

MOUNT TOBY MEETING OF FRIENDS

HANDBOOK

August 2026

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INTRODUCTION

The Mount Toby Meeting of Friends Handbook was first published in 1982 as a resource for our Meeting community, committees, and clerks. Its primary purpose remains to provide a clear, concise overview of the Meeting's organizational structure, processes, and policies grounded in Meeting for Business minutes and evolved common practices.

Until 2018, the Meeting published an updated version biennially, prepared at first by individuals and later by a Handbook Committee. The most recent Handbook is available on the Mount Toby website in the public section. Non-circulating versions of older print editions of the Handbook are available in the library.

This 2026 Handbook incorporates changes that have occurred since 2018. To assure the Meeting has a living, accurate resource, the Handbook Committee aims to update the online version on a rolling basis and publish a print version on even-numbered years.

The 2026 Handbook follows the same outline as previous Handbooks with long sections on Officers, Committees, and Working Groups; Meeting Structures and Processes; Meeting Policies and Policy Statements. Briefer sections on Activities and Groups, Meetinghouse and Grounds, and Affiliated Organizations are followed by four appendices. The online version is searchable and the print version includes an index.

While the Handbook clarifies responsibilities of committees and individuals holding positions, it is an overview and is not designed to include all details of individual committee policies.

Many committees and individuals go beyond the Handbook and have developed manuals that clarify how they conduct their business and fulfill their charges. Those flexible guides have proved to be valuable resources for nominated individuals and new committee members and can be updated by committees as membership changes.

QUAKERLY ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

AFSC	American Friends Service Committee
CVQM	Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting
F&P	<i>Faith and Practice</i> of New England Yearly Meeting of Friends
FCNL	Friends Committee on National Legislation
FGC	Friends General Conference
FUM	Friends United Meeting
FWCC	Friends World Committee for Consultation
NEYM	New England Yearly Meeting

REFERENCING MEETING ACTIONS

Whenever possible a reference is given to the monthly meeting minutes where a policy was approved. This will be in the form (mm/yyyy) or (m/yyyy). Thus (11/1995) refers to November 1995, and (5/2007) refers to May 2007.

OFFICERS, COMMITTEES, AND WORKING GROUPS

Purpose

This section describes duties and qualifications based on descriptions written by Nominating Committees and Care & Counsel over several years, checked by committee clerks, and approved by Meeting for Business. It is a guide for new committee members, for the Nominating Committee as it looks for suitable people for particular service, and for those who wish to serve. Anyone who wants to volunteer to serve on a committee should speak to the clerk of that committee or to anyone on the Nominating Committee.

Customary Procedures

The Nominating Committee brings nominations for officers and standing committees to Meeting for Business. In the past, nominations were only brought annually (3/2004), but this is no longer practical. Nominations are now brought on an ongoing basis. Nominations may be made from the floor at Meeting for Business, but these are referred to the Nominating Committee for consideration and recommendation, and presented to Meeting for Business for final approval (7/1978). Technical details are below:

Term Start Dates: Members of the Religious Education and Tilling Hour Committees begin on June 1. The terms for all other officers and committee members begin September 1.

Term Lengths: Ministry & Worship, Care & Counsel Committee, and Finance Committees are filled through staggered three-year appointments. The treasurer is also appointed for three years (7/2025). Trustees and burial ground caretakers are appointed for six years. Appointments to all other committees and offices are for two years.

Term Limits: Usually committee members serve for no more than six years without a break; the Nominating Committee may recommend an exception when they feel there is justification, such as particular experience or specialized training (recommendation of Care & Counsel 3/1994, 6/1996, 10/1997). It has been our custom that members of the Nominating Committee and the recording clerk don't serve consecutive terms and the presiding clerk only serves a single two-year term.

Annual Reports: Committees are encouraged to present reports to Meeting for Business at least once a year; reports are attached to the minutes (F&P).

State of Society: The Meeting annually writes a State of Society report discerning the spiritual state of the meeting. The report does not generally include statistical information or repeat information that appears in committee annual reports. The report is shared with CVQM and NEYM and should be completed by April every year to fit with their schedules. In most years this is overseen by Care & Counsel and Ministry & Worship, but in 2025 an experiment was tried using an ad hoc committee made up of representatives of four different committees (12/2025, 6/2026).

Minutes: Copies of committee minutes and reports may be filed in the office files in the library.

Committee Lists: Up-to date lists of committee members are posted on the bulletin board in the foyer by the Nominating Committee or the clerks (1/1989). A current committee list is also posted on the website.

Vacancies: Appointments made to fill vacancies between the regular appointments of committees in even years are intended to fill out the uncompleted term of the person replaced. See also **Nominating and Appointing Procedures**.

Officers

Clerks

The primary responsibility of the clerks is to oversee the Meetings for Business, together with activities related directly to the Meetings for Business. Traditionally, this has been done by a clerk and a recording clerk. Beginning in the late '90s, some began to feel there was more work to be done in a meeting of this size than could reasonably be expected of two people. Frequently, since then, an assistant clerk has been added to the clerking team. An assistant clerk is nominated through consultation of the clerk-nominee and the Nominating Committee. Specific responsibilities may be adjusted according to the preferences and needs of the clerks. They may agree among themselves who will do which parts of the necessary work, but there should be clear assignment of the presiding and recording functions (3/1990). Some clerks have also set up a formal support committee to meet with regularly, while other clerks have created an advisory clerk's council.

Clerk of the Meeting

The clerk should be a Friend with sound knowledge of Quaker practice; is usually a member of the Meeting; has an overview of Meeting activities and needs; is an administrator and facilitator who sees that those things are done that need to be done; and finds channels through which Friends' concerns can receive attention. Responsibilities include:

Meeting for Business

- planning the agenda
- publicizing the date
- presiding at the meeting
- working with the recording clerk to gather a sense of the meeting in a clear minute
- meeting with the recording clerk before and/or after each Meeting for Business to help coordinate the agenda and to follow up items from that meeting (as needed)
- reading letters of application for membership or transfer to the Meeting for Business
- seeing that important announcements are made
- ensuring that each standing committee presents an annual report to Meeting for Business.

Other Clerk Duties

- sending in reports requested by Yearly Meeting (except the Recorder submits the yearly statistical report)
- attending meetings of Care & Counsel and Ministry & Worship
- signing all contracts on behalf of the Meeting (12/2009)
- signing checks when the treasurer is not able or available to do so (11/2007)

- acting as liaison between Mount Toby, other Meetings, CVQM, NEYM, the local community, and the general public
- annually choosing one of the three Designated Responders under the meeting's Sexual Safeguarding policy (7/2022)
- serving as an ex officio member of the Nominating Committee to participate in the work of the committee to whatever extent they felt led

See also **Nominating and Appointing Procedures**

Recording Clerk

The recording clerk responsibilities (some of which may be performed by an assistant clerk if there is one) include:

- writing the minutes of the monthly Meeting for Business, alone or in conference with other clerks
- sending a copy of each minute to any individual or committee affected
- distributing electronic copies of the minutes and attachments to those wishing to receive them
- arranging for electronic copies of the minutes and attachments to be put on the website in the "members only" section, and to be put on the archival flash drive in the library
- sending a report of Meeting for Business actions to the Newsletter editor
- assembling the final approved minutes, including all attachments, and coordinating with the web minder to see that they are put on the website in the "members only" section.
- writing a report on the Meeting for Business for inclusion in the next Newsletter.

See also **Minutes of the Meeting for Business**

Responsibilities Decided by Team

One of the clerks is responsible for:

- sending out electronically the agenda and advance documents prior to business meeting
- sending out electronically the minutes and attachments after the meeting
- keeping track of items that will be coming back to a future business meeting
- posting a copy of the minutes on the bulletin board in the foyer
- receiving and distributing mail (electronic, voice, and U.S. mail) and responding as needed
- ensuring that letters of application for, or transfer of, membership are given to the Recorder

Recorder

The Recorder:

- keeps the official membership records of the Meeting
- records memberships, births, marriages, deaths, transfers and conscientious objectors
- proofreads the annual printout of membership from Yearly Meeting and enters corrections on it
- prepares the annual statistical report for Yearly Meeting, using information from the minutes of Meeting for Business

- receives originals of letters of application and transfers from the clerk and enters them in the files of individual members (4/2005)
- maintains files on Meeting members and attenders

See also **Membership – Becoming a Member** and **Records of the Meeting – Correspondence**

Records Manager

The records manager works to preserve and recover records of the meeting, especially minutes of committees. The Records Manager will collaborate with committees to collect current records in a way that is useful, to recover past records that have not been collected, to establish confidentiality policies as appropriate to each committee, and to find a storage method that is safe and permanent. The Records Manager is an ex officio member of the History and Records Committee, is nominated by the Nominating Committee, and is not term-limited (3/2026).

Treasurer

The Treasurer:

- receives funds, keeps accounts, and pays bills and other commitments of the Meeting
- serves as the agent of the Meeting for all external financial affairs such as insurance, banking, brokerage, and taxes
- provides financial information to the Finance Committee to facilitate development of the annual budget and its other responsibilities
- is a member of the Finance Committee ex officio, and works with it in sending out periodic letters to members reminding them of their responsibility to support the Meeting financially
- provides annually, during January, an acknowledgement to each contributor of their tax-deductible financial contributions for the calendar year just completed. A Finance Committee person helps with the end of the year gift receipt letters. This means one other person in addition to the treasurer will have access to the confidential donor list and amounts (9/2016)
- makes full quarterly reports (in September, December, March and June) and monthly summary reports to Meeting for Business except in July (2/2009)
- collects all passwords for and is administrator on all electronic accounts
- receives and deposits Solar Renewable Energy Certificate proceeds from the aggregator, tracks SRECs, and gives an annual report to Meeting for Business in October.

The Finance Committee oversees and assists with the work of the treasurer, and should create a list of regularly scheduled things to be checked (9/2016).

Committees and Approved Working Groups

General Committee Operations

The life of the Meeting depends on the functioning of its committees. Committees are appointed and laid down through the Meeting for Business, which clarifies the committee's charges and structure. Each committee and working group is expected to have a manual detailing its specific responsibilities and procedures. This Handbook is not intended to duplicate that information. Friends serving on committees are nominated by the Nominating Committee. When Friends are

asked to serve on a committee, it is important that they be helped to clarity about the responsibilities involved. Members who attend other Meetings have sometimes been appointed to Mount Toby committees, such as the Burial Committee (7/2024) and oversight of ministry committees.

At present although Committees are expected to keep minutes there is no formal process for filing or maintaining them in accessible locations. Most committees have, or are developing, manuals with more specific information about their committees functions and procedures.

Committee Conveners: When a committee is appointed by the Meeting, the first person on the list is the convener. It is their responsibility to call the committee together for its first meeting, when it chooses its own clerk. The choice of committee clerk should then be reported to the Meeting clerk and to the Nominating Committee. Committees are expected to submit an annual report to Meeting for Business. Oversight of the functioning of committees is the responsibility of Care & Counsel.

Audio Visual Support Committee

The Audio-Visual Committee's main function is to make meetings accessible to people with disabilities, although the technology it oversees is available to all. It maintains, operates, and improves the necessary equipment for hybrid operations and for hearing assistance for Meetings for Worship, Meetings for Business, and Tilling Hours. It recruits and schedules online hosts for hybrid Meetings for Worship and makes sure the system is on for these events. Friends can also request the committee's help for other Mount Toby meetings, and the committee will accommodate them whenever possible. The committee has six members serving two-year terms.

The Audio-Visual Support Committee has asked that Friends with Meeting-related passwords (for instance, to the library catalog or the Meeting's financial statements) share those passwords to the treasurer in the interest of maintaining continuity.

Burial Committee

Created 7/2010 modified 10/2019, the Burial Committee oversees matters relating to burial and the burial ground at Mount Toby and, in concert with the Ministry & Worship and Care & Counsel committees, oversee matters relating to death. The committee of five people is constituted of two burial ground caretakers and three additional members. The two caretakers serve staggered 6-year terms, while the other three members serve staggered 3-year terms. Committee membership is open to members of Northampton Friends Meeting, since we share the burial ground.

Functions for the Burial Committee are to:

- work with other committees and/or individuals of the Meeting to develop and carry out other larger or more general tasks relating to the burial ground and concerns about burial and death at Mount Toby, including but not limited to the recommendation of the ad hoc Committee on Burial (attached to the 7/2010 business meeting minutes)
- maintain the Burial Committee handbook for committee members to help ensure continuity in carrying out tasks of the committee
- maintain the burial ground in coordination with the Grounds Committee
- oversee all burials
- maintain the equipment needed by the Burial Committee

- in collaboration with Northampton Meeting, keep track of members planning to be buried in the burial ground
- educate and engage with our community on matters of death and dying

Burial Ground Caretakers

Duties for the burial ground caretakers include:

- take primary responsibility for maintaining records and providing guidance and oversight of the burial ground
- assign plots as deemed appropriate, following established guidelines and protocols and personal judgment, in consultation with the Burial Committee as appropriate
- develop and maintain a permanent record-keeping system, including founding documents, copies of relevant federal/state/local laws and other guidelines, relevant minutes of the Monthly Meeting, and a record of burials in the burial ground

See also **Who Does What?** and **Appendix II: Use of the Burial Ground**.

Cambodian Support Committee

Created 11/1981. The Cambodian Support Committee maintains contact with descendants of the four Cambodian families originally under the care of the Meeting. The committee has provided guidance, friendship, and support in adapting to life in the United States. Over the years, the committee has provided funds for education and other purposes from a support fund, although now much less financial help is needed. The committee remains available to respond to needs in times of crisis.

Care & Counsel

Created 5/1972 when Ministry & Counsel split. Originally called Overseers. The Care & Counsel Committee offers pastoral care to the Meeting and has general oversight of the functioning of committees. Six members are appointed for staggered three-year terms. Care & Counsel meets monthly and its core functions are to:

- hold members and attenders in the Light and organize assistance for those whose names arise or who are known to be dealing with health, aging, conflict, possible leadings, or other life issues
- respond to requests for clearness or support on personal or spiritual matters and for marriage
- greet members, attenders, and visitors each Sunday, initiate contact with visitors living in this area, and tend to the guest book in the foyer

Specific duties of Care & Counsel include:

- assisting family members in arranging a memorial meeting
- writing memorial minutes or seeing that they are written
- overseeing jointly with Ministry & Worship: Meeting for Business, the annual State of Society Report, making nominations to the Nominating Committee, the children's summer program, and other mutual concerns, meeting twice each year with Ministry & Worship for such business
- providing support to committees as requested by the Nominating Committee.
- acting on requests for financial aid from the Assistance Fund and the Scholarship Fund, and soliciting contributions for the Assistance Fund if the Fund is running low (7/2009)

- designating one member to the three-person Designated Responders group under the Sexual Safeguarding policy (7/2022)

Care & Counsel members are encouraged to attend meetings for worship and business regularly. Membership in Mount Toby Meeting is not a requirement (4/1976). See also **Nominating And Appointing Procedures**, **Burial Committee**, and **Memorial Minutes**.

Child Care Committee

Created 7/2005. The Child Care Committee is responsible for ensuring that our youngest children are attended to in a safe, nurturing, and engaging environment.

The Committee hires and oversees the two nursery caregivers who care for nursery-aged children during Meeting for Worship. One of the nursery caregivers is also hired to care for school-aged children during the Tilling Hour and Meeting for Business upon request.

