

## **Compiled Epistles from Other Yearly Meetings**

*List of epistles compiled:*

Aotearoa-New Zealand Yearly Meeting	Nordic Yearly Meeting
Belgium and Luxemburg Yearly Meeting	North Carolina Yearly Meeting Conservative
Bohpol Yearly Meeting (India)	Northern Yearly Meeting
Britain Yearly Meeting	North Pacific Yearly Meeting
Canadian Yearly Meeting	Northwest Yearly Meeting
Central European Yearly Meeting	Friends Church of North Carolina (FUM)
Cuba Yearly Meeting	Ohio Yearly Meeting (Conservative)
France Yearly Meeting	Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting
Intermountain Yearly Meeting	Pacific Yearly Meeting
Ireland Yearly Meeting	Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting and Fellowship
Italian Friends Gathering	Southern Africa Yearly Meeting
Lake Erie Yearly Meeting	Western Yearly Meeting
Monteverde Friends Meeting (Costa Rica)	Wilmington Yearly Meeting
Netherlands Yearly Meeting	
New England Yearly Meeting	

## **Compiled Reports from Quaker Organizations and Gatherings**

*List of reports compiled:*

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)  
Asia West-Pacific Section, Friends World Committee for Consultation (AWPS-FWCC)  
Black, Brown, Indigenous and People of Colour Friends (BBIPOC)  
Europe & Middle East Section, Friends World Committee for Consultation (EMES-FWCC)  
Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)  
Jordans Young Adult Friends Gathering (in UK)  
Oxford Young Adult Friends Gathering (in UK)  
Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA)  
Quakers and 'Indian Boarding Schools' Research Network (QIBS)  
Right Sharing of World Resources (RSWR)

Epistles and many of the reports can also be found on the FWCC website at  
[fwcc.world/resources\\_cpt/epistles/](http://fwcc.world/resources_cpt/epistles/)



The Religious Society of Friends –  
Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa New Zealand

**Epistle of the Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa New  
Zealand, Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri**

held at Columba College, Dunedin and online – 10-13 April, 2026

Kia ora koutou, greetings to Friends everywhere.

Ninety-three Friends, including 40 online, gathered at Columba College in Ōtepoti Dunedin.

We were welcomed with a greeting which recognised the divine spirit of love and peace, ko te wairua o te aroha me te rangimarie, and the sky and earth, Ranginui me Papatūānuku. Together they nourish and protect us. We honour and thank the people who hold the mana whenua of this region, Kai Tahu, Kāti Mamoe, and Waitaha.

We gathered with awareness of the turbulence around the world and of Cyclone Vaianu currently threatening our country. This awareness heightened the need for continued action as individuals and in community. We were reminded of the prayer from the 2024 World Plenary Tapestry Document, asking God for the love and courage to hold both pain and possibility in our hearts. We need to focus on both the issues and the Light that reveals them, for it is the Light that gives us hope and points to the necessary action.

In our yearning for peace and justice, we are called to do what we can, wherever we are. During this Yearly Meeting, we learnt again the many forms that our support takes – support of young families, support for those in poverty and in prison, support for young people in their places of possibility as well as support when a clear path opens for in depth study. Our legacy of Quaker funds for active support of people within and beyond our Quaker community give us hope that we can make a difference.

In our review of Yearly Meeting structures, we asked if they are serving our community and whether simplifications could be made that free up time used by administration so that it can be refocussed on our spiritual lives and that of our meetings.

We considered the braided river of our work together, and the ways that relationships can be built by working alongside one another. The value of making person-to-person connections has been a theme throughout. We have heard the ways that building relationships are being prioritised. Quaker Peace and Service Aotearoa New Zealand have been working on relationships with the bodies that receive their grants, to improve support and accountability. One such body, Te Ao o Rongomaraeroa / National Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, told us how they are building relationships with the Māori community to enhance their commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Friends joining Yearly Meeting online have been able to stay after sessions to make connections as we do in person.

The Quaker Lecture this year took the form of a conversation between our Friend Maddy Ash and anthropologist Anne Salmond. Anne told us about the value of experiential learning and learning through relationships. She spoke of complexity science, which seeks to understand the inter-connectedness of everything. She also spoke of the way the Māori world recognises the personhood of the natural world. We can observe and value the relationships among everything in creation in the same way as we value relationships with each other, which are expressed by the Māori word whakapapa. In our meetings we seek to combine the personal and communal sense of the spirit to guide us in our decision-making. We each bring different lenses to our discernment, and our communion brings us to a fuller picture.

When we work together, do we remember to value one another?

Do we leave enough time to recognise the divine spirit of love and peace in everything we do?

In Friendship,

Sue Stover and Carrie Barber, Yearly Meeting Clerking Team

13 April 2026

*Religious Society of Friends*  
*Religieus Genootschap der Vrienden*  
*Société Religieuse des Amis*  
*Religiöse Gesellschaft der Freunde*

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## ***Quakers in Belgium and Luxembourg***

### **Epistle of Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting, 2nd to 4th May 2025**

To Friends everywhere, greetings!

We met in the peaceful surroundings of Chant d'Oiseau, Brussels on Friday evening and felt welcomed into a safe place that allowed us to explore the theme of our Yearly Meeting, which was: "Freedom in a fearful world".

We welcomed representatives from the Yearly Meetings of Britain, Ireland, Germany, and also from FWCC, EMES and QUNO.

Any worries over unfamiliarity that we may have brought with us were quickly dissolved by the carefully planned friendly opening activities and the way in which our linguistic differences were attended to by giving translations, both spoken and written.

On Saturday, after a short Meeting for Worship, Antoinette Van Mossevelde, a teacher and engaged Christian who has worked in different parts of the world, told us of her rich experiences. She distinguished rational fear, which alerts us to real threats; and deep emotional fear, which can be used by the powers that be; and two different dimensions of freedom, both of which Jesus showed us: "freedom from" and "freedom for". We do well to be free from the restrictions of tradition and from inner conditioning; and thus free for the possibly unexpected actions to which the spirit leads us.

A mindful sharing session opened up space to speak of our fears, and the meditative movements of ZhiNeng Qigong helped our awareness of our mind-body-spirit relationship.

Friends from Ghent, part of our Yearly Meeting, introduced their active concern around our Peace Testimony. They wish to raise consciousness, and support others particularly in Eastern Europe, around such themes as freedom for conscientious objection. Different embodiments of the testimony were expressed, and new avenues for action were opened for future consideration. For example, "Walking the second mile" can be understood as more than just being patient or forgiving.

We participated in an activity called "Deep Democracy", which involved hearing many voices and perspectives. There was much lively conversation around how we might use this technique.

Later on, we experienced a session around "embodied worship sharing" practised in German Yearly Meeting. Seated silent worship was mixed in with gentle standing movements. This reminded us that we bring our bodies as well as our hearts and minds to our worship.

We leave with a renewed sense of the importance of embodiment for understanding both our fearfulness, and our freedom to act compassionately towards ourselves and other beings.

Signed: Jeremy Lester, Stefanie De Koker, Nick Rendle, Clerking Circle, 4th May 2025, Brussels  
Submitted by epistle drafting committee: Simon Grant, Carmel O'Hara and Antoine Habiyambere.

**BHOPAL YEARLY MEETING**  
**AMEERGANJ SHAHJEHANABAD BHOPAL M.P.**  
**INDIA**

**EPISTLE**

Loving greetings to Friends everywhere. We gathered to gather with happiness for the Annual Meeting of Bhopal Yearly Meeting on 02<sup>nd</sup> Feb. 2025 in Friends Church Bhopal. We gathered 30 people, including Elders, adults, young adults and children. Friends met each other with a hope that our time together and our decision making be strong in the Quaker Spirit.

In the beginning, we remembered our members, who passed away during 2025 and FWCC Clarke Simon Lamb. Meeting started with reading of heart-warming greetings from FWCC, AWPS, EMES, Philadelphia Y.M. and many Friends individually. We appreciate and thanked them for holding us in the Light.

Our theme was UBUNTU. We came to the conclusion that we must work together for the peaceful world, supporting each other with love and care.

In our business meeting, officials and different committee members presented their reports and approved the activities for the year 2025.

It was happy moment, when new attenders of our meeting, were given the membership of Bhopal Yearly Meeting. New Members were welcomed by the Meeting.

Meeting was closed, thanking God's presence.

Ronald Titus



# Epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting

Held at Friends House, The Frontier Centre in Northamptonshire, and online from 23 to 26 May 2025

Dear Friends everywhere, we send you our love and greetings.

Gyfeillion annwyl ym mhobman, anfonwn atoch ein cariad a'n cyfarchion.

*What is your message of peace for the world?*

*What brings you a sense of inner peace?*

To explore these questions, around 1,000 Quakers met at Yearly Meeting this weekend as an all-age community. We are encouraged that for many this was their first time at Yearly Meeting. The contributions to our discernment from the thriving young people's programmes have lifted our hearts, as have the gurglings of the infant with us in our worship.

Recent Yearly Meetings have focused on Church Governance. We now see ways forward, as we develop structures that we trust will help our shared discernment. This year's agenda is firmly rooted in our historic peace testimony, and we have asked ourselves deep questions about what it means for us today. We have listened in hope, and have opened ourselves to new learning, trusting in the leadings of the Light.

We are reminded that the central message of the New Testament is one of love. We are called to challenge tyranny; and to love everyone, even those who do bad things.

This is an anxious time for the world, even more so now than when we met last year. We have been challenged to welcome, accept, and nurture the radical peacemaker in ourselves and in others. We have also explored how we, as Quakers, address violence and conflict in our communities.

To help our discernment, we have seen a film about the different ways in which Friends are called to bear witness to our Peace Testimony. We have also heard prepared ministry from a number of Friends, including those who have seen violence and oppression at first

hand while giving service in Palestine and Israel as human rights observers. Reflecting on what we hear and read about each day has inevitably stirred deep and painful emotions.

We have spent much time praying about the situation in Gaza. Quakers have a long tradition of speaking truth to power. We have done some heart-searching and some heart-breaking, and our discomfort contributed to deeply gathered worship. We have been moved by the Spirit to speak out. We urge Friends to read the full minute, which has been written in love for all those affected.

This year's Swarthmore Lecture, *A Testimony of Community*, has nourished our discernment. We have spent time in worship considering how we live together in our various communities; there are many things we might do to build peace within them. The work begins by finding peace within ourselves.

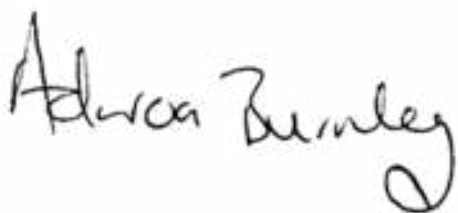
The promptings of love and truth in our hearts are pushing us to step outside our privilege, comfort and security. Can we do this in a spirit of adventure and joy? How radical can we be while retaining tenderness and not doing harm? We each have a different appetite and capability for radical peacemaking; we can all contribute.

