

Epistles received from other yearly meetings and Quaker organizations

American Friends Service Committee
All Poland Gathering
Aotearoa-New Zealand Yearly Meeting
Australia Yearly Meeting
Belgium and Luxemburg Yearly Meeting
Britain Yearly Meeting
Canadian Yearly Meeting
Central European Gathering
Cuba Yearly Meeting
France Yearly Meeting
FWCC European and Middle East Section
German Yearly Meeting
Intermountain Yearly Meeting
Ireland Yearly Meeting
Friends in Italy
Japan Yearly Meeting
Lake Erie Yearly Meeting
Lugari Yearly Meeting
Netherlands Yearly Meeting
New England Yearly Meeting
Nordic Gathering
Friends Church of North Carolina
North Pacific Yearly Meeting
Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting
Ohio Yearly Meeting
Pacific Yearly Meeting
Philadelphia Yearly Meeting
Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting Fellowship
Quaker Council for European Affairs
Sierra Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends
South Central Yearly Meeting
Southeastern Yearly Meeting
Uganda Yearly Meeting



**American
Friends
Service
Committee**

Quaker action for a just world

1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102
afsc.org

2023 Epistle

Dear Friends Everywhere,

Warm greetings from the American Friends Service Committee and our staff and volunteers all around the world. This year, the theme of our annual gathering of Friends, our Corporation meeting, is “Connecting for Lasting Change.” And we are writing to Friends worldwide to do just that... connect. We’d like to reintroduce AFSC and explore new opportunities for mutual work.

Quakers created AFSC at a time of “war fever” in World War I, as a way to help Quakers and allies live the Peace Testimony. This was dangerous work at the time, conscientious objectors were jailed, threatened, fired, and ostracized. In the face of public hostility and in a time of mounting humanitarian need, AFSC was designed to be a bold and vibrant display of Quaker faith in action.

Over the last 106 years, the Quaker experiment that is the AFSC evolved to be a unique organization. We now have real, authentic, deep relationships with communities across the US and around the world. It is our honor to serve alongside these communities – Quaker and not. We connect them. We help advocate and conduct research to promote their insights and experiences into global and policy conversations. We foster safe spaces for healing and reconciliation. And together, we speak truth to power.

Today, we share some important ways that Quakers are connecting with AFSC for lasting change. Around the world, many have had concerns for those fleeing the needless war in Ukraine and fleeing violence, repression, and poverty around the world. AFSC is working with European Quakers to help displaced people from Ukraine and has programs around the world caring for refugees and migrants in places as far apart as Denver, Colorado, and the Dadaab camp, near the Kenya-Somalia border. We send out our deepest gratitude for Friends’ support for these efforts to help displaced people heal, seek safe homes, integrate into new communities, and rebuild their lives.

We heard from Friends that AFSC should engage more on climate justice, and we have responded. One way to focus on improving our climate and economic justice is by building food justice. Where we get our food and how corporations profit from it affects our health, the health of our planet, our economies, and the lives of farmers, migrants, and many others. As Congress is considering a new farm bill, we are sharing the insights from affected communities. Friends can join our efforts for food justice by visiting our website and adding your voice to our petition.

Over the past year, some of our staff and several people from Gaza published a book, *Light in Gaza: Writings Born of Fire*. This anthology imagines a future for Gaza beyond the current cruelties of occupation, embargo, and apartheid. We encourage Friends meetings to read and share the book in discussion and to join our monthly series of author chats from different authors featured in the

book. We would love to see you and discuss this critical issue together. No background knowledge necessary, just a sense of curiosity and an openness to learning. If you are moved, you can visit the Gaza Unlocked website (gazaunlocked.org) for more about the book, the webinars, and how you and your meeting or church can take action with us.

We are delighted to report that the first year of Emerging Leaders for Liberation, a nonviolent social justice activism program for young adults connected to Friends institutions and AFSC communities, was a huge success. Young people, many of them from Quaker colleges and schools, learned vital organizing skills and then put them to work on a project in their communities. You can see more about the projects at the ELL section (afsc.org/ell) of afsc.org.

Last year, we published the North Star (afsc.org/northstar), a framework for healing justice beyond militarized policing and prisons. Since then, staff have had the pleasure of talking with many meetings about prison abolition and alternatives that promote real community safety. We have had many Friends attend our Community Safety Beyond Policing discussions, which have been held monthly online. We are revamping and continuing those webinars and have launched our Think Twice Pledge. (afsc.org/action/think-twice-calling-police) This pledge reminds people of things they can do instead of calling the police.

These are just a few of the efforts where AFSC and Friends are making a difference. We want this year to be a year of renewal with our Quaker connections. We have liaisons now in more than 260 meetings and churches and want to make sure we have connections and communications with more. And we are talking with Friends schools and organizations about partnerships to promote our mutual peace and justice concerns.

You can see these activities and more ways to get involved on our Friends Engage section of our website (afsc.org/friends-engage). Our staff and volunteers will be visiting meetings and be present at FGC Gathering and the FUM Triennial, hoping to talk with as many Quakers as possible about ways we can work together.

Wishing everyone peace, health, and our solidarity. We are looking forward to being in community with all of you.

Epistle of the All Poland Gathering of Friends, Warsaw-Włochy 2022

On the third weekend of October 2022, we met in the cosy home of our Friend Zuzanna Pędzich in Warsaw-Włochy. For the first time in three years, we enjoyed personal contact, engaged in conversation about current Quaker issues and shared our understanding of the testimony of peace in the current wartime circumstances.

In the evening, the ten of us (who came from České Budějovice, Gdańsk, Katowice, Piła, Poznań, Trzebiatka, Warsaw) shared news from local groups, heard greetings from FWCC EMES and from EMES AM, as well as from Bradius Maurus, who was unable to be with us for the first time since the All Poland Gathering was established. During the Meeting for Worship we remembered our Friends who had passed away – Jola Grabowska and Lyn Atterbury.

As we proceeded to our first decision-making meeting after the difficult time of the pandemic, we had concerns if the APG would survive. The pandemic had strained our strength, weakened our willingness and ability to play roles without which the functioning of a formal assembly is very difficult. However, once again we experienced the strength of the Quaker spirit and our need for community, and despite the small turnout, we ended our decision-making meeting uplifted by the readiness of Friends both to perform the roles needed and to organize Gathering next year.

A wonderful vegan meal and a short walk in the lovely surroundings prepared us for Pavel Marušinec's inspiring lecture on the role of religious doctrines. The worship sharing on this topic attracted the largest number – fourteen – of participants and was extremely lively. We were very touched by the metaphor of the spiritual life as a journey on which we take a backpack filled with certain beliefs. Who decides what and how much to put in the backpack? What to take out of it? Do Quakers have a list of indispensable equipment?

Filled with joy of music-making together, in excellent spirits and accompanied by Zuzanna's children, we put together the Polish verse (or even two, plus the chorus) of the song Every time I feel the Spirit. We will add it to the English verse, already prepared by the Warsaw Group for the World Gathering of Friends to be held in 2024 in South Africa.

Appreciating the opportunity to spend time together and be spiritually uplifted at our gathering in Warsaw, we look forward to meeting again in the autumn of 2023 in Poznań.

With friendly greetings,

Epistolar Committee: Magda Knapowska and Kasia Kaczmarkiewicz

Epistle of the Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa New Zealand Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri held online 28 April to 1 May 2022

Greetings to Friends everywhere.

Some 100 Friends in Aotearoa New Zealand gathered online under the care of Christchurch Monthly Meeting and the Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee. After the lingering Covid pandemic had made it unsafe and inequitable to gather in Christchurch as planned, we were moved to attempt as full a Yearly Meeting gathering as possible online.

We felt delight, excitement, and some trepidation, and also gratitude for the advantages of meeting online. We missed the face-to-face conversations, as we explored being able to make the most of our first completely online Yearly Meeting, yet we had confidence that the Spirit would lead us.

While not being able to be in Ōtautahi Christchurch we were treated to a partly bilingual presentation focusing on the history of Ngāi Tahu, the tangata whenua (indigenous people), of the land on which the city was built, and Tahu Pōtiki their important ancestor. We were reminded of the trauma from the land loss and colonisation that followed. There was also an overview of recent events which continue to shape that land and its people.

The online format allowed us to welcome visitors from Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) and the Asia West Pacific Section (AWPS) of FWCC. We were reminded of how much stronger we are from our international connections, made more possible with the online technology. We heard from our visitors Aletia Dundas representing Australia Yearly Meeting, Adrian Glamorgan the new Secretary of AWPS, Tim Gee, General Secretary of FWCC, and YangSu Park and Hyun-Duck Bae, from Seoul Monthly Meeting, AWPS. They spoke of their own journeys, the people who had inspired them and the concerns they are working on in their part of the world. Tremendous energy is going into AWPS to build on the work already established and into exploring effective ways to nourish connections and collaborations in an area that holds half the world's population with many different languages. We are reminded of the necessity to work towards more language inclusiveness. We were inspired by hearing about the many activities arising out of concern, and ways of connection that are being planned and tried.

Continuing the theme of connections, a tour of the riches of our website quakers.nz offered us an insight into its potential for inreach and outreach and encourages us to take advantage of opportunities for adventures in the online world.

We are grateful for the vitality, insight and generosity shown by our Young Friends who are engaging in a way that their energy and numbers allow. Our current statement of affirmation of same sex relationships, written in 1992, is now being revised. Young Friends reminded us that the fact that we are a reconciling and affirming church needs to be highlighted to those searching for a spiritual home.

It was good to hear how the Loxley Award is supporting the Action Research of Jeremy Simons into how Restorative Justice social movements can help repair the harm from violence on the ground and in the online world.

“Children are important to our Society and to the world, not just for the future, but for the joy and wonder that they share in the present. Children remind us of the value of love, of fun, of the spirituality of play and of God in our bodies.” Tracey Bourne 2014 Backhouse Lecture. We have been thinking creatively about how to engage better with our children and young people. This has resulted in the creation of a new paid role with a support group which will facilitate this process. The All Age Worship on the Sunday morning, based on the Faith and Play story of Gifts led by Melinda Wenner Bradley,

Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, left us spiritually enriched and feeling grateful for the insights which children can give us.

As we leave this Yearly Meeting we are mindful of the thoughts attributed to George Fox “Do not simply look at the temptations, confusions and corruptions of the world, but at the light that discovers them. For looking down at corruption and distraction, you are swallowed up in it; but looking at the light that discovers them, you will see over them and with the same light stand against them. ‘There,’ he said ‘is the first step to peace.’”

In Peace and Friendship

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anne Hall" and "Alistair Hall" written side-by-side.

Anne and Alistair Hall
Yearly Meeting Co-Clerks



Epistle of the Yearly Meeting 2022 of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia

Greetings to Friends everywhere.

Australian Friends gather during the southern winter chill for our third virtual Yearly Meeting, 2-10 July 2022. Ljudan Michaelis-Thorpe acknowledged the various Aboriginal lands on which we gather, reminding us that Indigenous knowledge is needed more than ever to heal both the planet and its people, especially as we face climate crises. She invited Friends to join with Indigenous peoples through an intertwined space of shared knowledge, adaptability and collective energy, bringing all of creation into balance.

In delivering the State of Society address Aletia Dundas asked challenging questions: what is holding us back from our radical roots; where is the evidence of the Truth moving amongst us; is our endless busyness keeping us from knowing one another in the Spirit? We were invited to use the Friendly notions of 'broken and tender' to reimagine our Society's structures to enable us to be more open to the moving of the Spirit in pursuit of peace, embracing of gender diversity and responses to climate emergencies. Within these challenges lies the hope to hold our faith community in love and tenderness, hold the oceans of Darkness and Light in balance, so nourishing seeds can grow and we can thrive.

Friends explored the theme for Friendly School, 'Caring for Humanity in Interesting Times', through many forms including labyrinths, creative writing, games, poetry, artistic expression, song, and exploring Indigenous language concepts. The opportunity for the latter to broaden our understanding will help to decolonise our thinking and attitudes. Our Society will be all the richer for it.

The array of Share & Tells and dedicated sessions this year expanded the theme already laid down. They demonstrated the depth and breadth of our concerns and Quaker testimonies in action and our collaborative links with others. We revisited the spiritual underpinnings of early Friends that guide everything we do. Revisions to the Handbook of Quaker Practice and Procedure in Australia, the future of a Yearly Meeting office and the effective use of IT focused our attention on matters of the world. We're asked to reflect on the right ordering of Friends as an institution and Friends as a community of seekers.

The Summary of Epistles from Yearly Meetings around the world reflected our shared faith and Quaker practices throughout the world. We heard similar yearnings for world peace and harmony, we felt a collective agonising over the destructive changes to our climate and species extinction: a simultaneous sense of suffering and solidarity from which we must not step away.

Our Formal Business Sessions at times traversed difficult terrain. Conducting them in a virtual environment brought an added layer of complexity and challenge. Our Quaker processes held us in good stead all the same. We were encouraged to have longer periods of silence, waiting, and listening ever more deeply 'for that of God to speak', especially when unity evaded us. This is the touchstone of our faith which brings us together to surrender to the still, small voice within our community.

We were heartened to hear from the Friends World Committee for Consultation about Quaker efforts around the world. It is timely to be reminded that we are part of a much bigger movement and network of Friends, sharing and supporting one another in Spirit-led work.

'Let me tell you some stories, listen deeply to hear your Truth'. Yarrow Goodley's Backhouse Lecture, 'Creating hope: working for justice in catastrophic times' did not mince words describing the current climate crisis and its disproportionate impact on people who are not privileged by the lightness of their skin. They shared experiences of deep despair for our planet. Hearing the journey of others has enabled Yarrow to discover seeds of hope which break the barriers of pain, enabling a vision for a compassionate and just future to grow. We heard imagined stories of people living in such future societies and are challenged to live radically, be collectively bold and see with the eyes of others.

To bridge the gap between virtual and residential participation, daily home groups on line and pods in situ were successfully introduced alongside our usual coffee chats and social gatherings in the evenings after Epilogue. We ask how to bring families, young people and children into the heart of Australia Yearly Meeting, and not just at our annual gathering. We miss the regular sound of children's laughter, discussions with teens and sharing with families. Even though there were fewer numbers, it was a valuable time for making new friends, building relationships and sharing experiences.

Two Yearly Meetings statements, one on peace and the other on climate emergency, as well as enthusiastic support for an integrity in public office project, were outcomes of the gathering and will publicly confirm Friends' commitment to this work. Looking forward, we shared ideas about a possible Quaker Life Network and how it might nurture our communities.

This Yearly Meeting in particular created an opportunity to broaden our notions of mutuality, identity and relationships, and question our entrenched binary thinking and attitudes. All these rich offerings provided avenues to wrestle with the challenges of how to live integrally and adventurously in a world in deep crisis. We are urged to 'consider the world as an en-Spirited whole, to accept no boundary to repairing and sustaining the Earth for the future, and to appreciate more deeply the creative energy in all living things and life processes' - all the while being truthful, hopeful and faithful Friends.

Australia Yearly Meeting

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**Epistle from the Belgium and Luxemburg Yearly Meeting 2022 annual gathering
held at Chant d'Oiseau, Brussels, Belgium**

17 – 19 June 2022

Community, Compassion, Unity

To Friends everywhere:

Dear friends, lieve vrienden, chers amis, liebe Freunde, Léif Frënn, queridos amigos, cari amici, greetings.

28 friends from Belgium, Luxembourg, France, Germany, Wales and England gathered in the peaceful Maison Notre-Dame du Chant d'Oiseau (Bird Song) <http://www.chant-oiseau.be/language/en/>

This gathering was two years in the making and was our first in person since 2019. We each came with our individual gifts such as unique life experiences, cultural diversity, inner guidance, loving hearts, hope, courage, and curiosity. Some also arrived feeling disconnected from one another, weary and awkward.

Jennifer Kavanagh and Edwina Peart were invited to bring fresh perspective on the theme of Community, Compassion, and Unity.

Jennifer grounded the three topics in the truth of our interconnected oneness. This mutuality extends into all forms of life throughout the universe. The reality, though, is that a community can never be perfect. We are not saints. We can love each other, disagree, and make each other uncomfortable. Compassion, however, is a relationship of mutual benefit with no dividing line between giver and receiver. We are called to take action and responsibility for one another. Unity is not uniformity. Unity is found in and through the Divine within us and can hold paradoxes for us.

Edwina challenged us to think about the application of these concepts of community, compassion, and unity in our Quaker community using the lens of the war in Ukraine. She noted diverse instinctive reactions to welcoming war refugees into our communities accepting native Ukrainians while creating barriers for African, Caribbean and Middle East nationalities. Who are we welcoming into and excluding from our local Quaker community? Are we willing to really question why attenders leave Quakers?

After these two presentations, breakout groups were formed in English, French, and Dutch recognising the rich language and cultural diversity in our Yearly Meeting.