The Child Care Committee manages supplies and ensures the safety and cleanliness of toys and the nursery. The committee finds substitutes for the caregivers when needed, develops policies for the nursery, and proposes hourly wages and terms of employment to Meeting for Business.

See also **Child Care**.

Communications Committee

Created 6/2014. The Communications Committee was inactive for several years and its functions either informally handled by other committees or individuals or left to lapse. In mid-2026, the Meeting's listserv vendor discontinued service causing urgent challenges. Two technically talented volunteers were appointed to the Communications Committee and asked to provide immediate technical support, although this is not part of the Communications Committee charge (6/2026). The Handbook Committee notes that no committee is charged with technical support for the website, wifi, or the server.

In its charge, the Communications Committee has had broad oversight of communications, both within Mount Toby, and between Mount Toby and the larger community. The committee is responsible for helping Mount Toby develop and maintain guidelines for:

- appropriate use of email communications
- appropriate use of email and the internet in the conduct of Meeting business
- current information about Mount Toby on various local college and community web pages and in appropriate Quaker publications
- expanding our use of social media as appropriate
- issues of confidentiality

The Committee is charged with providing support and oversight to:

- the Newsletter and its editor(s)
- email lists and their minders
- the Directory of members and attenders and its editor
- literature in the foyer and its minder
- the website and web minder, including both content and appearance of the website

As of 5/2026, these roles are being filled by individuals without committee oversight.

The Committee also oversees those bulletin boards and tables not explicitly under the care of another group to ensure that they are used appropriately and kept up to date.

The Communications Committee consists of four members, some of whom may also be filling one of the roles listed above that is overseen by the committee. It maintains active liaisons with M&W and C&C to aid in discernment of the community's communication needs.

Fellowship & Hospitality Committee

The Fellowship & Hospitality Committee is charged with providing opportunities for Mount Toby people to become better acquainted and for newcomers to feel welcome. In encouraging many people to both join in its tasks and its fun events, the committee creates the social exchanges that often are the beginnings of deeper spiritual sharing. To these ends, the committee:

- coordinates the refreshments at coffee hour after worship on Sundays
- organizes social events
- coordinates work at potluck lunches on third Sundays
- oversees kitchen and kitchen area cleanup and arranges for closing the building
- sees that coffee hour supplies are on hand and notifies the Meetinghouse Committee when kitchen-cleaning supplies are needed.

See also **Coffee Hour** and **Fellowship Lunch**.

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee:

- drafts a proposed budget for the coming fiscal year, which it presents to Meeting for Business in April, with final approval coming in May
- makes recommendations to Meeting for Business about insurance, raising funds, using bequests, and financial planning
- reviews funding requests from committees
- oversees the use and funding of the Capital Fund
- oversees and assists with the work of the treasurer, and creates a list of regularly scheduled things to be checked (9/2016)
- regularly reviews the Meeting's financial books and records
- sends out financial appeal letters
- proposes the rental fee schedules for the meetinghouse, subject to approval by Meeting for Business (10/2017)
- appoints a Finance Committee person to help with the end of the year gift receipt letters (9/2016).
- names a member of the Finance Committee to be a second person (in addition to the treasurer) to have all the passwords to the Meeting accounts, including the password to the computer where the accounts are kept (9/2016)

See also **Budget**, **Capital Fund**, and **Financial Support of the Meeting**

Grounds Committee

The Grounds Committee:

- maintains the grounds around the meetinghouse and burial ground
- maintains equipment needed for their care

- schedules volunteers for mowing
- plans and supervises work projects

At least one or two members should have knowledge of grounds work.

Handbook Committee

Created 4/2004; modified 3/2015. The Handbook Committee edits the Handbook by consulting with Meeting committees and individuals with official responsibilities, incorporating new actions by Meeting for Business. In the past the committee produced new editions biannually. The current committee (2/2025) plans to update the Handbook online on an ongoing basis. The Committee consists of three members. See also **Introduction**.

History & Records Committee

The History & Records Committee

- oversees the preservation of the records of Meeting, according to collection policy of the NEYM Archives and Historical Records committee (3/2000);
- maintains the Memorial Book on members who have died, other scrapbooks, and collections. (4/2005);
- oversees the clippings bulletin board in fellowship room (10/1997)

Mount Toby has a detailed "Record Retention and Destruction Schedules" presented to Meeting for Business (5/2026). The full document is available online in the attachments to those Meeting for Business minutes.

See also **Records: Who Does What?**.

Land Committee

(Revised 1/2019) The Land Use Committee was created 11/1972 when the Meeting took on title to 119 acres of land in Leverett and Sunderland that was formerly part of Ethel DuBois's Long Plain Nature Center. At the time of European contact, it was part of the land under the care of the Pocumtuck people. The committee name changed to the Land Committee 9/2017. The Land Committee's duties include:

- caring for the Meeting's land outside of the fenced areas (these are the purview of the Grounds and Burial Committees)
- liaison with abutting landowners and parties who have a right-of-way on Meeting lands
- assisting the treasurer to prepare current-use tax documents for the towns of Leverett and Sunderland, due each September
- advising the Meeting on potential activities and uses of the land
- managing the Meeting's forest and farmland

See also **Land History and Uses**.

Library Committee

The Library Committee manages the library, including policy-making as approved by Meeting for Business, and book selection.

Members share library duties on Sundays and other work of the library. See also **Library and Records: Who Does What?**.

Meeting Retreat Committee

(Created 7/2017). This committee has not been active since October 2017.

The charge of the Meeting Retreat Committee is to plan a retreat or retreats of some kind each year; weekends at Woolman Hill or day-long retreats at Mount Toby or elsewhere are all possibilities. See also **Annual Retreat**.

Meetinghouse Committee

The Meetinghouse Committee is responsible for care, use, and maintenance of the meetinghouse and its furnishings and outdoor play equipment (3/2003). Its responsibilities include

- planning work days for housekeeping and repairs
- coping with maintenance emergencies
- monitoring and maintaining the air purifiers
- ordering housekeeping supplies
- recommending fees for meetinghouse rental to Meeting for Business
- making and oversees contracts for solar panel and heating system maintenance and repair

See also **Meetinghouse** and **Appendix I: Guidelines for the Use of the Meetinghouse**.

Ministry & Worship

Created 5/1972 when Ministry & Counsel split. The Ministry & Worship Committee fosters the spiritual life and growth of the Meeting and strives to enhance the religious life and fellowship of the community. The committee

- has under its care Meeting for Worship and Meeting for Business
- appoints one or more of its members to hold and then close Meeting for Worship on Sundays
- has under its care memorial meetings; with Care & Counsel makes arrangements for memorial gatherings, including the printed program, in consultation with family and friends of the deceased (See also **Memorial Meetings – Who Does What**)
- carries special concern for worship groups under Mount Toby's care
- offers opportunities for spiritual sharing, including sponsoring several Tilling Hours each year, and organizes information opportunities for new attenders
- supports and coordinates with the work of the Religious Education Committee
- considers requests for travel minutes for Friends traveling in the ministry (see also **Letters of Introduction**), and makes recommendations to Meeting for Business
- considers and responds to requests for appointing committees for the oversight of ministry; appoints members of oversight of ministry committees, receives these committees' annual reports, and reports on their work to Meeting for Business
- considers all applications for membership, transfers, and terminations of membership before presenting them to Meeting for Business with its recommendations (F&P); names and convenes clearness committees for membership and welcoming committees (9/2025)
- keeps in touch with members at a distance and junior members, asking them whether their membership at Mount Toby is still meaningful to them or whether they would like to join a Meeting that is near where they live

- contacts members and attenders living in the area who are absent from Meeting
- shares minutes of its monthly meetings with Care & Counsel

Jointly with Care & Counsel, Ministry & Worship:

- oversees the annual State of Society Report, the children's summer program (if the Religious Education Committee requests it), and other mutual concerns
- nominates members of the Nominating Committee and brings these nominations to Meeting for Business for approval (see **Nominating Committee** and **Nominating Procedures**)

As a general rule, members of the committee are members of the Meeting. Regular attendance at meetings for worship and business is important. Six members are appointed for staggered three-year terms (4/1979, 2/1994). See also **Nominating and Appointing Procedures** and **Letters of Introduction**.

Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee nominates Meeting members and regular attenders to serve on standing committees or as Meeting officers or in individual positions. It may be asked by Meeting for Business to find members for ad hoc committees. This committee maintains an up-to-date list of committee members on the foyer bulletin board and on our website (1/1991) (6/2003). Names of nominees are posted in the foyer before worship on the day the nominations will be heard (3/2004). The Meeting acts on all nominations at the same Meeting for Business at which they are presented (4/2004).

Members of the Nominating Committee are nominated by a joint meeting of Care & Counsel and Ministry & Worship and appointed by Meeting for Business (5/1983), traditionally for a single term. Four members serve staggered two-year terms. Familiarity with Friends' procedures and a knowledge of Meeting members and attenders is important. Members should also be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of current committees. Membership should be spread as broadly as possible throughout the Meeting.

Because Nominating Committee has regular contact with all committees, Meeting for Business has asked that Nominating identify concerns about committee functioning and bring the concerns to Care & Counsel (12/2025).

See also **Nominating and Appointing Procedures**.

Peace & Social Concerns Committee

This Committee has not been active since 2020. Many of its activities have been assumed by working groups, listed below.

The Peace & Social Concerns Committee has a threefold purpose:

- to work on issues of peace and social concerns which are pressing and relevant to the Meeting
- to be a resource for the Meeting to provide people power on specific issues
- to provide information on issues of peace and social concern

See also **Immigrant Solidarity Group** and **Race & Class Working Group**.

Quarterly Meeting Planning Committee

This Committee is appointed as needed by Meeting for Business in conjunction with the clerk in those years in which Mount Toby is scheduled to host a meeting of Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting (CVQM). See also **Quarterly Meeting**.

Religious Education Committee

Created 12/2013; description revised by Committee 9/2016. The Religious Education Committee oversees programs of religious education and spiritual exploration for elementary aged children through the Children's Meeting for Discovery (10:10 to 11 a.m.) (see CMD description).

Responsibilities of the RE committee:

Children's Meeting for Discovery

- Hold the CMD each week along with a volunteer
- Keep track of the volunteer sign-up and make sure that there are two people on each week
- Communicate the Sunday morning schedule to the First-Day Announcer
- Keep track of the names, ages, and parents or guardians of all the elementary aged children affiliated with the Meeting
- Make sure that information about RE and its offerings are correct and up to date in the Meeting Handbook, the *Friends Journal*, our pamphlet, the website, and other publications

The Committee has six regular members. Three new members are appointed each year for a two-year term beginning June 1.

Tilling Hour Committee

Created prior to 1980 as the 9:30 Hour Committee. Restructured as the 11:30 Hour Committee 10/1986. Changed its name to 11:40 Hour Committee in 7/1997, then to the Tilling Hour Committee 3/2023. The Tilling Hour Committee plans, publicizes, and sometimes records adult First Day programs for the Tilling Hour after Meeting for Worship. The committee's priorities are to meet the requests of other committees for time for a program, to respond to requests from individuals to schedule a time, and then to organize programs on its own, including Spiritual Journeys. Terms begin in June (5/2004). See also **Tilling Hour, Records: Who Does What?**.

Trustees of Mount Toby Monthly Meeting

The Trustees are legally responsible for “taking, holding, managing or conveying” property of the Meeting in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter #68, Sections 10 & 11. They must be members of the Meeting.

In a smaller meeting, Trustees might be more active in managing property. However, at Mount Toby, management has been delegated mostly to other committees, such as Land Use, Finance, Meetinghouse, and Grounds.

Trustees maintain all deeds and legal papers (4/2005). Copies of all deeds should be both in the safe and in the office files.

Six Trustees are appointed for staggered six-year terms. The Trustees may raise or respond to issues around receiving, holding (including leases or insurance), and transferring property,

working in conjunction with the appropriate committees. Recommendations are forwarded to Meeting for Business for action.

Mount Toby Trustees take legal action as directed by the monthly meeting. Trustees meet as needed.

Trustees choose one person annually to be a Designated Responder under the Meeting's Policy on Sexual Safeguarding (7/2022).

Young Friends Committee

Created 9/2006. The Young Friends Committee supports the care and ministry of Mount Toby youth in grades 6 or 7 to 12. The committee:

- communicates with likely participants and their parents
- offers opportunities for fellowship in ways that nurture Quaker values and appeal to this age group
- recruits and supports volunteer youth leaders, resource people, and drivers
- coordinates and supports participation with NEYM Young Friends (9/2006)

Working Groups

Working Groups are limited-issue groups of self-selected members not chosen through the Nominating Process. They do not report to other committees and make annual reports directly to Meeting for Business. In some cases they have been authorized to raise and disburse funds for their work under the care of the treasurer. The Meeting has not formally defined the role of Working Groups. At the moment there are three: the Race and Class Working Group, the Concert Series Working Group, and the Immigrant Solidarity Group. Working Groups are included in the Nominating Committee's roster of group and committee membership.

Concert Series Working Group

(Approved 3/2022) The Concert Series Working Group oversees and supports the Concerts for Peace and Social Justice. See also **Concert Series for Peace and Social Justice**.

Race and Class Working Group

(10/2020) The Race and Class Working Group helps guide Mount Toby Monthly Meeting in actively engaging in race and class justice work as a community.

Immigrant Solidarity Group

Friends formally recognized the Immigrant Solidarity Group as a body which reports directly to Meeting for Business (9/2017). The Immigrant Solidarity Group is a working group that offers support to vulnerable immigrants in our community and in Quaker-sponsored programs. They have been authorized by Meeting for Business to raise funds independently. They work in cooperation with other groups and agencies to provide material and practical support to immigrants, to encourage legislative action, and to keep the meeting informed about important issues. Their full charge is in the minutes February 8, 2026, Meeting for Business. See also **Immigrant Support Fund** and **Proyecto Bienvenido**.

Other Positions

Directory Minders

The directory minders produce a directory of Meeting members' names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses each year and update it as needed. They send the Directory to the web minder for posting on the Mount Toby website.

Listserv minders

The listserv minders maintains and oversees the Meeting's listservs so that their use is consistent with guidelines adopted by the Meeting (7/2003). The Announcements list is moderated and the Bulletin Board list is not. Some working groups and committees update and manage their own listservs. These include Burial, Immigrant Solidarity, Newsletter pdf, NEYM Immigration Justice, and Race And Class.

Newsletter Editors and Distribution Managers

The Newsletter editors and distribution managers collect, edit, and produce the Newsletter 11 times a year. They also manage distribution of printed newsletters, emailed newsletters, and newsletters accessed from the Mount Toby website.

Newsletter Mailer

The Newsletter mailer picks up printed copies from the printer, prepares copies for mailing using labels prepared by the Newsletter editors and distribution managers, mails the Newsletter, sends one print copy to NEYM Archives, and gives two copies to the Mount Toby library (4/2005). Works under the oversight of the Communications Committee (6/2014).

Comfort Quilt Minder

Mount Toby lends quilts in its care to Friends in need of extra nurturing in times of trouble or sorrow. The responsibilities of the quilt minder are distributing quilts as needed and keeping track of quilts on hand, loaned or given away, and returned.