We recognise that to secure lasting peace we must address the complex causes of conflict, including poverty and hunger, injustice and distrust, fear and disempowerment. To create a fairer world, we must get better at sharing. In doing this work we remember Jesus' advice to his disciples to be "as wise as serpents, as gentle as doves" (Matt 10:16).

As a final shared activity, many of us who were in London have taken advantage of being together to stand in silent worship around Friends House. We held signs which had messages of hope for world peace on the outside and hopes for personal peace on the inside.

This Yearly Meeting has been one of great joy at meeting each other in the spirit, deep sorrow at conflict in the world, and determination to live out our Quaker witness.

Signed in, and on behalf of, Yearly Meeting

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adwoa Burnley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'A' and a decorative flourish at the end.

Adwoa Burnley, Clerk.

June 2025

Loving Greetings to Friends everywhere.

We cherish this annual opportunity to connect with you across all that separates us, not least geographic divides.

We met this year from June 12 to 15 online for our Annual Canadian Yearly Meeting Gathering. We found a theme emerging of bridge-building: in relation to the work that our Sunderland P. Gardner (SPG) lecturer did in Palestine, in our country's relationship with our American neighbours, and in the way 3 Yearly Meetings came together 70 years ago to unite into Canadian Yearly Meeting. We need to devote ourselves to this endeavour even more in the dark days we are now traversing.

In his lecture Asher Kirchner shared his faith journey as a Jewish Quaker. He described the influences of the Oral Torah and its similarity to the Quaker idea of the Inner Light. Moreover, one of the most frequently repeated phrases in Talmud translates as "peace is the greatest of values", which is not distant from the Quaker peace testimony. Asher was led to do protective accompaniment work in villages in Palestine, organized by the Jewish Center for Nonviolence. We were hearing his words against the backdrop of the escalating violence in the Middle East. He challenged us with the query: What does our Quaker peace testimony call us to do individually and corporately in this time of genocide?

At the follow-up session with Asher, Friends spoke of the connection between ongoing settler colonialism in Canada and the genocide in Gaza, and in what ways here at home, we can alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people.

We were blessed to be joined by many Friends from the United States of America. This Special Interest Group was facilitated by Friends World Committee for Consultation, Section of the Americas. In it we reflected on how the change in the political climate has affected the relationship between our two countries and how we can uphold each other. This year, World Quaker Day has a theme very close to home: Love your Neighbour and Neighbor!

It is 70 years since three Yearly Meetings united in Canada: Canada Yearly Meeting (Five Years Meeting), Canada Yearly Meeting (Conservative) and Genesee Yearly Meeting (General Conference). Our Library and Archives Committee celebrated this anniversary by outlining the causes of the divisions leading to these 3 Yearly Meetings and how the ensuing unification came about.

Central to our time at the Gathering is worshipping together. This takes many forms: Meeting for Worship, Worship Sharing groups that have consistent membership through the Gathering, the Experience of the Spirit in my Life and the Memorial Meeting, with its heartfelt sharing about those Friends who have died, but whose spirits remain with us. During the busy Gathering schedule, these sessions are opportunities to pause and personally experience participation in our Canadian Quaker spiritual community.

No Annual Gathering is complete of course without Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. Our Clerk wrote to our new Prime Minister with our concern about the lack of humanitarian aid reaching Gaza, and the need to seek a just and lasting peace for the people of Israel/Palestine. The excellent clerking, slow, considered, deeply respectful of everyone's Light, even in the face of unexpected objections, was a lesson in itself in being Spirit-led.

As with some of the Yearly Meetings we have heard from, we see a decline in our active membership; many of us are over sixty. Nominating Committee is still seeking Friends willing to serve in roles within the Yearly Meeting. However, we now have more attenders in the lower age ranges who bring energy to their local Monthly Meetings.

Another joy of our Gathering is time with our Canadian Friends Service Committee. CFSC's Indigenous Rights Committee led a session on Reconciliation and Reparations. Jeremy Vander Hoek presented on *Staying True to our Words*. Beginning with a brief history of CYM's written commitment to engaging in the hard work of reconciliation, he took us up to present-day examples of putting those words into action, quoting Rufus Jones on the power of "quiet processes in small circles." Friends appreciated hearing of concrete ways forward with reparations.

John Samson Fellows, CFSC Committee member, and Sandra Wiens, Government Relations Staff, presented about the need for a Guaranteed Livable Basic Income (GLBI). Sandra showed us examples of similar basic income projects and explained that there is a parliamentary committee working on a bill to table appropriate legislation. John shared stories of his students on remand who faced challenges and for whom a GLBI would have been of immense benefit. Friends were encouraged to advocate that a GLBI become a legislative priority.

Learning is also a focus when we come together each year. Friends considered if Quaker Chaplains, whether they work in prisons, universities or hospitals, should be affirmed by Canadian Yearly Meeting. Another group met to share their beliefs and feelings about Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) in a worship sharing format.

At Affinity Groups held for Queer Friends and for Gender Queer Friends, participants and their Allies shared their joy of creating safer Quaker spaces for gender queer folk and their frustration at not always being successful in bringing Quakers more into the fold of supporting safer spaces.

Our Gathering was both shorter than usual and only online and this led to both challenges and opportunities. We miss being together in person and mourn the absence of Friends who find the technology less friendly, but we are thankful to our Program Committee for retaining all the important elements in our schedule and for making this technology as user-friendly as possible. Seeing well-known faces on screen and hearing their voices is always a joy. We appreciate how the technology enables us to worship, learn and build bridges in our Yearly Meeting, in our communities and beyond and we are grateful for the flexibility that Friends show, given that we have 6 time zones!

"Live up to the light thou hast and more will be granted thee."

Caroline Fox 1.13 Faith and Practice – Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

# The Epistle from the Central European Yearly Meeting

## 5-8 June 2025 Terezín, Czechia

To Friends everywhere,

Ahoj, Witajcie, Welcome!

We send you greetings of love and hope from the gathering of the Central European Yearly Meeting, held in Terezín (Theresienstadt), Czechia, both in person and online, from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup> of June 2025.

We met in times that are heavy with uncertainty for Europe and the world. The place where we met - Terezín - carries the memory of great suffering but also is a testament to the endurance of the human spirit.

In this atmosphere, we gathered not in despair, but in search of hope, peace and spiritual fulfilment.

This is still a young Yearly Meeting - and we rejoice in its growth. We welcomed our first 17 Friends into membership this year. This brought a sense of new energy and excitement. With this joy also came a need to explore together how we welcome and accompany those who are new to the Quaker way. What makes someone a Friend? How do we faithfully discern membership in ways that are open and rooted in our tradition?

We turned to early Friends for wisdom, including the example of Margaret Fell, who spoke of the inward experience that makes one a Quaker - not outward signs, but the transformation that comes from hearing and following the voice of the Living Spirit. Her words helped guide our reflections, and we were deeply grateful for the voices of Friends who shared their experience and questions with openness and insight.

We also asked: What helps someone stay after their first Quaker meeting? This led us into conversations about welcome, about clarity of identity, and about how we live our testimonies in ways that are visible and invitational. We continue to seek ways to introduce newcomers to the essence of Quakerism: its stillness, its trust in the inward Light, its commitment to peace, justice, and equality.

The presence of families and young people brought joy and depth to our gathering. Children playing and young people engaging with curiosity reminded us of the life and future of our meetings.

We watched a film about a pianist who lived in the Terezín ghetto. We were moved by the testimony of those who sought to preserve dignity and joy through music even in the darkest of times. We had the opportunity to visit sites of the ghetto memorial and then had time for deep sharing, during which our minds and hearts inevitably turned to the current

situation in Gaza and the wider Middle East. We prayerfully uphold the leadership in the region and the world.

Russian aggression against Ukraine and persecution of conscientious objectors in both countries is a great darkness, requiring a great labour of love to overcome.

We were pleased to hear a report about the pastoral visit of EMES and CEYM to Ukraine and growing interest in Quakerism in the country. We hope to build closer spiritual relations and with time welcome new Ukrainian members.

Throughout our time together, there was a quiet strength in our worship, deep sharing in our discernment, and moments of Spirit-led ministry that held us together across languages and backgrounds.

We leave Terezín with a renewed sense of responsibility: to live faithfully as Friends in our countries and communities, and to be signs of hope wherever we are.

In Friendship and the Light,

Liz Coling and Paweł Milka  
Clerks, Central European Yearly Meeting

Epistle of the 97<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the  
Yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers) in Cuba

Greetings to our friends around the world from the 97th Annual Assembly of the Yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers) in Cuba.

Guided by the theme "A Family United in Mission" and inspired by the biblical passage found in Acts 2:42: "And they decided to live as one great family. And every day the apostles shared with them the teachings about God and Jesus, and they also celebrated the Lord's Supper and prayed together." TLA

We gathered at the Gibara Monthly Meeting and were warmly welcomed by our youth. Filled with joy, we witnessed the church's joy because, despite the challenges inherent in our times, a full year of intense work accompanied by the hand of our good God has been evident. Evidence of this work was the recognition of Brother Luis Carlos Jomarrón Rivero's pastoral gifts, as well as the moving tribute to Pastor Mileydis Batista Sintes, who has reached retirement age after a lifetime of arduous service in the work of Friends.

The messages received during this period invited us to consider what is essential in nurturing spirituality. The passage that guided us led to a minute recognizing the value of the Bridge of Love through the presence of Dover, Portland, Durham, and Providence meetings.

In addition, recommendations were made to promote evangelistic work, encouraged by the text that accompanied the Assembly. Filled with gratitude to the Lord, we were able to hear everything related to the wonderful work carried out by the ICCP throughout this year, work of which we are all part as *a family united in mission*.

May the Lord of love and truth inspire us to be living witnesses of this sentiment.

In the light, Yearly Meeting in Cuba

## EMEYF Spring Gathering 2026 Epistle

From the 28th March 2026, over 50 young friends from across Europe gathered together for a week, in person and online, at this year's European and Middle Eastern Young Friends (EMEYF) Spring Gathering. We arrived in Janowice Wielkie, south-western Poland hailing from Germany, Czechia, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, France, the UK, the US, Ireland, Poland and (traditionally, by Eurovision rules) Australia.

While the temperatures dipped a call came for warmth - more firewood, hot water bottles, stews, blankets for our frozen rooms and communal areas. And with the call they appeared. As the physical warmth grew so too did the worship, community and connection. After many nights of rain came bonfires where talks and songs drifted from political cries to Quaker parodies and personal histories.