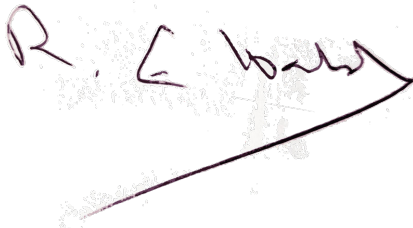
There was also time for individual presentations and discussions on subjects such as community building at Pendle Hill, which currently holds a daily blended meeting for worship with 10 people or more in 'The Barn' and perhaps 100 online. We discussed in what form of meetings might our Quaker community go forward with face-to-face, blended, or online as we have used all three since the pandemic began. Presentations/discussions were also led on Diwan House in Brussels, a local charity for refugee asylum seekers to which our Meeting has long given practical and

financial support, and how we can critically look on security concerns in our world today in order to explore longer-term peaceful solutions. We are particularly mindful of present conflicts and tensions in Eastern Europe.

In the final all-participants session of the day, Jennifer and Edwina posed questions for us to answer in a variety of ways including a one-to-one inner/outer circle exercise, increasing person-to-person communication in a simple context, something we haven't been able to do since the pandemic started two and a half years ago. The main day ended with a guided social, musical and spiritual evening demonstrating the connection of the rhythm and sound of the musical genre known as "Gospel" or "The Blues" with the human spirit and heartbeat.

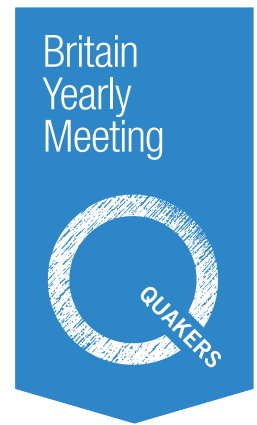
On Sunday morning before closing Meeting for Worship, we were challenged by Jennifer and Edwina and given individual time to reflect, through writing or drawing imagery, on the Unity that we each aspire to reach, reflect and generate in our Yearly Meeting. With this encouragement, we hope to walk forward together into the post-covid world discovering new ways to communicate and build community with compassion for all.

- In Friendship • Met hartelijke groeten • Bien amicalement
- Mit freundlichen Grüßen • Mat Frëndleche Gréiss • En amistad
- In amicitia

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "R. E. Harland". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a long, thin, slightly curved line that extends from the end of the signature towards the right.

Ruth Harland, Clerk

Submitted by epistle drafting committee of Sasha Hologne, Janice Thomson, and Daniel Clarke Flynn



Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain

Epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting

held in person and online from 28 April to 1 May 2023

We send loving greetings to Friends everywhere.

Cyfleuwn gyfarchion cariadus i Gyfeillion ym mhob man.

Quakers of all ages gathered for Yearly Meeting at Friends House in London, Hemel Hempstead and online. Preparatory sessions took place online in the week before, and Junior Yearly Meeting met earlier in April. An All-together meeting for worship was held with many local meetings and individual Friends joining virtually across Britain and beyond.

We meet at a time when existential issues face us both within our aging and numerically diminishing Society and in the wider world. These require urgent responses. Quakers can show leadership and offer counsel that will help our nations in matters of the degradation of public truth, the climate and ecological crisis, and divisive public commentaries around people's identities and associated rights.

How best can we achieve this? We are a people of faith, always in transition on an exciting path of collective and personal exploration. We seek and follow the eternal Truth of the Spirit, which has many names, remaining open to new leadings and also to the possibility that we are mistaken. Our faith requires us to practise our testimony of truth and integrity in all that we say and do.

Kindness has a powerful impact and we hope to offer caring support to all, including those with whom we may disagree. Speaking from a faith perspective can carry weight. We try to let our lives speak and have a ministry of presence, but can we speak out more as Quakers?

We can be a listening presence, creating a "kinder ground", alongside speaking truth in public places and contexts. We are called to witness truth-telling, accountability,

community-building, and to give messages of hope. Speaking truth to power with love is a ministry, and is vital in a time when truth is often corrupted.

Our Quaker community has many voices, and we are upheld as one by the power of the Spirit. We all have a part to play, need to collaborate and trust those doing work on our behalf. Are we open to all voices, and how can we develop structures to engage all Friends through active listening? Ensuring true access for all in our community is a work of love. This may require us to move outside our own comfort and experience others' frustrations and discomforts.

Yearly Meeting is the all-encompassing body of which we are all a part and where we are most diverse. It takes on the big questions – Who are we as Quakers? Why are we here? What are we led to do? At times we have been mystified, even baffled. However, we discern a need to simplify our structures to make them more transparent, to release energy for practical ministry. We seek intentional change, led by the Spirit, to help our community to thrive as we move into the uncertain futures that dance before us.

Building on our tradition of radical spirituality, we need to be courageous, imaginative, careful, and joyful. We seek corporate structures that are agile, simpler, more inclusive and support equality. Big questions are being asked about how we take the Society forward, with ways of working that meet our practical needs and have spirit-led discernment flowing throughout.

This work will continue into 2024, and ways to involve Friends across Britain Yearly Meeting will be developed, arising from our discernment thus far. As a Society, we must go in whichever direction we are led, so that the Truth may prosper.

Signed in and on behalf of Yearly Meeting,

Adwoa Burnley

Clerk

To Friends Everywhere:

Loving greetings from the 189th annual gathering of Quakers in Canada, our 67th as a united Yearly Meeting. Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (CYM) met from the 7th to the 13th of August, 2022, as an entirely online meeting.

Canadian Yearly Meeting is now experiencing our third year of holding the annual gathering as an online event; we aspire to move to a hybrid (online and in-person) format in 2023. For some F/friends, being restricted to online connection represents a significant challenge – for others, the online approach offers the chance for greater accessibility for distant F/friends; a chance to respond to environmental concerns; a way of meeting the very real budgetary challenges of our organization. It is an uneasy place to land in and we continue to explore new ways of meeting together, aware of the gains and losses. May we be open to exploring new ways to build Quaker communities.

This was the second year of using ‘Sched’ as the CYM Planner. It was introduced just before CYM-In-Session 2021, and it seems that people using this scheduling tool feel much more comfortable with its features this year. We honour the Programme Committee who worked so hard on the wide range of offerings available to Canadian Quakers in 2022 and adopted this tool for the online meeting. There were a total of 105 sessions for this year’s programme and 183 people in attendance. Although we were prepared to offer an online program for children, not enough children registered. Online programming for children is very challenging and we look forward to having our children meet one another in person.

JoLee Sasakamoose gave the annual Sunderland P. Gardner lecture: “Guided by Ancestors: Integrating Ojibwe Teachings with Quaker Testimony for Social Action”. Through personal stories both joyful and painful, we were presented with two different kinds of knowing (Quaker and Indigenous) that seemed to interweave and complement one another. As CYM continues to work toward better relationships with the Indigenous Peoples whose home we now share, experiences like this one deepen our understanding and increase our ability to communicate.

Meetings across Canada are engaging with profound layers of change and transformation, both within our Society of Friends and in the larger society. We name in particular a significant challenge: How can an older generation of F/friends make the much-needed internal changes to our Society that will enable us to embrace the emergent needs of younger generations of F/friends, as well as families with small children? A presentation by one wise and learned Friend explored the founding meanings behind some time-honoured Quaker practices and processes are being eroded or ignored. We were asked whether this is necessary and useful, or distressing and damaging, as we attempt to offer our faith and practice to new participants.

“Ask a Young Friend”, a panel discussion by four Young F/friends, provided us with much food for thought around key questions, such as how Meetings can be welcoming spaces to be queer, or why our Meetings are failing to make Meeting inviting for families with young children, as they struggle with child care, fatigue, and the desire for appropriate curriculum, when attendance may be irregular, or the family may be the only one .in a Quaker community.

Friends hope that we can welcome new F/friends into our Society, while we reflect on our traditional testimonies and practices which have served us well for centuries (and may or may not need changing). At one morning worship there blossomed the theme of friendship (both with and without a capital F) offered to each other, as well as to those outside our own community. At our annual large worship-sharing event entitled “Experience of the Spirit in My Life,” several Friends explored how painful times could offer unexpected blessings of the Spirit that could be shared with others.

The past three years have brought deep change to our Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. Our sessions devoted to business were meaningful and marked by important decisions, including a minute on loving marriage. The session “Understanding Meeting for Worship for Business” helped F/friends contemplate the necessary discipline and practices needed to sustain our life together. We were called to reconnect with the theological foundations of our Quaker ancestors, even if we have to update these for today’s world. Understanding our Quaker roots demands a deeply-searching process within, which then must be shared with other Quakers and beyond in terms of integrity and truth.

Canadian F/friends continue to be sustained and uplifted through Bible Study, presented this year by Colin Saxton of Friends United Meeting. He shared examples of mercy found in the bible, as a reminder of its potential place in repairing and mending God’s good world and our own lives. The focus on mercy may lead those hearing this message to move forward in faith in new ways. For those seeking an oasis of prayer and deep centered experience, the Meetings for Worship and Meetings for Healing offered periods of presence and connected fellowship. There were 7 daily worship sharing groups which enabled us to know one another better. There were 13 Special Interest Groups, an indication of the passion and commitment of F/friends as we discern how to act in the world.

We held a meeting to remember Friends across our Yearly Meeting who are no longer with us and note that this year there have been many more deaths than births.

Family Night, held at the end of a long week of being in front of a computer, was attended by a small group of Friends who enjoyed music and poetry performances by some Friends and hearing the ‘gleanings’ gathered by Friends during our week together.

Faithfulness is not always about getting things perfect or right, but rather represents the commitment to walk together in the Light, so that we can gain strength to do what is needed in our world. As we gather together however we can, may you be blessed wherever you are.

Epistle of 25th Central European Gathering of Friends from 2-5 June 2022 at Zbraslav, Prague, Czech Republic

Dear Friends,

We greet Friends everywhere from the ancient town of Zbraslav and its beautiful surroundings on the outskirts of the Czech capital. We are grateful for once more being able to meet and embrace each other in these troubled times of pandemic and now even war in our part of Europe. Since the last CEG we have remained in regular contact via internet and with the outbreak of war in Ukraine we have felt the need to be in close and more frequent contact with our friends.

We were 20 in presence and 9 who joined us on-line in our second hybrid meeting. We shared information from our different groups and countries, and it became clear that the war in Ukraine was very much present in our minds and our activities as Friends in Central Europe. Our friend Michal Kołakowski Mickiewicz spoke passionately about his concern that all must be done to stop this horrible disaster and urged support to our Russian Friends, whose testimonies are currently being put to an extremely hard test.

Several of us are hosting Ukrainian refugees in our households as well as in the premises of the Prague Quaker Centre. In particular, Warsaw Friends' cooperation with a clinic offering post-trauma therapy appears to make our small group of Quakers more known in this region. Assistance to refugees through a number of projects throughout the area has been made possible thanks to generous contributions from Quakers around the world, money which is now channelled through our CEG account, and thanks also to the publicity through the EMES website. As well as helping refugees in our region, this activity has helped raised the profile of CEG in the Quaker world.

The theme chosen for our gathering this year was: **CEG – Where we came from, where we are now, where we are going.** We were therefore delighted to hear that our Friend Kasia Kaczmarkiewicz is starting our CEG documentation project in preparation for her plan to write a book about Quakers in Central Europe. We are grateful to EMES for the grant we have already received, which will serve as essential initial funding for this project.

As to where we are now, we are in the process of formulating a statement of our identity as Friends in Central Europe, and hope to complete it at the future gathering. Where are we going? The discussion of this question gave rise to both positive and negative responses. Some Friends stressed that although we are a relatively new and developing Quaker group, we already have some tradition and that some even very established groups face the same issues that face us.

We rejoiced in the presence of young people at our gathering both from our own community as well as Ukrainian refugees who are guests of Liz Coling our Co-Clerk. They joined with our children on the trampoline and with us in our singing. In her presentation, Irena Marušincová told us how she had asked for her children's thoughts about our gathering, and their positive but also critical comments will inspire

our provision for young people in Gdańsk, the beautiful city we have chosen for our next gathering. Irena reminded us that children are the future of our movement.

Ondřej Fafejta made a presentation about the American author M. Scott Peck whose Quaker schooling undoubtedly inspired his thinking about community, which resonated in further discussion about our process. We also thank Bradius Maurus for his presentation on Spinozan spirituality.

We would like to thank the Marušinec family for the musical accompaniment during our daily singing. Thanks to the sound of their instruments our musical worship could be appreciated by other guests of our hotel.

We were delighted to welcome EMES Executive Secretary Michael Eccles in person to our gathering and we thank him for his active participation.

At this gathering Jalka and Cathy Butler completed their terms of service as Elders. We join the Clerks in sincerely thanking them for all their help in holding our gathering in the Light every time we have needed it.

With Quakers everywhere we hold in the Light the people of Ukraine and Russia and deplore the ongoing destruction and loss of life caused by the senseless war being waged against Ukraine. We pray for a just and lasting peace in that country and throughout our region. We thank all Friends who continue to donate money to the CEG Funding for Ukraine Group (FUG), which can be accessed from the [EMES website](#)

We are looking forward to meeting again in Gdańsk in 2023.

In Peace,
Ewa Gawrońska, Gerald Turner and Paweł Milka

Gibara 19 de febrero del 2022

A todos nuestros Amigos Cuáqueros:

Acogidos en el amor al que nos tienen acostumbrados en la comunidad de Gibara, su mar y su aire que purifica nuestros cuerpos, que han sufrido durante dos largos años que nos mantuvieron distantes por la pandemia mundial, y convocados por el lema “Unidos sirviendo al Señor” y el texto: “Todos los que habían creído estaban juntos, y tenían en común todas las cosas; y vendían sus propiedades y sus bienes, y lo repartían a todos según la necesidad de cada uno,” celebramos nuestra 94 Asamblea General de la Junta Anual reconociendo que ha habido un esfuerzo en tiempos tan difíciles en el sentido financiero, incluso para hacer esta reunión; más la fuerza del Espíritu Santo nos impulsó a estar juntos otra vez ¡Que alegría nos reunimos otra vez en la casa del Señor!

El encuentro produjo que se mezclaran sentimientos de gozo al recibir a los que llegaron y añoranza por tantos rostros que no están, sentimos la ausencia de nuestro Pastor Ramón González – Longoria Escalona con sus oportunos consejos y sus aportes espirituales de gran peso en las decisiones de la iglesia. Recibimos la donación de la Familia González – Longoria Concepción de su biblioteca personal que contribuirá a la formación de nuevas generaciones; patrimonio que recibimos con amor.

Las visitas de las hermanas Christel Marie Jorgenson, Mary Randolph Hopkins y Mary Rebecca Leuchak-Monroe de Nueva Inglaterra ha sido bálsamo para nuestras heridas en este tiempo de duelo por la pérdida de tantos hermanos valiosos.

Todos los mensajes y estudios bíblicos giraron alrededor del texto que nos convocó en esta ocasión en Hechos 2: 44 – 45.

Ha sido motivo de alegría recibir un certificado de agradecimiento del Puente por los 30 años de hermandad espiritual, así también un proyecto bajo el nombre del Pastor Ramón Andrés González – Longoria Escalona que recibirá fondos para ayudar al sustento de nuestros pastores y misioneros promovido por la familia, en especial por Marcos González Concepción. También fue motivo de gozo el reconocimiento de los dones ministeriales de nuestra hermana Ailsa Pavón López

En la luz

Junta Anual de los “Amigos Cuáqueros” en Cuba.

Gibara, Cuba; February 19, 2022

To all our Quaker Friends:

As always, we were welcomed by the love of the Gibara community, the sea and the air purifying our bodies, after suffering for two long years, separated by a global pandemic. We have been called together by the theme “*United in the service of the Lord*” and by the text “*Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.*” We are gathered for the 94th General Assembly of our Yearly Meeting. We recognize that even to bring this meeting together has been a great effort in such difficult economic times; but the strength of the Holy Spirit moved us to be together again. What a joy to meet again in the house of the Lord!

The gathering brought mixed feelings of joy in receiving those who came, and longing for so many faces which are not with us. We feel the absence of our Pastor Ramón González-Longoria Escalona, with his helpful advice and his weighty spiritual counsel in the decisions of the church. We have received from the González-Longoria Concepción family the gift of his personal library which will contribute to the formation of new generations; it is an inheritance which we accept with love.

The visit of Christel Marie Jorgenson, Mary Randolph Hopkins, and Mary Rebecca Leuchak, our sisters from New England, has been a balm for our wounds in this time of mourning for the loss of so many dearly loved brothers and sisters.

All the messages and Bible studies concentrated on the text which called us together at this time, Acts 2:44-45.

It has been a source of joy to receive a certificate of thanksgiving from Puente de Amigos for thirty years of spiritual fellowship, and also to approve a fund under the name of Pastor Ramón Andrés González-Longoria Escalona, to help sustain our pastors and missionaries, promoted by the family, and in particular by Marcos González Concepción. It was also a source of joy to recognize the gifts in ministry of our sister Ailsa Pavón Lopez.