Zoom Account Manager

The Meeting has not formally named a Zoom account manager. At the moment, two people have access to administrative settings on the Meeting's Zoom account because of their technical expertise. To reach the Zoom administrators, contact tech@mounttobyfriends.org.

Nametag preparer

Responsibilities: Maintain adequate supply of nametag request forms in the foyer, occasionally announce that new nametags are available, check for requests each Sunday, maintain a list of nametag requests, keep a supply of materials needed and make nametags, deliver new tags to the meetinghouse, organize the nametags in the foyer.

First Day Announcer

The First Day Announcer writes the What's Happening weekly email, which provides advance notice of all Sunday activities in the meetinghouse, and sends it via the Announcements list.

Green Systems Controller

The Green System Controller (GSC) is appointed by and reports to the Meetinghouse Committee (position created 12/2017; description approved 3/2018).

The GSC:

- makes on-site and off-site adjustments of the thermostats controlling the mini-splits, heat pumps, and oil heat for heating and cooling
- coordinates with the scheduler and makes adjustments for scheduled meetings
- makes decisions about appropriate settings for heating and cooling under various conditions, except for meetings under the care of the Ministry & Worship Committee
- oversees regular maintenance (e.g., changing or washing filters on heat pumps)
- monitors the solar array online to confirm that the system is working well and takes appropriate action as necessary
- reports to Meeting for Business on the overall performance of electricity production and oil consumption

Literature Person

The literature person:

- maintains a supply of free literature in the foyer and selects books and pamphlets for sale
- maintains the foyer bulletin board and the larger bulletin board in the Fellowship Room (10/1997)
- works under the oversight of the Communications Committee (6/2014)

Mount Toby does not display any campaign literature for political candidates.

Meetinghouse Cleaning Scheduler

The cleaning scheduler:

- prepares a schedule and posts it on the Meeting bulletin board in the foyer (11/1991). See also **Appendix I: Guidelines for the Use of the Meetinghouse**
- reminds people of upcoming cleaning commitments by email
- is appointed by, and works under the oversight of, the Meetinghouse Committee (10/2011)

Plantings Keeper

The Plantings Keeper:

- maintains and oversees the general health of the trees and shrubs on the Meeting grounds
- facilitates memorial plantings with Care & Counsel
- oversees and maintains records of the general landscaping plans for the grounds
- works closely with the Grounds Committee to maintain the overall attractiveness of the Meeting grounds
- consults regularly with other members of the Meeting community who have strong interests in landscaping (6/2000)

See also **Appendix III: Guidelines for the Planting of Memorial Trees**

Representatives and Liaisons to Other Groups

Friends Committee on National Legislation: The representative maintains active communication between Mount Toby and FCNL. The representative encourages Mount Toby Friends to participate in FCNL events, campaigns, and activities. Nominating Committee asks relevant committees and groups to let names rise for FCNL Liaison and then considers the recommendations.

New England Yearly Meeting Ministry & Counsel Committee: Common practice has been that Ministry & Worship and Care & Counsel jointly suggest a name to the Nominating Committee, which brings it to the Meeting for Business for approval. NEYM M&C is not currently active.

New England Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee: Nominated by the Nominating Committee and approved by monthly meeting.

Interfaith Opportunities Network (ION): founded in 2005, is a local lay group with representatives from area faith groups. Its goal is to promote education and collaboration among these communities through sharing information about their social actions and spiritual practices, and by visiting one another's worship. Mount Toby joined ION in 2013, agreeing to appoint a representative to it (11/2013). The ION representative is nominated by the Nominating Committee with no fixed term.

Scheduler

The scheduler:

- keeps a calendar of reservations for use of the meetinghouse and the Meeting's Zoom by groups or individuals
- makes contracts with outside groups or individuals asking for use of the meetinghouse
- keeps track of related expenses for reimbursement by the treasurer

Proposals for long-term use of the meetinghouse by outside groups should be brought to Meeting for Business with a recommendation from the scheduler and the Meetinghouse Committee that includes the recommended fees. Copies of any contracts for long-term use should be provided to the Meetinghouse Committee and the treasurer. See also **Appendix I: Guidelines for Use of the Meetinghouse**.

Supplies Replenisher

The Meetinghouse Committee appoints someone to keep cleaning and other supplies stocked at the meetinghouse. This does not have to be a member of the Meetinghouse Committee (6/2023).

Web Minder

The web minder oversees the Mount Toby website at mounttobyfriends.org (7/2003). This title was changed from web servant 4/2025.

The web minder is responsible for the design of website appearance, content updates and backups, website platform updates, and maintaining website security. The web minder ensures that Meeting for Business minutes and attachments and the Newsletter are available on the website.

At the end of the meeting clerk's term, the web minder arranges for two years' worth of records to be sent electronically to the New England Yearly Meeting Archives, which are part of the

Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA) at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. The records include Meeting for Business minutes and attachments and any other documents requested by the History & Records Committee.

The web minder balances respect for the privacy of members and attenders with an accessible public face for Mount Toby. The web minder works under the oversight of the Communications Committee (6/2014).

MEETING STRUCTURES AND PROCESSES

Budget

The Mount Toby fiscal year is June 1 through May 31. A draft budget is prepared by the Finance Committee and the treasurer after consulting with Meeting officers and committees. The draft is presented at the Meeting for Business in April. A final budget incorporating further changes is approved in May and posted in the foyer and on the members-only section of the website.

We have chosen to function without a reserve fund. However, we do have a Capital Fund, in which we set aside funding to cover anticipated capital expenses as projected by the Finance Committee.

Undirected donations go into the Meeting's general fund and form the basis of our annual budget. The Meeting also accepts directed donations to support existing designated funds, such as the Alternatives to Violence program, the Cambodian Support Fund, and projects of the Immigrant Solidarity Committee. (See the financial reports of the Meeting for the full list.) Other directed donations may or may not be accepted, based on discernment by the Finance Committee and Meeting for Business (7/2025).

We plan to spend unrestricted bequests promptly (3/2002). Normally, we would expect bequests to be unrestricted and would use the bequest to support the life of the Meeting. This includes both the physical structures of the Meeting and its ministry. In special circumstances, the sense of the Meeting may be to support some cause or organization having no direct link to the Meeting if that work is a clear extension of concerns carried by the Meeting (7/2024).

Since the meetinghouse and the grounds immediately around it are not taxed, the Meeting makes a contribution to the Town of Leverett, in lieu of taxes, to help defray cost of services from which we benefit (12/2002).

Contributions to Other Organizations

Mount Toby makes regular budget allocations to what are called Friends Structures. These are the larger Quaker bodies to which we have some connection: New England Yearly Meeting, Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting, Friends General Conference, Friends United Meeting (though we have not been able to reach unity on contributing to FUM at this point), and the Friends World Committee for Consultation. It has been our practice to increase our contribution to NEYM and FGC by 2 percent a year, sometimes more if inflation is higher (5/2024).

The budget also includes a category for "Friends Concerns." This includes groups such as Woolman Hill Quaker Conference Center, the Interfaith Opportunities Network, and the Alternatives to Violence Program, local groups in which Mount Toby Friends actively participate.

The budget used to have a line for "Friends Concerns: Other Organizations," and Peace and Social Concerns had developed a process for distributing it (7/2007 and 11/2007). The Meeting would give a small contribution to these Other Organizations and ask Friends to also make individual contributions. Since Peace and Social Concerns has been inactive, the Finance

Committee has removed this line from the budget. Friends wishing to sponsor an “Other Organization” are advised to approach the Meeting clerk for advice.

Tax Exemption

Mount Toby is a 501(c)(3) association (we are not incorporated). In 1976, we received a “letter of determination” from the IRS stating that we are “exempt from Federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code,” with a church classification. The 501(c)(3) part means we are a tax-exempt charitable organization, and hence don’t have to pay federal or state taxes on income from activities directly related to our charitable work. The “church” classification further exempts us from having to file a number of the forms that other kinds of charitable organizations have to file.

The 501(c)(3) classification also means that contributions to the Meeting can be deducted from donors’ incomes for their personal income tax computations. Our Federal EIN (Employer Identification Number) is 51-0192520.

The treasurer holds, and renews as necessary, a Massachusetts Department of Revenue Certificate of Exemption Form ST-2, certificate number 1095799808 (MA Taxpayer ID 22247245). This may be used to avoid paying tax on any item bought for the Meeting or the meetinghouse. Technically stores need a copy of the ST-2, and possibly an ST-5, though some may just accept the numbers given. The treasurer can supply these forms if needed.

Technical Details

All copying and binding costs are included in the History & Records budget (4/2005).

Friends charging duplicating expenses on the Meeting’s account should save the receipt and give it to the treasurer.

Banking

The Meeting treasurer is responsible for making banking decisions. The treasurer has the authority to open and close accounts and can move money into different accounts as seems appropriate.

Bank Accounts

We have a checking account with Northampton Cooperative Bank. We also typically have several CDs there. A modest amount is invested with the Yearly Meeting Pooled Funds. We do not have separate bank accounts for the different Meeting funds. There is a separate checking account for the income and expenses of the P&SC Concert series, with two signatories suggested by P&SC and approved by Meeting for Business (3/2019).

Bank Account Signatories

All bank accounts should have two authorized signers (only one signature will be required on checks) and someone in addition to the treasurer should have all passwords, including the password to the computer where the accounts are kept. The second signer will be the Meeting clerk or the Finance Committee clerk, at the discretion of the Meeting clerk. The second person with the passwords should be on the Finance Committee (9/2016). The Finance Committee is

responsible for bringing to Meeting for Business all proposals to add or delete signatories of Meeting bank accounts, including the authorization needed whenever a new treasurer has been approved (7/2020). Formal language for the duties of bank account signatories was included in the minutes of 3/2024.

From time to time we have also had an assistant treasurer – typically an incoming treasurer during the transition – who has also been given signing authority on all our accounts.

Marriage Under the Care of the Meeting

It is important for a couple wishing to be married under the care of the Meeting to read carefully the appendix on “Marriage Procedures” in *Faith and Practice* and to start the procedure in time for all steps to be completed in good order; six to eight months is not too much to allow. The couple declare their intention to the Meeting in a letter addressed to the clerk. This is forwarded to the Care & Counsel Committee without waiting for the next Meeting for Business (5/1982). At its next meeting, they appoint a committee on clearness for marriage (5/1982, reconfirmed 1/1993). This committee – usually composed of people of mixed genders – meets with the couple, separately and together, to “discern together whether all are clear that such a marriage may proceed ” (Draft F&P as of 8/2025).

After clarity is reached that the Meeting should take the marriage under its care, the committee reports to Care & Counsel, which brings a recommendation to the next Meeting for Business; the couple should be present if possible. If Care & Counsel and the clearness committee are in unity that the marriage should not proceed, that information is not necessarily shared in the business meeting. If the Meeting takes the marriage under its care, it then approves a date for a Meeting for Worship, usually a date suggested by the couple, during which the marriage will take place. This same Meeting for Business also appoints four people, suggested by Care & Counsel, as a wedding committee to help plan and oversee the Meeting for Worship. The couple is then free to proceed with their plans. Invitations can be sent out only when Meeting for Business has set the date.

Members of clearness and wedding committees do not have to be members of the Meeting, but it is important to have members who are seasoned in Friends' practices (4/1993).

The couple is responsible for getting a marriage license, which, in Massachusetts, is obtained from the town clerk in any town. The license must be returned to the same town clerk after the wedding. Town clerks have information sheets that outline the legal requirements, including specific time limits. Massachusetts statutes allow specifically for marriages in the manner of Friends. The law requires that one signer of the marriage license must be the Meeting clerk or recorder, and that any signer must be a resident of the state. The Wedding Committee is responsible for seeing that all legal requirements are met. When a marriage under the care of the Meeting has taken place, this fact should be reported to the next Meeting for Business and recorded in the minutes.

Some Wedding Committees have felt strongly that a wedding rehearsal is advisable, especially when some of the wedding party are not familiar with Friends' ways (7/1988).

Meeting has had some hesitation about overseeing marriages of people who are not members of the Meeting, especially if they are not Friends (5/1977). This can only be decided case by case, as the occasion arises. An alternate arrangement might be for the couple to arrange to use the

meetinghouse for their wedding, but not to have it take place under the care of the Meeting. In this case, the license would be signed by a justice of the peace or some other authorized person.

Mount Toby Meeting has been celebrating same-sex marriages since the Meeting approved the practice in 1/1987, giving the same loving care and consideration to all couples.

Dying, Death, and Burial at Mount Toby

Detailed information on Mount Toby's policies and procedures can be found in the section on **Care & Counsel, Ministry & Worship, Memorial Meetings, Memorial Minutes, Appendix II: Use of the Burial Ground, and Appendix III: Guidelines for the Planting of Memorial Trees**

Who Does What?

When a member of the community is dying or dies, a number of different committees and individuals respond:

Care & Counsel Committee provides emotional and practical support to dying persons and their families; determines eligibility for burial; writes memorial minutes (or sees that they are written) and distributes them appropriately.

Ministry & Worship Committee assists with arrangements for and oversight of the memorial Meeting for Worship, in consultation with family or friends of the deceased.

If burial or scattering of ashes is to take place at Mount Toby, a member of the Burial Committee accompanies Ministry & Worship and Care & Counsel to their initial meeting with the family of the deceased. The Burial Committee member will assist the family to make appropriate arrangements.

Care & Counsel assists with the logistics of the memorial meeting. Audio Visual Support should be involved in a family meeting to ask about technical issues such as slide shows.

Grounds Committee maintains the grounds around the meetinghouse and burial ground.

History & Records Committee maintains the memorial book.

The recorder maintains personal files of members.

The plantings keeper oversees selection, assignment, planting, and care of memorial trees.

The Burial Committee oversees the plot selection and interment in the burial ground, in keeping with Meeting policies.

Compassionate Burial

In response to the furor around finding a cemetery that would accept the body of the alleged bomber at the Boston Marathon, business meeting approved the following minute:

We affirm that our own burial ground is a potential sanctuary for those in need of a compassionate burial in any similar case where politics and public outcry is so strong that burial elsewhere is refused.

Should the need arise for such a burial we will follow the guidelines in the Mount Toby Handbook, which indicate that Care & Counsel oversees exceptions to the rules for burial at Mount Toby. (7/2014)

Meeting for Business

Meeting for Business is held at noon on the second Sunday of each month except August. Meeting for Business is under the joint care of Care & Counsel and Ministry & Worship (1/1986). Soup is sometimes provided after Meeting for Worship for those planning to stay for business meeting.

Meeting for Business is a Meeting for Worship at which business is conducted. Friends meet in a quiet, worshipful atmosphere and deal with the business of the Meeting, following a prepared agenda. The clerk's function is to guide the Meeting, keeping it to the issue under discussion unless the Meeting itself decides to change it, and eventually drawing a "sense of the Meeting," which is not necessarily either majority opinion or unanimity, but a course of action with which all present can feel comfortable.

Persons wishing to speak wait to be recognized by the clerk, and rise to speak, if able, so that they may be heard better, and so that interruptions are discouraged. Sometimes a time limit for discussion may be suggested by the clerk and agreed to by the Meeting (5/1978, 6/1978). Minutes recording a sense of the Meeting are formulated by the recording clerk and/or the meeting clerk, or the whole Meeting working together. See also **Minutes of the Meeting for Business**.