The gathering theme this year was Witnessing Borders: Faith, Identity and Conscience. During the week, we approached the topic from many different angles and contexts.



We witnessed borders as dangerous obstacles causing death, suffering and sorrow. The refugee crisis on the European borders came often into the centre of debates and reflections.

However, we also witnessed that many people - including Friends from EMEYF and beyond - try their best to bring a spark of light to the darkness. Namely, a German Friend Katja from CompassCollective shared her work, aiding people crossing the Mediterranean sea. Moreover, we

learned about the refugee crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border and the effort to mitigate the worst outcomes by numerous initiatives, including the We Monitor Collective. We also learned about a Peace initiative led by German Friends to help war refugees and deserters.

In this context, those of us attending in person were grateful we were able to cross borders safely, and were mindful of those who do not have that privilege across the world, and holding

absent friends in the light. We were thankful to be joined online by our friend Muhammad from Gaza who shared his experiences with borders, how they have been violently enforced and how spirituality can reach him. His presence allowed us to truly become European and Middle Eastern Young Friends.

We approached multiple ways of identifying and overcoming borders in and by our Quaker faith and practice. In the session on welcoming community, we were able to hold each other through difficult questions and suffering. Being around children can bring joy, but also complicated emotions for many, and we were grateful for the space where these vulnerable feelings were able to be shared, and deeply heard.

In a post-worship workshop 'What do we believe in?', we had a fruitful sharing of our various views and perspectives on the Quaker's faith and identity. The workshop's outcome turned into a true spiritual renewal and also a little celebration of diversity within Quakerism.

Building a community takes time and effort and often mistakes are made. We are left feeling nourished that we created a space that friends felt able to share with each other individually and through ministry. With new light in our hearts we are going back to our homes and lives, feeling encouraged to live our faith in practice, already looking forward to our next meeting.



Artworks provided by Epistle Committee to accompany the Epistle.

Dear Friends,

The theme of this year's Annual Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in France was "Welcoming (expecting the unexpected)".

Matthew 25:35: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

This epistle is the result of collective discernment using the technique of building on our short spoken ministries, each ministry spinning off one or more words of a preceding ministry.

We gathered at the Jo&Joe youth hostel in Gentilly, a working-class neighbourhood a few steps from the new Quaker House in Paris. Some may have been surprised by the contrast between our silent worship and the throbbing music in the background, while others adapted more quickly: a wonderful opportunity to put the theme of this assembly into practice as soon as we arrived.

What is welcome? We were surprised by the diversity of the theme.

We discovered that the word "welcome" can take on different meanings.

There is a very profound spiritual practice in hospitality. The resident Friend at the Quaker House in Congénies reminded us that the spirit of worship can be present even in everyday tasks such as cooking. Every encounter is an invitation to be present. To welcome is to open oneself to others. An open mind, listening and patience are necessary to give a real welcome. Opening one's door to others is opening the door to the presence of God in each of us. When we welcome others, we welcome the spirit of God within them.

Welcoming means never letting anyone feel excluded. We heard testimonies from our Friends who are seeking to establish a Quaker Centre for migrant women and children in Calais, as well as from our Friend Olo, who presented the work of the Community Support Centre in the Democratic Republic of Congo for women and children affected by the war that has been raging in his country for 30 years. These women and children are healing through sport and by forging bonds.

Yes, welcoming also means offering a place where people feel safe. We heard the report from the *Safeguarding* Committee. We discerned the importance of welcoming everyone, especially the most vulnerable, in safety.

After hearing from our Friends on the ground in Calais, the French Assembly discerned the need to support the Quaker Centre for Migrants in Calais.

Another Friend shared her testimony about disability, reminding us that welcoming can, unintentionally, be discriminatory.

Welcoming is a choice, it is not a question of financial means.

With each encounter, there is an opportunity to receive (with curiosity) by listening and responding with love, without taking refuge in "Quaker silence". A silence behind which we can sometimes hide to escape the difficult choices we must make in our personal approach to welcoming others.

Can we and should we welcome everyone?

If it is the other person I must welcome, should I welcome them without any limits?

The limits I set help me to welcome others and protect myself, because diversity is inevitable. The path is not a straight line but a winding road that brings us back to ourselves.

Welcoming others is a process that allows us to get to know them without prejudice. Our places of worship are spaces that allow us to welcome the emotions of our Friends with kindness and respect.

We must try not to judge and practice listening even if we do not understand. Rejection causes suffering. We must welcome suffering in the world: that of migrants, physical victims and displaced persons. Welcoming people's suffering means showing empathy, but we do not necessarily have to feel another person's suffering to understand it. We do not necessarily have to resolve another person's suffering in order to welcome them.

Understanding another person's suffering requires a great deal of love.

Love is paying attention to the other. Accepting others in their differences is a deep and powerful form of love. And love requires us to accept others and walk together on the path of life in search of peace.

Without trust, we could not welcome others, nor could we be welcomed ourselves.

Trust is not certainty, it is about allowing others to help us grow, and their differences are a source of richness.

What brings us together draws us into our spark of light. And it also encourages us to welcome others on the path, together.

Our young people have enjoyed being with us this year. They have brought us creativity and curiosity. They are our light.

The other who welcomes us can help us find a better path in life.

We are not the other; we become the other in the eyes and mind of another person.

Curiosity and power allow us to avoid remaining locked in dogma and to remain open.

## June 2025 Epistle to all Friends

From **Intermountain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends**, Fort Lewis College, Durango, Colorado, USA

To Friends Everywhere

We send greetings from Intermountain Yearly Meeting (IMYM) Annual Gathering 2025 at Fort Lewis College in southwestern Colorado. Here on a mesa above the Animas River Valley at 6,900 feet, we are close to the San Juan Mountains which still have a little snow on them. The weather has been perfect with warm temperatures and sunshine. The storm clouds here when we arrived have dispersed.

The origin story of the college starts with Fort Lewis, named after a relative of Lewis and Clark fame. The fort closed to become an Indian Boarding School from around 1890 to 1910 and afterwards was developed as a two-year then four-year college. The college is free to a third of the students; they are tribal members from anywhere in the country. During the gathering a few attendees visited a colorful show of Navaho rugs from the college museum's collection. As was related in our 2022 epistle from this location, we need to remind ourselves of "the dominant cultural narratives in this region that have been told without full recognition of its original residents who continue to inhabit and connect with this land".

The theme of our gathering was *Beloved Community: Gathered in Courage and Care*. It gave us three nouns to explore and play with: community, courage and care. However, a second theme emerged from the start: nonviolence. This was an unplanned and powerful topic developed with interest groups and friendly circles.

We started our conversations with storytelling by Elizabeth Freyman about the different gifts people can bring to a meeting. Seated cross legged on the floor and surrounded by the next generation of Quakers she reminded us of the storytelling tradition of native peoples. Elizabeth's quiet, clear voice, the discussion she generated with her wise questions, the inclusion of the children, created a spiritually gathered meeting. The introspection of the respondents, our self-questioning, was unexpected and powerful. "Gifts" is now a word loaded with new meaning for many.

Exploring Beloved Community continued in the worship sharing and two plenary sessions. The planning committee had chosen to ask our own community members to lead the plenaries rather than invite an outside speaker. So instead of being spoken to, attendees were asked for their responses to queries; after we shared our knowledge we broke into small groups for discussion. Many long-time attenders have prioritized worship sharing, and this year we had wonderful opportunities to share. Another gift was the technology of the college that allowed

the on-line attendees to feel really included. Several of them commented how well their small groups had flourished.

In the first plenary session Friends responded to a query on the characteristics of a beloved community. This was followed by a three-person group listening-into-wholeness exercise. In the second session it was suggested that we reword AJ Muste's phrase on peace into "There is no way to beloved community; beloved community is the way". After responding to some queries, we broke into twelve groups to do an exercise on choosing and sharing three words describing community. Both these sharing experiences were deep, opening up fresh thoughts and understandings. This program enabled us to spend our time getting to know each other, to develop new friendships with trust, and grow into a blessed community.

The unanticipated theme of passive opposition started with the five Statements of Conscience we agreed to at the on-line business meeting on May 31. Presiding Clerk, Bruce Thron-Weber, brought it back with his welcoming address. His own connection with the term "beloved community" was with Martin Luther King, Jr.; for him it was further developed by Thich Nhat Hanh. Giving love and caring as a community has always been the Quaker way; today we are called to respond to the injustices happening in our country; we seek to use nonviolence as an action "to defeat injustice, not people."

We had further opportunities to learn about nonviolence. Bruce led a discussion when he shared with us more about Martin Luther King and the building of the community of support among Black people. The nonviolent actions were planned and discussed with lots of training: people were trained not to respond to taunts when they sat at the counters. Building solidarity is essential and today this training is available from several sources. Small cadres of trained people can be more effective than mass unorganized protests. That evening we watched the film "The Third Harmony: Nonviolence and the New Story of Human Nature" produced and directed by Michael Nagler. A third opportunity was given to us on Friday when we discussed "Making Change the Quaker Way". Once again, we did much sharing on what we are afraid of and made suggestions on how our Quaker spirit-led way can lead us to practical actions. Finally, on Saturday a large intergenerational group went with banners to join the No King rally in Durango; in the late afternoon we held our own vigil on the campus.

All along we were aware this was an intergenerational gathering. Many of the younger children's activities were in a room adjacent to the principal gathering room and we could see them through the glass. The younger people joined at the story telling plenary. More children and youth attended than was initially expected, and the family camping experience beforehand was highly successful. The Next Generation Advisory Group has already initiated a parent's chat platform and is recommending the hiring of a youth organizer. At our business meeting



## IRELAND YEARLY MEETING

### RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

Quaker House Dublin, Stocking Lane, Dublin, D16 V3F8

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To Friends Everywhere

It is with uplifted hearts and minds that we send our greetings from Ireland Yearly Meeting 2025. Given the theme of our gathering: 'A Learning Community', it was apt that Friends' School Lisburn, celebrating its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a community of learners, should be the location for Friends from across Ireland and beyond, in person and online, to meet and share together.

James Nelson, who gave our Public Lecture on the subject 'Quakers, learning and education – using the future to rethink the present', reminded us that we are all teachers, and we are all learners. And, over the three days of our gathering, from 25<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> April, through listening, activity and discussion, we discovered just how much scope there really is for us to learn from each other.

That learning takes many different forms but what emerged over Yearly Meeting was a number of common threads. Listening to others' voices was seen as key. Michael Eccles, Executive Secretary of Friends World Committee for Consultation, Europe and Middle East Section, told us how over the course of a week's visit to the Friends' School in Ramallah it was by listening that trust was gradually built up and he was able to learn first hand of the devastating impact of the war in Gaza. There are fears over how children's education is being disrupted and Michael described the lengths that teachers go to in order to ensure that pupils have a safe learning environment.