In the Light,

Yearly Meeting of the Quaker Friends in Cuba.



France Yearly Meeting October 2022, Domaine de Lazaret, Sète and Congénies Quaker House

Epistle

To all our Friends throughout the world:

This year we spent a weekend together in a spirit of exchange and communion at the Domaine de Lazaret in Sète by the Mediterranean Sea. We gathered with the purpose of exploring how we can open ourselves up to the Inner Voice and ways in which we can be guided by the Spirit. This gathering was made special by the fact that it was followed by events held in Congénies to mark the bicentennial of the Congénies Quaker House.

In connection with our theme, we invited David Lorimer, author and lecturer, to speak about his vision regarding the Spirit and ways in which we can connect with It. His rich and complex presentation highlighted how powerful a force love is and that *we must know ourselves in order to know the Spirit*.

In addition, we were introduced to accessible practices for rendering ourselves available to Divine inspiration. There were physical exercises to enhance awareness of the body and its relationship to the Inner Light. We also experienced "flow state" by engaging in creative tasks. Finally, we practiced deep listening as a way to better feel our connection with each other.

To be known by others requires profound knowledge of ourselves.

The current geopolitical context in Europe led us to a discussion of peace on the continent. For this occasion, we invited representatives from EMES-FWCC, QCEA, Friends House Moscow, and QUNO to give presentations. Through these, we learned of various actions being taken by European Quakers, notably in response to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. We are inspired by the Spirit-led actions of these different organizations. And our thoughts are with them and our Friends in Eastern Europe, who have been agents of aid and peace during this time of conflict in Europe.

The question foremost on our minds was, *how can we continue following our peace testimony in times of war?*

Upon arriving at the Quaker House in Congénies, we were warmly welcomed by our Friends in residence as well as by others from the local community. What a joy to find ourselves together in this charming place replete with history for the occasion of its bicentennial! A lecture given by Patrick Cabanel to an audience of 120 Friends and local residents plunged us into the history of the

Protestants of the region. This along with presentations by Jean Paul Chabrol and Edouard Dommen made clear the spirit of resistance and resilience demonstrated by these 17th century Protestants. The first French Quakers in particular were led by the Spirit to confront violence with nonviolence.

The power of the Spirit can manifest itself anywhere, even in the face of adversity.

A panel discussion that brought together several Friends from France and one from Quebec made clear the necessity of creating more French-language content and of strengthening ties amongst Francophone Quaker communities around the world. We were also reminded that *the spiritual life of each individual is essential to the construction of a Quaker community.*

It is the individuality of each person that enriches the collectivity.



Friends World Committee
for Consultation

EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST SECTION

Europe & Middle East Section

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Registered Charity No: SC036528

Executive Secretary: Michael Eccles

Epistle from the FWCC Europe and Middle East Section Annual Meeting held Online

4-7 May 2023

Responding with hope to God's call to cherish creation – and one another

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Jeremiah 29:11 (NRSV)

To Friends everywhere, greetings:

Dear friends, annwyl cyfeillion, kjære venner, chers amis, liebe Freunde, lieve vrienden, queridos amigos, cari amici, kära vänner, kære venner, rakkaat ystävät, kallid sõbrad, drazí přátelé, dārgie draugi, dragi prijatelji, дорогі друзі, дорогие друзья, kedves barátaim, drodzy przyjaciele, Shanovni Droozi, a chairde, Salamaat Asdiqa

Loving greetings to Friends everywhere from the FWCC Europe and Middle East Section Annual Meeting 2023, meeting at Woodbrooke, UK and online.

Our annual meeting this year saw 60 Friends gather together from the Europe and the Middle East Section and further afield. Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic this was our 2nd blended annual meeting together in person with attendees at Woodbrooke and on Zoom. 50 of us met in person and 10 Friends participated through zoom. Alma was our youngest joy at a year and a half old.

We were able to create a rich experience. Cultivating joyful relationships enabled us to do our work. We became a gathered community.

Silence was deep when we commemorated Friends who died last year, we gave thanks for their lives and they will inspire us into the future.

Sandra Berry, Director of Woodbrooke, greeted us and she invited us to share memories of Woodbrooke. From Simon Best we heard about the wide variety of courses and other possibilities to pursue studies on-line and at places we invite Woodbrooke to in the upcoming years.

Personal testimonies and introductions of Finland, France, Netherlands Yearly Meetings also from Poland and FWCC Asia West Pacific Section enriched and inspired us to know more about activities of smaller groups, and cooperation within the YMs and beyond. The situation of the sold properties was explained, as well as figuring out the new normal after the pandemic, and searching for ways of outreach.

Meetings for worship were held, and gathered friends from across the section at Woodbrooke and online. Worship sharings brought us to discern more clearly, giving rise to thoughts and encouragement to bring back home.

In the reports from last year, we heard about activities that made us grateful for the work that had been done, and the efforts Friends put in. We were encouraged to work on sharing content in different languages and to find ways for outreach on social media. During the Meeting for Business we looked at the Accounts, the Budget, making the plans for and working on the discerned and most valued activities in the upcoming year.

Quaker United Nations Office New York and Geneva, Northern Friends Peace Board, Europe & Middle East Young Friends, Quaker Council for European Affairs, Quaker International Educational Trust and the FWCC World Office inspired us with their ongoing work, through means of quiet diplomacy and ways towards human and ecological security. We were reminded that we must keep asking what love requires of us.

Timothy Ashworth opened up the keynote quotations from Jeremiah and world Friends, in the lecture *Sustaining Hope: Faith for Long the Term*. Can the generosity in ourselves be set free to make our partners “glow”, as Bjork sings in her song from *Biofilia*? Our speakers on climate change and Quaker history brought us challenging themes to reflect upon. In our Home Groups we attempted to answer some of the questions we were given:

- Jeremiah`s message was a deeply controversial one in his time, counselling acceptance in the face of dominant power. In our own time of crisis, are we open to a call that prioritises the nurture of our families and communities?
- Are we in a position of creative responsiveness to the biblical story, such that we can share in authentic dialogue with Friends from around the world?
- Both the early Christians and the early Quakers felt they were on the cusp of a breakthrough for humankind. Both groups used words like “yearning” and “longing” for new life to come. In our time, how do we hold in our hearts the hope for that new life even as we are realistic about the risk and pain in our present crises?
- What is our gut reaction to the idea of linking our care for creation with the parts of creation that are closest to us – our most intimate partners in life? What bridges do we need to build towards each other? Can the generosity in ourselves be set free to make our partners “glow”?
- What is the source of an authentic hope that will sustain us ‘woven together in transformative faith and love’? We are a people of faith and follow the eternal Truth of the Spirit, which has many names around the world.
- Do we challenge growth for economic growth’s sake? Early Friends like James Naylor showed great courage in their conviction. Many Friends are doing so now in their stands on the environment.
- How do we convey our epistle to those who name the spirit differently to the Bible?

A personal testimony reminded us that the words we choose to use will limit the way we think and live. All creation, including us humans, goes into the ark before the rainbow. Sustainability is the

watchword. Our dependency on the earth that sustains us, is central to the continuation of our existence.

As part of the new Sustainability Policy 2022, *Among Friends* and other publications have been moved from print to instead be available online. We were considering the climate impact of our events and travel. We need to find a way to reduce the damage of the climate crises – find out what is needed and cooperate with Friends from other Sections. We made a good start and have a road ahead. We need to find the answer for our questions such as: What is the strength of our conviction?

We heard testimony on what it is like to live up to Quaker values in a war situation, help refugees, stand up for the rights of those suffering and the challenges of living up to Quaker values.

Video greetings from Friends in Ukraine and friends in Georgia deeply moved us. Some talked of sustaining hope for peace in the horrible war situation. Others shared their views and different experiences, explaining that you can fight without weapons, with the power of creativity and resistance. Central European Gathering and The Funding for Ukraine Group shared experience of ongoing aid work that's still needed, as well as keeping in touch without humiliating those in need.

We heard about the preparations for the FWCC World Plenary Meeting in 2024 in South-Africa. We are invited to discern the possibilities of creating hubs in our Section / Yearly Meetings / Area Meetings so that we create the environment for Friends from our area to join in the Plenary Meeting and connect to Friends from other Sections of FWCC.

The introduction of the current situation of the Ramallah Friends School in Palestine highlighted the importance of staying committed to Quaker values and the sustenance they can give when everyday activities and tasks have been disrupted or made hard to accomplish in a situation of frequent military onslaught, checkpoints and unequal civil rights. Supporting Friends from this area of our Section and their work is very much needed and appreciated. Sami Cortas from the Quaker meeting in Brummana in Lebanon reminded us of the quiet Quaker way, our peace testimony, seeing that of God in everyone and how they had inspired former pupils of the school with different backgrounds and beliefs. On Sunday morning we joined in Meeting for Worship with Quakers in Kyiv and their supporters around the globe. Our prayers are with all those involved.

Our meeting was worthwhile beyond words. Next year we hope to meet, thanks to online devices, relying only on Zoom. Please do think about joining us.

In Friendship, mewn cyfeillgarwch, i vennskap, i vänskap, i venskab, ystävydessä, bien amicalement, in Freundschaft, in Vriendschap, en amistad, in amicizia, v přátelství, u prijateljstvu, draudzībā, barāti üdvözlettel, sõpruses, w przyjaźni, Zi Droozhnim privitom, в дружбі, в дружбе, le cairdeas, fi alsadaqa.

Signed on behalf of FWCC Europe & Middle East Section
Ethel Livermore
Clerk

Epistle of German Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends 2022

At last, after 3 years of meeting online or in blended meetings, we could meet again in presence: 135 Friends including 22 children and young people, delegates from France, Great Britain, Ireland and Switzerland and guests from Georgia, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus, the Czech Republic and the USA were gathered in the Haus Venusberg in Bonn from the 13th – 16th October 2022.

On arriving, we were surprised in the opening session to be offered an inspired and inspiring selection of five quotes from five epistles of other countries, which gave us the opportunity to reflect, share and get to know one another better. Nordic Yearly Meeting's question, „Am I aware of what I am called to do?“ connected us back from the world to the theme of our own yearly Meeting „What is the spirit moving us to do in the present day world“. In the following worship sharing and also in the Meeting for Worship the next day we could clearly sense the current themes in our society and the resulting rifts and polarisations of opinions. From the way we approach the climate catastrophe, to the pandemic and measures to deal with its consequences, from the impact of the war in the Ukraine, and the decisions our political leaders are making, to issues around gender which continue to surface, the question „what does the Peace testimony mean for Quakers today?“ burns within us.

We were reminded by Denise Vosseler from Switzerland Yearly Meeting in her Richard-Cary-Vorlesung that the inner light is a yearning and thus a mover for our spiritual journey, and that only with spiritual nourishment can we find our way through difficult times. She pointed us towards our common source. We shared in groups the many different ways her words had touched us.

In our Business Meetings we were finally able to decide to begin work on renovating our Quaker House in Bad Pyrmont, which will bring a breath of fresh air and let light in to the dark rooms in the basement. This is the beginning of a new path to help us make the house our own and to fill it with life. The character of this historical Meeting House will be preserved. We are planning to begin fundraising for the project. While joyful that we could secure the future of our house, we also share an outrage at the the growing threats to all life on this planet, which are more and more noticeable. The German Yearly Meeting is therefore happy to hear about and support the work of a new Quaker initiative for peace, ecology and justice – Earthcare Witness. Friends are encouraged to get involved. We are also planning to create a network and a forum for peacework. The idea is to thereby support the important work many Friends are already engaged in, and to enable better coordination. A particular concern of ours is the call to the governments of the Russia Federation, the Republic of Belarus and the Ukraine to respect the human right to conscientious objection.

Amidst the existential challenges we face, the spirit moves us to listen to our heart, when it urgently calls us to act in love and truth.

Bonn, 16th October 2022

Jochen Dudeck & Anne Pommier

Intermountain Yearly Meeting

228 0 S Columbine St

Denver, CO 8 0210

www.imym.org

To Friends Everywhere:

We send greetings from Intermountain Yearly Meeting (IMYM) at Fort Lewis College in southwestern Colorado. We have returned to the southern edge of the San Juan Mountains after many annual gatherings in the high desert of northern New Mexico. We were grateful to find the sky relatively free of haze from the fires that have been burning throughout the southwest. A cool breeze greeted Friends as they gathered outdoors on the first day of early morning worship. We welcomed the sun, as we welcomed one another, celebrating the warmth that we feel in the company of Friends. Although we were attentive to lingering public health concerns and took precautions, we were thankful for friendly smiles and hugs. It was good to come home to this kind of fellowship, which helps us heal from the challenges we have all faced during the pandemic.

Our theme this year, offered to us by our children, was “Celebrating the Divine in All of Us.” With all of us in mind, our clerks and representatives were intent on making this year’s gathering as inclusive as possible. The accessibility of campus facilities enhanced our experience. For those who were unable to attend in person, access to programming was provided on a virtual platform. The technology team worked hard to create a hybrid welcome that included many friends zooming in on a big screen at the front of an auditorium. Well-placed monitors enabled Friends on Zoom to see the “live” audience and vice versa. Closed captioning further enhanced accessibility and provided some unintended levity with a few muddled translations including the transcription of “IMYM” as “I Am Yam.”

Fort Lewis College also strives for inclusivity. It was designated as one of six Native American-serving, non-tribal colleges by the U.S. Department of Education, which is especially appropriate given the deep indigenous roots in this region. This land is the ancestral land and territory of the Nuuchiu (Ute) people

who were forcibly removed from most of their homeland by the United States Government. This land is also connected to the communal and ceremonial spaces of the Jicarilla Abache (Apache), Pueblos of New Mexico, Hopi Sinom (Hopi), and Diné (Navajo) Nations. It is important to acknowledge this setting because the dominant cultural narratives in this region have long been told without full recognition of its original residents who continue to inhabit and connect with this land.

Ernest House Jr., our plenary speaker this year, offered us a deeper sense, from the perspective of the Ute Mountain Utes, of what that connection has meant and still means. Given those who came before him--including his great grandfather Chief Jack House, the last hereditary chief of the Ute Mountain Ute tribe, and his father, longtime tribal leader Ernest House, Sr., our speaker exemplified a family tradition of leadership.

He offered Friends an introduction to the history of the Utes in this region, reminding us of many broken promises and treaties separating his people from their ancestral homelands. But he also pointed to the resilience of the Utes who have managed to maintain traditional ways of being on the land, such as hunting, fishing, and gathering plants for food and medicine. He shared stories of the annual Bear Dance which continues to be an important ceremony of relationship and renewal. He also spoke of efforts to sustain Ute Culture and language through education, including a new charter school in Towaoc, Colorado which Friends expressed interest in supporting.

Ernest reminded us that land acknowledgement statements referring to the long time presence of indigenous people are only meaningful if they represent a commitment to reconciliation and healing. Part of that process for Friends, as we were reminded in a session led by Paula Palmer the following day, means coming to terms with the history of Indian boarding schools. Quakers established and ran some of these schools, which forced tribal students to abandon their cultural inheritance and identity in a misguided attempt to assimilate them. Ironically, given its advocacy for indigenous students today, Fort Lewis has institutional roots in one such boarding school, which was located in a former army fort in nearby Hesperus, Colorado from 1892 until 1956. Friends were deeply moved by stories related to Fort Lewis and other Indian boarding schools. These are hard stories to hear, but as Friends of the Truth, we must hear them. Friends were led to pray in this session for support and guidance as we enter into the early stages of this truth and reconciliation journey.

As Ernest House, Jr. said, this will be a long and challenging conversation, but we are intent on seeing it through. To that end, we passed a minute reconfirming our support for “The Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policy Act,” soon to be reintroduced in the U.S. Senate. We also passed a minute reaffirming our commitment to nuclear disarmament. We realize that stating our intentions is only part of fully engaging issues like nuclear disarmament. Whether it involves our advocacy for disarmament, dealing with climate change, or standing up for the humanity of migrants along our borders, our best efforts will be faith-based, as Anika Forrest from Friends Committee on National Legislation reminded us. As we continue to grapple with these and other issues, we sustain ourselves with good cheer, fellowship, steady worship, and a strong sense of community, all of which we have found here at yearly meeting.

But it takes a lot of work to sustain a yearly meeting, and we have faced challenges, as all yearly gatherings have, related to the pandemic, not to mention an aging population. Often, it has been difficult to fill positions of responsibility. This year, we arrived at our gathering unable to find unity on a nomination for presiding clerk. And so we open ourselves to the Spirit and invite the kind of support and guidance that will help us recognize and celebrate that of God in one another, while also acknowledging our differences and divisions. It helps us to sit together in the silence and stillness of worship and it helps us to listen deeply to one another in worship sharing. It helps us to sing together. We are grateful for the joyful voices of younger friends who remind us that it is good to be open and vulnerable and ready to play. They remind us that the Spirit is in our midst.

