on a FB page, a website or in any other social medium.

Links to Faith Journey films we have already made.

- [Roberta Bothwell](#)
- [Rodney and Ann Pierce](#)
- [Sue Tannehill](#)

A Partial Selection of Interview Questions (meetings can also develop their own questions)

Birthright Friend:

- What was it about Quakers that kept you in the faith after you were an adult?

Friend by Convincement:

- Tell us about the spiritual journey that led you to become a Friend.
- What was it about Quakers that made you want to become a member?

Other Questions:

- What aspects of the Quaker tradition and testimonies matter most to you?
- What are some concerns or leadings that you have acted upon over the years?
- What are some of your practices during Meeting for Worship? How do you experience it?
- Do you have practices during the week that support or inform your Quakerism?
- You have been a Friend for many years. What changes have you seen in the Society over time?
- What have you drawn from Quakers of long ago and what do you imagine Quakers in the future will draw from us?
- Quakers long ago proclaimed their Truth loudly through speaking, writing and acting. Where and how do you see Friends proclaiming their Truth today?