Generally, Meeting for Business is a policy-making body, dealing with spiritual and outreach matters, and trusting the details of carrying out business to appointed committees (1/1980). It considers matters already formulated into recommendations by committees; only matters that can be put into a clear recommendation by a committee are ready for Meeting for Business. An issue that doesn't have unity within a committee needs more seasoning there before it is brought up. Meeting feels strongly that "it is essential for informed members of a committee to be present when that committee presents a matter requiring attention by the Meeting" (12/1983). Clerks need to be informed in advance of all intended agenda items and to be given a short background – the recommendation, the reason for it, who does it, who pays for it and how much, and coordination with other committees. If possible, copies of written reports should be given to the clerks in advance, with extra copies for distribution if that seems advisable (1/1977). Meeting for Business establishes standing and ad hoc committees and lays them down when their work is finished, with the advice and consent of the committee.

Meeting has asked the clerk to put an agenda in the foyer before meetings and perhaps mention the more interesting items during announcements after Meeting for Worship the week before (1/1988). To facilitate the work of business meetings, the clerk should be notified in writing of agenda items well in advance, with electronic copies of all reports and proposals.

Mount Toby has a long tradition of welcoming non-members to Meeting for Business, and this was reaffirmed in two meetings in 3/1977. Often, visitors may have insights or information from their experience to contribute to a discussion. For new attenders, the conduct of Meeting for Business can offer great insight into the character of a meeting, and of Friends in general. When a large number of non-Friends wish to come to discuss a concern, Meeting has considered

whether a discussion meeting might be scheduled to include them, rather than a Meeting for Business where decisions are to be made. See also **Nominating and Appointing Procedures** and **Clerks of the Meeting**.

Letters of Introduction

A Friend may bring a letter of introduction from their home meeting, to be used when visiting other meetings. This differs from a travel minute, which is a formal letter granted by the Meeting for Business and signed by the clerk, for use by a Friend traveling in service of a ministry. See also **Ministry & Worship**.

Letters on Behalf of the Meeting

Letters to other groups should identify the sender as “Mount Toby Monthly Meeting of Friends (Quakers)” since many do not realize the terms are practically synonymous. Letters from the Meeting that committees wish to have sent are brought to Meeting for Business for approval and are signed by the clerk of the Meeting or the clerk of the committee; they may be sent on Meeting stationery or from a Mount Toby email address.

Letters from individuals should not be on Meeting stationery or from a Mount Toby email address, and should make it very clear that the writer is speaking as an individual rather than for a committee or for the Meeting.

Minutes of the Meeting for Business

The meeting and recording clerks are given some discretion in how they handle minutes. Some clerks aspire to writing all minutes and having them approved during the business meeting being documented. These minutes are then reviewed at the next Meeting for Business to correct any errors. At the second meeting it is simply recorded that the minutes were accepted, noting whether there were any corrections made. Other clerks prefer to work on the minutes, especially those with lengthy narrative sections, at more leisure, with the minutes being brought to the subsequent business meeting for approval. Still other clerks have fallen somewhere in between, striving for approval of most of the minutes on the spot and giving them a “first approval” then, but leaving some latitude for polishing in the intervening month, at which time the final approval is minuted. When the clerks are satisfied with the draft minutes, they are sent out by email for comments before the next Meeting for Business.

When Meeting for Business agrees on a policy, statement, or other commitment, the minute of the action needs to be written in real time so there is no misunderstanding about what has been discerned. The business meeting can instruct the clerks to fill in some of the details of the narrative section of the minute and bring it to the subsequent business meeting for approval.

The recording clerk assembles the final approved minutes, including all attachments, and coordinates with the web minder to see that they are put on the website in the “members only” section. At the end of the term of the meeting clerk and recording clerk, the web minder arranges for two years' worth of minutes, attachments, and other timely documents to be sent electronically to the New England Yearly Meeting Archives, which are part of the Special Collections and University Archives at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Report on the State of the Society

Each spring Ministry & Worship and Care & Counsel, working jointly (3/1998), write and bring to Meeting for Business for approval a report on the state of the Meeting. Usually this follows searching and fruitful discussion by the whole Meeting. Always it involves careful examination of the spiritual strengths and weaknesses and the general health of the Meeting. The Report is attached to the minutes of the Meeting, printed in the Newsletter (4/2015), and is forwarded to Quarterly and Yearly Meetings. See also **Customary Procedures**.

Called Meetings for Business

Special meetings of the Meeting may be called by the meeting clerk individually, or by the clerk upon request of three members. Notice shall be given at a regular Meeting for Worship at least seven days before the date of the called meeting; it shall name the business to be considered and the persons calling for the special meeting. No business may be considered at a special meeting other than the business for which it was called. (F&P)

Queries

Meeting has decided at various times that the Quaker Queries in *Faith and Practice* should be read regularly at Meeting for Worship. Each time the practice has been observed for short periods and then has fallen into disuse. At other times, one Query has been printed in each issue of the Newsletter with suggested relevant readings, has been read at Meeting for Business, or has been printed and left on benches on Sunday morning. The complete set of Queries is in *Faith and Practice*.

Meeting for Worship

Meeting for Worship is held each Sunday at 10 a.m. and is under the care of Ministry & Worship. In recent years the meeting has been hybrid, with some Friends attending on Zoom. There is a hearing assist system available with headphones to amplify sound in the meeting room. In-person Friends enter the meeting room quietly and promptly, or even early if possible, and settle into worship. Visitors are always welcome; leaflets on the outer door or in the foyer may be helpful for those who are attending a meeting for the first time. After about an hour, a designated member closes meeting by shaking hands. Everyone is then invited to introduce themselves.

In late 2015, as our Meetings for Worship became increasingly crowded, the joint committee of Ministry & Worship and Care & Counsel began considering ways of dealing with our abundance. In 3/2016 we approved their recommendation to set up concurrent Meetings for Worship – one in the main meeting room and another in the Champney Room. In 2017, the joint meeting reviewed having two meetings and reported that there was general acceptance of the practice. In 2021, Meeting began having a separate outdoor Meeting for Worship at 10 a.m. in good weather. This generally replaces the Champney Room meeting in the summer. Ministry & Worship names a person to coordinate the outdoor worship.

A Greeter appointed by Care & Counsel is in the foyer to welcome indoor in-person attenders. The greeter is especially attentive to newcomers and visitors. The greeter sees that the door to the foyer is closed at 10:10 a.m. once the children leave.

The foyer is equipped with speakers so Friends there can also be part of Meeting for Worship.

Currently, school-age children join the meeting for the first 10 minutes, then leave for Children's Meeting for Discovery. Smaller children can go to the nursery at any time, where there are paid caregivers. All children and their teachers come into meeting just as worship ends and we begin introductions.

Introductions may be followed by "joys and sorrows" or "holding people in the light," at the discretion of Ministry & Worship. Announcements pertaining to the life of the meeting follow except on second Sundays when there is Meeting for Business. At the rise of meeting, in-person Friends are encouraged to leave the meeting room silently so that those who wish to continue in worship may do so. Friends on Zoom often stay online to have a chat after meeting.

Because some Friends have chemical sensitivities or allergies, those attending Meeting in person are asked to refrain from using scented products. See also **Allergies, Announcements after Meeting for Worship, Coffee Hour**.

Memorial Meetings

A memorial meeting is a Meeting for Worship at which a recently deceased member of our community is remembered. Memorial meetings are under the care of Ministry & Worship, which keeps in its files a set of guidelines, useful information, sample programs, and practical suggestions that may be helpful to consider in planning a memorial meeting. For other help available from the Meeting, see Burial Ground, Memorial Minutes, Care & Counsel, and Appendix II-Guidelines for the Use of the Burial Ground.

A folder giving information about Quaker memorial meetings for attenders has been written by Ministry & Worship; it can be personalized as desired (3/1998).

Meeting members are invited to register their wishes about their own memorial meeting by filing the information in their personal files, managed by the Meeting Recorder. See also **Personal Files**.

Our policy is not to make recordings of memorial meetings. Recording should be done only in exceptional cases and by request of family members to the Audio Visual Support Committee. (Policy set by Meeting for Business on recommendation of Ministry & Worship 1/1995.)

Name Tags

Meeting for Business encourages members and attenders to wear nametags. In a large meeting with several visitors each Sunday, this makes it easier to become acquainted. Temporary tags are available in the foyer. There is a signup sheet for requesting permanent tags, which are stored in the foyer. Tags are not obligatory, but wearing a tag makes it easier for other people to learn your name.

Membership

Becoming a Member

Friends do not invite people to membership, but want new people to decide when they are ready to request membership (9/1988). A person who has been coming to Meeting regularly, who has been learning more about Friends, who is becoming active in the life of the Meeting, and who has come to feel at home in the Meeting and among its members, may feel ready to write a letter

applying for membership. This letter is read at the next Meeting for Business. The clerk keeps a copy and gives a copy to Ministry & Worship; the original letter goes to the Recorder who enters it into the files of individual members (4/2005). See also **Recorder** and **Correspondence with Meeting Members**.

Ministry & Worship, at its next meeting, appoints a Membership Clearness Committee of two or three individuals. At least one member of this Committee should be a current member of Ministry & Worship. Other committee members should be knowledgeable Quakers from the Mount Toby community. Applicants should look at clearness committees guidelines, available from Ministry & Worship, before they meet with their Clearness Committee (5/2004). The Membership Clearness Committee reports to a future meeting of Ministry & Worship, which makes a recommendation to the next Meeting for Business (7/2003).

When the applicant is accepted by Meeting for Business, Ministry & Worship names a welcoming committee. (Ministry & Worship asks people who are interested in serving on welcoming committees to let them know.) One of the functions of this committee is to help the new member to assume responsibility for both service and support, as way opens. Welcoming committees always include at least one member, but may also include non-members (2/1997). The clerk may write a note of welcome to the new member (9/2025). The new member should be introduced at Meeting for Worship (2/2008).

Ministry & Worship will also ask each welcoming committee to write a brief article about the new member(s), to be published in the Newsletter. For individuals who have transferred their membership, the article might include information about their involvement in the former meeting, along with other information of interest. For individuals who have gone through the clearness process, the article might describe their activities at Mount Toby and what led them to Quakerism (2/2008).

The Welcoming Committee should visit the new member again after about a year to keep in touch and help with any questions or problems (5/1981, 3/1984).

Ministry & Worship has written guidelines for clearness and welcoming committees.

See also the paper called “**Curious About Membership Among Friends?**” on the literature table in the foyer.

Transfer from Mount Toby

A member of the Meeting who wishes to transfer to another meeting asks the clerk to send a certificate of transfer to the new meeting. The clerk refers the matter to Ministry & Worship and on its recommendation Meeting for Business directs the clerk to send the certificate to the new meeting. The clerk completes the certificate of transfer and includes with it a faithful description of the experience of the Meeting with the transferring member. The description is drafted in consultation with Ministry & Worship Committee. When the clerk of the new meeting notifies Mount Toby's clerk that the person has been accepted into that meeting, membership in Mount Toby ceases. The process at Mount Toby differs from that described in the New England Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice* 2019.

Transfer to Mount Toby

A certificate of transfer from another meeting requesting a member's transfer to Mount Toby Meeting comes to the clerk and a copy is given to Ministry & Worship. The original certificate is given to the recorder. Ministry & Worship appoints a visiting committee, which includes at least one member of Ministry & Worship. The visiting committee acts in the roles normally assigned to both the membership clearness and welcoming committees. It explores with the transferring member the responsibilities and opportunities for service and support implied by membership and full participation in our worship community. The visiting committee ensures that the transferring member is familiar with the Meeting and the practices of Friends in New England. The visiting committee reports to a future meeting of Ministry & Worship and may recommend accepting the transfer. Ministry & Worship makes a recommendation to the next Meeting for Business. The clerk of the old meeting is then notified by Mount Toby's clerk of the outcome of the transfer process. We decided, as a matter of general practice, not to include phrases from letters of transfer in our minutes. The process at Mount Toby differs from that described in the New England Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice* 2019.

Junior Members

Minor children are enrolled as members on request of one or both parents (see *Faith and Practice* for details). They are encouraged to take an active part in the life of the Meeting.

Meeting has approved the recommendation of Care & Counsel and Ministry & Worship that Mount Toby follow the procedures in *Faith and Practice* by which junior membership does not extend beyond age 25 unless the youthful member has expressed in writing an intention to apply for membership in the near future. However, at Mount Toby, Ministry & Worship usually initiates correspondence with junior members, asking their intentions and reassuring them that, if they do not wish to continue with membership, a later application for membership will always be sympathetically considered. If the person does not wish to continue, if no personal contact is achieved, or if letters are unanswered, the person is removed from the rolls of the Meeting. In 5/1988 Ministry & Worship again recommended reliance on *Faith and Practice* as our guide. Various yearly meetings have differing terminology and practices on early membership. We have had lengthy discussions, but no decision, on whether young people transferring from other yearly meetings should be recorded as junior members, as their letters of transfer are written, or as they themselves wish. Our past practice has varied (5/1980).

Nominating and Appointing Procedures

At Mount Toby, the most common process for filling positions is nomination by the Nominating Committee followed by appointment by Meeting for Business. This process is used to fill positions for Meeting officers such as the clerk, recording clerk, recorder, and treasurer. The same process is followed for filling trustee positions, standing committee members, and representatives to Yearly Meeting Ministry & Counsel and Nominating Committees.

For some positions, nominations come from standing committees and appointments made by the Meeting for Business. Ministry & Worship together with Care & Council jointly nominate members for the Nominating Committee who are then appointed by Meeting for Business. Care & Counsel nominates members for marriage oversight committees who are then appointed by Meeting for Business (5/1983). The liaison for the Friends Committee on National Legislation

liaison is nominated by Nominating Committee, which asks relevant working groups (Race & Class and Immigrant Solidarity) to allow names to rise for a possible liaison and to submit those names to the Nominating Committee. Then the Nominating Committee seasons those names and brings a nominee to Meeting for Business (10/2022).

Other appointments are made directly by committees and then reported to Meeting for Business. Ministry & Worship appoints members for membership clearness committees, clearness committees relating to requests for travel in the ministry, oversight of ministry committees, and welcoming committees for new members (6/1988). Care & Counsel appoints clearness committees for marriage (5/1982).

In some cases, both nomination and appointment are handled directly by the Meeting for Business in conjunction with the clerk. This includes the Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting Planning Committee in years when Mount Toby hosts CVQM. Meeting for Business also appoints the Quarterly Meeting clerk and recording clerk, following the QM rotation.

Certain appointments are made by committees and are not reported to the Meeting for Business. Care & Counsel appoints clearness committees for personal discernment (11/1981) and support committees. The Meetinghouse Committee appoints roles such as the cleaning scheduler (10/2011) and the Green Systems Controller (3/2018).

Finally, nominations made from the floor at Meeting for Business are referred to the Nominating Committee for consideration and presentation to the next Meeting for Business for final approval (7/1978).

Committee clerks advise the Nominating Committee of their needs and changes. Nominating Committee distributes an annual survey in January asking individuals about their interests in order to match people with committee needs. Friends also recommend that the committee consider nominating Young Friends to bring in new ideas and provide them with experience in serving on committees (3/1994).