The 2025 Swarthmore lecturer, Emily Provance, speaking from her 6 years' experience as a Travelling Friend demonstrated how the resolution of conflict surrounding a Kenyan woman accused of financial impropriety only took place after all involved had taken the time to listen to the woman's life story. Only by deep and long listening were understanding and a just resolution possible.

Shane Whelehan of Quaker Service illustrated the listening and collaboration the charity is involved in as it looks to develop service in North Belfast, using the voices in the local community to help discern where there is unmet need. In Geneva, the Quaker United Nations Office provides a space where Diplomats from many countries can engage in off the record over dinner conversations, listening and learning from each other in a quiet, non-judgemental space.

Over the course of the weekend, we were called upon to listen as well. We had asked representatives from the Quaker Schools in Ireland about what we could do to support their schools and in a practical session they identified a number of steps that we can take to support and promote the Quaker outreach that our schools provide. What we have learned through listening we now need to put into action.

**Website:** [www.quakers.ie](http://www.quakers.ie)    **Facebook:** [QuakersIreland](https://www.facebook.com/QuakersIreland)    **Bluesky:** [@QuakerIreland](https://bsky.app/profile/@QuakerIreland)    **Instagram:** [quakersireland](https://www.instagram.com/quakersireland)

Our focus in our session with Alison Tarpey-Black from Britain Yearly Meeting was on how we can support our Meetings to thrive. We were uplifted listening to the positive story that Alison told, considering how we might make ourselves more visible and be more flexible in our practices to, for instance, attract young families who have so many calls on their time on a Sunday morning.

Alison reminded us that this period of global disruption really is the time to reach out to the many young people who are looking for answers and to show them that this is not the world that we wish them to inherit. The Society of Friends, she told us, is as unique today as it was 400 years ago; a group of both contemplation and action.

There was a large and vibrant gathering of Young Friends at Yearly Meeting and we were reminded of how much we can gain when we create space for their guidance and leadership. They prompted all of us to action with a Meeting for Worship for Movement and an interactive session in which we played games, got competitive, tried to collaborate, engaged in inspiring debate on topics from pacifism to the death penalty and simply had fun. Young Friends also led a candlelit Epilogue raingame on the first night. It was with delight that we partook in this shared exuberance!

As we listened and learned from each other, what was produced was a sense of encouragement and hope as we look forward. It was appropriate that James Nelson should have focused in his public lecture on how we think about the future. James suggested that the readiness to think differently as we look ahead opens each one of us to transformative learning, releasing us from our previous assumptions and freeing us all to think and act in new ways.

As a learning community we are guided by these words:

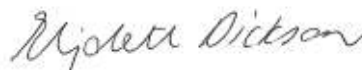
*'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free'* John 8:31-32

**Signed on behalf of Ireland Yearly Meeting,**

William Haire, Clerk

Handwritten signature of William Haire in cursive.

Elizabeth Dickson, Walsh, Assistant Clerk

Handwritten signature of Elizabeth Dickson in cursive.

Clodagh Davis, Assistant Clerk

Handwritten signature of Clodagh Davis in cursive.

Susie Harty, assistant in writing the Epistle

Handwritten signature of Susie Harty in cursive.

Mountain Friends Camp former attendees and adults told of their joy attending the camp and encouraged IMYM to increase its financial support.

The business meetings were shorter this year and the evening entertainment as long as usual. We have completed our time together with a strong feeling of a community covered by the Spirit that we trust to guide us in the challenging world we must live in as Quakers.

Signed on behalf of Intermountain Yearly Meeting, USA

Bruce Thron-Weber

Presiding Clerk

**Epistola dall'Incontro Annuale dei Quaccheri in Italia, 25-27 luglio 2025**  
“ Umiltà , gentilezza e coraggio: strumenti di pace”

**Epistle from the Annual Gathering of Quakers in Italy: July 25-27, 2025**  
“ Humility, Kindness and Courage: Instruments of Peace”



**Agli Amici ovunque** (English version follows)

L' **Incontro Annuale dei Quaccheri in Italia nel 2025** svolto presso **Casa Guiscella** nell'Appennino tra Bologna e Firenze. Hanno partecipato 16 Amici e simpatizzanti in presenza, compresi gli ospiti dalla Slovenia, dall'Irlanda e dalla Svizzera, mentre quattro persone si sono collegate online: due dalla Svezia e due dall'Italia (una da Monza e una dall'Abruzzo). Il tema del Raduno era “ **Umiltà , gentilezza e coraggio: strumenti di pace.**”

Abbiamo ammirato la casa dell'Amico **Andrea Guidotti** con le sue travi in legno, i muri rustici e la torretta: una dimora di campagna costruita nel 1500 e completamente restaurata dalla sua famiglia negli anni '60. Con l'aiuto delle **Cucine Popolari bolognesi** (un'organizzazione di 4 soup kitchens) **Marta Isola Guidotti, il marito Mohammed Kapi, e Fancesca Guidotti** hanno fornito un ottimo cibo.

La nostra prima sera siamo stati accolti calorosamente da Andrea e dalla sua famiglia. Abbiamo condiviso le nostre speranze per il fine settimana, parlando anche dei nostri animali preferiti (come la tartaruga marina e la sua capacità di sopravvivere alle difficoltà). È stato incoraggiante sentire che molti Amici credono che il Raduno Annuale sia un'occasione per parlare apertamente e onestamente dei conflitti globali. Abbiamo anche rinnovato la nostra convinzione comune che “ci sia qualcosa di divino” in ogni persona, una fonte continua di coraggio, nonostante la disperazione di fronte ad alcuni eventi mondiali.

Il sabato mattina è iniziato con un breve Incontro. Amico **Marco Gallarino** ha guidato online il tema **Darwinismo Sociale** che il sociologo Herbert Spencer ha giustificato la competizione naturale fra individui e nazioni, proponendo la sopravvivenza delle nazioni e delle persone più adattate e la eliminazione dei più deboli. Questo ha giustificato politiche, razziste, coloniali ed eugenetiche nel quadro del positivismo ottocentesco. Questa spiegazione determinista e materialista della realtà oppressiva pretendeva di essere scientifica e giustificava un meccanismo di selezione naturale all'interno della società umana, sostenendo che il tentativo di correggere disuguaglianze interferiva con la legge naturale. Il neoliberalismo con la visione inumana e sbagliata di una società dove prevale il diritto del più forte ha avuto il sopravvento.

**You sef Hamdou** nà figlio adottato in età adulta dall'Amica **Lu cia Biondelli** di Rimini, ha parlato (in un video) dell'oppressione e della morte per fame in **Gaza** (dove lui viveva) che ci riguarda tutti. Lucia ci ha raccontato la storia sua e della sua famiglia e l'utilizzo della fame per distruggere la coesione sociale del popolo palestinese. Si tratta di una guerra contro l'umanità che cerchiamo di contrastare. Amico **Fabian Lang** ha sottolineato l'importanza di scambiarsi le opinioni su quello che possiamo fare. Yousef con EducAid ONG ha organizzato un centro mobile per disabili in Gaza, il centro che era stato costruito è stato completamente distrutto. I palestinesi sono stati disumanizzati nell'immaginario israeliano. Un famoso giornalista di *Haaretz* ha scritto del progetto di pulizia etnica in atto nella striscia di Gaza. Fabian ha spiegato come il suo lavoro nel carcere di Bologna ha dato un piccolo contributo in una situazione assai compromessa. C'è stata una discussione, abbiamo idee differenti: è possibile dare il nostro piccolo contributo per questa situazione catastrofica in Medio Oriente, oppure sono necessarie robuste soluzioni politiche e militari?

Nel pomeriggio di sabato Amica **Jasmine Piercy** ha aperto la sua conversazione con una lettura dal testo **Advices and Queries** dei Quaccheri britannici, numero 42 — chiedendoci in che modo possiamo essere strumenti di pace verso tutte le specie. Ci è stato ricordato che, anche in tempi come questi, il nostro trattamento degli animali riflette ciò che siamo come società. Jasmine ha condiviso la sua collezione museale intitolata **"Sold Out"**— 25 oggetti realizzati con prodotti di origine animale (scarpe di pelle, borse in pelle di coccodrillo, binocoli in avorio...) Abbiamo esaminato la nostra percezione degli animali come *merci* e ci siamo interrogati su come onorare la vita che ogni animale ha vissuto.

Amico **Mauro Bonaiuto** con sua moglie **Dalma**, hanno guidato una sessione che ha esplorato il tema del *ri-incanto*, cioè di una **nuova connessione tra natura e società**, attraverso **spiritalità e il quaccherismo**. Sono stati citati, tra gli altri, **Weber, Latouche, Haddad, Foucault e Illich**. Mauro ha presentato le riflessioni di un gruppo interessato all'ecologia e alla decrescita. La ricerca di spiritualità laica può essere alimentata dalla convivialità, dall'autonomia e dalla cura di sé e della natura.

Amica **Kaya Van der Horst** venuta da QUNO Ginevra per condurre con noi un dialogo sulla sezione dei **Diritti Umani delle Nazioni Unite** e sul **lavoro QUNO**. La missione di QUNO è quella di far sì che le persone si connettono a livello personale prima che inizi il dialogo di diplomazia "sottovoce" (quiet diplomacy) confidenziale. Il gruppo ha condiviso le proprie percezioni sulle attività e sui limiti delle Nazioni Unite. Abbiamo ascoltato una panoramica sui programmi di QUNO riguardanti i rifugiati, il clima, l'economia sostenibile e la pace e i diritti umani, e anche sul sostegno offerto agli obiettori di coscienza.

Nel corso del Meeting for Worship for Business ibrido, abbiamo sentito gli aggiornamenti sulla vita dei due gruppi di culto: di Firenze dalle **Amiche Kirsten Hills e Julia Holloway** di Roma dall'**Amico Ulisse Di Corpo**. I Membri del Meeting di Bologna e i Membri isolati di Milano e di Bergamo hanno espresso la loro continua solidarietà e sostegno. **Amica Joyce Steijner** ha chiesto informazioni sullo stato della nostra lettera all'Ambasciata britannica a Roma, riguardante l'irruzione della polizia nella Quaker Meeting House di Londra (Westminster); faremo un follow-up.

- Abbiamo accettato l'invito di EMES a collaborare, anche dal punto di vista logistico, all'**Incontro Annuale regionale di EMES della primavera del 2027**, suggerendo le date da **giovedì 15 a domenica 18 aprile 2027** a Bologna. Cinque Amici di Bologna, Firenze e Milano hanno confermato il loro sostegno attivo.
- Il prossimo **Incontro Annuale dei Quaccheri in Italia** sarà da **venerdì 24 a domenica 26 luglio 2026**. Siamo stati calorosamente invitati a tornare a Casa Guscella e siamo grati a Andrea e Francesca per il loro generoso invito.
- Il prossimo **Meeting for Worship for Business** sarà **domenica 31 agosto 2025** alle 19:00.