In Faith, Hope, and Friendship,

Gale Toko-Ross and Valerie Ireland
Presiding Co-Clerks
Intermountain Yearly Meeting

14th August 2022

To Friends Everywhere,



We send loving greetings from Ireland Yearly Meeting, held in sunshine from 11th – 14th August 2022, at the green and leafy campus of Stranmillis University College, Belfast. The theme of this year's Yearly Meeting was 'Hope, Renewal, Healing', supported by the Bible verse '*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.*' (Romans 12:2)

This was our first Yearly Meeting to take place in Belfast, and also our first 'hybrid' meeting. With the help of a skilled volunteer technical team we were able to welcome visitors and speakers both in person and from around the world. It was a joy to gather again after the cancellation of Yearly Meeting in 2020, and the online only event in 2021. The hybrid nature of the event was really enriching, and enabled us to welcome more visitors from distant locations than usual. Barbara Luetke joined us from Missouri on Thursday evening in the Ministry and Oversight session to talk about her novel 'The Kendal Sparrow', based on the life of Elizabeth Fletcher, a young 17th century Quaker. On Friday we welcomed Esther Mombo from Kenya, who told us about the inspirational peacemaking work of the United Friends Women's prayer groups. Friends joining via Zoom from places including Mexico City, New England and Dublin were able to ask questions and take a full part in the proceedings.

Two Friends who continued this global theme were Tim Gee, new Director of FWCC, and Jacqueline Stillwell, Director of the Right Sharing of World Resources. They both challenged us with questions. How can we reach out to Friends across the world and connect in our spiritual lives? How do we decide what is enough for our needs? Can we share more generously with those for whom relatively small amounts of money can have a huge impact? We are called to make a more radical expression of our faith and surrender ourselves to the ordering of the Spirit.

The Public Lecture this year was given by Lynn Finnegan, a Young Irish Friend, on the subject *Embodying the Quaker Testimonies in Service of a Living Planet*. Lynn challenged us with a series of 'beautiful questions' about what it means to be members of a spiritual community when the living planet is under threat. If we can surrender ourselves to the way of Love, we are nearer to bringing the whole of our sustainability journey under the ordering of the Spirit.

Nozizwe Madlala–Routledge, Director of QUNO in Geneva, spoke about her journey as a lifetime campaigner for peace and justice. This included time spent in prison in South Africa during the apartheid era. We heard about the current QUNO programmes in Peace and Disarmament, the Human Impacts of Climate Change and Human Rights and Refugees, along with the newer concerns of Sustainable and Just Economic Systems and Retrospective Justice.

Space was deliberately left in the programme to consider what love and our Peace Testimony requires of us in these turbulent times. The death and destruction in Ukraine following the invasion by Russia has made us long for hope, renewal and healing more than ever. We were asked what does the Peace Testimony mean to modern Quakers? The peace testimony today, is seen in what we do, severally and together, with our lives. 'We pray for the involvement of the Spirit with us, that we may work for a more just world.' (London Yearly Meeting 1993).

Signed on behalf of Ireland Yearly Meeting

Denise C. Gabuzda, Clerk

Handwritten signature of Denise C. Gabuzda in blue ink.

William D. A. Haire

Handwritten signature of William D. A. Haire in black ink.

Pleasaunce Perry, Asst. Clerk

Handwritten signature of Pleasaunce Perry in black ink.

Pauline Goggin

Handwritten signature of Pauline Goggin in black ink.

Epistle 2022 from Friends in Italy at Borgo Basino, Italy – in English

Dear Friends,

Friends and friends of Friends in Italy gathered at Borgo Basino in Cursecoli, Emilia-Romagna, Italy 9-11 September, 2022.

This Annual Gathering of Friends in Italy brought 15 Quakers, seekers and friends of Quakers and 5 children to the farm where we have met the last several years to share fellowship, find inspiration and discern business of Quakers across the peninsula.

As usual, we welcomed old Friends who have regularly worshipped with us for many years as well as inviting new friends joining us for the first time. We conducted our activities in a mix of Italian and English. Children painted collaboratively, took a walk to the forest hut, made stick bread over the fire, and played together barefoot throughout the weekend.

We were joined by Ethel Livermore, Clerk of FWCC EMES, which coordinates and supports Friends in Europe in the Middle East. Our first gathered session on Saturday morning centered on Ethel's presentation of the work of EMES and particularly the structures and business processes of various groups and gatherings in the Section.

Ethel's session was followed by our business meeting, in which we discerned a new time of gathering the first weekend of November each year at Borgo Basino as a dedicated meeting period for our annual gathering.

We also considered our representatives to EMES and how to receive funds granted by that body through their Spiritual Growth fund. We included a consideration of the character of hybrid meetings and the pattern of our meetings, recognizing the possibilities and challenges presented by this format.

After lunch and free time where new members of our group toured the farm, Marisa Johnson, former EMES General Secretary and current member of the International Membership committee, shared about the historical evolution of the peace testimony and her current relationship to it through a videoconference link.

Her words provoked a lively discussion about peace, peacemaking, and how we live our values. We, as Friends in Italy, are grateful that the Italian Constitution repudiates war as a means of resolving international conflicts. We affirm our belief that both this law and our testimony of peace call us to support peaceful resolution of all wars and work toward a Just Peace, particularly a truce in Ukraine and the Middle East.

After dinner, we enjoyed a fire together and an epilogue session to close the evening.

On Sunday morning, we helped label honey produced on the farm and gathered for a final worship and reading of letters of greeting. We send warm greetings to Friends who were not able to join us, hold those who have asked for our thoughts in the Light, and look forward to coming together again next year, 3-5 November, 2023, at Borgo Basino.

In peace and Friendship,

Quakers in Italy

11 September, 2022, Borgo Basino, Cusercoli

Dear Friends Worldwide,

Japan Yearly Meeting held its annual gathering under the autumn sky on November 19th to 20th, 2022, hosted by Tokyo Monthly Meeting. As our theme, we took First Corinthians 3:7: “So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.” Japan has entered its eighth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, and while we must remain vigilant, 51 of our 84 members were able to participate: 14 in person, 16 online, and 21 by proxy. Thanks to the Internet, we were able to transcend physical distance and communicate with members of Monthly Meetings at a distance, as we did last year.

In our Meeting for Business, we heard reports of the past year’s activities and the audit of our finances for 2021. For 2022, we determined to continue allocating our normal level of funding to the work of FWCC, even if travel to attend international meetings is limited. We decided to include Friends Center in the agenda of the Planning Committee. And after a period of placing the Peace and Social Justice Committee under the care of the Education Committee, we decided to ask that group to revert to its original status as an independent committee. We concluded by approving our plan for activities and budget in 2023.

In the first of two discussion sessions, we invited Norio Akashi to present an introduction to our newly published Quaker Handbook: An Ocean of Light that Covers the Darkness, explaining the impetus for writing it. We then heard the passionate responses of three members to the knowledge gained about the history of Quakerism, faith and practice, and the current status of our Society in Japan. Many members expressed their plans to use the Handbook actively.

After fellowship over dinner, we invited representatives of each Monthly Meeting to present their views on how we maintain connections under pandemic conditions in our second discussion session. Mixed feelings were expressed about both the advantages of using Zoom, including an increase in attendance, and concern that we may become too accustomed to virtual gatherings, tinged with poignant yearning for personal contact.

In the biennial Inazo Nitobe Memorial Lecture held after the Meeting for Business and Worship, we enjoyed a prerecorded lecture by British Friend Chris Lawson (former Secretary of FWCC) entitled “Challenged by Jesus.” He kindly prepared the recording in advance so that we could translate it into Japanese and prepare subtitles, and then joined us online for a live question and answer session.

Ever mindful of the suffering of people in war zones around the world, we continue to ponder what we can do to realize God’s peace on earth.

Machiko Takeda, Clerk
Japan Yearly Meeting
November 20, 2022

**Lake Erie Yearly Meeting
Annual Sessions Epistle
July 27-31, 2022 Held Virtually**

To Friends Everywhere:

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting gathered virtually for our annual sessions July 27 through July 31 considering our theme “Many Roots One Tree.” More than 130 Friends met for Bible study, expectant worship and worship sharing, business sessions, workshops, panels on various Quaker organizations, a plenary on our theme led by Christian Acemah, Head of Olney Friends School in Ohio, lunchtime chat groups, and a family-friendly evening of entertainment.

We launched right into our theme on Wednesday evening. The clerk of our Program Committee, Susan Hartman, inspired us to consider the multilayered dimensions of the metaphor, “Many Roots, One Tree,” citing the pervasive, timeless symbolism of the tree across many cultures and through countless generations.

Our opening session featured an interactive roll call where our monthly meetings shared their “story trees:” short histories of how their meetings took root in local communities throughout Ohio, Michigan and Pennsylvania. We learned about Friends who helped each meeting grow and how their roots of social justice and spiritual development have supported the new growth that hybrid worship and today’s equity movements demand.

As our gathering moved through times of worship and learning, panel discussions and meetings for worship with attention to business, we found the images of a tree and roots to be both expansive and foundational, expertly woven through all we did together.

Roots, of course, are often thought of as our past—our individual childhood experiences, the places we come from, the culture we are a part of, our deep grounding values, the anchor that holds us in place. Yet roots of a tree are also alive and growing; they are the sources through which nourishment of water and minerals are absorbed from the soil, stored, and distributed to the rest of the tree. We know that roots can even serve as a means of communication or information between trees.

Our metaphor throughout the gathering often focused on the roots, but we also were reminded that they are not the only sources of the tree's nutrition. The whole tree, including the roots themselves, are also nourished by the sugar that is produced in the leaves, through photosynthesis, using the sun's energy and carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. This sugar—the tree's food – is stored in all parts of the tree and feeds the roots so they can do their work. In this complex system, each part of the tree relies on the others to maintain its health and growth.

As we considered ourselves and our organization, the metaphor seemed to expand before us, and grew to include not only the roots, trunk, branches, and leaves but also the sun—the source

of light – that allows the tree to grow and produce food. Only with this light can the tree live and bear fruit.

The theme of new growth and our deep, intertwined roots, unfolded in various ways during the week. In the keynote talk on Friday evening, Christian Acemah asked us to think together about “What Lies within this Tree with Many Roots?” He encouraged us to explore with him the questions: “What makes a nourishing, vibrant inside? What do we need to cultivate Spirit-led approaches to address apparent, latent, and emergent threats to the tree's internal health?” Our two worship sharing times on Friday and Saturday considered the queries: “How do I experience the roots of my spiritual growth? How do we nurture our collective spiritual growth?” Our Bible study, led by April Vanlonden, considered first the Bible as a whole, our complex relationship to it as Quakers, our roots in it, both beautiful and “messy” and why, in American culture today, we are wise to know something about the Bible and not to simply “ditch it.” We also explored the Exodus story, which is deeply rooted in many cultures and understood from radically different perspectives, several of which we looked at together.

The ten workshops on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday offered opportunities to stretch and expand our exploration of the theme, from the physical roots of gardening to exploring Quaker family trees; re-creating our “grounding roots” of public safety, conflict resolution, and peacemaking; exploring the roots of our personal, spiritual journeys; considering the health and integrity of the whole “tree”-- individual or organizational.

In a slightly new format this year, many of us attended three different panel sessions. Each panel introduced several Quaker organizations, with a representative of each organization briefly presenting a summary of the “roots and fruits” of the organization, with time for more in-depth information in separate break-out rooms.

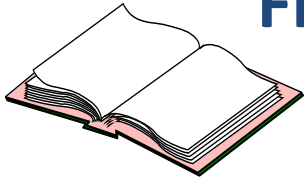
We’ve explored creative ways to bring together our younger and older Friends during the pandemic. In addition to our annual evening of intergenerational entertainment, we again provided space within Minecraft for our middle and high school-aged Friends and young adult Friends to meet, build and explore together.

Some of the most significant decisions we discerned during our time together are seeds for our future. Our ad hoc Site & Arrangements Committee has worked faithfully this year to identify a new location for our annual sessions and we’re excited to share our plans to hold the 2023 annual meeting at Ashland University in Ohio from June 15-18. Just as planting a seed requires sun, rain and protection, we see this decision as an opportunity to discern how we can better support Friends in affordability, whether we might spread business sessions across multiple times throughout the year, starting with the 2023 annual meeting, and how we can create more intergenerational programming at our annual meetings. We approach planning our 2023 sessions with the excitement of a gardener sorting fresh packets of seeds, overlooking a tilled bed, ready to support this season’s sprouts.

Throughout our many deep explorations of the tree and root metaphor, we were inspired to consider the solid, nourishing roots under and around us as a Yearly Meeting. Epistles from other Yearly Meetings, interwoven through our time together, helped us both center our souls and remind us of Friends beyond us, of our roots and branches reaching across miles and time, belovedly entwined. Explorations of the images of gardening, of seeds and new growth provided firm foundation for our deep dives into life after the realities of Covid and offered hope throughout our considerations of the many present, urgent challenges before us as part of the global faith community.

We send on to other Yearly Meetings our assurances of Light and all that nourishes the roots and branches that connect us. We take with us the sense of having been deeply nourished by our time together and of carrying renewed visions of hope for vitality and growth in our future.

Susan Loucks, Presiding Clerk
Lake Erie Yearly Meeting

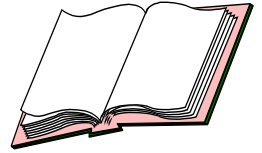


FRIENDS CHURCH (QUAKERS)

LUGARI YEARLY MEETING

PO BOX 483 TURBO: Email: friendschurchlugari@yahoo.co.uk

"You are my friends if you do whatever I command you: "John 15:14"



TO ALL FRIENDS IN THE WORLD

Dear friends,

RE: 30TH ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE AS FROM 17TH TO 21ST AUGUST 2022 APISTLE

Receive Calvary greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

We the Lugari Yearly Meeting of Friends Church (Quakers) gathered at Friends Centre - Lugari which is located in Marakusi sub-location, Lugari Location, Lugari Sub- County, Kakamega County in Kenya.

Friends Centre – Lugari is located 10 kilometers off Turbo / Webuye highway. Immediately after 200 meters from Turbo Town turn right and from Webuye before Turbo Town just after the bridge turn left

From Turbo Junction on a Murram road go for a distance of about 10 kilometers to Pan Paper Market. Just some meters a head turn left, you will find a sign post written Friends Center Lugari then just before Marula Primary School turn right then left.

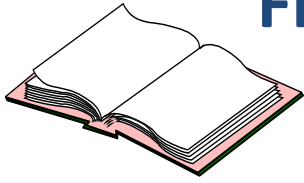
The area is cosmopolitan and it experiences long rains in the month of April to August and short rains from the month of September to December. It is an agricultural area that practices mixed farming.

The conference was officially opened by the presiding clerk of Lugari Yearly Meeting Rodgers Katami Wambia.

The theme text of the conference was derived from the Gospel of **John 14:27**. The theme was "**SEEK PEACE**". It was well explored by the Main Speaker Pastor Andrew Sirengo the General Superintendent of Elgon East Yearly Meeting presided over by Pst. Simon Bulimo of Lugari Yearly Meeting.

Other Topics covered were:

1. TEND MAKING AND GIVING
2. ELDERSHIP

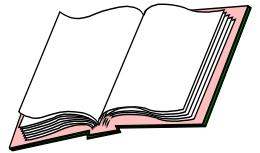


FRIENDS CHURCH (QUAKERS)

LUGARI YEARLY MEETING

PO BOX 483 TURBO: Email: friendschurchlugari@yahoo.co.uk

"You are my friends if you do whatever I command you: "John 15:14"



Friends braved heavy rains as they attended the crusades held at Pan Paper market and very cold night for overnight prayers.

This was a joyous moment for friends who had not met for three years as occasioned by the lock down due to Covid -19 outbreaks. They mingled freely and had very peaceful nomination of the new leadership where Brother Enos Mwangale was nominated together with other leaders as the Presiding Clerk of Lugari Yearly Meeting.

The attendance was quite impressive with a total number of over three hundred (300) delegates among them friends from Friends Church in Kenya (FCK), FUM, FWCCAS and other yearly meetings.

May God bless us all

Netherlands Yearly Meeting

EPISTLE FROM NETHERLANDS YEARLY MEETING

held on Zoom (June 10th) and in person (June 11th) in Amersfoort

Greetings to Friends everywhere

After two years of coronavirus pandemic, this Annual Gathering, too, was special. Important topics that are close to our hearts came together in the content of the event as well as how it took shape. 'Due to circumstances', we gathered online via Zoom on Friday evening and in person on Saturday. On Saturday we were the guests of the liberal christians (a collaboration of the Mennonite congregation, the Remonstrant congregation, and the Association of Liberal Protestants) who offered their hospitality in their church building in Amersfoort. The reason for this set up for our weekend was, that the location we had originally booked for the entire weekend, suddenly was needed to provide shelter for refugees from Ukraine.