The Nominating Committee process is one of worship and worship sharing. The Committee first reaches clarity about the personal gifts needed for a particular position in the Meeting. Worship periods follow, during which names are spoken of those who are thought to be gifted to carry a position's responsibilities. The Committee also hears the names of those who have advised the committee of their interests. Names are given without comment. Questions of availability or circumstances are not discussed except to review a person's current extent of Meeting commitments; the committee focuses on gifts and leadings. By doing this, we try to avoid the pressure of guilt and obligation, which is not an inspiring base for Meeting ministry. The Committee's mission is to call out gifted people to work in line with the Spirit and the spiritual life of the Meeting. People named are contacted and asked whether the committee may present their nomination to Meeting for Business. Their response may need time for consideration and conversation with others who fill the same position. Other committees use the same process, modified to their needs. (Adapted from Friends Journal 10/2005 and the Mount Toby Newsletter, with thanks for earlier influence of Beacon Hill Meeting, Boston, and Strawberry Creek Meeting, Berkeley, CA)

See also **Nominating Committee** and **Membership as Qualification for Service**.

Publications and Text-Based Communications

The heart of a Quaker meeting is in-person communication between and among Friends. Mount Toby supplements this with email, a website, meeting over Zoom, telephone calls, cork bulletin boards, and letters sent through the mail. A general Code of Conduct governing all communication at Mount Toby (7/2003) can be found in the Handbook section on Meeting Policy and Policy Statements.

In discussing communication in the Handbook, the editors were faced with minutes about "electronic communication" that predated the existence of Zoom. The editors used their discretion to differentiate between policies based on earlier forms of technology, usually called "text-based communications," and policies that were written with video in mind.

Text-Based Communications

Text-based communication at Mount Toby includes email, newsletters, a Meeting Directory, email distribution lists, the Mount Toby website, physical bulletin boards, and the Handbook. These channels are primarily intended for general information sharing. Text-based media mentioned above are available in both print and electronic formats, with the exception of emails, website postings, and physical bulletin boards. The use of electronic text based communications is governed by Meeting policy (07/2003).

Email, Meeting Directory, and Email Distribution Lists

Email lacks the richness of in-person interaction; therefore, its use requires particular care. The purpose and use of email is governed by the following guidelines adopted by Meeting for Business (07/2003) and modified by the Communications Committee (10/2015) and informally by the Handbook Committee (2/2026): Email is not to be used for corporate discernment or decision-making. Neither the Meeting nor its committees should require or assume its use. Friends are encouraged to exercise restraint in sending unsolicited email, respecting the privacy of others.

The Meeting maintains a Mount Toby Meeting Directory containing contact and other information about members and attenders. Entries typically contain: names of adults and children (under the age of 18, including birth years), email addresses, phone numbers, and membership status. Information is provided by individuals who would like to be included in the Directory. Individuals can choose to exclude particular information from their entry. The Directory is intended for one-to-one, small group, committee, or interest group communications. Electronic copies of the Directory can be downloaded from the password-protected section of the Mount Toby website in Word and .pdf format. Paper copies are available by request. The Directory is updated annually. To have your information added or modified, contact the directory minder by email at Directory@mounttobyfriends.org.

The Meeting maintains several email distribution lists for large group emailing made available through subscription. The moderated Announcements list provides notices of recent developments and upcoming events directly related to Meeting life. The unmoderated Bulletin Board listserv (begun 11/2015) is available for general notices, while the weekly "What's Happening" message highlights activities at the meetinghouse for the coming weekend. Subscriptions to these lists are managed by the email minder. Contact emailminder@mounttobyfriends.org to subscribe.

The Meeting also recognizes that committees or working groups may wish to maintain their own distribution lists. While the Meeting Directory is the primary resource for contact information, individuals or groups setting up independent lists are expected to respect the privacy guidelines of the Meeting, ensuring that all participants have consented to be included and that the list is used only for its intended purpose. As of February 2026, there are distribution lists for the Race and Class Working Group and the Immigrant Solidarity Group.

Newsletter

The Meeting Newsletter includes items on meeting activities, a digest of the month's Meeting for Business minutes, information on upcoming events, announcements and committee updates, news of members, items of interest from the wider Quaker world, and contact information for some meeting clerks. The newsletter is published monthly, excluding August.

The editor sets the deadline for submission, which is currently the Monday before the last Sunday of the month (except in months when the last Sunday is too far from the end of the current month). The editor has the option to combine content from two winter months into one newsletter. Each October, the harassment policy minute entitled Nurturing Trust in Our Community is reprinted in the newsletter (06/1989). See also **Harassment**. The October edition of the Newsletter will also include the minute entitled Sexual Safeguarding Policy adopted by Mount Toby Meeting of Friends (7/2022), and the names of current Designated Responders will be included. See also **Sexual Safeguarding Policy**.

A link to the Newsletter on the website is distributed electronically via the Announcements list. It is available by mail for those preferring paper copies and by email for those wishing to receive it as an attachment and is archived with New England Yearly Meeting and in the Mount Toby library. Extra copies are placed in the foyer for general access.

Handbook

The Handbook is intended to help new people get acquainted with the Meeting, and to remind officers and committee members of what the Meeting has decided their duties should be. Compiled from Meeting for Business minutes and customary practices, the Handbook describes the meeting's policies, structures and processes. The Handbook is organized into sections covering key functions of committee and officers, management of meeting structures and processes, governance by policies and policy statements, and maintenance and oversight of Mount Toby's buildings and property. Anyone whose name or contact information might appear in the Handbook must give consent before this information can be included (06/2008). The most recent versions of the Handbook can be downloaded from the website homepage under the password-free page of the Members and Attenders Section.

Maintaining the Handbook is the responsibility of the Handbook Committee. The committee updates descriptions, adds new policies, and improves its format and references. The Handbook Committee regularly updates the downloadable version and posts a revised version as soon as revisions are completed. The common practice is to revise the Handbook at two-year intervals.

Bulletin Boards

Physical bulletin boards also play a role in communication and are currently maintained by the Literature Minder.

In the foyer, a “Welcome to Mount Toby” bulletin board displays items such as: An Invitation to Worship, the Meeting Directory, recent Newsletters, Meeting for Business minutes, and financial reports. It also includes guidelines for use of the meetinghouse, a current committee list, and rosters for meetinghouse cleaning and grounds care. This board was formerly under the care of Care & Counsel and the clerk (10/1997), though regular tending has since shifted to the Literature Minder.

The fellowship room contains additional boards dedicated to broader Quaker concerns. The southwest wall features items related to New England Yearly Meeting, various Quaker conferences, and items of general interest. On the southeast wall, the board labeled "Peace and Social Concerns" is used by the Immigrant Solidarity Group and other groups with a social justice focus. This area also includes a board where the History & Records Committee posts relevant newspaper clippings about Friends and Friends' activities and concerns. All postings must be dated, and those older than one month or placed incorrectly are subject to removal. Significant historical items are preserved in the Meeting archives by the Recorder.

Website

The Meeting website serves both outreach and internal purposes. The public section contains descriptions of Quaker worship, calendars of events, committee structures, donation information, the Handbook, and links to Quaker organizations. The password-protected section provides access to internal documents such as the directory, newsletters, minutes, budgets, policies, and other internal documents. Ongoing discernment guides which materials are public and which remain restricted.

Video and Hybrid Communications

Mount Toby had a Zoom account before the pandemic and committees were being urged by the Communications Committee to try out meeting on Zoom, but it was largely unused. It does not appear that Meeting for Business was consulted on this or that a minute exists. However, because Zoom was there, Meeting for Worship was able to move directly from the Friday pandemic shutdown to meeting over Zoom on Sunday, March 15, 2020.

The use of Zoom has evolved in six years. In January 2024, the Audio Visual Support Committee was established. The charge of the AV Support Committee is to provide participation opportunities to people with disabilities who could not otherwise attend worship, with a side benefit of allowing access to people who are at a distance or otherwise prefer Zoom. The committee has minuted that it will provide a hybrid link to all meeting activities when practical. While the meeting has not minuted that all events will be hybrid, the expectation is clearly widespread.

The practice in August 2026 is that Meeting for Worship is audio-only for meeting room worshipers, and that Meeting for Business and Tilling Hours have a screen in the meeting room to view Zoom participants. Some committees meet over Zoom, some have hybrid meetings, and some exclusively meet in person, based on the discernment of the committees.

Records of the Meeting

Our goal is to have a permanent record of important papers available to the Meeting, and not to have them saved only on Friends' personal computers. Most committees are encouraged to keep complete minutes of their business.

Anything thought to be too personal to be in the Meeting files should be destroyed or returned to the writer. We urge Ministry & Worship and Care & Counsel, especially, not to write in their minutes those things that should not be in a public file – for instance, names of those seeking clearness on personal matters. (11/1996).

Records: Where Are They?

All references to the office now mean two file cabinets in the library.

Membership records and personal files are in the bottom drawer of the vertical file in the library.

Committee minutes and records, contracts, and clerk's correspondence are in the two-drawer file cabinets in the library.

Meeting for Business minutes, Meeting directory, Meeting Handbook, committee rosters, budgets, and the Newsletters are all on the website.

Memorial Book of memorial minutes are in binders in the closed shelves in the library.

Clippings and photos about Meeting members are in the top two drawers of the vertical file in the library.

Oral history tapes, spiritual journeys, other meetings and talks are in the library as CDs and on the website.

Champney House records, deeds, legal papers, and signed conscientious objector cards are in the safe.

Records: Who Does What?

There are many committees and individuals responsible for maintaining various components of the records of Mount Toby. Meeting for Business has charged the History & Records Committee with developing policies for managing and archiving records (11/2025).

Minutes of Meeting for Business are kept on the members section of the website, with new minutes added shortly after each Meeting for Business. The recording clerk arranges with the web minder to send the records to the NEYM Archive at UMass at the end of their term.

The Newsletter is available in the members section of the website. The web minder arranges to have electronic copies of the newsletter copied from the website by the UMass Archives.

Meeting Trustees maintain all deeds and legal papers in a safe but retrievable place. The original deeds are in the safe and photocopies are in the "Deeds" file in the library.

The Care & Counsel Committee writes a draft of memorial minutes. This is presented at Meeting for Business and a final version is approved and attached to the Meeting for Business minutes. A paper copy of the approved minute is placed in the History & Records Memorial Book.

Electronic copies of memorial minutes are sent to CVQM and NEYM by the meeting clerk or recording clerk.

The History & Records Committee maintains the Memorial Book, scrapbooks, and other collections. The committee is in the process of transferring information about individuals in Meeting to the recorder for the files.

The Audio Visual Support Committee makes copies of Tilling Hour programs upon request. There is no current process for accessioning these in the Library. They are on the foyer computer and on a thumb drive with the committee clerk.

The clerks of the Meeting give copies of paper letters of application for membership and transfers to the recorder to be entered into the file of individual members. Email letters are forwarded electronically.

The recorder maintains files on individual meeting members and attenders including newspaper clippings, membership information, and burial plans. The recorder follows archiving policies set by the History & Records Committee.

All copying and binding costs associated with the above activities are charged to the History & Records budget (4/2005).

Membership Records

These are kept by the recorder and filed in the library. See also **Correspondence with Meeting Members**.

Minutes of Meeting for Business

Copies with all attachments are on the website. All past minutes of Meeting for Business minutes from 1938 to the present (though some of the early years are in abstract form) are on the members' section of the website. The clerk has a searchable electronic file of all Meeting for Business minutes.

Memorial Minutes

When an active Meeting member dies, Care & Counsel writes a memorial minute or finds someone to do it. A memorial minute may also be written for a formerly active member or a non-member whom the Meeting feels close to and is in contact with (12/1994). The minute is read, possibly edited, and approved at Meeting for Business. The final version is entered into the minutes and printed in the next Newsletter. The History & Records Committee obtains a copy for the Memorial Minute book (4/2005). As of 2017, all memorial minutes are forwarded to Quarterly Meeting, where they are read, entered in the Quarterly Meeting minutes, and then sent on to Yearly Meeting.

Memorial Minute Archives

The Memorial Minutes Archives are a permanent record of all members and non-members who have had a memorial minute written about them. It is organized and maintained by the History & Records committee. The memorial minutes are contained in binders in archival boxes in the History & Records cupboard in the library.

Personal Files

Each member of Mount Toby Meeting has an individual file, and the recorder is in the process of creating files for active attenders as well. Some people have asked to have various documents kept there for them. If anyone (especially those with no family members nearby) would like to have kept on file papers such as a living will, a health care proxy, plans for a memorial meeting, a list of persons to notify in case of death, favorite newspaper clippings, or information for a memorial minute (such as a resume), please ask the recorder to include them in the filing cabinet in the library.

Miscellaneous Items

Committee minutes and reports are kept by committee clerks or recording clerks (11/1996). In the era of paper copies, committees commonly filed their minutes in the cabinets now located in the library. The Meeting is currently working on a process to salvage committee minutes and other records existing only in electronic form (roughly those since 2000), which have not been stored centrally, and to secure records going forward. Reports to Meeting for Business are attached to the business meeting minutes and archived from there.

Safe Combination: The recorder has the original combination that came with the safe from the manufacturer. The clerk, the clerk of the Trustees, and the treasurer have copies.

Resources – Where to Go for Help

Care & Counsel is charged with pastoral care of the Meeting, while Ministry & Worship has oversight of the Meeting's spiritual life. They are ready, either singly or in groups, to help with personal and family concerns. These committees are good sources of information and support on a range of issues. In addition to informal conversations, these committees can provide several kinds of more formal support.

Care & Counsel

- appoints clearness committees for couples contemplating marriage
- appoints clearness committees to help individuals with matters of personal discernment
- appoints support committees to help individuals going through matters of personal crisis
- offers scholarships to attend Quaker programs
- has an Assistance Fund to offer small amounts of money for emergency loans and grants

Ministry & Worship

- appoints membership clearness committees for those contemplating becoming members of Mount Toby
- appoints clearness and support committees to help individuals seeking clarification on matters of spiritual discernment
- appoints committees for the oversight of an individual's ministry
- appoints committees for an individual's spiritual accountability

People interested in finding out more about any of these options should speak to a member of the appropriate committee. Care & Counsel has an Assistance Fund that is available for loans or grants in case of financial need. See also **Ministry & Worship**, **Care & Counsel**, and **Funds and Scholarships**.

Funds and Scholarships

Except where noted, the treasurer administers these accounts.

Assistance Fund

A confidential fund held and administered by Care & Counsel for small emergency loans and grants to Meeting members, and occasionally to others. Apply in a confidential letter to the Care & Counsel Committee.

Cambodian Support Fund

Raised to aid refugee Cambodian families under the care of the Meeting. In 2/2002 it was combined with the Refugee Scholarship Fund (the Ethel Dubois Fund) that was begun with a bequest to Meeting in 1990; it makes grants for educational purposes to members of immigrant families under the care of the Meeting. The Cambodian Support Committee should receive a short application in writing. Held by the treasurer and administered by the Cambodian Support Committee. See also **Cambodian Support Committee**.

Immigrant Support Fund

A fund established in 3/2018 to collect donations and allocate them to those in the local immigrant community who have great economic need and are particularly vulnerable due to the current anti-immigrant climate and policies in the United States. The Immigrant Solidarity Group has the authority to make expenditures from the Fund through the Meeting treasurer.