In conclusione, un Incontro di Culto (ibrido); infine, ci siamo salutati e ci vedremo l'anno prossimo.

A nome dei Quaccheri in Italia,

**Jeannette Tien-Wei Law**

Segretaria/Clerk

25-27 luglio 2025

To Friends Every where...

The **2025 Annual Gathering of Quakers in Italy** was held at **Casa Gu scella** in the Apennine hills between Bologna and Florence. Sixteen Friends and attendees participated in person, including guests from Slovenia, Ireland and Switzerland, while four Friends joined online: two from Sweden and two from Italy (one from Monza and one from Abruzzo). The theme of the gathering was “ **Humility , Kindness and Courage: Instruments of Peace**”

We admired the home of our Friend **Andreas Gu idotti** with its wooden beams, rustic walls, and small tower — a country house built in the 1500s and fully restored by his family in the 1960s. With the help of **Cu cine Popolari Bolognesi** (an organization of four soup kitchens), **Marta Isola Gu idotti** her husband **Mohammed Kapi**, and **Francesca Gu idotti** provided us with excellent food.

On our first evening, we were warmly welcomed by Andrea and his family. We shared our hopes for the weekend, and also talked about our favorite animals (such as the sea turtle and its ability to survive hardship). It was encouraging to hear that many Friends see the Annual Gathering as a space to speak openly and honestly about global conflicts. We also reaffirmed our shared belief that “there is that of God in everyone” — a continuous source of courage, even in the face of despair over world events.

Saturday morning began with a short Meeting for Worship. **Marco Gallarino** led an online session on **Social Darwinism** explaining how the sociologist Herbert Spencer justified natural competition among individuals and nations, promoting the idea that the strongest survive, while the weakest are eliminated. These ideas were used to justify racist, colonial, and eugenic policies within the 19th-century framework of positivism. This deterministic and materialist view of oppressive reality claimed to be scientific, supporting a “natural selection” within human society and arguing that efforts to correct inequality interfered with the laws of nature. Neoliberalism, with its inhumane and flawed vision of a society where the strongest prevail, has since taken hold.

**Yousef Hamdou n** the adult-adopted son of Friend **Lucia Biondelli** of Rimini, spoke (in a video) about the oppression and starvation in **Gaza** where he had lived — a crisis that affects us all. Lucia shared the story of her family and the way hunger is being used to destroy the social cohesion of the Palestinian people. This, she said, is a war on humanity — one we seek to resist. Friend **Fabian Lang** emphasized the importance of exchanging ideas about what we can do. With the NGO **EducAid** Yousef had helped set up a mobile centre for disabled people in Gaza. The original centre was completely destroyed. He described how Palestinians have been dehumanized in the Israeli imagination. A prominent journalist from *Haaretz* wrote about the ongoing ethnic cleansing project in the Gaza Strip. Fabian described how his work in Bologna’s prison system is a small contribution in a deeply compromised situation. A discussion followed, with Friends expressing differing views: *Can we make even a small difference in the face of this Middle-Eastern catastrophe, or are stronger political and military solutions necessary?*

On Saturday afternoon, Friend **Jasmine Piercy** opened her session with a reading from *Advices and Queries* #42 from Britain Yearly Meeting — asking how we might be instruments of peace for all species. We were reminded that, even in times like these, our treatment of animals reflects who we are as a society. Jasmine shared her museum project titled “ **Sold Out** ,” which features 25 objects made from animal products (leather shoes, crocodile-skin handbags, ivory binoculars...) We examined our views of animals as commodities and reflected on how we might honour the lives those animals once lived.

Friend **Mauro Bonaiuti** with his wife **Dalma**, led a session exploring the theme of **re-enchantment** — the idea of reconnecting nature and society through spirituality and Quakerism. Thinkers such as **Weber, Latouche, Hadot, Foucault** and **Illich** were referenced. Mauro presented reflections from

a group focused on ecology and degrowth. The search for lay spirituality can be nurtured through conviviality, autonomy, and caring for both oneself and nature.

Friend **Kaya Van der Horst** from **QUNO Geneva** came to lead a dialogue on the **UN Human Rights** section and the work of QUNO. The organization's mission is to enable people to connect on a personal level before engaging in confidential "quiet diplomacy". The group shared their views on the activities and limitations of the UN.

We received an overview of QUNO's programs focused on **refugees, climate, sustainable economies, peacebuilding, and human rights**, including support for **conscientious objectors**

During the hybrid **Meeting for Worship for Business** we received updates on the life of two worship groups: in **Florence** from **Friends Kirsten Hills and Julia Holloway** and in **Rome** from **Friend Ulisse Di Corpo**. Members of Bologna Meeting and isolated Members from Milan and Bergamo expressed their ongoing solidarity and support. **Friend Joyce Steijn** inquired about the status of our letter to the British Embassy in Rome, regarding the police invasion of Quaker Meeting House in London (Westminster). We will follow-up with a Quaker Embassy contact in Rome. In addition:

- We accepted the invitation from **EMES** to collaborate, including logistically, in hosting the regional **EMES Annual Meeting in Spring 2027** proposing the dates **Thursday, April 15 to Sunday, April 18, 2027, in Bologna, Italy**. Five Friends from Bologna, Florence and Milan affirmed their active support.
- The next **Annual Gathering of Quakers in Italy** will be held **Friday, July 24 to Sunday, July 26, 2026**. We have been warmly invited back to Casa Guscella, and are grateful to Andreas and Francesca for their generous invitation.
- The next **Meeting for Worship for Business (M4W4B)** will be **Sunday, August 31, 2025, at 7:00 pm online**.

We concluded with a hybrid Meeting for Worship and farewells — until next year.

Signed on behalf of Quakers in Italy,

**Jeannette Tien-Wei Law**, Clerk  
July 25–27, 2025



## Lake Erie Yearly Meeting Epistle

*Sixth Month 12–15, 2025*

Beloved Friends everywhere: Grace to you and peace from God.

One hundred seventeen Friends from Meetings and Worship Groups in Michigan, Ohio, and western Pennsylvania returned with joyful anticipation to the campus of Ashland University in Ashland, Ohio, for our sixty-third Annual Meeting. Here for our third year, this location feels ever more like home. In-person attendees settled quickly into our daily routine, as our location again provided great support for our business, workshops, worship, and evening activities. New practices helped on-line attendees connect with greater ease for business and plenary sessions.

With the painful separation of the COVID years behind us, Friends were very thankful for this precious time to gather, renew long-standing connections, and welcome newcomers. We showcased a display of “puzzle pieces”, each created by a constituent meeting or worship group, that described some of the characteristics we bring to the yearly meeting as a whole. All ages—from youth to adult programming—experienced immediate abundance of Light; togetherness was love beyond imagination. These connections carried qualities of grace, and yet we are thankful for the intentionality needed to lay a groundwork of safety and acceptance. We are dedicated to continuing to build and extend that culture in addition to relishing its fruits.

In many ways, a sense of abundance blossomed among us. We were enriched by the presence and Spirit-led activity of an increased number of children and older young Friends, and one newborn who provided frequent, and welcome, ministry. Our business was completed without significant difficulty or challenge. Our finances remain stable and adequate for our work. Our newly re-formed Peace and Justice Committee reported an active year of work and plans for the next year. Friends responded to calls for Yearly Meeting service for the coming year; cared for our newborn during business and plenary sessions; were generous with donations and gifts of service during our gathering (carrying trays in the dining hall and writing summaries of workshops, for instance); and gracefully adjusted to a bit of rain and minor changes to our schedule.

We gathered around the theme of “Mending our Nets: The Power of Becoming Whole.” Friends, we entangle our lives with others. In so doing, we become a robust whole, like knots of cord

becoming a net. This form lets us gather joys and collect sorrows, knowing that none is meant to be dealt with alone.

We considered how we respond to the tears in our nets. How can we transform conflicts in our relationships? How can we become whole in the face of death in our community? In our plenary session, Pamela Haines acknowledged the impulse to throw out the broken and buy its replacement. Though replacement is possible for the material at the human-scale, we are called to a mending ethos. Repair is often the only choice—there is no replacement for our Earth or our social net. We have little loving choice but to mend what has frayed. We can darn heels and tie ourselves anew to others in a loving net. It is our mutual responsibility. Mending society relationship-by-relationship is establishing God's Kingdom—it is creation caring for itself. Pamela reminded us not to think only of large-scale rips in our social net, but to tend to mending in our daily actions and choices and our relationships with family, friends, and not-yet-friends. But mending of nets must begin with grieving what has been lost, while also celebrating those sections that remain vital and supportive.

Along with love and connection for each other, we carried constant awareness of the deep gravity of this historical moment—the unprecedented and accelerating erosion of democratic, environmental, and social norms and protections in the United States. We are heartbroken when we consider the consequences of these trends for ourselves and future generations. During our meeting, the crisis provided an opportunity for public witness. Many Friends peacefully expressed our objections at a Quaker vigil on the campus, the local branch of a national “No Kings” rally against autocratic rule, and in worship to hold those who participated in the Light. Our Bible Study sessions reminded us that early Friends also wrestled with despair when they saw the promise of God’s kingdom on earth fade into political chaos and human oppression. These Friends learned to look for blessing and spiritual strength “at home” or within themselves, regardless of external trends.

We carry wounds and experiences that diminish our confidence in responding as Quakers to these crises. We are primed with stories of ways our meetings have not been able to navigate conflict and places where our personal connections have broken and failed us, even with people we knew, loved, and trusted. At the same time, workshops and movies illustrated powerfully how people such as ourselves can model courage and use existing tools to create peace and social change. We hold both this fear and this potential, as well as hard-won personal lessons that guide us towards wholeness: fully experiencing our grief to release old expectations, learning we can love people whose thoughts or behaviors we see as wrong.

We have been recalled to a greater obedience that frees us from worldly obedience—not obedience to scarcity mindsets, individualism, and fear. We can summon personal and collective power to address the world, and claim the irrevocable power to live richly in connection, and to love each other well.

Friends, we left this Meeting refreshed and renewed for the Spirit-led work, small and not-so-small, in the coming year, grateful that we will return to Ashland again. We know that you are addressing many of the same challenges that grip us. As your nets rend and fray, we pray that you will share openly your grief, that you will be called to mend, and that you will rejoice in your propensity to be woven into wholeness.

*Written for the sake of that Spirit who has moved through*

The Epistle Committee:

Jack Smith,

Jonah Brownfain,

Susan Loucks, &

Alexa Kay

Signed

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joe Mills". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the word "Signed".