The theme of our Annual Gathering was 'Inclusive security'. An important part of the agenda of our meeting for worship for business was our membership of the InterKerkelijk Vredesberaad, IKV (the Dutch InterChurch Peace Council), which we had suspended in 1999 and ended in 2002. During this Annual Gathering, we decided to become active members again. In our role within the IKV council itself as well as via this organization, we intend to develop both the theme 'rethinking security' and the correlation between peace and ecojustice. We are strongly aware of the responsibility as well as the *commitment* that we have taken upon us, also represented in the Kabarak Call for Peace and Ecojustice of Quakers worldwide in 2012.

On Friday evening, Kees Nieuwerth shared with us the historical background of the concept of "Inclusive security", starting with the establishment of the World Council of Churches in 1948 in Amsterdam. Jan Schaake of the workgroup 'Inclusive Security' explained to us in detail what 'rethinking security' means and how this strategy could be realised in the period from now until 2040. Quite clearly he explained which steps we can take to move toward that dot on the horizon. In our base groups, we spoke about: what does this mean for us personally, for us as Dutch Quakers, and in relation to the current affairs?

We concluded, in the words of a well-known song, which Jan reminded us of: "It has already started, don't you notice?" *We can continue with and build on what we already do.* In the small and in the big things, as they are one.

We head home in hopes and with the intention of contributing to the Light finding its way into our broken world.

Peter Spreij
(Clerk)



NEW ENGLAND
YEARLY MEETING
OF FRIENDS
QUAKERS

The Epistle of the 362nd Annual Sessions of the New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

To all Friends everywhere:

From the 6th through the 11th day of the Eighth Month, 2022, Friends gathered at Castleton University, as well as by videoconferencing, to hold our Annual Sessions. We acknowledged that we met on unceded land of the Abenaki people, now known as Castleton, Vermont, and we heard from the chiefs of the four recognized Vermont Abenaki tribes. We gathered together for the purpose of creating a sense of community, worshiping together, doing business, and envisioning our future. Our theme for this year was, “This is the Hour: How does the Spirit find you?”

This year’s meeting has been our first since 2019 where some of us have been able to join together in one location. This was also our inaugural “hybrid” Sessions, which has incorporated both attenders at Castleton and attenders who have joined via videoconferencing. We were blessed to have 350 individuals registered to attend in Castleton, and 167 registrations for online participants, for a total of 517 attenders. This number included 70 youth of high school age or younger, and 33 Friends representing Quaker organizations or visiting from other yearly meetings, including from outside the United States, notably Belize, Bolivia, Cuba, Ireland, Kenya, and Mexico.

We were deeply grateful for the tremendous expertise, patience, and grace of our technical support team. We were also thankful for the team that allowed us to practice “language justice” by offering simultaneous translation into and out of Spanish.

We continued our practice of financially supporting the gathering using a “pay-as-led” approach, inviting all to attend regardless of financial means. Youth of high school age and younger were invited without charge. Our youth programs are still in the process of restoration after the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Numbers have been down significantly from where they were before. However, the young participants in the 2022 Sessions showed great energy and enthusiasm for the adventure of being together. Youth programs are clearly still vital.

In coming together at this year’s Sessions, we have had to rebuild a sense of community that has been damaged by years of pandemic-related separation, and by the assaults of

our unjust economic and social system on our sense of safety and connection. We had to ask each other: “How are you doing, Friends? What has been on your heart?” The leaders of our intergenerational opening celebration guided us in releasing the “Big Feelings” that we brought with us, creating a communal collage of them, in order to sink into clearness to listen and discern. This work continued during our intergenerational and interactive Plenary, led by Emily Provance, who engaged and united us through story and song, questions and discussions, emphasizing connection, love and mercy.

As we moved into doing the work of our Annual Sessions, Regina Renee Nyégbeh of Ujima Friends Meeting ministered to us daily, challenging us to engage with Bible verses which asked us about how we listen to and answer God’s call. Are we truly listening? Do we act on what we hear and are shown? Are we quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry? Are we aware that we can move too fast but also that we can move too slowly?

Throughout this gathering, we wrestled with the questions raised by our theme, “This is the Hour,” reflecting our sense of urgency about the enormous challenges that we and all of the world’s people face at this time: dismantling Empire, and healing the immense damage that it has caused, leading to racial, economic, and social injustice and the destruction of the planet.

As we engaged in the business of the Yearly Meeting, we realized that seeking God’s guidance and practicing obedience to the divine will is hard work for us. Our sense of urgency often leads us to reenact the ways of Empire. Humble listening was our way through. We strove to listen through the personal pain and experience of beloved Friends as we wrestled with numerous issues related to how our Yearly Meeting answers the call to promote racial, social, and economic justice.

The Noticing Patterns of Oppression and Faithfulness Group asked the whole body of Friends to take up the ministry of naming the patterns of oppression and faithfulness among us here at Sessions. Our Presiding Clerk made time for these noticings to be aired.

We addressed issues of right relationship with the indigenous peoples of our region and beyond. These included the distribution of our letter of apology to Native peoples of our region, the northeastern United States, and responding to the call to join the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative. We were inspired by reports of Friends United Meeting ministries in Belize, Kenya, and Ramallah, Palestine, which are supported by NEYM and individual meetings and Friends. Friends have been both complicit in cultural imperialism and have taken part in building up lasting institutions and programs run by local people. We are humbled by the contrast. We were reminded that “America” means continents, not a country.

Our NEYM representatives to the Board of Friends United Meeting reported that the conversation with FUM over the discrimination against unmarried couples and those in same-gender relationships in their personnel policy is continuing. They report that trust is being built.

With regard to the NEYM *Faith and Practice* draft chapter on marriage, a listening session took place in which Friends openly discussed concerns about inclusion. One of the issues raised was a concern for the potential invisibility of people in committed polyamorous relationships. The Faith & Practice Committee responded with new language to this and other issues, and the chapter received its requested preliminary approval.

We felt a concern for the nurture of the spiritual life of Friends. In our continuing exploration of how to fulfill the work of Ministry and Counsel, we heard proposals for experimenting with support for ministry and eldering throughout the Yearly Meeting. We also want to support local meetings, and to evaluate the quarterly meeting structure.

New England Yearly Meeting celebrates its 30-year friendship with Cuba Yearly Meeting. Three Friends from NEYM were able to attend Cuba's Yearly Meeting sessions this spring and were warmly received. We were deeply moved by the sufferings currently experienced by Cuban Friends, and by Cubans as a whole.

As we deeply listened to these and other issues, we found God's grace swelling our hearts with love. We needed the insights, prayers, and gifts of everyone to seek and find unity on the ways forward.

Thank you, Friends, for your good listening to our condition. We are eager to hear from you about your own place in the great journey. Be blessed, always, with God's presence and love in all your work, and all your ways.

In Love,

Your Friends in New England Yearly Meeting
Bruce Neumann, Presiding Clerk

To Friends everywhere,

The open and friendly landscape around Nordiska folkhögskolan welcomed us after the pandemic and the war we are now experiencing in Europe. The people who created this place saw indeed “the Light in the crack,” that Leonard Cohen sings about in his thoughts-provoking poem “Anthem” which the young people gifted us, in the epilogue on the first night. The lines from the song that have resonated with us are: ‘Forget your perfect offering, there is a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in’.

Many expressed joy at being able to gather again in person but we were still grateful for digital connections enabling Friends from a distance to join with us for some of our sessions.

Quakers have the capacity to gather into silence and explore, creating a culture of trust and safety. A Friend who was delayed expressed their surprise at encountering such a Gathered (or Covered) Meeting so early in our weekend. That trust enveloped us in many ways during our time together: including the experience of being in the earth – not on the earth – together, in each meeting for worship as well as in our meetings for clearness.

In addressing the theme for the gathering, “Seeking a Quaker Spirituality for our Times” Alistair Macintosh suggested that the task for us Quakers today is to practice holding “hospitable spaces” before the new and uncertain situations we frequently face.

We have been reminded that meeting for clearness is a cornerstone of Quaker practice. We had the opportunity to experience this in small groups, in which a chair for silence was included in the circle. We affirmed that “deepening the question may be more important than answering the question”.

One of the interest group topics was related to being a pacifist today rather than a passivist. How do we experience the war deep inside us?

The most valuable parts of life are being destroyed in the natural world, both for animals and humans. The soil and the air we breathe is being taken from us. War is a system that removes our free will and independence. War is also about what happens when a piece of land which has been destroyed is to be re-

established and rebuilt and wounds are to be healed. This takes time and work must be done to put all the small parts together by working for peace at all levels. With a Quaker outlook on life, we can be torchbearers when hope for peace fades.

Another workshop encouraged us to ask questions about how we tie our spirituality to our work with sustainability. In this process of approaching right relationship with animals we might begin by acknowledging all the animal products fulfilling a quiet place in our homes before considering what we are possibly called to do.

With all this in mind we were invited to consider how we might use each day in a blessed way, asking: “do I see what I am called to do?”

Eleven-month-old Sanni’s vocal ministry has spread joy in the gathering over the whole weekend. The older children and young people had their own program. Alistair shared an ancient Celtic story about the value of sharing; even if it comes at a cost, it may still be with the right thing to do. Creativity formed a significant part of the activities, and the children and young people enjoyed many opportunities to walk and play together – forming new friendships without being hindered by language differences.

Faith is a way of life. We ask ourselves as we leave: “What was awakened in you?” “What will you bring back to your worshipping community?”

A blackbird calls. Another responds. We are walking together in pilgrimage.

In peace and gratitude,
Nordic Yearly Meeting Gathering
30 June - 3 July 2022

Friends Church of North Carolina
Annual Sessions Message, August 12 and 13, 2022

To Friends Everywhere:

We send greetings to all Friends as we gather for our Annual Sessions at Quaker Lake Camp and Conference Center. We all experience so much of God's creation when we come to this beautiful setting. The Camp is very blessed with many activity areas and accommodations. The theme for the sessions was "Be Thou My Vision" taken from Philippians 3:14. This year -2022- we celebrate 350 years of Quakerism in North Carolina. Seth B. Hinshaw wrote in his book The Carolina Quaker Experience "The first voice of a Christian preacher heard in North Carolina was that of a Quaker, William Edmundson, who came to the colony in May 1672".

Presiding Clerk, Brenda McKinney began our sessions at 3:00 on Friday, August 12, 2022 with a time of worship at business. Committee on Clerks presented their recommendations for Clerks for the coming year. Brenda is stepping away and Roger Holt was approved as the next Presiding Clerk. Various reports were shared including the Superintendent, Mike Wall's report sharing that a Hispanic church in Yadkinville and a Kenyan Friends Church outside Baltimore are interested in becoming members of FCNC. Five Meetings shared how they are doing outreach and growing the family of Christ. Jared Warden shared about the activities during the year for Young Friends. There has been much involvement by youth across FCNC. Mike Fulp presented the report from FCNC Ministry and Counsel and brought the recommendation to record the gifts of ministry of Sterling Brown. Two individuals, Valli Chilton and James Moore, were approved to go under the care of the Recording Committee.

In the evening we gathered for a time of worship including special music by African Friends in North America and a message from Bob Carter, Kenyan Missionary. The Carters began mission work in 1985 serving FUM at Friends Lugulu Hospital and as of last year Bob is retired from clinical care and is focusing more on public health issues and medical education. Bob began by telling us the Lord loves us at FCNC and is pleased with us. Bob encouraged us to stay connected to the Head-Jesus and to each other. We are to build up, encourage and minister to one another. Our time of worship continued as we recorded the ministry gifts of Sterling Brown. A reception followed.

Sterling Brown led the Morning Praise on the Porch overlooking the beautiful lake. The Representative Body resumed business at 9:00. Among the reports, NCYM, Inc. shared the concern there are 8 cemeteries spanning over 300 years that the Body needs to decide about perpetual care or do we follow Quaker ways of simplicity and let them return to a natural state. Scott Carter reported the Missions Committee is able to send funds to many mission areas but requests for funding exceed the available funds. He encouraged participation in the Silent Auction being held to benefit the Missions Committee. Colin Saxton reported on FUM North American Ministries and the Billy Britt Fund. Affiliated Organization, Barclay College and Kaleo Academy reach high school to graduate school adults developing and enriching gifts of ministry. We were encouraged to seek them out for our teenagers to participate in their leadership training program.

Quaker Lake Camp, LLC Director, Heather Varner, shared there was a "regular" camp this year after 2 years of COVID and they were blessed with campers and all the needed staff and little sickness. There

are other activities on the year-round campus with two being the Pumpkin Fest and the December Candlelight Worship service. Beulah Gullion reported Friends Campus Ministries is a vital program with a purpose of strengthening Christ-centered Quaker values of our college students in four cities in NC but reaching more than one college in most locations. The fourth campus begins with the fall 2022 semester in the Wilmington area.

The offerings taken during the Annual Sessions went to the Billy M Britt Fund for North American Ministries to support FUM being better able to develop sustainable and effective emerging ministries to support and resource our local and Yearly Meeting. Billy was a Pastor in and Superintendent of NCYM Yearly Meeting and had a heart for leadership development, spiritual formation, congregational vitality, growth of our Quaker Meetings, and unity among Friends.

Following the lunch hour Bob and Hope Carter again shared with us a message of how to pursue a vision for ministry. Missions are at the heart and soul of following Jesus. How are we going to “woo” the world to Jesus? A Memorial Service followed led by Southern Quarter in recognition of those of our Meetings who died during the previous year. Many rose to speak of the contributions to Friends these folk gave during their lives. Following the Memorial Service Friends enjoyed free time or participated in optional workshops. The workshops related to our celebrating 350 years of Quakers in North Carolina. Richard Wilcox presented a session entitled “North Carolina Quakerism and William Edmundson”; followed by a workshop by Don Farlow “Suffering of Quakers during the Civil War”.

The evening worship began with special music by Renee Matthew Jones and Family and was followed with a special presentation. Diane Faison-McKinzie who resides in Winston-Salem gave a moving presentation “The Spirit of Harriet Tubman” a one-woman play about a leader in the Underground Railroad. Harriet Tubman was an American abolitionist and political activist born into slavery in the early 1820’s. She fought for equality and justice, women’s suffrage and dedicated her life to helping those in need. Diane, who gave a wonderful performance, was a 30-year educator, is an actress, visual artist, speaker, and writer. Her studies were at NC Central University and the University of Virginia.

A Minute of Appreciation was read for Brenda McKinney. Brenda has served FCNC faithfully as our Presiding Clerk for three years.

The FCNC Annual Session message, which is to be sent to other Yearly Meetings and Quaker Groups, was read and approved. The closing minute was read by Clerk, Brenda McKinney adjourning this Annual Session of Friends Church of North Carolina as it continues the valuable influence of Quakerism in North Carolina.

Brenda McKinney, Presiding Clerk

Prepared by Yadkin Valley Quarter: Geraldine Brannon, Brent McKinney, Judy Ritter

To Friends Everywhere:


Friends from Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana, USA, gathered from July 13 – July 17, 2022, at Western Oregon University in Monmouth, Oregon, for the 50th Annual Session of the North Pacific Yearly Meeting. We gathered in person for the first time since 2019 (using masks and other COVID precautions), and were joined by Friends virtually in hybrid sessions. While we rejoiced in each other's company, we also felt the struggle to establish new balances: with technology, lower numbers, re-learning how to be together, and the absence of Friends we dearly miss.

Our spiritual state of rebuilding and rebalancing was ideal for the theme of our gathering, Deep Hope in Optimystical Times. Our Friend in Residence, Carl Magruder, brought prophetic witness that we are living through apocalypse: not "the end times", but in the New Testament Greek meaning: an uncovering or unveiling. Friend Carl calls this "The Crumbles". We are traveling through ongoing chaos, in a transition away from extractive, industrial economies to a life-sustaining society that we might also call the Peaceable Kin-dom.

Buried within this experience is the road to deep hope. It begins in the secret place of grief and lamentation; we cannot hope if we cannot grieve. Invited to speak our grief out into the silence, many of us shared lamentations about poverty, devastation of the living world, refugees, loss of bodily autonomy, divisiveness, deaths, fears, and sadnesses. Friend Carl then reminded us that it was out of lamentation and despair that Quakerism was birthed.