Obadiah Brown's Benevolent Fund and Sarah Swift Fund

Quaker funds, independent of Yearly Meeting, each administered by its Board of Trustees. Modest grants are available to Friends and Friends' organizations to "enhance the Religious Society of Friends" and spread Friends' principles. Apply to the clerk of Yearly Meeting or any of the Trustees (names are in current Yearly Meeting minutes). Mount Toby Ministry & Worship and Care & Counsel have guidelines on file. (Information from Permanent Board 1997)

The Proyecto Bienvenido (Welcome Project)

Fund established to support immigrants to the US who have been deported to Costa Rica without any ties to that country. Costa Rican Friends are caring for these immigrants. The treasurer accepts donations to the fund, deposits them, and records them as donations to that fund. Costa Rican Friends who are acting as hosts, and who have US bank accounts, request reimbursement for their expenses in hosting those immigrants, and the treasurer sends money to the hosts. This special designated fund is under the control of the Immigrant Solidarity Group, which authorizes fund recipients. See also **Immigrant Solidarity Group**.

Scholarships for Retreats and Conferences

A fund to assist members and attenders of all ages who wish to go to retreats, conferences, workshops, or other programs sponsored by Quaker organizations such as Woolman Hill, quarterly meetings, yearly meetings, or national organizations that encourage spiritual growth. Administered by Care & Counsel under guidelines approved by the Meeting on 7/1990. There is no ceiling on how much anyone may request.

ACTIVITIES AND GROUPS AT MOUNT TOBY

Youth Programs

There are a number of different programs and activities for children at Mount Toby overseen by different committees. See also **Safe Practices for Working with Youth**.

Intergenerational Meeting for Worship

Some meeting members organize a quarterly intergenerational worship that includes story reading and music, with an abbreviated time of waiting worship. Dates are announced in Meeting for Business and in the Announcements.

Child Care

Nursery aged children are cared for at 10 a.m. during Meeting for Worship. Older children attend Children's Meeting for Discovery. The age at which children move to Children's Meeting depends on the ages of the regularly attending children. Child care is provided for all ages during Tilling Hour programs and during Meeting for Business (if requested by parents). People who need child care during committee meetings at the meetinghouse may arrange it with our current child care providers, and the cost will be borne by the meeting as a whole (12/2019). The Child Care committee will track the hours and report them to the treasurer. The Meeting for Business budgets money to hire nursery caregivers. See also **Child Care Committee**.

Children's Meeting for Discovery

Children's Meeting for Discovery offers a place for children to find their spiritual centers and discover what it means to be spirit-led in the context of belonging to a group. Getting to know others in the meeting – both adults and children – in deep and playful ways is an important part of the experience.

CMD follows a regular, but flexible, pattern. By 10 a.m., children with their caregivers gather with the whole community in Meeting for Worship. At approximately 10:10, two adult volunteers stand and lead the children who wish to participate in CMD out of Meeting for Worship to a central gathering space. At the close of Meeting for Worship around 11 a.m., CMD rejoins the community in the meeting room for introductions and announcements.

Young Friends

Young Friends in grades 7 to 12 meet and plan their program and activities under the guidance of the Young Friends Committee. At the moment the group is meeting weekly during Meeting for Worship. See also **Young Friends Committee**.

Other Mount Toby Sponsored Activities and Groups

Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP)

AVP began in 1975 from a collaboration between Quakers and incarcerated individuals. From its inception, the project incorporated the Quaker conviction that there is "that of God in everyone," an inherent "transforming power." Mount Toby joined the program in 1990 and trained volunteer facilitators from the prison, Mount Toby, and the wider community to plan and conduct AVP workshops at the Osborne Correctional Facility in Somers, Connecticut.

The workshops focused on building practical tools necessary to commit to a non-violent lifestyle, if participants choose to do so. The meeting has given the local AVP group permission to use the Mount Toby mailing address to receive correspondence from about-to-be-released AVP participants (12/2023).

Coffee Hour and Fellowship Lunch

The Fellowship & Hospitality Committee is in charge of serving refreshments in the Fellowship Room after Meeting for Worship and coordinating the monthly potluck on third Sundays. The help of volunteers is welcome. (3/1989)

Concert Series for Peace and Social Justice

In 2015, the Peace & Social Concerns Committee launched the P&SC Concerns Series (3/2015, 5/2015). The series typically brings in about 10 singer-songwriters to the meetinghouse each year. When the Peace & Social Concerns Committee became dormant, Meeting approved the creation of the Concert Series Working Group to oversee and support the concert series (3/2022).

The financial arrangements continue in a similar fashion to those approved in 2015. Most of the admission receipts are distributed to the performers. The clerk of the committee continues to handle the routine activity in the concert series bank account which is separate from the Meeting's bank account. The clerk of the committee and the treasurer are the signatories on the concert series bank account. The clerk reports monthly to the treasurer on that month's transactions, and the treasurer enters them into the Meeting's accounting system. If the concert series is laid down, the balance of funds in the concert series bank account will be transferred to the Meeting's general fund. See also **Concert Series Working Group**.

Inquirer's Group

From time to time some Friends have organized a series of evening meetings for those wishing to learn more about Mount Toby and Friends generally. While Care & Counsel is specifically charged with overseeing this kind of outreach, in recent years the work has largely been carried on by Friends feeling a special concern for this work.

In recent years a Friend from Northampton meeting has conducted an online course called Elements of Quakerism. The meeting has purchased several sets of the pamphlets needed for participation in this course and they are available in the library.

Sanctuary

On 11/2017 we declared Mount Toby to be a Level 2 sanctuary faith community, committing ourselves to supporting the Level 1 congregations that provide physical sanctuary in their places of worship for undocumented immigrants. This support can include food, accompaniment, emotional and financial support, emergency response, public strategy, and transportation. The Mount Toby Immigrant Solidarity Group coordinates these efforts within our community.

Tilling Hour

The Tilling Hour programs are held on Sunday after Meeting for Worship. The programs are coordinated by the Tilling Hour Committee, which tries to present a balanced mix of programs that build community, enhance our spiritual life, and raise social consciousness. Programs offered by Mount Toby committees spiritual journeys of Friends, have priority. The Committee occasionally develops programs around special concerns in the Meeting but does not take on tasks more appropriately dealt with in other committees. Quakers from other Meetings may offer programs, preferably when sponsored by a Mount Toby committee. Presenters are not paid, and donations may not be solicited. Programs are announced in the Newsletter, Announcements list, and during announcements after Meeting for Worship. They are offered from early September through mid-June, but not on days of Meeting for Business, fellowship lunch, Quarterly Meeting, or major holidays. (From the committee, 2/2008). See also **Tilling Hour Committee**.

Work Days

Work days are held on Saturdays, usually in spring and fall, supervised by the Meetinghouse Committee and/or the Grounds Committee. All who are able help with repairs and maintenance. The clerks of Meetinghouse and Grounds Committees welcome suggestions for workday projects.

Other Activities and Groups at Mount Toby

There are a number of activities at Mount Toby that groups of individuals have organized. Some of these have been around for many years, while others have had a shorter lifetime, depending on the energy and ongoing interest levels of those involved.

Singing

There is singing on Sundays in the Champney Room at 9:30 a.m. and before fellowship lunch on third Sundays.

Friendly Eights

Small groups within the Meeting form with three purposes in mind: to share spiritual discussion; to get better acquainted; and to have fun. While we call them “Friendly Eights,” the groups have been anywhere from seven to fifteen. Most groups meet monthly, often sharing a potluck meal or dessert as well as worship and conversation. Some groups have even taken camping trips. Many groups form with the plan of a year’s commitment together; then they check and decide whether to continue. A few Mount Toby Friendly Eights have existed for many years. Care & Counsel discerns the need to establish new Friendly Eights groups but doesn’t oversee the groups beyond setting out sign-up sheets.

Quilts

Care & Counsel has custody of a few hand-made quilts, including one sized for a child, that it lends to Friends who may appreciate a bit of extra nurturing in a time of trouble or sorrow. Friends are asked to bring the names of such people to the attention of the Quilt Minder. When they are not on loan, these quilts adorn the walls of the Champney Room.

MEETING POLICIES AND POLICY STATEMENTS

Over the years, the Meeting has approved a number of policy minutes giving guidance for how we conduct our business and deal with one another and has also approved a number of more general policy statements setting forth our positions on a number of broader social issues.

Policies on Meetinghouse Use

Alcohol Use

The Meeting has agreed that alcohol is never to be used on Meeting property (2/1982). An extremely rare exception has been made for an outside group using the meetinghouse for a religious ceremony in which wine played an essential part. See also **Substance Abuse**.

Allergies

A few people in the Meeting have serious allergies or sensitivities to perfumed products. Even products labeled “unscented” frequently contain a “masking fragrance.” In 10/1996, a minute asked people wearing perfume to sit in a specific corner of the meeting room, but since then the expectation has become that people should not wear perfumed products to Meeting.

Smoking

There is no smoking in the meetinghouse.

Storing Personal Property in the Meetinghouse

Meeting affirms that the meetinghouse and storage shed are communal space. If any individual needs some of that space for personal storage, they must ask the Meetinghouse Committee (9/1988).

Working with One Another

Introductions and Announcements after Meeting for Worship

The Friend designated by Ministry & Worship to close meeting asks people to remain in the spirit of worship and to hold each person in the light as they introduce themselves. The closer then invites brief announcements pertaining to the life of the Meeting, generally starting with those related to children and families. Short announcements of Meeting activities and matters of great interest to most people present, such as news of ill or absent members, are welcome. Activities of individual members or other events of general interest are mentioned very briefly, and attention is directed to the appropriate bulletin board for further details (10/1989). In order to offer an experience of a variety of ways of leaving worship, Ministry & Worship has designated second Sundays as “no spoken announcements” days (2/2016).

Attenders

Attenders are people who come to Meeting frequently but are not members. They are welcome to take an active part in Meeting activities, including serving on committees and attending Meeting for Business. As a general rule, they do not serve on Ministry & Worship or as clerk of the meeting unless they are Friends who are members of other meetings. We encourage active attenders to apply for membership in the Meeting. See also **Membership as Qualification for Service**, and **Becoming a Member**.

Communication

Some suggestions for communication adopted by Meeting for Business (7/2003):

- To open ourselves collectively in attending to the Spirit: to speak and listen faithfully to one another;
- To speak plainly, i.e., simply, clearly, directly, openly, honestly;
- To receive communications in a spirit of openness and trust.
- To be careful in speech, avoiding tale-bearing and detraction, and safeguarding the reputation of others;
- To allow for the seasoning effects of time, within and between communications;
- To communicate with all members of a group involved in a matter of common concern;
- To communicate in a form and manner fitting to the relationship in question, so that all those involved may seek Truth together;
- In matters of corporate worship and discernment, to seek God's will in the presence of one another;
- To welcome others into Quaker faith and practice.

Electronic Communication

Telephone, Web-based Technology, Social Media, etc.:

Electronic communications should require even more care than in-person communication, because of the reduced richness of electronic communication.

Email and other text-based communications are not to be used for the purpose of corporate discernment and decision-making. Neither the Meeting nor groups within it should require or assume the use of electronic communication.

All should practice restraint and discernment in sending unsolicited text-based messages, respecting the privacy of others, and consulting with them about this in advance whenever possible.

The Mount Toby Directory is to be used for internal purposes only, for communications directly related to the life of the Meeting. Individuals should not use the Directory to send blanket communications.

See also **Electronic Communications, E-Mail Directory**.

Harassment

Meeting for Business approved the following statement on recommendation of Care & Counsel and Ministry & Worship. It is to be published in the Newsletter each October, posted in the

meetinghouse, and included in the Handbook. It was also shared with Quarterly and Yearly Meetings (6/1989).

Nurturing Trust Statement

Our Meeting is a community of people seeking to perfect their love of God and all living beings. We support each other in this quest through our silent worship together and in our relationships with each other. While we accept our human imperfections in interacting with each other, we are bound together by the trust that comes from our commitment to treat each other with love, compassion, and respect. Verbal, physical, and sexual harassment destroy this trust and require vigorous counteraction. If anyone in our Meeting feels harassed by another member or attender, the Meeting needs to be informed, usually through Care & Counsel, in order to act to support all concerned, prevent further occurrence, and avoid the isolation of any person.

Latecomers

Current practice is that the doors to the meeting room will be left open until the children leave at 10:10 a.m. If arriving later, please make sure no one is speaking and then enter quietly.

Membership as Qualification for Service

Meeting has held several long discussions about whether membership should be a requirement for appointment to Meeting offices and committees. Membership is desirable for clerks of the meeting and members of Ministry & Worship; other regular attenders, if they were already members of some other meeting, have also been asked to serve. In recent times, there has been an increasing number of exceptions to this rule. For other positions, either members or regular attenders are qualified (6/1975, 2/1976, 8/1977).

The following minute was approved in 8/1990 by Yearly Meeting for business: “The Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee may consider for membership on Yearly Meeting Committees any person active in the fellowship of Friends in New England. Lack of formal membership is not necessarily a bar to service. We trust the Nominating Committee to discern those who are truly called to serve.”

Safe Practices for Working with Youth

At the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee on Safe Practices for Working with Youth, Meeting decided (6/2006) to

- adopt the policy that two adults be present whenever feasible while working with young people
- foster a sense of openness in all gatherings of children by encouraging parents and other adults to attend or drop in as they wish
- place the materials gathered by the Ad Hoc Committee in the library

Sexual Safeguarding Policy

Mount Toby seeks to be a safe and welcoming place for adults and children. To this end, the Meeting has established a Sexual Safeguarding Policy so that, in the event of inappropriate behavior, all involved will know where to go for support and protection. The policy provides that three designated responders are appointed, one each by the trustees, by Care & Counsel, and by the meeting clerk, who serve as a point of first contact and can consult with designated trusted

elders with professional experience in dealing with similar situations. The policy suggests a range of responses based on the seriousness of the situation. The policy is available on the Meeting website, and the names of the designated responders are posted in the meetinghouse foyer and available from the clerk. The full policy is on the website at <https://www.mounttobyfriends.org/membersonly/docs/sexualsafepolicy2022.pdf>

Structural Policies

Financial Support of the Meeting

Like most Friends meetings, Mount Toby does not pass a collection plate; checks or cash may be left in the contribution box in the foyer, or mailed or handed to the treasurer in care of the meeting. Checks should be made out to Mount Toby Meeting of Friends. Contributions are tax deductible; see also **Tax Deductions**.

The Finance Committee sends letters to contributors and Friends once or twice a year reviewing the needs of the Meeting. The Meeting does not ask for pledges for annual contributions.

The Meeting discussed in detail the following principles in its handling of financial affairs (2/2002, 3/2002, 12/2002):

Mount Toby chooses to live within a modest budget. We have chosen to live without a reserve fund or endowment, trusting that extra funds will become available if needed (3/2002).

We are frugal and choose (for spiritual, financial, and community reasons) to perform as much of the Meeting's work as possible ourselves. As the number of members with construction skills declined, repairs began to fall on fewer and fewer people, and the meeting is now more likely to hire contractors with the necessary skills. Those contractors may or may not be members or attenders of the meeting.

We consider rental income to be part of the general operating budget, though it is usually a small part.

When we have needed extra money for special concerns or projects, we have asked for it directly.

When we receive an unrestricted bequest, we tend to consider ways to spend it promptly (3/2002). We consider recommendations of the Finance Committee, but a sense of the Meeting for Business decides what to do with the money.

In our corporate giving, we identify two levels of obligation: Friends Structures, which are bigger contributions to organizations like New England Yearly Meeting and Friends General Conference that provide us with services and support, and Friends Concerns, which are smaller contributions to other mostly Quaker groups, assuming that individual contributors will make their own decisions about further support of those concerns.