Joe Mills, clerk

Greeting to Friends everywhere.

*“How has Spirit been faring with Thee in the last year?”*

The trail through the forest to her friend's house curves around old growth trees. As she passes one she hears a profound crack and then another. Stopping to listen for the anticipated branch falling, she hears nothing. After quickly passing the spot an enormous vine tree crashes down in the forest after its roots had broken, not only disturbing her but neighboring trees, leaving a gap in the woods.

Disturbance, by its very nature, invites change. The gap in the forest community allows new trees needing light and space to begin to grow. Our human community is no different.

Disturbance in a system brings challenges that can open us to creative solutions. We have reached a turning point in our school-meeting relationship and are struggling to make major decisions regarding the future of Monteverde Friends School. To that end we have hired a consultant to help us with strategic planning. We are deeply grateful for outpouring of financial support for rewiring our buildings as required by the Ministry of Health.

To help us meet each other at a deeper level the Meeting has made a fresh start at spiritual sharing groups. In recent years several spiritual sharing groups have been constant although COVID put a pause on meetings for a time. Lately the Meeting has formed new groups that hold specific topics on which to focus. A recent high school project of exploring personal spiritual journeys has inspired participation and reflection for Meeting members.

Disturbance in world political systems has created more challenges for Peace and Social Concerns Committee. Fundraising was very successful this year and two grants were received enabling projects providing meals and shelter for migrants. While northern migration has almost stopped Costa Rica accepted and received flights of people forcibly removed from the United States. The committee worked with Meeting as a whole to issue a bilingual statement asking the Costa Rican government to inform the public about the status of human rights protection and to step up and protect those rights. Eventually the government granted humanitarian status and three-month visas to those affected.

We welcome new members, Lois Carter Crawford, Paul Angell, and, most recently, Tom and Jean Cox, all of whom have already been active in the life of Meeting.

With the help of dear friends and family, one of our “originals” has published her memoirs, [Living with Lucky](#). We are inspired by her gentle, loving philosophy and grateful for her stories.

The gap in the forest begins filling with fast growing plants in competition for the light. Just think what can grow in that little space of light! What species will prevail?

The epistle committee: Judy Witt, Helena Guindon, Ran Smith, Lois Carter Crawford

Harriet Joslin, Clerk

Tim Curtis, Recording Clerk

Monteverde Friends Meeting

## Nederlandse Jaarvergadering

### Netherlands Yearly meeting Epistle 2026

Dear Friends

From May 8–10, we gathered at the Naturefriends House ‘De Bosbeek’ in Bennekom with some 50 Friends, including guests from Belgium, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, and Sweden.

We welcomed new Friends and remembered those we have lost.

Our theme was ‘Speaking Truth to Power’. During the introduction, we heard about the American Quaker Rufus Jones, who connected the mystical experience of God to action in the world.

Early Quakers sometimes faced kings and judges. We are rarely confronted so directly with authorities, but rather with other people who stand above us, as well as with systems that perpetuate inequality.

How do we, as Quakers, deal with this? We discussed this in base groups, which often took place outdoors because the weather was sunny.

We heard about the work of the Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) and the Quaker United Nations Office in Geneva (QUNO), and about the practical implementation of this work. The epilogue focused on ‘letting go’ and placing trust in one another.

At this Annual General Meeting, it was decided to entrust the sale of the Vossiusstraat property to the relevant committees. We also decided to continue supporting Charles Tauber, a member of Netherlands Yearly Meeting who works in Croatia for the Coalition for Work With Psychotrauma and Peace (CWWPP).

From Brussels and Geneva, we heard about the reinstatement of conscription. QCEA and QUNO are working with Quiet Diplomacy, among other methods, to promote alternative security and respect for the rights of conscientious objectors. It was encouraging to hear how in these uncertain times, the work on peace, dialogue, and human dignity continues.

This gives us hope in the good forces at work in the world.

We were inspired by the poem by Emily Dickinson:

‘Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul.  
And sings the tune without the words  
and never stops at all.’

So let us keep hope.

In Friendship and Unity

On behalf of Netherlands Yearly Meeting

Peter Spreij (Clerk)



NEW ENGLAND  
YEARLY MEETING  
OF FRIENDS  
QUAKERS

To Friends Everywhere,

Loving greetings from the 365th annual Sessions of the New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends. From August 1 to 6, 2025, we gathered for the first time on the campus of the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, as well as over Zoom, and we humbly recognize that the lands on which we met are the unceded homelands of the Pocumtuc Nation. 420 adult Friends as well as 69 children and youth gathered here in the valley of the Long River (the Connecticut), with 116 Friends joining us over Zoom. We were especially glad to welcome 67 newcomers to our annual Sessions!

Our theme this year was “Streams in the Desert” (Isaiah 43:19). This theme has felt deeply relevant to us and has been woven through our worship and conversations. With the sorrow and concern that we carry, many Friends feel that we are living in a desert. Yet Friends feel called to stand against injustice and sense a readiness for our community to take action. And we need to find those streams that will replenish our souls.

Kirenia Criado Pérez of our sister yearly meeting in Cuba joined us as our Bible Half Hour speaker. Kirenia serves as pastor of the Friends church in La Habana and as a professor at Matanzas Theological Seminary. Kirenia spoke powerfully to us on our theme as she invited us to join her on a journey through the desert, reminding us that God’s map seldom takes the easy route. And she noted that, when God brought the Hebrew people out of Egypt, they also had to remove Egypt from their hearts, reminding us that while most colonial empires have ended today, we continue to struggle to remove empire from our own hearts.

Our plenary speaker was Gretchen Baker-Smith of Westport Friends Meeting. Gretchen has worked for many years nurturing youth and adults throughout New England Yearly Meeting and beyond, and is beloved as a bastion of the youth programs that have long been such an important part of NEYM. She spoke to us of the grief that many of us are feeling today but reminded us to hold on to what remains constant and what grounds us. We are called to be faithful, not perfect, successful, or even effective. Hope, she said, is how we balance the awfulness, pain, suffering, and grief, with the Love and Joy. Our challenge is to be present to the awfulness, but not forgetting where the watering holes are that we need. She offered us some words to keep in our toolbox: “What do you need?” “What can I do to help?” “Thank you for being here!”

Our musical plenary was provided by Kim Moberg, from the Tlingit people of Alaska, who shared with us her suite of songs called “The Seven Fires Prophecy: Suite

for Humanity,” which is based on a legend of the Anishanaabe peoples. She closed with her belief that all races and peoples of Turtle Island will learn to live together because “we are one,” and “our superpower is love.”

We came together with spirits again heavy with the loss of life in Gaza, and we are also burdened this year by the harm to cherished friends, neighbors, and community members by unjust policies of the current administration of our nation regarding immigrants and transgender and other LGBTQIA+ people. We heard a call to act to help at-risk people in our communities. Through a number of gatherings for Worship Sharing we have voiced our despair over the genocide occurring in Gaza as its people are being displaced, starved, and killed, struggling simply to survive the continuing attacks on their land and communities. We also heard a powerful message from Rania Maayeh of Ramallah Friends School describing the resilience of the students and teachers in facing incredibly difficult conditions under military occupation. We look for hope and ways that we as a community and as individuals can act to help alleviate the suffering and recognize the human dignity of the Palestinian people.

Both here and in many other countries we see these and other deep challenges to Friends' Testimonies. As we gathered together as a body of New England Friends, we have sought directions for our community to address these challenges, sharing ways to move beyond our despair through individual acts and group efforts in love and service. We have been reminded of Friends' long history of standing with those experiencing great losses to help alleviate their suffering and despair, and we have asked what we are called to today.

Our Quaker Indigenous Boarding School Research Group has completed the painful research that they were tasked with in 2022, and the group has now been laid down. Now it is time for the Yearly Meeting, monthly meetings, and individual Quakers to use what we have learned as we move forward with the work of retrospective, reparative justice and of building right relationships with our Indigenous neighbors. As we embark on this next phase of the work with our Indigenous neighbors, we are also reminded of the unfinished reparative work NEYM still has before us with African Americans and other marginalized peoples. We will endeavor to do this with humility and a consciousness of past mistakes.

Throughout our time together we have been reminded that our work in the world as Quakers must be motivated by careful attentiveness to the will of the Divine, not by human fear and anger. We know that we must move from a foundation of faith and love, and find hope and joy in the presence of Spirit. The Living Water is a stream which sustains and guides us. Through it we hope to be the hands of God and become

streams in the desert ourselves, bearing waters of hope and comfort to others who need them.

Let us recall the words of Isaiah (43:19 NIV) from which our theme this year was drawn:

See, I am doing a new thing!

Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.

Kirenia explained that God is advising us, here, not to get stuck in grieving for the past, but to learn to live in the desert and to build, with hope, a better future. We *can* do this, as Kim Moberg said, because “Our Superpower is Love!”

Yours In Peace, Love, and Light,

New England Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. Rebecca Leuchak". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rebecca Leuchak, Presiding Clerk

# **Epistle from the Nordic Yearly Meeting Gathering held in Stavanger, Norway, from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2025**

Dear Friends everywhere, kjære Venner over alt, kära Vänner över allt, kære Venner over alt, rakkaat Ystävät kaikkialla, we send you our love and greetings.

From the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> of July, 88 participants from 12 countries gathered at Solborg Folk High School, Stavanger, Norway, for the Nordic Yearly Meeting Gathering 2025 where Friends from Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden Yearly Meetings as well as visitors from other countries met. This year we centred ourselves around the question of “How can we strengthen the Nordic Quaker Community”. We also observed the fact that this year the Swedish society of Friends can celebrate its 90<sup>th</sup> and the Danish Society its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

We started our extended weekend together contemplating the history of Quakers in Western Norway. Some of us visited the 150 year old Quaker house at Stakland and worshipped there. Many of us went into Stavanger bay to join the big public event commemorating the 200 years since the ship Restauration left with emigrants across the Atlantic. Some of them were Quakers persecuted for their faith and looking for a life in religious freedom. In the ceremony downtown, with the royal family present, the role of Quakers in the first emigration from Norway was emphasised. This also showed us an example of how Quakers since long back have built and nurtured community across borders and with a global reach. Many of us carry family stories where travels, meetings and connections internationally play a significant role.

Our main speakers, Julia Ryberg and Michael Eccles, reminded us of taking note of the particularities of our community as Nordic Quakers and the characteristics of each our Yearly Meetings. We were challenged to reflect on what we can be relevant and contribute to a wider community. We were organized in small groups to discuss how we in practice can collaborate across borders. We came to understand how we are interconnected and interdependent on each other; just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12).

