

July 2026 New York Quarterly Meeting

Executive Director's Report

Finding Out By Doing

F/friends:

We gather at the Cemetery on Saturday, July 25.

Just last week about eighty NYC Quakers made the trip up to Silver Bay for New York Yearly Meeting's Summer Sessions, out of about four hundred Friends from across the region. We came from Brooklyn, Fifteenth Street, Manhattan and Morningside, some who have been going for decades and some who had never been. This year's theme was "Led by Spirit." It was my first Summer Sessions as your Executive Director, and Sarah Way, our Communications Director, and Jess Hobbs Pifer, our Community Organizer, were both there too.



NYC Quakers at Silver Bay, July 2026

I return with perspective and a better sense of how we intersect. There are more dots to connect, circles that overlap, and conversations to be had. I understand more deeply that we

are part of a larger community of friends in New York State and beyond. It was special to return, worship, discern, play and learn together.

It was a double-dipped feelings kind of a week. Sunshine dappled the bay and there were sing-alongs on the porch and many warm reunions. That said, Friends did not reach unity on two significant items, a commitment to becoming an anti-racist organization and lending the Yearly Meeting's name to a statement on Gaza. Both sessions were left open, with a follow-up gathering that will take place after this report is posted. I know that was difficult, even painful at times for many in the room, and I do not want to gloss over it. But I have been sitting with it since returning to the city, and what I keep coming back to is that we believe truth is still arriving. George Fox, after years of turning to one priest and preacher after another and finding that none of them could speak to his condition, finally heard a voice himself and wrote, "And this I knew experimentally." He meant that he came to it by living it rather than by being handed it. It took courage to leave those sessions open. Spirit and us are still working.

I have been talking about experiments since I stepped into this role, and I mean it in that same spirit. We try things. We pay attention to what happens. We keep what serves and let go of what does not. Which means a fair amount of what I have to report is a work in progress. I think that is ok. Together we will find a way, and when that way no longer serves, we will find another way to open, together.

What's in progress and what we're learning

One of the most exciting developments in 2026 is the strong possibility of re-opening the Friends Shelter at 15th Street. Over the last half year we have visited Broadway Community's shelter on the Upper West Side, held weekly working sessions with members of the 15th Street Shelter and 15th Street Property Committees, and have a draft memorandum of understanding in hand. The Quarterly Meeting would provide the space, the 15th Street Meeting's Shelter committee would manage and support the volunteers and Broadway Community would identify guests, starting small with the intention of growing over time. Some questions remain, the largest being how we support our guests every night. We are moving toward resolution and will continue to learn as we go.

We finished the second year evaluation of our Community Wellness program, our partnership with University Settlement, and the results are encouraging. Use of the program grew to thirty-one cases this year, up from twenty-three in the first year. What struck me most was what our care committees said. Every committee that responded described real relief at having professional social-work expertise to turn to when someone comes to them with a housing crisis or a Medicaid problem that no amount of loving attention can solve. The honest finding is about awareness. Friends know their traditional care structures far better than they know a two-year-old program, particularly newer and younger Friends, who are the ones most likely to use the direct services. The working group is recommending we continue with University Settlement for a third year, at roughly \$46,000, with some changes aimed at helping more

Friends know it is there and better processes in place to understand the impact we are having on people who receive direct assistance.

Something that stood out to me this quarter: cross-pollination. Brooklyn Meeting has been running coworking twice a week for a while now. We borrowed the idea and tried a popup, opening Room 1 at Fifteenth Street with tables, wifi, and coffee, and paired it with a Community Wellness Day where University Settlement's social workers sat down with Friends about Medicaid, food assistance, and health insurance. In mid-June a crowd of Friends, Brooklyn Frontiers students, and Audubon Society volunteers refreshed the front garden at Brooklyn Meeting. Jess has convened a monthly gathering for Friends at Brooklyn who do prison ministry,



and we are looking at how that model of peer support might extend to other groups across the Quarter.

That last one connects to something that opened up at Silver Bay. Sessions approved a minute from the Yearly Meeting's Prisons Committee and a letter to the state Department of Corrections on earlier parole eligibility. Friends across NYC Quaker meetings and at the Yearly Meeting have been caring for returning citizens who find their way to us. There is a real opportunity to bring those two efforts into deeper contact with each other.