The budget is considered an estimate of necessary expenditures, and does not set up line-by-line restrictions. The treasurer, the Finance Committee, and the clerk are responsible for deciding when any substantial variation from the budget plan requires formal Meeting approval. See also **Budget, Finance Committee**.

Tax Deductions

For tax purposes the treasurer will provide a written acknowledgment to anyone who contributes more than \$250. Other contributions will be acknowledged on request. The acknowledgment will include a statement of whether the Meeting has provided any goods or services in return. This may be provided at the time of the contribution, or shortly after December 31 of each year that the law requiring it is in effect.

Contributions to help a specific person or cause are not deductible unless the Meeting or Care & Counsel Committee has made a prior decision to support that person and is soliciting funds from Meeting members. To be deductible, the contribution would then be made to a fund of the Meeting (e.g., Assistance Fund), but may be earmarked for the specific purpose.

Telephone Tax

The Meeting has consistently refused to pay the federal telephone tax because its purpose is to help wage war.

Public Statements

From time to time the Meeting for Business records a sense of the meeting on current issues – minutes that it has discussed, approved, and sometimes published alone or in concert with other meetings. The Meeting reaffirmed in 10/1976 that the basis of its concerns should always issue from Meeting for Worship, having been examined in the light of our spiritual heritage. The full text of each statement is in the meeting minutes. Statements through 1998 can be found in the library in the loose-leaf booklet Policy Statements of Mount Toby Meeting of Friends (catalog number 262 Pol, or in the reference collection); discussions are underway on how to continue and maintain this print collection of policy statements.

There is an incomplete list of statements since 1998 on the Mount Toby website at <https://www.mounttobyfriends.org/welcome/public-statements/>.

MEETINGHOUSE AND GROUNDS

Meetinghouse

The meetinghouse was built in 1964. In 1997, the Champney Room was added, the kitchen was enlarged, and the library was moved from the foyer.

A keybox is mounted next to the front Fellowship Room door, and the keycode is available on the website. Walking down the hallway from the Fellowship Room toward the Champney Room, you will find the kitchen door, the Young Friends Room door, and the telephone cubby on the left. The safe is located on this wall, with cabinets above the phone containing meetinghouse architectural drawings and maps. On the right are the doors to the Children's Meeting Room and the library. The Young Friends meeting room includes two closets: one for cleaning supplies and another for paper products, concert equipment, and assorted storage.

A basement sits beneath the Young Friends Room and the library, accessible via a bulkhead at the back of the meetinghouse. Aside from the oil furnace – which is largely unused following the installation of the solar array and mini-splits – the basement is empty and prone to flooding, so it is not used for storage.

There are five electrical panels in the building. The main panels (two of them, side by side) are in the basement. They mainly serve the heat pumps and the Champney Room, with feeders running to the other panels. The “stalls without urinal” room has a panel that controls all of the lights and outlets from the meeting room to the nursery. A panel in the library controls the lights and outlets in the Fellowship Room and the rooms off the hallway to the Champney Room. The control panel for the septic field is in the closet in the nursery.

A shed behind the meetinghouse primarily houses the riding lawnmower and other lawn equipment, along with extra folding chairs and miscellaneous surplus. The key for this shed hangs by the door in the Young Friends Room. A smaller shed near the road houses burial equipment and is accessible only to the Burial Committee.

Water for the meetinghouse comes from a well in the playground, and the septic field is located next to the burial ground. The water is rated as a public water source, and Friends are welcome to fill bottles from the tap outside the library to take home.

In 2020, an accessible bathroom was added in part of the foyer, and the men's and women's rooms were renovated. They are now designated as the "stalls without urinal" and the "stalls with urinal" (which includes a utility sink). There is also a small children's bathroom in the nursery.

The meetinghouse has wifi through Leverett.net, though cell service inside and immediately outside the building is poor. The meeting hires a contractor to plow the parking lot, while members of the Grounds Committee shovel the sidewalks. Six air purifiers are stationed throughout the meetinghouse – four in the meeting room, one in the Champney Room, and one in the nursery – which must be turned on and off manually during use.

In the event of a building emergency, contact the meetinghouse steward, a member of the Meetinghouse Committee, or the meeting clerk. Contact information can be found in the meeting directory posted in the telephone cubby.

See also **Storing Personal Property in the Meetinghouse, History of the Meeting, Appendix I: Guidelines for the Use of the Meetinghouse, and Meetinghouse Committee.**

Accessibility

The meetinghouse was designed on one level for accessibility and the Meetinghouse Committee and others have made several improvements. Front and back doors to the fellowship room have had ramps added, special handicapped parking spaces have been designated on the circular drive closest to the building, and an ADA-compliant restroom has been added. More easily usable lever-type door handles have been installed. If there are other ways in which the meetinghouse could be made more easily accessible, please tell Care & Counsel or the Meetinghouse Committee.

See also **Allergies, Hearing Amplification in the Meeting Room, and Overnight Use Of The Meetinghouse.**

Capital Fund

The Meeting maintains a Capital Fund to which we set aside money every year to help cover infrequent, but expensive, major projects for maintaining or improving the meetinghouse and grounds. Each committee is requested to inform the Finance Committee about anticipated major expenses or projects in future years. These anticipated expenditures are compiled on a Capital Fund list to help the committee plan for large expenditures. The Capital Fund list provides a basis for the Finance Committee's yearly presentation and recommendation to Meeting for Business for an annual budget contribution to the Capital Fund. Expenditures from the Capital Fund require approval from Meeting for Business.

When unanticipated capital needs arise during the year, however, a committee can bring a request directly to Meeting for Business. The business meeting can then either approve the request directly or refer it to the Finance Committee for further consideration. Capital purchases usually involve items costing over \$500. Once approved by Meeting for Business, such expenses can be charged against the Capital Fund rather than against the operating budget.

Cleaning

Cleaning is done once a week by volunteers, usually working in pairs coordinated by the meetinghouse cleaning scheduler. If everyone takes a turn, each person cleans about once a year. The scheduler prepares a schedule and posts it on the Meeting bulletin board in the foyer and on the members' section of the website. The scheduler will remind people of their upcoming turns (11/1991). A list of cleaning chores is posted inside the door to the cleaning supplies closet in the Young Friends Room. The Fellowship & Hospitality Committee sees that cleanup is done after coffee hour and potluck lunch.

Hearing Amplification in the Meetinghouse

Hearing aids are kept in the foyer next to the entrance to the meeting room for those who have difficulty hearing messages during Meeting for Worship. The system only functions if the white

switch in the foyer is on. The units that fit over the head require batteries, and the units with one earpiece are rechargeable. Please ask the member of Care & Counsel on duty at the door for instructions for using them. If the system does not seem to be working well, please report this to a member of the Audio Visual Support committee, which is responsible for maintenance. (Minutes of Care & Counsel 8/1994, Meeting for Business 1/2024.) A portable unit can be used in the Champney Room or elsewhere when the meeting room system is not in use.

Keys

Clerks, committee clerks, and members of the Meetinghouse and Grounds Committees commonly have keys. There is also a key in the keybox at the entrance to the Fellowship Room. The code for the keybox is on the website members' section.

Library/Office

The library provides service to the Meeting, Friends, and visitors. The library is open whenever the meetinghouse is open.

The chief functions of the library are teaching, ministry, outreach, and support of Meeting activities. Needs of both children and adults are considered. Major Quaker topics are covered in books, periodicals, pamphlets, magazines, and a few audio-visuals. The on-line catalog is searchable from the computer in the library or from <https://www.librarycat.org/lib/mttobyfriends>.

The Library Committee is working on down-sizing the collection to eliminate books that are old but not classic and not of interest.

A collection of curriculum materials is shelved in the Children's Meeting Room.

See also **Library Committee**.

Maintenance

The meetinghouse is maintained by the volunteer work of members and attenders during scheduled spring and fall workdays and at other times. Sometimes individuals take on special projects that they are concerned about. Large projects are now usually contracted out by the Meetinghouse Committee.

We agree that our priority for selecting meetinghouse projects will be those that undergird and nourish our worship and that take into consideration the health of our community and our impact on the earth. We invite those with ideas on improving our 60-plus-year-old building to bring them to the Meetinghouse Committee (3/2004).

Office

Mentions of the "office" refer to files now kept in the library. Meetinghouse records on paper are kept in two two-drawer file cabinets. The Recorder's files are in the bottom drawer of the locked vertical file. The History & Records Committee uses the cupboards and the vertical file for the non-circulating copies of the minutes, the Memorial Books, and other scrapbooks. The lower shelves hold boxes of archival materials.

Outside Groups

Those wanting to rent the meetinghouse make arrangements with the scheduler after checking the publicly available meetinghouse calendar on the website. Large groups put a strain on our water and sewer arrangements, so may need to rent a portable toilet. Groups must follow Appendix I: Guidelines for Use of the Meetinghouse.

Overnight Use of the Meetinghouse

No one may stay overnight at the meetinghouse without clearing it first with the scheduler. If the scheduler has any questions, they will consult with the clerk (11/1987). Traveling Friends have been allowed to stay at the meetinghouse if this did not interfere with already-scheduled use. Others are not allowed to stay unless a member of the Meeting stays with them. Either arrangement must be cleared with the scheduler (12/1987).

Parking

Parking space can be limited. There are marked handicapped-accessible parking spaces in the drive close to the meetinghouse entrance. Parking is also allowed facing the stone wall along Route 63.

Rental of the Meetinghouse

The use of our facilities is cost-free for groups sponsored by the Meeting – those that have been approved by a committee or Meeting for Business. Other groups are asked to share in the costs of upkeep of this facility by paying a fee. Individual members or attenders who schedule the meetinghouse should also expect to pay a fee (approved 3/2007, modified 11/2015). The fee schedule is available from the scheduler.

The Finance Committee proposes the rental fee schedules for the meetinghouse, subject to approval by Meeting for Business (10/2017). All meetinghouse rentals and fees are coordinated through the scheduler. The scheduler is charged with deciding if a group is subject to fees for use of the meetinghouse, and may negotiate reduced fees for outside groups as deemed appropriate. A cleaning deposit may be requested for groups using the meetinghouse for a full day or more, or an additional fee for cleaning may be requested if the premises are not left in good order. The scheduler may choose to consult with the Meetinghouse Committee in making these decisions.

Long-term use of the meetinghouse by an outside group (e.g., multi-week educational programs) should be approved by Meeting for Business. Long-term use proposals should be brought with a recommendation from the scheduler and the Meetinghouse Committee that includes the recommended fees. Copies of any contracts for long-term use should be provided to the Meetinghouse Committee and the treasurer.

Electronic equipment such as computers, Zoom account, screens, concert equipment, and projectors is not included in the rental agreements unless specifically stipulated (6/2026).

Scheduling

Meeting and other groups are welcome to use the meetinghouse (11/1977). They must arrange with the scheduler to reserve the space and schedule the heat. To keep slots open for Meeting groups, the Meetinghouse Committee suggested in 8/1988 reserving two Saturdays a month and several weekday evenings for Meeting use. See also **Scheduler**.

Telephone

The telephone booth is opposite the library, by the door to the Champney Room. Checking for voicemail messages is assigned to the clerk and infrequently done. The instructions and password for checking messages are posted in the phone booth. If the message is not for you, don't delete it.

Grounds

Burial Ground

The Mount Toby Friends burial ground is southeast of the meetinghouse. Corners are marked with permanent granite markers. The burial ground is overseen by the Burial Committee. Burial ground records are maintained by the burial ground caretakers. See also **Other Positions**. Permanent records are kept in the meetinghouse office. Policies governing use of the burial ground have been discerned by the Meeting from time to time and are available from the Burial Committee (8/1977, 3/1982, 9/1997, 3/1998, 7/2010, 9/2012). The burial ground is for the use of Mount Toby and Northampton Meeting members and their immediate families within one generation (spouse, parents, children) (2/2015). There is no planting in the burial ground (3/1998).

See also **Burial Committee, Memorial Meetings, Appendix II: Guidelines for the Use of the Burial Ground** and **Appendix III: Guidelines for the Planting of Memorial Trees**.

Grounds Maintenance

Maintenance of grounds around the meetinghouse is done by the Grounds Committee and other volunteers. In summer, volunteers take turns mowing (it takes about 3 hours). In winter, the committee hires a company to plow the parking lot but volunteers shovel the walkways.

Memorial Trees

When the meetinghouse was built in 1964 a landscape plan was also developed. Additional trees and shrubs have been planted since, many in memory of Meeting members who have died. A map showing the location of the plantings is posted in the meetinghouse and is available at <https://www.mounttobyfriends.org/members-and-attenders-section/land-committee/>. A policy on plantings was approved on 6/2000. All trees are under the care of a Plantings Keeper appointed by the Meeting. See also **Plantings Keeper** and **Appendix III: Guidelines for the Planting of Memorial Trees**.

Mount Toby Land

Land History and Uses

In 1972 Meeting purchased land outside the site of the meetinghouse. It includes 118 acres of pasture, wetland, and forest, plus a spring, a pond, and a section of Long Plain Brook. 108 acres are in Leverett and 10 acres are in Sunderland. The land covers a roughly triangular area with its base along Long Plain Road and the railroad tracks.

The area immediately surrounding the meetinghouse, including the burial ground, is cared for by the Grounds Committee. The rest of the Meeting's land is administered by the Land Committee. In May 1978, after lengthy discussion, the meeting decided that the portion north and west of the power lines should be cut periodically for lumber, while the rest would remain largely unmanaged or for agriculture. In 1983, the Land Committee's portion was put under conservancy, under Massachusetts Law Chapters 61, 61A, and 61B, for forestry, agriculture, and recreational use, respectively (3/1983). In 2014, Meeting decided to file its last forestry plan (6/2014), and in 2024, all meeting land was taken out of the forestry category (1/2024). It is now all recreational for tax purposes except for land along Long Plain Brook leased to an abutter for agricultural purposes limited to grazing sheep and haying.

There is an extensive network of trails, some of which are overgrown and others of which may be used for hiking and cross-country skiing. A map of Meeting land can be found at <https://www.mounttobyfriends.org/members-and-attenders-section/land-committee/>. Camping is allowed with the permission of the Land Committee. See also **Camping on Meeting Property**.

No swimming is permitted in the pond, as our insurance does not cover that activity. A sign saying "Swimming is not Permitted" has been posted at the pond.

A simple footbridge (currently in disrepair) south of the pond used to give access to our land beyond Long Plain Brook. For pedestrian access and occasional access by vehicles, including cars, trucks, and equipment, we have an easement with another abutter on a gravel road across a culvert over Long Plain Brook. W.D. Cows lumber company has an agreement with the Meeting for a right-of-way to truck logs across Meeting land from their abutting property on the north (6/1990, 2/1994). Western Massachusetts Electric Company has a 100-foot right-of-way for a power line through the property. Our agricultural renter has a deeded right to access a spring on the meeting's forested land across Long Plain Brook.

In 4/1995 at a hearing in Leverett, Meeting successfully opposed a proposal to declare the land opposite us on Route 63 a General Business Zone; we stated that we expect our land "to remain forever protected from further development." See also **Land Committee**.