The strong tradition of Quakers’ work for peace, nonviolence and development was visible in many ways. In the vestibule colourful posters illustrated the projects of

Kvekerhjelp (Quaker Service Norway) in Gaza and Africa, and in its Annual Meeting we learned that a new psycho-social support project for traumatized children and their mothers finally had been implemented in Gaza in spite of the cruel war. In the Swedish meeting of worship for business, the Swedish sister organization, Kväkarhjälpen, was an equally important topic.

All sessions were held in a warm and welcoming atmosphere. In a moving period of silence in the opening session we commemorated friends who have died these past years. We give thanks for their work and inspiration.

During our gathering, our experiences have been manifold, ranging from the nurturing experience of silent worship to a lively social evening. We have enjoyed each other's company in different ways, and a special programme was set up for the children and youth. We have been able to explore how the spirit moves in our life and among us in our community. We have shared testimonies of the importance of truth, a basic need to be shared with all.

Taken together this Nordic Yearly Meeting Gathering has strengthened the bonds between Quakers in Nordic countries in line with the motto for the meeting and we look forward to further develop the Nordic community of Friends.

In peace and gratitude,  
Nordic Yearly Meeting Gathering  
3-6 July 2025  
Solborg folkehøgskole, Stavanger, Norway

## Friends Church of North Carolina 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Sessions

### *Epistle/Message to Friends Everywhere*

Friday, 8/8/2025 & Saturday, 8/9/2025 at Quaker Lake Camp, Climax, NC

Theme: *Planted & Flourishing: New Growth, New Vision*

*Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.*

-1 Thessalonians 5:11 - 11 (NIV)

Representatives of Friends Church of North Carolina gathered at Quaker Lake Camp, Climax, NC, on Eighth Month 8-9, 2025 for their 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Sessions. Presiding Clerk **Roger Holt** welcomed Friends as the Friday afternoon first business session opened. In the opening minute he spoke on Psalm 150 (ESV), the praise psalm.

*Let Everything Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!*

*Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens!*

*Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!*

*Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp!*

*Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe!*

*Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!*

*Let everything that has breath praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!*

Growing up in a Friends Meeting, he did not remember much praising the Lord with trumpets, lute, harp, tambourines, dance, etc, but he also wondered if we regularly praised the Lord enough? We should praise Him for the simple things – the air we breathe, the ground we walk on, etc. Can we praise the Lord for the peace we can find even in turbulent times when we go to the Lord? Ginger Holt led in the singing of the hymn, “*Be Thou My Vision.*”

Roll Call and signup sheets indicated 65 Friends representing 20 Meetings plus 9 visitors present that afternoon. Visitors recognized included **Bob and Hope Carter** with Bob giving greetings from his father, **Wayne Carter**; **Emma Condori Mamani** from Bolivia; **Michael Sherman** from FUM; **Katie Moran** and family from Barclay College; and **Wayne Finegar** from Quaker House, Fayetteville, NC.

**Mike Wall**, our FCNC Superintendent (part-time), reported on his work of visiting pastors to give encouragement, pulling them together for times of fellowship and encouragement, visiting one Monthly Meeting each month, and helping Meetings that request help. He noted that 8 Meetings are searching for pastors. *Great is the Lord and (still) Greatly to be Praised.* -Psalm 145:3. He challenged us to seek God’s vision for a plan of action to use the resources given us for ministry.

Ministry & Counsel clerk **Tommy Sluder** reported on two recent gatherings of elders and pastors invited from all meetings which spoke of the **need for new leadership with vision and increased effective communication.** Ministry and Counsel is charged with the Spiritual Condition of our Meetings and the need to develop strategic plans for the next many years. Upon recommendation from Ministry & Counsel, **Rodney Kirby**, pastor of Archdale Meeting, was approved for Recording as a Friends Minister.

Quaker Lake Camp celebrated 75 years of ministry this summer reaching 660 youth under the theme, *More Like Jesus*, trying to reach kids where they are at, during **Heather Varner’s** 21<sup>st</sup> summer as Camp Director. Other programs throughout other months extend this ministry.

Friday evening included worship from Baltimore Friends; Intergenerational Worship from our Young Friends, and Speaker, **Troy Thornburg**, Director of Operations from Youth Commission International.

In Saturday business sessions, **Erin Mintmier**, Assistant Clerk, brought the recommendation from the Administrative Oversight Commission to move **2026 Annual Sessions to November 6-7** at Quaker Lake which was approved with the hope that it may help with more youth participation in Annual Sessions. August is a month of starting school and sports which may be a factor in why there has been less involvement.

**Kelly Kellum**, General Secretary from FUM joined us via zoom. He spoke of the many FUM missions that are supported through Yearly Meetings. However, FUM has noticed a 30% drop in donations and a shortfall of \$200,000 for the General Fund budget. Kelly went on the road and raised \$130,000, still leaving them short \$70,000. Approval was given to send \$25,000 to FUM.

**Michael Sherman**, Coordinator of FUM North American and Caribbean Ministries, read a letter of thanks from Kelly Kellum for our support of FUM. He read from Hebrews 10:22-25 and referenced the different verses through his presentation relating them to the various programs and groups under FUM NA-C ministries. NA-C Ministries is also working on “***Looking Forward***” initiatives to connect ***Friends through Nurture, Cultivate, Support, Connect, Equip, and Energize***—to grow and build future leadership especially among young Friends.

Other Quaker organizations/ministries had displays and/or opportunity to report on their work during the sessions.

Saturday afternoon activities included the Memorial Service coordinated by Southern Quarter remembering Friends who had died in the last year. Ministry & Counsel Clerk **Tommy Sluder** led the recognition ceremony for retiring pastors, **Hugh Spaulding** and **David Hobson**; and the recording ceremony for **Rodney Kirby**, which was followed by a reception with refreshments for all three. Baltimore Friends shared some beautiful music with us later in the afternoon.

After dinner, **Michael Sherman** gave the closing message. Annual sessions adjourned until November 6-7, 2026.

**Roger Holt**, Presiding Clerk

**Christine Blamer**, Recording Clerk

*Written by representatives from Western Quarterly Meeting. Read and approved in FCNC Representative Body session, 10/25/2025, at White Plains Friends Meeting House.*

**North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative)**  
**PO Box 4591, Greensboro, NC 27404**  
**ncymc.clerks@gmail.com**

*Two people, three people, ten people may be in living touch with one another through Him who underlies their separate lives. This is an astounding experience, which I can only describe but cannot explain in the language of science. But in vivid experience of divine Fellowship it is there. We know that these souls are with us, lifting their lives and ours continuously to God and opening themselves with us, in steady and humble obedience to Him. It is as if the boundaries of our self were enlarged, as if we were within them and as if they were within us. Their strength, given to them by God becomes our strength and our joy, given to us by God, becomes their joy. In confidence and love we live together in Him...Holy is the Fellowship...*

*A Testament of Devotion*  
*pp. 79-80*  
*Thomas R. Kelly*

*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

*Hebrews 10:24-25*

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To Friends Everywhere,

In a time of summer storms as tempestuous as the times we are living in, we met on the Guilford College Campus in Greensboro, NC. After the rains we were welcomed by lush green grass and trees and accompanied by a chorus of cicadas. The names on the buildings speak of our Quaker history here and the brick paths are familiar under our feet. We feel at home.

As our sessions got underway we were greeted by Jean Parvin Bordewich, acting president of Guilford College, who gave us an update on the financial challenges that the college, along with many other institutions of civil society, has faced in recent years. Based on the results of restructuring and the generous response of friends of the College, she was able to offer cautious optimism about the college's recovery, for which we are very grateful.

As is our custom, the Body of Worship and Nurture met for worship and business the day before the start of Yearly Meeting business. This year Worship and Nurture has been holding monthly conversations over Zoom to offer Friends spiritual support in facing uncertain times. These have been well received.

The theme of our annual sessions was "Members One of Another." This theme was woven throughout the gathering yielding deep reflections on our sense of kinship with each other. In response to queries about what membership means to us, Friends shared thoughts such as: "[Membership means that] when it gets hard I'm willing to stay in the room," and "[Membership means that] we are each other's to love."

We continue our practice of hearing the State of the Meeting reports and query responses from all 8 of our monthly meetings. The overall tone was encouraging with meetings reporting deep worship, care of each other, and service to their communities along with the usual challenges of maintaining or expanding facilities. All of this, however, is colored by threads of concern regarding how to respond with love and courage to the social and political upheaval we are experiencing in our country and our world.

We were blessed with many visitors, domestic and international, some representing Quaker organizations, some traveling in the ministry and some here for spiritual respite. Visitors always enrich our time together and we were blessed not only by their presence but also by their rich and informative offerings of vocal ministry, song, teaching, and helpful observant reflections on who we are. The concern for peace and stability was underlined by reports and presentations from Quaker organizations: Friends Committee on National Legislation, Friends Committee on North Carolina Legislation, American Friends Service Committee, Quaker Earthcare Witness, Earth Quaker Action Team, Friends World Committee on Consultation, and Right Sharing of World Resources. Rashid Darden of Friends General Conference was gracious in stressing that the resources of FGC are available to all.

Bible Study was the centerpiece of each day, occurring right after lunch. Under the guidance of Emma Condori Mamani, with us from Holiness Friends Yearly Meeting in Bolivia, we engaged with verses from the book of Acts highlighting how believers share resources, pray powerfully

for each other and organize the work of ministry. We were lovingly challenged with queries Emma had formulated such as “When did the experience of feeling that Quakers are your family in Christ start for you?”, and “What inward and outward aspects make you feel you are part of your Friend’s meeting?” Her enthusiasm for scripture and her weaving some of her personal stories in with her Biblical exposition were very pleasant and effective.

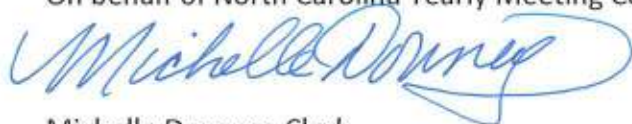
On Friday evening Traci Hjelt Sullivan led us through probing queries exploring Love, Community and Interdependence in the meeting community and in the wider world. Her first “rule” for love in the meeting community is “Step toward difficult people.” From this came her first queries, “Who are you avoiding in your meeting?” and “How could you take a step toward them?” Subsequent queries were equally perceptive concerning the challenges and rewards of our call to love each other. Many of us will be bringing the queries back to our meetings to invite others into this fruitful inquiry.

The work of our yearly meeting includes the ongoing project of revising our Book of Discipline. We strive to retain the essentials of content and tone while making the language accessible to the modern ear. Not a task for the faint of heart! We heard an example of this work in the reading of our Advices which are being updated into contemporary language. It is clear that a lot of time, prayer and waiting upon the Spirit has been invested in this work.

