



Report on the State of the Westerly Monthly Meeting 2025

As Friends have done in this meetinghouse for the previous 151 years, we gathered in 2025 at the beginning of each week for unprogrammed worship. Worship is at the center of our life as a Meeting. For some, worship was an hour of appreciation for the comforting silence. Others came looking for the guidance of vocal ministry in their spiritual journey. Some in the Meeting said they never experienced the presence of the Inner Light within the time of worship. Others recognized that our sense of the spirit waxed and waned, but overall, it united and comforted us.

The primary way most of us took part in life of the Meeting was to serve on one and, in some cases, more than one committee. The Meeting for Business helped to keep us informed of what was happening in other committees. Our weekly newsletter included national Quaker news as well as particular needs of our own Meeting, as in calling for volunteers to bring food to WARM.

A number of activities were held in 2025 to foster spiritual growth in our Meeting. Inspirational quotes from various faiths and literary sources were chosen by a group of poets in the Meeting and placed in a location where they would be easily noticed. The quotes were also included in the weekly newsletter. A discussion group on the nature of worship was held near the end of the year. This was well attended and gave Friends a chance to talk about their experiences, both rewarding and challenging, of unprogrammed worship. A Friend travelled to a number of extended worship services and upon her recommendation we hosted an extended worship day in Westerly.

We were concerned about sustaining the vitality of the Meeting in the years ahead. To help us to respond to this challenge, the Meeting extended an invitation to the NEYM Accompaniment Group. We were hopeful they would provide some tools to help us maintain the present vibrancy of the Meeting as well as open more doors to the spirit for us as a group.

Jeremy Langill, Director of the R.I. Council of Churches, came to speak to us about the counsel's efforts to defend transgender students' rights. This led to us having a called meeting to talk about how to respond to Jeremy's message. Friends felt called to act in a number of ways to causes they felt were important for us to become involved with. Among those actions were the following:

- A poet spoke about sharing environmental concerns through poetry and encouraging plantings of more trees in our town.
- A member regularly tracked environmental legislation in Connecticut.
- Some were led to support immigrants' rights by distributing ACLU "Know your Rights"
- A Friend provided transportation and support to medical appointments for an immigrant family through Start Fresh, a local immigrant support group. .
- Some were concerned about housing shortages and kept themselves apprised of new legislation and planning and zoning laws
- Some were led to attend Westerly School Board Meetings to bear witness to the rights of trans students.

We reached unity to continue to live into the Gaza Minute- specifically to "Stop Bombs and Send Food." Several of us attended the annual Peace Day at URI and distributed a questionnaire to find out what concerns the students had. In the Spring we, and others from the Southeast Quarter, dedicated our peace pole in the front yard. We chose Japanese, English, Spanish and Narragansett for the pole.

We took a new approach to our monthly meal donation to WARM, our local shelter. Instead of cooking alone, we had a few gatherings in the meetinghouse kitchen where we prepared the food together and also got to know one another better. A Friend continued to volunteer as part of a group at the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center's garden as he has done for nine years. The group tries to grow 2000 to 2500 pounds of fresh organic produce a year. We received two large gifts from a Friend to be used for social justice issues and reached unity in our distribution of these funds to a local shelter, food pantry, an immigration support system as well as a local clinic serving indigent patients locally.

Our First Day School of around a half dozen children continued to meet the 1st and 3rd First Day of the month. In December they sang amusing carols at a local Nursing Home. "Twelve Days of Christmas" was especially well received.

We were thankful for one member applying for an historic preservation grant to cover the cost of a new roof. We had the roof completed and we received the grant. In the

fall we dedicated the ramp in front of the meeting house in memory of a Friend who had been a member and strong advocate for handicap accessibility.

Individual Friends continued to engage with the wider Quaker community in various ways. This engagement was an important way to meet other Friends and learn new ways of doing things. Continued leadership and attendance at the Quarterly Meeting level and a Friend's membership on Permanent Board led to the care and support of individual ministries outside of the local meeting. Participation with the regional Advocacy Team brought a Friend to serve as the NEYM Representative to FCNL. Several of us attended the monthly Tuesday evening FCNL leadership training on Zoom. Several of us participated in NEYM's Living Faith Day. We hosted a visit from Marcus Mitchell who shared his work on opening dialogue with people while traveling on the train. Two representatives from Right Sharing of World Resources gave us a power point presentation on the loans around the world this organization has made to build self-sufficient businesses. The NEYM "Living Stream" committee shared with us the many ways that NEYM works to support NEYM monthly meetings.

In closing our group discussion on the State of the WFM Society, one member reflected: " Maybe I am looking through rose-colored glasses, but I feel we have had a successful and lively year here at WMM."

Read and approved at the April Meeting for Business
Westerly Monthly Meeting
April 12, 2025