Camping on Meeting Property

Camping on land cared for by the Land Committee is allowed with permission of the Land Committee (4/1978). The committee strongly advises against allowing fires on Meeting land (6/1979, revised 5/2026). Leverett zoning by-laws do not allow camping for more than 28 days without adequate sanitary facilities (6/1979). Camping on land cared for by the Grounds Committee near the meetinghouse has been allowed for retreats and Quaker programs (6/2024, 6/2025). There is a fire ring on the playground used by Mount Toby programs. Use of meetinghouse toilets and kitchen by campers can be allowed when it does not conflict with previously contracted use (6/1979); such use must be cleared with the Scheduler. Sometimes the Meeting has rented portable toilets for Grounds campers 6/2025). See also **Overnight Use of the Meetinghouse**.

AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

Other Meetings for Worship

Small subsidiary groups have been formed from time to time to fill special needs, most of them with the concurrence of Ministry & Worship and Meeting for Business. They are laid down when they become inactive by Meeting for Business on the recommendation of Ministry & Worship.

Woolman Hill Midweek Worship

Meets each Wednesday from 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Worship is usually in the meetinghouse – if it needs to be moved, the alternate location will be posted on the meetinghouse door. This is not under the oversight of Mount Toby. Contact the Woolman Hill office at (413) 774-3431 for more information.

Second Friday Sabbath

This Meeting for Worship gathers on the second Friday of each month at 6 p.m. (with some arriving a bit earlier for animal visits) and worships together for about a half hour. Worship is followed by some worship sharing, then a potluck meal.

All are welcome to attend! This is a time when parents can enter into worship knowing that children's sounds and words are welcomed. Gatherings are announced in the newsletter and Bulletin Board listserv, and email reminders are sent to anyone requesting them. From April through October we meet at Winterberry Farm in Colrain. In November through March the gathering takes place in other Friends' homes.

Taizé Worship of Prayer and Singing

The monthly Taizé worship of prayer and singing is under the care of Ministry & Worship. It happens on Thursdays at 7 p.m. via Zoom. All of the regular attenders of Taizé are Friends from Mount Toby or Northampton Friends Meeting. For more information, contact quakertaize@fastmail.com.

Connecticut Valley Quarterly Meeting (CVQM)

Mount Toby Meeting is a member of the Connecticut Valley Quarter of New England Yearly Meeting. Friends meet for a day or a weekend three times a year – on the first weekends in February, May, and October – for a planned program, worship, and fellowship. The February and May meetings rotate among the different monthly meetings. The October meeting is always held at Woolman Hill.

Mount Toby's Meeting for Business, in conjunction with the clerk, appoints a planning committee in those years in which Mount Toby is scheduled to be host (approximately every three years).

Every October, when the program is at Woolman Hill, Mount Toby has some responsibility for a part of the arrangements, determined by a rotation schedule. These duties are undertaken by the CVQM Planning Committee, which includes a Mount Toby representative.

Mount Toby is also responsible for finding and appointing officers of the Quarter (clerk, recording clerk, and treasurer) on regular rotation (these Friends need not be from Mount Toby). Terms are typically for two years.

Woolman Hill

Woolman Hill is an independent Quaker retreat and conference center on Keets Road in Deerfield. The Board of Directors includes people from Mount Toby and other monthly meetings within CVQM and NEYM. Mount Toby has traditionally had strong representation on the board, and has a deep connection with the history of Woolman Hill. The Mount Toby Care & Counsel Committee has a scholarship fund that will assist people who want to go to Woolman Hill programs.

New England Yearly Meeting

New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM) is an association of most of the monthly meetings in New England. It holds its annual Meeting for Business, with workshops and programs for all ages, for several days in the first week in August, usually on a college campus. All Friends receive announcements in the spring. Several members of the Meeting serve on NEYM committees. We are expected to appoint representatives to the Yearly Meeting Nominating Committee.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE MEETING

The roots of the Mount Toby Meeting trace back to occasional Quaker worship groups in the Pioneer Valley, including informal gatherings in Amherst (1924) and Northfield (1930s). However, the Meeting's formal lineage began in 1939 with the organization of the Northampton Meeting as an independent group under the Friends Fellowship Council in Philadelphia. The catalyst for this formal organization was a European couple at Smith College. Anticipating the outbreak of war in Europe, they urged local Friends to unite and prepare a collective witness for peace.

At the end of World War II, several new Quaker meetings in New England remained independent due to an 1845 schism within the New England Yearly Meeting (NEYM) – a division between the unprogrammed (Wilburite) and programmed (Gurneyite) traditions. When NEYM reunited in 1945, Northampton and other independent regional meetings formally joined the Yearly Meeting.

Following this reunification, the local group renamed itself the Middle Connecticut Valley Monthly Meeting of Friends. This unified body encompassed several local worship groups: South Hadley, Greenfield, Northampton, and Great Barrington.

These groups gathered monthly for Business meetings, frequently convening at the Sherwood Friends Center – a barn studio in Greenfield donated by Mary Champney (which was later demolished to make way for Interstate 91).

In 1954, the Amherst worship group was revitalized, largely driven by newly arriving faculty at the rapidly expanding University of Massachusetts. As more Quaker families settled in the area over the following decade, Amherst grew into the region's largest worship group.

To accommodate this growth, the Monthly Meeting launched an "experimental consolidation" in 1959, renting the Grange Hall on Main Street in Amherst to bring all local Friends together for unified First Day worship.

The Grange Hall experiment was a resounding success, notably providing a dedicated space for a thriving First Day School of 50 to 100 children. This vibrant growth inspired the community to build a permanent meetinghouse. In 1963, the Meeting broke ground on Long Plain Road in Leverett, on land generously gifted from the farm of Ethel Dubois.

Helen Griffith's history of the meeting through 1964 and Georgana Foster's history from 1954 to the 1990s are available at <https://mounttobyfriends.org/about-us/mt-toby-history/>.

APPENDIX I: GUIDELINES FOR USE OF THE MEETINGHOUSE

From the Meetinghouse Committee (2/2000); re-approved (4/2004):

The meetinghouse is available for use by any group seeking to develop spiritual growth, enrichment of inner life, better human relations, social concerns, civic responsibility, and educational and international understanding.

Permission for use of the meetinghouse can be obtained from the meetinghouse scheduler (see the current committee list in the foyer). The key code is available from the scheduler. The building is fully heated only while it is being used; this requires that the scheduler be contacted at least a week in advance so that the heat can be programmed. No admission may be charged for any activity in the meetinghouse, although collections for social and religious causes are allowed.

The meetinghouse is not available to groups practicing discrimination.

For the schedule of fees charged to non-Meeting groups, see the scheduler.

The meeting room has been designated for meetings only; any other use should have prior permission from the Meetinghouse Committee. Please ask before rearranging the benches, and return them to their original places when done. No lighted candles, food, or beverages are allowed in the meeting room, foyer, or Champney Room (small meeting room).

Please do not allow children to use the library unless there is an adult with them at all times.

There is no smoking in the meetinghouse. People may smoke on the grounds, but are asked to dispose of their own litter and not leave it for others to clean up. No alcoholic beverages may be brought onto the premises.

Electronic equipment such as computers, Zoom account, screens, concert equipment, and projectors is not allowed by non-Meeting groups unless specifically stipulated (6/2026).

Groups renting the meetinghouse are asked to include in any information given to others the words "This is not a Quaker Meeting program."

The meetinghouse is cleaned weekly by members of the Meeting. Those using the building are expected to clean up after their gathering and leave things as they found them. Groups using the kitchen should wash and put away all dishes unless they have brought and used disposable paper products. Floors should be vacuumed, swept, and mopped as needed. All trash and garbage must be removed and wastebaskets relined. Any damage to the equipment or facilities should be reported to the clerk of the Meetinghouse Committee. People are asked not to use the furnishings for purposes other than those for which they are intended. Cleaning supplies are in the closet in the Young Friends Room.

After everyone has left, the person responsible for the group should check to see that the instructions for closing the building have been followed.

Closing the Building

Any group which uses the meetinghouse, including Meeting groups, sees to the following (Meetinghouse Committee 10/1987):

- all dishes washed and put away
- soiled dishtowels and sponges taken out to be washed and returned
- all rubbish removed from the building and fresh liners in trashcans and baskets
- floors mopped and swept as needed, wet mop left in the utility sink located in the bathroom with a urinal, rugs vacuumed if needed
- rooms left as they were found
- tables and chairs put away
- all windows closed and tightly latched
- all lights off
- all outer doors closed, latched, and locked. Because of weather-strips, some must be pushed very hard to be sure they are latched.
- doors to the Champney Room and meeting room closed to save heating expense when they are not in use in winter. To prevent pipes freezing in cold weather, all other interior doors should be left propped open in winter.
- key returned to the keybox

See also **Meetinghouse**

APPENDIX II: GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF THE BURIAL GROUND

Taken from two drafts dated 4/5/1983; modified according to Care & Counsel's recommendation to Meeting for Business 10/1997; further modified according to Ad Hoc Committee on Burial Report and Recommendations, accepted by Meeting for Business 7/2010, and Burial Committee recommendations to Meeting for Business 9/2012, 2/2015, 5/2017, and 10/2017. Modified by the committee 6/2026.

Eligibility for Burial in the Burial Ground

Burial in the Meeting burial ground is for members of Mount Toby Meeting and Northampton Friends Meeting and their immediate families within one generation (i.e., spouse, parents, and children), and for locally resident members of other Friends' meetings who have been active in Mount Toby or Northampton Meeting. Any exceptions will be made by at least two members of Mount Toby's Care & Counsel Committee, if the committee as a whole is not available (for the Mount Toby community), or by Northampton's Pastoral Care Committee (for the Northampton community). Exceptions, if any, will be for individuals who have had an ongoing relationship with Mount Toby and/or Northampton Friends Meetings and have participated in the life of one Meeting or the other. In view of the urgency and uniqueness of each decision, no exception to the eligibility rule is to be later construed as a precedent that encourages subsequent exceptions.

The Meeting has also minuted (7/2013) its affirmation that the burial ground is a potential sanctuary for those in need of a compassionate burial in cases where politics and public outcry is so strong that burial elsewhere is refused. In such a case, we will follow the same guidelines for exceptions as described above.

Administration and Oversight

The burial ground caretakers, in conjunction with the Burial Committee, assign plots; are responsible to see that the grave is dug and burial is completed; maintain graves; maintain records of burials; and fulfill any legal responsibilities for oversight.

The Grounds Committee is responsible for mowing the burial ground. There is to be no planting in the burial ground.

Description of Burial Ground

Location: The burial ground is a plot of land 70 feet by 150 feet located southeast of the meetinghouse as shown in a plan submitted to the Town of Leverett.

Plots: Each grave plot will be 5 feet by 10 feet. In Massachusetts there is no legal requirement as to depth. We intend to follow guidelines for green burial and dig graves 3 to 4 feet deep (to the bottom of the coffin). In case of cremation, grave plots may be used for the cremated remains of more than one person from the same family if they so choose. Tops of containers for cremated remains must be deep enough for markers to be placed above them, i.e., 12 to 18 inches of soil. Specific plots may not be reserved, with the exception of a single plot adjacent to the grave of a spouse already buried. Existing adjacent graves reserved for a parent or child are not to be construed as precedents.

APPENDIX II: GUIDELINES FOR THE USE OF THE BURIAL GROUND

Plan: Grave plots are laid out northerly to southerly, with the long side of a plot being roughly parallel to the highway. Using the dimensions given above, the burial ground will accommodate 210 graves. However, since most of the graves in the first row are narrower than 5 feet, the total will be closer to 215. Granite corner posts and granite row markers for rows A and B were set in 2013. A sign made of white oak mounted on granite posts was set at the northern end of the burial ground in 2015.

Grave markers: There will be no standing markers or headstones, only flat markers no larger than about 1 foot by 2 feet. Arrangements for markers are made by the family, in conjunction with the Burial Committee, through a monument dealer, who will install them. Markers are set dry, without a foundation. Markers are, of course, optional.

Burial containers: Burial vaults, grave liners, and caskets made of metal or other nonbiodegradable materials are not permitted. Our preference is for shrouds or coffins made of readily biodegradable materials.

Woody plantings: There are to be no woody plantings in the burial ground. Woody plantings should be located at least 10 feet outside the burial ground boundaries to avoid damage to plantings by digging of graves or lifting of markers by root growth. Herbaceous plantings within the burial ground are discouraged as they will be mowed and/or grazed.

Charges and Donations: There will be no charge for a burial plot. Families will be responsible for all expenses of burial and other funeral arrangements. Burial ground caretakers will explain and help estimate these costs to the family. A Burial Ground Fund tracks expenses and income of operating the burial ground – including costs such as excavation rental and additional topsoil and payments by a family or anyone else to cover such costs. The Mount Toby treasurer will receive and disburse monies from the Burial Ground Fund.

The family may also wish to make a donation to the Meeting, beyond expenses, to help pay for maintenance of the burial ground and associated expenses.

Making Arrangements for Use

The burial ground caretakers, in conjunction with the Burial Committee, assign plots and keep a record of burials and a plan of the grave plots. Care & Counsel (Mount Toby) or Pastoral Care Committee (Northampton) is responsible to facilitate an initial conversation or meeting between the family and one of the burial ground caretakers. Caretakers are legally responsible for ensuring that the burial permit (officially, the “Disposition, Removal and Transportation Permit”) is in hand and in order before a burial takes place. In practice, the funeral director usually obtains it on behalf of the family, and will present it when the caretaker requests it. After the burial, a caretaker signs and, after making a photocopy for Burial Committee records, returns the burial permit to the town official who issued it. See also **Burial Ground, Records of the Meeting, Memorial Meetings, and Appendix III Memorial Tree Planting Policy and Guidelines for the Planting of Memorial Trees.**

APPENDIX III: GUIDELINES FOR THE PLANTING OF MEMORIAL TREES

Adapted from a report submitted to Meeting for Business 6/2000.

Introduction

When a member of our community dies, there is sometimes a desire to plant a tree or shrub on the Meeting grounds to remind us of the role that person played in our lives. The following policies are designed to establish clear procedures for such plantings.

Policies

Anyone for whom we write a memorial minute is eligible to have a memorial tree or shrub. In its discussions with the family, Care & Counsel will provide information about our policies for such plantings. The Meeting may want to act on its own initiative in some cases.

In general, the family should cover the cost of the memorial tree or shrub. In cases of financial hardship, the Meeting may provide a modest amount, either through the budget or through the discreet solicitation of contributions.

If the family desires, they may plant the memorial in their own ceremony. Otherwise, the planting could be part of spring workday or a special Meeting event. Trees planted around the burial ground need to be protected from sheep. Maintenance will be the responsibility of the plantings keeper.

To ensure enough sites for memorial trees, we recommend that no other trees be planted.

The plantings keeper, in consultation with the Grounds Committee, will take into account the landscaping needs of the Meeting to suggest a site. There will be no effort made to correlate the “weightiness” of the Friend being memorialized with the location.

The family will be provided with a list of trees consistent with the landscaping at Mount Toby from which they can choose. Otherwise, the plantings keeper, in consultation with other interested parties, will make the choice.

Care & Counsel will have general responsibility ensuring the functioning of memorial plantings as part of their overall care when a member dies. The details of the policy will be the responsibility of the plantings keeper. See **Plantings Keeper**.

A map and list of plantings on the Meetinghouse grounds is available at <https://mounttobyfriends.org/members-and-attenders-section/land-committee/>.