Once again, we showed up for Pride--this year, twice. Friends marched as a registered group at Brooklyn Pride in June for the second year in a row, and then again at NYC Pride at the end of the month. Friends gathered in Room 1 beforehand for pizza and poster-making, and then around twenty of us marched, and we handed out a thousand LOVE ALL stickers along the route. I will say that the stickers were gone well before the parade was.



We put out the [second issue of our 'zine, "The Facing Bench,"](#) produced by Sarah with support from the communications working group. This issue features an overview of every Quaker meeting in the city, one to a page, with photographs, worship times, locations, and quotes from each. It works as a resource for our own meetings and as a warm thing to hand a newcomer who is trying to figure out where to sit. You can pick one up at Brooklyn, Fifteenth Street, Flushing, and Morningside, or find it online. Whether small print cuts through the digital noise is exactly the kind of thing we will only learn by trying it.

Donations to Manhattan Meeting's book donation project continue, with our office helping work through the logistics of getting them where they are going—to schools in Kenya and Jamaica. The books are not there yet. This is Manhattan Meeting's effort, with Friends Seminary's participation, and our part is the unglamorous business of coordinating donations and supporting shipping. None of the three of us could get those books overseas alone, and I find that a satisfying arrangement.

We also remembered Bob Wilber, with a memorial at Brooklyn Meeting, where he was a long-time attender. Bob also served as sexton at our cemetery for over thirty years, from the early 1990s until 2025. Friends recall the warmth with which he welcomed everyone who came through the gates, which is its own kind of ministry and not a small one.

The Ground Under Our Feet

None of the above happens without a roof over it and funds to pay for it. Here is where our facilities work stands.

The Brooklyn roof is finished and the scaffolding is down. We took advantage of that scaffolding to make facade repairs--tending to something that needed doing and saving money by leveraging the fact that we'd already mobilized. The ceiling in the meeting room has been repaired and painted, so you will have to find something else to look at during worship. I

recommend the coffee stains on the carpet but don't get too used to them--they're on Steve and Jose's list. And please, let's just stick to water in our meeting rooms!



At Fifteenth Street the roof is in its active installation phase. The scaffolding is up, the old roof came off after the July 4th holiday, and the meeting room ceiling work has begun. The fence is moving along too. The bluestone pavers have been reset, new concrete is going down, and the refurbished iron should start reappearing shortly. We are aiming to have it done before Thanksgiving. Temperatures will dictate when the final paint goes on.

Room 2 (formerly known as the NY Quarterly Meeting office) is heading toward opening this fall. The common room cushions have been re-upholstered. Meanwhile, the American Friends Service Committee has been running its Liberation Academy at 15 Rutherford this summer, a program where teenagers learn to work as activist-artists, using film and photography to make change in their own neighborhoods while studying the systems of incarceration. Whenever we might be tempted to think of the buildings as a set of maintenance tasks it's worth remembering that worship and witness is what they are for.

On finances, we are in good shape. Through the first half of the year we are running a modest surplus of about \$82,000 against a budgeted loss for the period, mostly from investment returns and operating savings. At this Quarterly Meeting we bring the fund reorganization report for its second reading and adoption.

A word on our balance sheet (think of it as a snapshot of our financial health at a single moment in time). At midyear our total assets stood at just under \$46 million, up about \$1.4 million since the first of the year, with our investments recovering from a softer spring to around \$36.3 million. We are managing to put real money into our facilities: roofs, ceilings, the fence and more while the resources that sustain us keep growing rather than shrinking. That's exactly the position we want to be in: tending to long-deferred work and not eating our seed corn.

Looking Ahead

The 2027 budget is drafted, and we look forward to community input. Room 2 should open this fall. The summer facilities work will finish out. Nominating is recruiting trustees for both the Quarter and Brooklyn Friends School, and I will be doing outreach on the latter, so if a name comes to mind, please send it my way.

Onward F/friends!

In friendship and possibility,

Ted Bongiovanni

for the New York Quarterly Meeting