"When all my hopes in them [in priests] and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could I tell what to do, then, oh, then, I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,' and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy." -George Fox

In The Crumbles, our ways of knowing are out of date; we need to hold our knowing loosely and be ready to self-correct. Because Quakerism is a narrative, an evolving possibility, we can rely on continuing revelation. Friend Carl said, "When we surrender enough of our fears, worries, doubts, resentments, judgment, and control to heed Isaac Pennington and sink down to the Seed, we find that we rest in Spirit so completely that we cannot help but rejoice, and hope, and work as we are led." This is Love as *opti-mysticism*, and ours is an optimystical faith. Carl's ministry was rich and deep. We recommend viewing it in its entirety at:

 ["Deep Hope in Optimystical Times", Address by Carl Magruder NPYM \(Quaker\) Annual Se...](#)

Our NPYM committees have worked in the Light throughout this year, and we easily approved a minute circulated by several Quaker bodies about migration. After a great deal of seasoning, Friends at Annual Session approved a minute of support for indigenous people. In an effort to uproot racism in our Annual Session, we used the Ouch/Whoa/Oops tools throughout all our

proceedings, to acknowledge and respond to harm as it happened. Such harms can come from the best of intentions: A skit meant to teach Friends the use and purpose of these tools trivialized the real pain experienced by many on a daily basis; the committee apologized. We were asked, “What is the caring response to this expression of pain?” We do not have a comfortable answer—and that is probably good for us.

During open worship, some wrestled with feeling entitled to allyship with marginalized people, when we know that trust needs to be earned over time. Also, we recognize that we have a need for growth and awareness regarding ableism, trans issues, patriarchy, ageism, classism, and other forms of marginalization. Language isn’t always adequate, and actions speak louder than words. We are a multi-faceted, multi-racial gathering of Friends, and we labor earnestly to be a community where everyone truly belongs. Out of worship, a Friend sang this new verse for “Simple Gifts”:

*When true diversity is gained, to bow and to bend we shall not be ashamed/
To turn and to learn will be our delight/
Till by turning and learning we come round right.*

As part of confronting injustice, we approved a fund for honoraria for our Friends in Residence, and other teaching opportunities. In recent years we have established paid positions to support administration and the well-being of our children; we now also acknowledge that ministry is labor, and worthy of financial support.

Here in The Crumbles, many of our Meetings are dwindling, and the end of the Religious Society of Friends, as we know it, is a real possibility. Recognizing this, do we continue to put our time and effort into bringing new Friends into the meeting; focusing our energies on witnessing our faith into the world; and/or educating our children on our faith and witness? On our final evening together, our Junior Friends (High School age) led a worship with queries, including this one: “Can you think of a time when a junior, central, or youngest friend has shared ministry in your chosen meeting? If not, why do you think that is?” We hold these questions in our hearts.

This is a generative time. Volatility is good news because new social organization grows out of chaos. Let us navigate our way with a practical, deep and wise hope.

“Optimycism is the profound hope that comes from surrender, the right-sizing of the ego, and the direct encounter with God, which reframes entirely both what hope is and what we might hope for. It enables radical witness... Quakerism also has the Crumbles, but may just be on the cusp of a profound transformation. We are the inheritors and stewards of this gift. And that may be a great Adventure.” -Carl Magruder

Ohio Yearly Meeting
c/o Olney Friends School
61830 Sandy Ridge Road
Barnesville, Ohio 43713
8th Month 1-5, 2022

Lift up your heads, O you gates!

Lift up, you everlasting doors!

And the King of glory shall come in.

Who is this King of Glory?

The Lord of hosts,

He is the King of Glory.

(Psalm 24:9-10)

To Friends Everywhere:

This year a number of Friends have gathered in the Stillwater meeting house for our 210th session of Ohio Yearly Meeting. Many unable to come have joined us virtually through zoom. We feel the deep joy in being gathered with Friends seeking to worship our Lord Jesus and discern together His work in us and the ways in which we should continue in it. One attending through zoom spoke of being able to feel the energy of the Holy Spirit through the computer screen. Our peace is extended all along the brick walk from the Meeting House, to dine or rest in other parts of the campus.

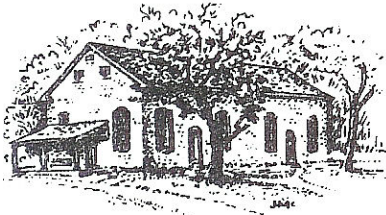
One afternoon we said good-bye to Jamie Helmick, who has worked as our compassionate & industrious director of the Walton Home for over 10 years. We are grateful that our Lord has raised up another gifted person serve as the new director. Walton Retirement Home has been a service of Ohio Yearly for many years. At one point during the Ohio Yearly Meeting sessions a baby cried out briefly announcing a welcome recent addition to our midst.

For many generations, Ohio Yearly Meeting carefully maintained a "hedge" to protect our lifestyle and Way of worship from the outside world. In recent years circumstances have necessitated that we learn how to reach beyond our hedge, and the Lord is providing the technology for us to do so. Sometimes we struggle to hear one another, either because the technology is imperfect, or because we use words and phrases that have different shades of meaning in different contexts, and this can be troubling. Still, if we listen carefully, with minds and hearts open to one another, we often hear the same Lord speaking to us and through us across these differences and distances, honoring His Promise to be with us whenever we gather in His Name.

It is this Unity in the Spirit of the Living God, revealed in the Presence of the Inward Christ within and among us, that we to continue to celebrate in the ways of our forebears, blessed with contemporary tools many of them never imagined. We hear in Scripture: Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, what the Lord has prepared for those who love Him. (1Cor. 2:9, Isaiah 64:4)

On behalf of Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends,

Charles C. Thomas, Jr.,
Clerk



Miami Friends Meeting House
Waynesville, Ohio
1811

Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS



Fall Creek Meeting House
Pendleton, Indiana
1857

Epistle, Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions 2022 (Approved 2022-06-12)

Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting of Friends gathered for its 202nd annual sessions on Sixth Month 8-12, 2022 on the campus of Mt. Saint Joseph University in Cincinnati, OH. Our sessions had the theme, “Embrace the Healing Power of Community.” Having met entirely online over the preceding two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Friends present felt deeply blessed to meet with one another in person. We maintained a hybrid format to enable participation online, and valued the involvement of Friends not able to meet with us in person. Our opening meeting for business and first plenary presentation both began with acknowledgments: of the indigenous Shawnee and Miami peoples forcibly removed from this, their ancestral land by European colonizers; the enslaved Africans and their descendents, whose forced and stolen labor created prosperity for the colonizers; and the institutionalized racism that has continued to transfer wealth and power from people of color to those considered white, including most of us.

The tumult and sufferings of the world touched each of us and made our theme timely. Throughout our gathering, the need for healing – of our ecosphere, our society, our Religious Society, our meetings, and ourselves – came into focus. We received reports on our Yearly Meeting revealing smaller membership, fewer volunteers, and dramatically lower participation by children and young Friends. Sadly, committees serving Friends under the age of 25 continue to have inadequate staffing. We noted that the pandemic accelerated, but did not cause, these trends.

The healing hand of the Divine reached out to us in many forms. Worship-sharing elicited our personal experiences of the healing power of community. The Living Witness of Paul Buckley and Peggy Spohr inspired Friends with many examples of this power. In her plenary presentation, Gloria Stearns-Bruner introduced us to ways in which music and the sharing of our own stories can help to heal trauma. We reflected on how we might get to “know one another in that which is eternal” (George Fox). Plenary speaker and workshop leader Angela Hopkins, founder of Friends Center for Racial Justice in Ithaca, NY, led us in considering how Friends meetings can become anti-racist faith communities. A

Healing Center gave us opportunities to receive gifts of physical and emotional healing from one another. Our presiding clerk guided our business with a spacious pace, clearly rooted in worship. Love and concern pervaded the meetings for business, with deep appreciation for steadfast and Spirit-led service by many Friends.

Hope rose to the top of our awareness as our annual sessions drew to a close. First-time attenders participated fully in the week's activities and expressed gratitude at the welcome they received. Our annual variety show was filled with mirth and energy. Friends finishing terms of service to the Yearly Meeting continued into new roles and several Friends accepted committee posts for the first time. We faced our challenges. We experienced our love for one another and our devotion to our Religious Society. Following George Fox, we glimpsed the infinite ocean of Light that overcomes the ocean of darkness and death.

Rachel Ernst Stahlhut, OVYM Presiding Clerk
Martha Viehmann, Assistant Presiding Clerk

Epistles from the 76th Annual Session, 2022
Epístolas de la 76^a Sesión Anual, 2022

Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
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Loving greetings to Friends everywhere from Pacific Yearly Meeting's blended annual session, held from July 22-27 in the coastal redwoods at Mount Madonna Center in California on the original land of the Amah Mutsun, Ohlone peoples. Pacific Yearly Meeting includes Friends from California, Nevada, Hawaii, Mexico, and Central America. 177 people attended in-person including 11 children, and 18 Junior Yearly Meeting teens. Wild turkeys, deer, and steller's jays were also frequent visitors. Over 100 attended online most days, aided by multiple projection screens and cameras, including two remote controlled cameras for offering close-up shots of speakers. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of Mount Madonna's tech staff and some Zoom-savvy Friends, our first hybrid annual session was rich and meaningful for both online and in-person attenders and allowed for record attendance from farther away Meetings such as Honolulu.

Our theme, Beloved Community; What does it mean to belong to ourselves, to each other, to the earth? spoke to our yearning to be together again after pandemic isolation. Despite the fact that annual session coincided with record high Covid-19 numbers, a covid safety team worked diligently to make tough decisions juggling safety and inclusion. Participants cooperated to a remarkable degree with safety measures. As we celebrate Pacific Yearly Meeting's 75th anniversary, jubilee themes of healing and renewal infused our expectant, waiting worship, plenary sessions, affinity groups, and interest groups. In an act of jubilee debt forgiveness, a financial surplus accumulated during the pandemic years allowed organizers to offer annual session free-of-charge for all children and pay-as-led for adults. Bible Study continued this theme by reading Isaiah 40, which includes the passage, "Oh Lord, revive us again."

Inclusion and diversity were at the forefront as we grappled collectively to acknowledge with loving care harm that has been done in our gathered spaces, including Meeting for Worship. We seek to repair the harm of past and ongoing ouches from insensitivities learned in the dominant society. We seek to recognize ways that we might practice simple loving kindness with one another and build a beloved, just, and inclusive community. Keynote panel speakers Marlene Coach Eisenstein, Peni Hall, and Keith Runyan challenged participants to have humility and be attentive to areas where we lack awareness, especially ableism, racism, and disharmony with the natural world. Open, curious conversations can draw out Friends who feel excluded. Spirit equips us to see each others' gifts and needs and prompts Friends to offer a tender hand in acts of kindness.

A document outlining proposed guidelines for pausing before speaking to reflect on where ones' words are coming from was presented by the Ministry Committee and the Racial Justice Subcommittee which has developed a series of workshops throughout the past years examining subconscious exclusionary practices among Friends. During gathering, the Racial Justice Subcommittee presented the keynote address virtually to New York Yearly Meeting, something that would not have been possible in the past. We found comfort that our work in making Friends a more inclusive and aware community, willing to acknowledge the ongoing impacts of history, is shared by so many Yearly Meetings around the globe. Honolulu Friend Aaron Terry

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guided a group of participants in the traditional Hawaiian practice of Ho'oponopono, the healing and righting of past wrongs, and we looked at how Friends might bring more mindfulness in resolving conflicts amongst ourselves.

Quaker discernment process offers a model for seeking truth beyond divisions in this time of wars and scars, climate devastation, social, economic, gender, and racial inequities. Friends are developing ways to mend past harms and move society toward a healthier future. Deep listening is an act of surrender. Worship deepens when Friends are able to release regrets and worries with each exhalation and receive renewal with each inhalation in what Thomas Kelly named as “continually renewed immediacy” with the Source of Love. How might Pacific Yearly Meeting Friends become living epistles, couriers of the regeneration? We are called to be bold with one another and a beacon of light for the rest of the world.

Parents found solace in each others' stories of struggle to fully participate in gathering while caring for young children and resonated with a report by the Children's Program Committee raising concerns about children being ignored or even “othered” by adults not specifically tasked with childcare. A parent affinity group was formed, which led to parents feeling empowered to bring their children to an interest group focusing on the future of Pacific Yearly Meeting which was inadvertently scheduled at a time when it was challenging for parents to attend. The kids drew their vision of the future on a giant piece of paper and brought joy to everyone. Despite anxieties about dwindling numbers, 1/3 of in-person attenders at this annual session were under the age of 35. We began the gathering looking at the past and ended feeling present and optimistic about the future.

We heard ministry with an adaptation of a song often sung in our meetings:

Until true diversity is gained
To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed
To turn, to learn, will be our delight,
'Til by turning, and learning we come round right.

Laura Magnani, Clerk
on behalf of Pacific Yearly Meeting.

Saludos afectuosos a los Amigos y Amigas de todo el mundo desde la sesión anual híbrida de la Junta Anual del Pacífico, que se llevó a cabo del 22 al 27 de julio entre las secoyas costeras en Mount Madonna Center en California, en la tierra originaria Amah Mutsun, del pueblo Ohlone. La Junta Anual del Pacífico incluye Amigas y Amigos de California, Nevada, Hawái, México y Centroamérica. 177 personas asistieron en persona, incluidos 11 niñas y niños y 18

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adolescentes de la Junta Anual Junior. Los pavos salvajes, ciervos y las charas crestadas también eran visitantes frecuentes. Al menos 90 personas asistieron en línea, con la ayuda de múltiples pantallas de proyección y cámaras, incluidas dos cámaras controladas a distancia para ofrecer primeros planos de los oradores. Gracias a los esfuerzos dedicados del personal técnico de Mount Madonna, algunos Amigos y Amigas expertos en Zoom, nuestra primera sesión anual híbrida fue rica y significativa para los asistentes tanto en línea como en persona y permitió una asistencia récord de reuniones más lejanas como Honolulu.

Nuestro tema, *Comunidad Amada: ¿Qué significa pertenecemos a nosotros mismos, a los demás, a la tierra?* expresó nuestro anhelo de estar juntos nuevamente después del aislamiento por la pandemia. A pesar de que la sesión anual coincidió con cifras récord de Covid-19, un equipo de seguridad de trabajó diligentemente para tomar decisiones difíciles haciendo malabarismos con la seguridad e inclusión. Los participantes cooperaron en un grado notable con las medidas de seguridad. Mientras celebramos el 75.º aniversario de la Junta Anual del Pacífico, los temas de jubileo de sanación y renovación impregnaron nuestra adoración de espera expectante, las sesiones plenarias, grupos de afinidad e interés. En un acto de jubileo de condonación de deuda, un superávit financiero acumulado durante los años de la pandemia, permitió a los organizadores ofrecer una sesión anual gratuita para la niñez y de pago para los adultos. El Estudio Bíblico continuó con este tema al leer Isaías 40, que incluye el pasaje: “Oh Señor, avívanos de nuevo”.

La inclusión y la diversidad estuvieron a la vanguardia cuando luchamos colectivamente para reconocer con amoroso cuidado el daño que se ha hecho en nuestros espacios de reunión, incluida la Reunión para la Adoración. Buscamos reparar el daño de las heridas pasadas y actuales, de las insensibilidades aprendidas en la sociedad dominante. Buscamos reconocer formas en las que podamos practicar la bondad amorosa simple entre nosotros y construir una comunidad amada, justa e inclusiva. Los oradores principales del panel Marlene Coach-Eisenstein, Peni Hall y Keith Runyan desafiaron a los participantes a tener humildad y estar atentos a las áreas en las que carecemos de conciencia, especialmente el capacitismo, el racismo y la falta de armonía con el mundo natural. Las conversaciones abiertas y curiosas pueden atraer a Amigos que se sienten excluidos. El Espíritu nos equipa para ver los dones y necesidades de los demás y anima a Amigos y Amigas a ofrecer una mano tierna en actos de bondad.

El Comité de Ministerial y el Subcomité de Justicia Racial presentaron un documento que describe las pautas propuestas para hacer una pausa antes de hablar para reflexionar sobre el origen de las propias palabras y ha desarrollado una serie de talleres a lo largo de los últimos años para examinar las prácticas de exclusión subconsciente entre los Amigos. Durante la reunión, el Subcomité de Justicia Racial presentó el discurso de apertura virtualmente en la Junta Anual de Nueva York, algo que no hubiera sido posible en el pasado. Nos consoló que nuestro trabajo para hacer de los Amigos y Amigas una comunidad más inclusiva y consciente,

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dispuesta a reconocer los impactos continuos de la historia, sea compartido por muchas Juntas Anuales en todo el mundo. El Amigo de Honolulu, Aaron Terry, guio a un grupo de participantes en la práctica tradicional hawaiana de Ho'oponopono, la curación y corrección de errores pasados, y analizamos cómo Amigas y Amigos podrían traer más atención plena para resolver conflictos entre nosotros.

El proceso de discernimiento cuáquero ofrece un modelo para buscar la Verdad más allá de las divisiones en esta época de guerras y cicatrices, devastación climática, desigualdades sociales, económicas, de género y raciales. Los Amigos y Amigas están desarrollando formas de reparar los daños del pasado y avanzar a la sociedad hacia un futuro más saludable. La escucha profunda es un acto de entrega. La adoración se profundiza cuando Amigas y Amigos pueden liberar arrepentimientos y preocupaciones con cada exhalación y recibir renovación con cada inhalación en lo que Thomas Kelly denominó como "inmediatez continuamente renovada" con la Fuente del Amor. ¿Cómo podrían convertirse los Amigos y Amigas de la Junta Anual del Pacífico en epístolas vivientes, mensajeros de la regeneración? Estamos llamados a ser audaces unos con otros y ser un faro de luz para el resto del mundo.

Madres y padres encontraron consuelo en las historias de lucha de los demás para participar plenamente en la reunión mientras cuidaban a niñas y niños pequeños y resonaron con un informe del Comité del Programa Infantil que plantea preocupaciones sobre la niñez que es ignorada o incluso tratada con "otredad" por parte de adultos que no están específicamente encargados del cuidado de niños y niñas. Se formó un grupo de afinidad de padres, lo que hizo que madres y padres se sintieran empoderados para llevar a sus hijos a un grupo de interés centrado en el futuro de la Junta Anual del Pacífico que, sin darnos cuenta, se programó en un momento en que era un desafío para padres y madres asistir. Los niños y niñas dibujaron su visión del futuro en un papel gigante y alegraron a todos. A pesar de las preocupaciones sobre la disminución de los números, 1/3 de los asistentes en persona a esta sesión anual tenían menos de 35 años. Comenzamos la reunión mirando el pasado y terminamos sintiéndonos presentes y optimistas sobre el futuro.

Escuchamos ministerio con una adaptación de una canción que se canta a menudo en nuestras reuniones:

Hasta que se gane la verdadera diversidad
De inclinarnos y doblarnos no nos avergonzaremos
Girar, aprender, será nuestro deleite,
Hasta que girando y aprendiendo lleguemos a lo correcto.

A nombre de la Junta Anual del Pacífico
Laura Magnani, Secretaria General

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Epistle from Young Adult Friends

On July 22nd 2022, twenty-three Young Adult Friends gathered together in person at Mount Madonna Center for Pacific Yearly Meeting's annual session. We are immensely grateful for this lively week and the opportunity to be in community with Friends of all ages, old and new. We attended meetings for worship, plenary sessions, interest groups and shared many meals together. After a short discernment we are thrilled to announce we have decided to revive the YAF committee which was laid down in 2017. Alma Moon and Ari Standish will act as Co-Clerks for the upcoming year. This decision will allow us to have more scheduled programming for Annual sessions as well as providing YAFs resources throughout the year. We look forward to the future and the crucial work that young Friends need to do to support the growth of our beloved community!

If you have Questions or concerns you can contact us at
YoungAdultFriendsClerk@pacificyearlymeeting.org

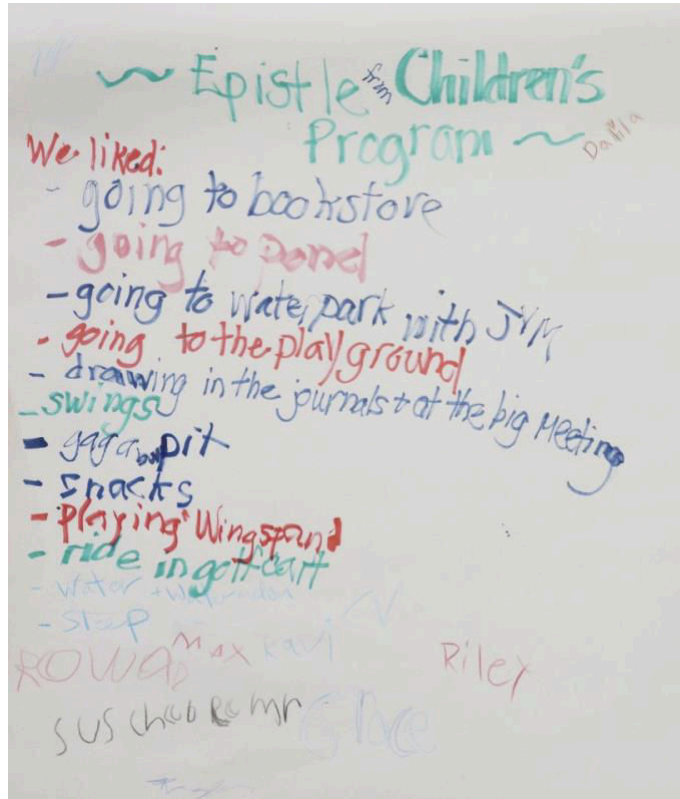
Visual Epistle from the Junior Yearly Meeting (Teens)



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Visual Epistle from the Children's Program





Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Epistle **Approved, July 31, 2022**

Greetings to Friends Everywhere from Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, seated on lands stewarded over the millenia by Lenni Lenape and other indigenous people who are still among us:

In late July 2022, we held our 342nd annual session over several days. In the face of a new wave of coronavirus Covid-19, for the third year we met virtually by Zoom. Again, we missed meeting face-to-face, hearing our children's voices and laughter, visiting each other over meals, and welcoming visitors in person with hugs and handshakes. However, most of us have become accustomed enough to computer-based conference platforms to appreciate that they bring in folks from far away, allow us to spell our names correctly, foster deep spiritual connections, practice fellowship in small groups, and even experience powerful and moving vocal ministry.

Our annual sessions officially began a month ago with events offering additional ways for gathering, learning, and celebrating the gifts of Friends and the love shared in our community. They also highlighted some of the challenging issues that shape our lives today. Both a pre-sessions retreat imagining a new future of racial equity (and moving forward towards that) and an opening plenary invited us to look at our current behaviors and set the stage for the future we wish to see.

This year's theme, **"We seek to repair broken foundations across the generations unified in our beloved Quaker community,"** was deeply and powerfully addressed by young adult Friend and performance artist Eppchez Yes in their keynote talk. Building on critical examinations of Penn's Treaty with the Lenni Lenape in 1682, the Germantown Declaration Against Slavery in 1688, and the 1969 call for reparations by the National Black Economic Development Conference, Eppchez discerned Quaker patterns of oppression, delay, and avoidance. We are challenged to examine, acknowledge, and repair these "harmingly-designed" foundational patterns and to face this critical work: "We are standing in the need of prayer, for the stakes are high."

We began each day with bible stories presented in Godly Play format, evoking wonder in many of us. Deep worship laid a foundation for informative and fruitful business sessions. In our work together it became clear that we cherish each other, trying our best to be supportive and helpful with one another even as we navigate profound disappointments and woundings.

Yearly Meeting financial stewardship appears in good hands on a sustainable basis, thanks to the work of a dedicated staff and Friends. We heard that our one historic property, the landmark 1804 Arch Street Meeting House, is becoming less of a burden as it develops its own funding support. We

heard reports on work being carried out in the areas of Yearly Meeting-wide actions approved last year: membership and belonging, addressing racism, and addressing global climate change.

Our General Secretary led us in an exercise to examine the meaning of shared corporate witness. The responsibility for addressing climate catastrophe and undoing racism doesn't lie with just two committees; instead it is the responsibility of each individual at every area of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting – taking acts of love and leaps of faith. We were reminded that the Yearly Meeting is all 10,000 of us scattered across the region in 100+ meeting communities, not just the staff or the Friends whose collaborative work has stewarded the concerns thus far.

An innovation this year was a chance for our quarterly meetings to report. We savored the variety of practice, vitality, and commitment to this historically important concept. Some of our quarterly and monthly meetings leverage their efforts by participating in local and regional interfaith networks. We also heard an informative report from Ujima Friends Meeting (founded in 2020) and the Ujima Friends Peace Center (2017), both established as active and vibrant outgrowths of the Fellowship of Friends of African Descent dedicated to “bearing witness to peace, justice, and love” in urban North Philadelphia.

We carefully considered and united with a minute of concern recommending a truth and healing commission at a federal level addressing the genocidal practice of boarding schools for indigenous youth in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Friends were actively involved with these schools, so we wish the full story to be known and documented and that appropriate apologies and reconciliation actions take place.

Our closing speakers broadened our awareness of exclusion and oppression by telling us about fostering accessibility and inclusion for those with physical and mental impairments. One speaker shared insights from the field of public philosophy, and the other explored ways to make electronic information sources as accessible as possible. Opening up access helps us all. The discussion afterwards illustrated how Quaker values of inclusiveness and fairness can be applied to contemporary technologies. Improved accessibility is a key part of the ongoing journey to fuller human rights.

There is a paradox in the decreasing number of active Friends -- and yet increasing enthusiasm among our monthly meetings for crafting and submitting Spiritual State of the Meeting Reports. We heard an inspiring and informative report from the recently named Climate Stewards. Meanwhile, antiracism work is occurring on many fronts even though, as a body here, we feel painfully blocked. In reflecting on a recent memorial service for a young and beloved Black Quaker shot in the street, our Ministry and Care Committee beseeched us: “As we are called out of worship, may we be called to actions in our communities, our meetings, our Nation, and the world.”

As our time together came to an end, we held an “All Together Worship” linking 300 Friends and 22 meetinghouses for deep and nourishing worship. Then we heard heartening reports for Friends General Conference (FGC), Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) Section of the Americas, Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW), and the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) on how they are effectively supporting Quakerism and addressing many of the pressing issues discussed here this week.

In closing, we cite Abington Meeting's minute about their leading for reparations. We learned from them that the pathway forward will be full of potholes, but the challenge is to keep going:

We wish to engage in racial reconciliation and healing through acknowledging, apologizing, and atoning for wrongs our Meeting has committed in the past that influence the present. . . . We wish to atone for these past oppressions and injustices in the hope of bringing healing through retrospective justice to African Americans and Indigenous Peoples.

-- Approved by Abington Monthly Meeting, Fifth Month 10, 2021

On behalf of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Frank and Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch
Presiding Co-clerks

[Attach Young Adult Friends' epistle here]

Piedmont Friends–Yearly Meeting & Fellowship Epistle Inaugural Session, Sixth Month, 2022

Greetings to Friends everywhere,

On June 4, a beautiful and joyous Saturday, Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting and Piedmont Friends Fellowship held their joint Annual Sessions on the Guilford College campus in Greensboro, North Carolina. It was a memorable time, marking the unification of two distinct Quaker bodies – Piedmont Friends Fellowship and Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting – into one new Quaker organization called “Piedmont Friends–Yearly Meeting & Fellowship.” It was also our first in-person meetings since the pandemic began and many remarked how good and life-affirming it was to be together in each other’s presence.

The weekend retreat began on Friday evening over Zoom with a roll call of attending meetings and an appreciation of the indigenous peoples on whose ancestral land we now meet. Retreat hosts led us through a series of queries designed to renew our faith, to reflect on the challenges and joys of this historical moment, and to deepen our sense of community. Those who participated expressed gratitude for the queries, noting how effective they were at eliciting honest and personal sharing.

Saturday morning at Guilford College, guest speakers Jonathan and Leah Wilson-Hartgrove shared their personal journeys with radical hospitality at the Rutba House in Durham, the Poor People’s Campaign, and the Restorative Justice project. Their presentation provided valuable insights into how structural injustices in society cause large numbers of people to live “on the edge,” and how radical hospitality “wades into the water” of relationships with those who have been marginalized. The Wilson-Hartgroves shared numerous stories of how these relationships had transformed them, notably how the line between being the host and the guest is blurred. Setting out to offer hospitality to those who have been damaged by a broken economic system, they found themselves ministered to in surprising ways by those they were serving. Several participants remarked that this presentation celebrated the key principle of Quaker spirituality that there is “that of God” in every person. The takeaway for many was that any Friend can walk in the Light in their own unique circumstances, and that this experience is life-changing.

As lunch was being organized, Friends received an update on Guilford College from its new president, Kyle Farmbry.

After fellowship over lunch, many Friends went on a walk of the Guilford Woods with a local Quaker historian and learned about the rich local history of the Underground Railroad, and saw the Freedom tree where nails still sit that once pointed enslaved people towards freedom. Others participated in an art project making parfleches: colorful, hand-decorated Native American pouches which can be used to store small keepsakes or as envelopes to send through the mail.

We then gathered for annual sessions. With thanks to the clerking committee for the months of preparation, Friends met in what was the 51st and final annual meeting of Piedmont Friends Fellowship and the 7th and final annual meeting of Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting. After the respective organizations were laid down, it was with great joy that we minuted the unification and held the inaugural meeting of Piedmont Friends - Yearly Meeting & Fellowship. We recognized John Hunter, a founding member of PFF who was present for this historic moment.

The Minute of Unification reads:

Friends (of the Religious Society of Friends) of the Piedmont region of North Carolina, South Carolina and Virginia, gathering at Guilford College, Greensboro, NC, on Saturday, June 4, 2022, affirm the unification of Piedmont Friends Fellowship and Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting into the unified body of Piedmont Friends–Yearly Meeting & Fellowship.

Friends further acknowledge the more than fifty years of Piedmont Friends coming together in fellowship, in support of peace building, and in welcoming inclusivity. Building upon this foundation of collaboration, Friends affirm the unification as strengthening Piedmont Friends into the future.

The remainder of the first meeting of PF-YM&F consisted of reports of various organizations and committees which have faithfully been carrying on their work through this transition, as well as remembering those Friends that have passed in the last year. The State of the Meeting report showed that member meetings have struggled throughout the pandemic with finding ways to safely worship and minister to each other and to the wider community but have found creative ways to do so. Meetings have continued to be a valuable presence in their communities providing both service and prayer.

In the final moments before closing worship, Friends expressed thanks to the speakers and those who shared their gifts in the weekend's program offerings, the clerks table, the retreat planners who took efforts to have zero waste, those who provided the excellent refreshments and bookstore, the seamless technical assistance throughout the weekend, and the beautiful setting at Guilford College. The day ended with a time of silent worship and gratitude.

The weekend closed with Meeting for Worship Sunday morning over Zoom.

Shared in peace,

Marian Beane, Sally Freeman, Paul Klever, and Nancy Riemer
PF-YM&F Clerking Committee

A photo of Friends who gathered can be viewed at Piedmont Friends website:
<https://www.quakercloud.org/cloud/piedmont-friends-yearly-meeting-fellowship>

EPISTLE

The General Assembly of the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA)

The General Assembly of the Quaker Council for European Affairs met in blended format on Friday 31st March and 1st April 2023. We commenced our session with a period of Silent Worship.

Martin Touwen, Clerk of the Executive Committee, updated us on the work of the Committee.

Nominations Committee have reported the continuing difficulty of finding names for Executive Committee and as the terms of office of some members is drawing to a close, this has become rather urgent. This brings to our attention the need to find names for very specific pieces of work under very specific timeframes. Another piece of research in this genre is the financial recording of the Environmental Sustainability of QCEA and the carbon footprint of our work.

The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust have extended funding to QCEA for a further 12 months while we finalise our new Strategy document. The Trust have also given us a grant to support an anti-racism reflection process.

We received a report from the Joint Executive and General Assembly Governance and Statute Review Committee. We had a very long discussion on Corporate Governance, how we ensure we are complying with Belgian Law while at the same time maintaining our Quaker way of discernment in conducting our business in these times of strict regulation.

Tracey Martin our Director outlined recent developments under the headings: repair, recovery, regrowth.

On Saturday we met in small groups and discussed the strategy under the following headings:

- Migration and peace - through a peacebuilding lens
- Climate justice and peace - through a peace lens.
- Dialogue for transformation - complex problems are only solved by listening to different views.

What kind of change will we focus on?

Transformative change is a new way of working for us. It is a long slow process of providing safe spaces to listen to different viewpoints.

We have had an opportunity to raise questions and gain a deeper understanding of the strategy, which we have now accepted.

We recognise that we as members of the GA will also need to develop our understanding of what a transformational dialogue actually sounds like and to practise this ourselves so that we are also 'patterns and examples'.

We know that European Quakers have many concerns. We can't work on them all. We have tried to identify those where we can bring a distinctive voice and approach and where there is potential for change in European institutions and perceptions in Europe more generally. However there are

some key issues for Quakers where we will keep a watching brief in Europe and where we will add a Quaker voice individually or through networks where we can. These are:

- The right to conscientious objection
- Long-term work towards lasting peace in Ukraine
- Challenging the arms trade and increased militarisation

We have received impressive presentations from our staff team on their work since the last GA.

Staff recognise the need to rebuild institutional memory and to this end the team have been active in engaging within the civil society space, such as with the Conference of INGOs and the Human Rights & Democracy Network. Events have also been hosted at Quaker house with a range of local and regional organisations.

We heard that the 'Storytelling from the Frontlines' publication was launched in March 2023 with an online event and that dissemination is ongoing. We value these powerful testimonies collected from different contexts, which illustrate the intersection between climate change, climate justice, militarism and human rights.

We recognise that there is substantial deficit in the current budget and QCEA is in urgent need of additional funding to implement its strategy. We are excited by the direction of QCEA as outlined in the strategic plan and by the energy of the staff team in supporting us to develop this.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Ford', with a horizontal line underneath.

Martin Ford

Clerk QCEA General Assembly

1 April 2023

Quaker Council for European Affairs, Square Ambiorix 50 - 1000 Brussels, Belgium

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19 June 2022
Canby, OR

Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, above all else, let us guard -keep with all diligence- and watch over our hearts because from our hearts the springs and issues of life, everything we do, flows. [an amplified version given as vocal ministry this morning]

To all Friends everywhere:

Greetings from the 5th annual sessions of Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends. A few dozen of us are here at Canby Grove Christian Conference Center to experience that Presence in our midst. We meet together in Christian love, to work and to worship, and to reconnect after two years of COVID restrictions that forced us to use computers, phones, emails, and other distanced ways of gathering. Even this weekend, 20 or more Friends have joined us by Zoom, and we used a hybrid format to welcome these dear Friends from far-flung places including the Philippines, Honduras, and even Ohio. It is sweet to see their faces and names on the monitors, but our hearts hurt that we cannot give them hugs or fist-bumps or walk arm-in-arm. We have no doubt that those of you reading or hearing these words are nodding in sympathy and recognition.

There is a sense among us that we are starting over after two years of COVID. One Friend expressed that we are only 5 years old, so we know our colors, we can count, and we have begun to read. We pondered other metaphors, one a vivid image of the coat-of-many-colors wrapped around a skeleton with bones awaiting a beating heart and life-giving breath. "Now hear the word of the Lord." Yet after our meeting for worship with an eye to business, we attest to a difference, a sense of flesh and blood covering those bones, a beating heart, and the breath of the Spirit blowing into new lungs. Parents report that their children who gathered here have connected and bonded, and that makes us all sit up a little straighter and feel a little prouder of ourselves and our yearly meeting.

During these COVID years our local meetings have lost attenders, and this loss carries over to our yearly meeting. Our committees are mostly functional, but with fewer people sharing the work. Nevertheless we have some weighty decisions on our agenda:

- We are making good progress on a policy to safeguard our children and vulnerable adults. The "abuse prevention working group" has requested a name and status change to "Committee for Safeguarding," borrowing language from Britain Yearly Meeting. They have brought an excellent 22-page draft for our consideration, which we approved.
- Our Equity and Inclusion Committee worked hard in concert with North Pacific Yearly Meeting, and brought us a proposed Minute on Right Relationship with Indigenous People. The minute was approved as presented. We also approved an introduction which will frame this minute and the minute we approved in 2020 in support of Black lives.
- From our beginnings as a collection of Quaker meetings split off from Northwest Yearly Meeting, we knew there would be Friends who wanted to worship and work with us, even as their local meetings needed time to discern their involvement. We also have people with no local membership who are clear they want us as their larger Quaker association. Our bylaws allow these individuals to hold membership at the yearly meeting level. Membership requests come to our Clerks or to our People Care Committee; the Committee brought a recommendation for minor changes in our bylaws to clarify the process and to change a few terms.

We have also lost members who died during the past years, and we held them and their loved ones in our hearts as their names and photos were projected. "The water is wide, I cannot

cross o'er and neither have I wings to fly..." But we do not grieve as those who have no hope, and trust that their spirits have returned to the Creator.

Because we don't have our own Faith & Practice or Book of Discipline, nor have we borrowed such a document from another yearly meeting, some Friends wonder who we are, what we believe, and where we stand. If you still have doubts, consider this conversation one of us had with an Ohio Yearly Meeting (Conservative) Friend some years ago:

Inquirer: "Faye, what do Conservative Friends believe?"

Faye: "If thee would know what Conservative Friends believe, thee must come and spend several months with us, walking and worshiping with us, and then after observing our lives thee would know what we believe."

If you want to know what kind of Quakers we are, and what matters to us, then come and spend some time with us. We fall short, of course, but we aspire to live lives of love, sharing freely the Divine love that resides in each and every one. We assure you that you are not only loved by God, but that you are **wired to love** and that our Creator rejoices when we recognize this fundamental truth.

The only thing that counts is Faith expressing itself in love. Galatians 5:6

Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand. Isaac Penington, 1667

With gratitude to the wider world of Quakers, many of whom sent us words of greeting and have been holding our meeting this weekend in prayer, we offer a poem that arose during this sacred time we savored:

Sunday Morning Covid Protocols

by Derek Lamson, used with permission; 2022

Start with open doors
to the world, and how
it was June. And supposed to be
hot, but drizzled instead, cool.

Open doors, outside airs eddy
across our faces,
eye lashes, upper arms, bared ankles.

We invite you, O Breath of God,
make the hairs on our necks
stand up.

Your Friends in the Truth,
Norma Silliman
Mike Huber

Clerks, Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends

Epistle from the South Central Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

2023 Annual Sessions
4th month, 2nd through 9th days, 2023

Warmest greetings of peace and goodwill to our beloved Friends everywhere,

Friends from Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas met in early Spring in a blended onsite/online fashion near Bruceville, Texas, on lands once cared for by the Waco, Tonkawa, and Kickapoo indigenous peoples. Following the success of the blended format of the 2022 Annual Sessions, Friends in the South Central Yearly Meeting (SCYM) met for a week of worship and fellowship. We gathered with 105 Friends in attendance at these annual sessions. 18 of those joined our sessions online, and 87 joined in person. We welcomed Friends living as far away as New York and Vermont back “home” to South Central Yearly Meeting. One Friend is traveling as we meet and joined our online sessions from Hawaii. Another Friend marked his 60th Yearly Meeting annual sessions, having attended faithfully since he was just one year old. Children in attendance ages 4 to 16 brightened our Spirits. Friends are celebrating the births of two children and two marriages under the care of our monthly meetings. As is certain with the passage of time, we heard memorial minutes for 7 friends who had died within the last year. May their memories be a blessing.

As the global COVID-19 pandemic continues to ease, many Quaker organizations have resumed meeting in-person. Friends represented SCYM to these groups, growing individually, and strengthening the ties of faith and Friendship with the wider Quaker community. Accordingly, Friends of SCYM have shared in joy and gratitude as we listened to Friends recount their experiences fostering new relationships and building community. Friends feel a great sense of gratitude and spiritual nourishment being connected to Quakers near and far.

The highest purpose of any Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends is to know and love God and each other in “that which is eternal.” The Spirit of God, speaking to us through Friend Greg Casillas of the Friends Meeting of San Antonio, delivered the Meeting’s keynote as a reflection on our theme, “Spiritual Refreshment for the Long Haul.” We were asked, “If I am not charged, how can I recharge others?” and Friends were gently and lovingly reminded that it is not selfish to practice self-care as a spiritual exercise. Greg encouraged each of us to ask ourselves, “How does my spirituality serve others with whom I am in community?” Throughout the Yearly Meeting, Friends were led to share ministries during our times of Worship and fellowship. The seed of God within us all was greatly nurtured by workshops, mural-making, and worship sharing.

While we gather amongst the lush greenery and blooming wildflowers of Texas, our hearts still break as war continues to ravage Eastern Europe and in other places of the world with acute violence erupting between Israel, Palestine, and Lebanon. We gather in peace and in love to discern our collective way forward in a world plagued by violence, oppression, disastrous climate change, and human suffering. During this time of struggle, Friends continue to lean on one another as we were reminded by Friend Greg Casillas that, “We have more than one Friend because one Friend can’t do it all for us.” We came together searching for spiritual refreshment so that “our Light may be ever-present and may lead someone out of darkness.” We have faith that the collective and transformative power of love we give to the world will surely be a shining beacon of peace amongst the chaos. Friends minuted their support for establishing and supporting peacemaking dialogue between SCYM and Friends in both Ukraine and Russia. Another topic of concern Friends were led to minute was the establishment and promotion of apartheid-free communities, particularly as it relates to the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Friends further minuted an affirmation of the rights of transgender individuals as a witness to our testimony of equality. After careful discernment and discussion, Friends minuted an affirmation of the necessity of access to safe and legal reproductive healthcare as well as an acknowledgment of the right of individual decision-making. Friends were mindful that, individually, we may have views on this matter that fall all along the spectrum. Friends engaged in a weighty and deep discussion on SCYM’s response to the epidemic of gun violence in the United States. We were unable to reach unity on this matter, but this concern will continue to be threshed by Friends. We pray for

God's guidance, strength, and willingness to follow Spirit in acting on these concerns, knowing that way will open.

Friends give thanks for the work that God and Spirit have ordained. We give thanks for those Friends who have spent countless hours organizing our annual sessions, representing SCYM at other Meetings, and continuing to be in corporate and personal ministry to our communities. At these annual sessions, we are especially grateful for the work of the Faith and Practice Committee. After many years of toiling in the spiritual vineyard, the committee harvested the first fruits of their labors and presented to the Yearly Meeting a first draft of the SCYM Book of Faith and Practice. Over the next year, Friends will season the committee's work and provide feedback on the document. We pray for God to grant us wisdom to discern the leadings of the Spirit as we describe our experiential and experimental faith in writing.

Our constituent monthly meeting in Oklahoma City communicated to the Yearly Meeting their unity in declaring their disaffiliation from SCYM. During our Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business, we acknowledged their declaration of disaffiliation. Friends feel pain and sadness, but we commit ourselves to holding this Meeting and these Friends in the Light. Friends acknowledged in our State of the Meeting report that very few persons of color attend our monthly meetings and harm has been done to persons of color by Friends and our monthly meetings. As was so eloquently stated by our Friends in France Yearly Meeting in their 2022 Epistle, "The power of the Spirit can manifest itself anywhere, even in the face of adversity."

Friend Bill Wilkinson, the presiding Clerk of SCYM, invited Friends to reflect on some ad hoc queries throughout our time together. "What does SCYM look like going forward?" "How has it changed?" "Is SCYM different from when our Friend first attended 60 years ago?" Out of the silence of Worship, one Friend remarked that, "It may not be our organization that lives on, but what will is the way that Friends live their faith." There is no problem that love cannot solve.

We send all Friends much love and every peace in the search for Truth.

Southeastern Yearly Meeting

Quakers in Florida, southeast Georgia & coastal South Carolina
Post Office Box 1062, Saint Petersburg, Florida 33731-1062 • office@seym.org

Epistle 2022

Loving Greetings to Friends Everywhere.

The Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends met for our Annual Gathering at Warren Willis Conference Center, Fruitland Park, Florida, Fourth Month, 13th through 17th, 2022,

Our theme this year, “Welcome as You Are”, was highlighted by our youth – in chalk – on the auditorium entry sidewalk, as we gathered.

Good weather facilitated outdoor activities and we welcomed being back together for the first in-person gathering in two years.

Offering Hybrid Meetings for the first time posed challenges but allowed Friends to join us virtually. Meetings for Business, Worship Sharing, and the Walton Lecture, were available for distant Friends, while those attending in person were required to present vaccination records upon registration, and to wear masks indoors, and distance appropriately.

Sixty-five adults and 12 youth attended in person, and 34 registered to join us online.

In keeping with our theme, intergenerational events included several workshops intended for all ages, and there was a well-attended and diverse Friday night talent show. Cooperative help from parents gave assistance to youth leaders throughout the Gathering.

We presented a robust youth program, ages 8 through high school were with us, though no children younger than eight attended.

We brought with us concerns for state, national, and world events and legislation, and these remained in our minds as we endeavored to step back a bit from these, and to breathe into the Light of Spirit. We approved a minute to strongly recommend resistance to the recent laws passed by the current Florida legislature. The minute is as follows:

22YM05 We are advised, as members of the Religious Society of Friends, of the truth to reach out to that of God in everyone. We endeavor to live out our testimonies in expected and unexpected circumstances of daily life, living in love and learning from one another.

Florida’s recently enacted “Don’t Say Gay” bill, the transgender youth medical care ban, the license to discriminate in health care bill, and the proposed “Stop Woke Act,” are not in unity with our testimonies. This legislation does not come from a place of love, and it inhibits opportunities to learn from one another and puts us in a position of vulnerability because of our practice and call to eliminate ignorance.

SEYM urges Friends to be bold in expressing opposition to this legislation that will deny the right of gender-questioning youth access to compassionate counseling and medical care and prohibits educators from teaching anything about America's past or present which causes discomfort to any student.

Compliance with these laws will seriously inhibit the possibility of love, truth, and reconciliation which are prerequisites to attaining a just society of equals. For this reason, we call Friends and all Floridians to refuse to comply with these laws and to support the organizations, teachers, and physicians who choose to act in opposition to these laws.

APPROVED AS REVISED

Workshops were presented on racial justice, aging and dying well, mystics and laughter, one with our Field Secretary on Earthcare, and one with Friends Committee on National Legislation (which updated us on lobbying and issues in Washington DC), Bible study on The Sermon on the Mount, Spiritual Nurture for Friends, LGBTQ+ concerns, and several other offerings were also included.

Our Walton lecturers, Windy Cooler, of Baltimore Yearly Meeting, and Melinda Wenner Bradley, of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, presented an excellent workshop on welcoming families to our Meetings, and also presented two retreats in which we were encouraged to express that which was in our hearts.

In the Walton Lecture, Friends Windy and Melinda shared reflections on gifts that contribute to family and communities and how we can nurture ourselves and each other.

Our Gathering included activities we have traditionally had at yearly meeting, and some new activities such as Extended Worship, as well as the new challenges that Hybrid Meetings present. We regret being unable to offer the full content of the Gathering to our virtual participants this year but look forward to future in-person gatherings as pandemic conditions ideally continue to ease.

Blessings and Peace to you all, in the Light.
Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

OUR EPISTLE

UGANDA FRIENDS CHURCH [QUAKERS]

35TH ANNUAL GENERAL CONFERENCE

MBALE FRIENDS CHURCH

AUGUST 24-28, 2022

TO ALL FRIENDS EVERYWHERE

Warm greetings from Ugandan Friends in the name of our risen Lord Jesus Christ.

We had a very successful conference at our Uganda Friends Church [Quakers] headquarter, 5 km from Mbale city, along the Mbale-Tororo highway.

We studied God's eternal promise to us through Jeremiah 29:11[a], "For I know the plans I have For You."

The main speaker, Pastor Stephen Wamboka urged the congregants to "make a U-turn for the Lord to help us realise the good plans He has for us..."



We benefitted for deep spiritual & academic content from topics like Mental Health, Leadership & Church Development, Spiritual Gifts, Christian Giving, Resilience & Ministry, Quakers & Technology.

The conference was attended by more than 100 delegates from various regions in Uganda & beyond. We were blessed by delegates from Kenya including FUM/AMO Director, Dr. John Muhanji, FWCC Africa Section Clerk Bainito Kyayongo, Quaker Men International Secretary Joshua Sisei, his wife Emily Sisei [USFW Assistant Treasurer of Nairobi Yearly Meeting - NYM], NYM Chairperson Literature & Publication Commission, Wilhite Mulobi, Kakamega Yearly Meeting, Clerk Paul Kisiangani, General Superintendent Joseph Shamala, Roselyne Amugune [Kakamega YM], Agnetta Injairu [Malava YM], Crispinus Murunga [Malava YM], Isaac Towai [Chevaywa Yearly Meeting], among our other well wishers.

We sincerely appreciate Kakamega YM & Clerk Paul Kisiangani for the kind donation of Bibles [Gideons]. Below...



We sincerely appreciate all Yearly Meetings in Kenya & beyond who supported us in this conference. We appreciate Nairobi YM USWF Assistant Treasurer Emily Sisei for gifting our USFW Uganda leadership with lovely scarfs.



We are especially grateful to the Secretary of the Quaker Men International Joshua Sisei for helping to establish the Quaker Movement in Uganda. Thank you, Dr. John Muhanji for praying & commissioning Uganda's new Quaker men leadership. [Christopher Wabuula-President, Solomon Watibini-Vice President, Alfred Wasike-Secretary, George Wamashiu-Vice Secretary, James Wabwire-Treasurer, Stephen Wamboka-Pastor, Luke Walyaula-Elder, Julius Nambafu-Elder, Stephen Natifu-Elder, Apollo Wopicho-Elder, Francis Wamalia-Elder, Joseph Nyongesa-Elder, Samuel Wefafa-Elder].



Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya
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Our Clerk Emeritus Apollo Wopicho initiated a unique & our typical vote of thanks for our support/kitchen staff led by professional Chef Robert Lumbasi [left in kitenge shirt] including Esther, Esther, Jesse & Sylvia.



Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya
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UGANDA: 35 years later:







We sincerely appreciate all our Friends from the various Regions in the Uganda Friends Church [Quakers] for their contributions to the success of the conference.

Uganda Friends Church [Quakers] is a growing church. We look forward to promoting regions to Yearly Meetings. In this 35th conference we learnt that Bududa Region intends to become a Yearly Meeting. This gives us joy. We look forward to working with them as long as they select a name as long as they are not Uganda Friends Church [Quakers] or Uganda Yearly Meeting because these are historic umbrella names for all Ugandan Friends.

GOD BLESS US ALL

Kuloba Nanson Paul
Kuloba
Presiding clerk



Wasike

**ALFRED WASIKE
GENERAL SECRETARY**