We are also excited to announce that Issue #8 of the Journal of North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative) is now available. The theme is Speaking the Truth and the Journal is easily found on our website [ncymc.org](http://ncymc.org).

This year we again enjoyed the company of Friends of all ages in worship, learning and fun. There were 112 adults (including 21 Zoomers) and 22 kids. We would love to count you among us at next year’s sessions on 7th mo 9-12, 2026, in person at Guilford or via Zoom,

On behalf of North Carolina Yearly Meeting Conservative,



Michelle Downey, Clerk

May 23-26, 2025 Northern Yearly Meeting Annual Session  
Epistle

Committee: Emily Scott, Adam Hirscher, Jonathan Leacock, and correspondents David Arnold, Lauri Perman, Wina Mortenson, and others

Greetings, friends and Friends, from Northern Yearly Meeting Annual Session in Rosendale, WI. Our beloved community from months prior gathered for preparative meetings located in North Dakota, Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin's Upper Peninsula gathered on a gorgeous, sunny, and fair Memorial Day weekend at the Lion's Camp.

This year, 2025, marks NYM's 50th birthday. We celebrate Northern Yearly Meeting. You're 50 now. Have you really grown? What have you learned?

At this year's gathering, we grounded ourselves in the question: "How do we continue to become the Quakers the world needs?" This theme was especially relevant in a time that challenges us to stand up and define what we want to be. One Friend expanded the query: Are we becoming the friends that God calls us to be?

Emerson LaWall-Shane and Lauri Perman offered their intergenerational keynote speech. Emerson spoke about the Quakers in the past, focusing on the formidable Sarah Mapps Douglass, and Quakers today, particularly her experience with disability in seeking stillness to better discern when your yes is a Holy Yes and a Holy No, guided by spirit.

Friends and friends carried these thoughts into sessions, where attendees explored three arcs coming out of this year's theme: How do Quakers meet the world's needs in the past, today, and into the future?

One small group noted that Faith in a General Inward Call, asks us to love God, love our neighbor, and expand our circle of love.

This commandment of the spirit was displayed in action throughout the weekend, asking us to show up for our neighbors. Attendees were invited to write letters in support of federal recognition of Indian Nations. We left the Annual Session with more than 69 signed letters to Senators and Congresspeople.

As Annual Session commenced, Friday evening, May 23, a good time as attendees arrived at camp. Megan Perry-Spear and a band of young people met-and-greet for Quakers young and old in Memorial Hall.

On Saturday, attendees were able to take opportunities for joy, for rest, and for service. Meetings for worship were joyful, and supported Friends' discussions in small groups, adding to our leaders and decision-making. Afternoons featured songs from pastoral care to

memories of yearly meeting history, decorated balloons, pontoon boats, and some intrepid souls were even spotted swimming.

The Quaker Organization Fair tradition, with representation from more than a dozen Quaker organizations, from downtown to the north. This year, for the first time, the NYM featured "Fox Talks," anecdotes from Quaker friends, featuring stories that moved them from their organizations.

By the lakeshore, attendees used stencils, like the first, and other items with their 50th birthday stencils. We saw an art project in the evening, attendees gathered on shore for another milestone NYM photo. Cheers were appropriately shouted "cheese" and some folks even cried. Many sat under their inner light with sparklers around a fire and cooking a good meal. We were high and sang songs including brand-new songs celebrating NYM's 150th anniversary. In the evening many attendees looked through a telescope and the International Space Station.

On Sunday, Friends and friends continued with discussions, interest groups, and found opportunities for joy, rest, and nature. The fabulous NYM talent show showcased our talented talents.

The children and youth attending NYM with the community inside and outside formal programming. They found friends and enjoyed playing together, doing puzzles. Young adults talked, played games, and paddleboarding.

It was another year of vibrant attendance. There were about 238 attendees present at camp, with another 40 youth and 60 children. We had 59 children in attendance from youth groups getting back to pre-pandemic attendance levels.

During the 50th anniversary birthday party, a group of adult attendees stood together appreciating the clear air and sunset. They commented to each other that even though they'd seen a sunset similar to this one, it still invoked a sense of majesty and wonder. What does a sunset mean to a child less than a year old?

We asked ourselves this annual session to the Quakers the world needs. After this weekend, we will ask, what we have, will we embody, speak, and make happen in the world that we want to see? We encourage you to do a little discernment in your heart.

*A special greeting on the occasion of Northern Yearly Meeting's 50th birthday to our f(F)riends at Illinois Yearly Meeting. The Illinois Yearly Meeting was marking their 100th anniversary when NYM spun off 50 years ago. Happy 150 years, Illinois Yearly Meeting!*

## 2025 NPYM Epistle

To Friends Everywhere -

Greetings from North Pacific Yearly Meeting 2025 annual session, held on the campus of the University of Montana (UM) in Missoula, Montana, from July 9 to 13, 2025. We were 131 adults and 24 youth attending in person; and 33 registered on Zoom. We gathered on the aboriginal territories of the Salish and Kalispel people, and we have crossed the lands of many other peoples in our journey here. We honor all those peoples, remembering that they were here first and that they are still here.

A few months before our annual session, NPYM organized, in an unprecedented action, a called meeting to discern our response to the University of Montana's sudden new policy regarding gender. In the spring, the Montana State legislature had enacted a bill to require segregation of restrooms and dorms in public facilities by biological sex; the University would have required attenders to identify "gender at birth" when they registered. The NPYM called meeting grew from the concern that to hold annual session in a location with policies in conflict with our witness and leading as Friends would put our trans members and attenders at risk. By the time of the called meeting, a judge had stayed the law and UM had agreed not to enforce the restroom law for NPYM. We were grateful for UM's support of all-gender facilities. Over 100 people participated in the called meeting over Zoom and achieved sense of the meeting to proceed with the annual session in Montana and to support trans Friends. When we gathered here, many attenders joyfully joined Visibility Brigade, a local event in support of trans people, immigrants, and democracy. The NPYM attenders joined Missoulians for the demonstration at a pedestrian overpass during rush hour, waving flags and celebrating the honks and waves of support. Trans attenders of all ages, from children to elders, felt safe, supported and welcomed at annual session.

This annual session, we were nurtured and challenged by our Friends-in-Residence, Keith Runyan and Nora Lisette, who joined us with their one-year-old child, Juniper. Keith is general secretary of Quaker Earthcare Witness (QEW). They invited us to explore what it means to live the theme of this annual session, "Lift Your Voices and Sing Loud!", which was inspired by the words of Sufi poet Rumi:

*God picks up the reed-flute world and blows.  
Each note is a need coming through one of us  
A passion, a longing-pain.*

*Remember the lips  
Where the wind-breath note originated,  
And let your note be clear.  
Don't try to end it.  
Be your note.  
I'll show you how it's enough.*

*Go up on the roof at night  
in this city of the soul,  
Let everyone climb on their roofs  
and sing their notes!  
Sing loud!*

To create the movement that the world needs today, Keith suggested that we go into the wilderness and find that wisdom that speaks in a language older than words. “There is a sermon in the wilds that await us.” Nora spoke about her life as a cycle of falling in love, to betrayal, and back to falling in love, in relationships and with Friends. Keith and Nora concluded their presentation by leading us in the sacrament of movement and the song, “The Course” by Ayla Nereo, about two grandmothers passing the torch from one generation to the next. Keith and Nora also led an interest group, where they explored the world’s ecological crisis through the lens of relational healing - drawing from the insight that our separation from the living Earth mirrors our separation from ourselves and each other.

During plenaries, we dealt with internal and external concerns. We were asked to consider whether NPYM might respond swiftly *and* faithfully to the rapid pace of threats to our democracy. We struggled with how to find a balance between yearning for rapid response while holding our discernment process as precious and valid. We approved doing what we can to support the lawsuit by Philadelphia, New England, and Baltimore Yearly Meetings to prevent federal immigration agents from entering places of worship. Discussions of internal concerns centered on finances, restructuring, and the difficulty filling some leadership positions.

After five days of worship, singing, friendship and listening, we return to our homes, keeping in mind the call we received for this annual session: In these days when all the world seems to tremble, we gather as Friends, and we tremble, too. But we do not tremble in fear or despair. Our trembling is the quaking that comes the moment before we break the silence of worship and speak. Our trembling is the Spirit stirring us to speak and act. We are called to let the Inward Voice ring through us with such clear conviction that we rise in courage and sing.

Paul Christiansen, NPYM Presiding Clerk

## Northwest Yearly Meeting Epistle 2025

Greetings to Friends around the world from the Northwest Yearly Meeting of Friends.

The 133<sup>rd</sup> annual sessions of Northwest Yearly Meeting met on the campus of George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon, July 20-23, 2025. The theme for our gathering was “Hope.” Annual sessions began on Sunday morning with a video message from Superintendent Dr. Jim Le Shana that was shown in all Northwest Yearly Meeting churches. Jim preached on the theme of hope, defining it as “looking forward expectantly,” recalling the promise in Isaiah 40.31 that “those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.” This simple but resonant idea set the tone for our meetings throughout the week.

On Sunday evening we gathered for our first General Session and Missions Banquet. We welcomed Karen Swenson returning from Hungary and Lana Thurston as she waits to return to Israel/Palestine, and listened to a message from David Thomas of Evangelical Friends Mission. David encouraged us that in missions work we do not go alone, but together. We are all missionaries. David offered a prayer for our missional community in the words of Romans 15.13: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Monday and Tuesday opened with worship and devotional messages prior to meetings for business. Parts of our business were encouraging, such as learning about strong attendance and discussions led by TEAM2 task force members at recent area meetings and a new church planting initiative in Southeast Portland to be led by Nathaniel and Katie Vanderploeg. Parts of our business also felt heavy, particularly as we labored with financial challenges and lack of clarity about how to achieve sustainable budgets in the future. We took time in the midst of this difficult business to pray for members of the Administrative Council who are discerning these issues on a regular basis, recognizing the chance we have to practice hope in this situation. Russ Ragsdale of Newberg Friends offered us the image of investing in our roots with expectancy of new growth in the future, even if that feels far off now.

After opportunities to attend equipping workshops and fellowship together in the afternoons, on Monday and Tuesday evening we worshipped for the first time in the new George Fox University chapel. Each evening we heard from Dr. David Williams of Malone University in Canton, Ohio. David picked up on the theme of last year’s annual sessions commemorating the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of George Fox’s birth by drawing attention to his exhortation to “Hold fast the hope which anchors the soul, which is sure and steadfast, that you may float above the world’s sea.” Pointing out that Fox’s encounter with Christ was an encounter with the voice of hope, David invited us to meditate on John’s experience with the same voice of hope on the isle of Patmos in the book of Revelation, reminding us that “Revelation wasn’t written to incite hysteria; it was written to inspire hope.” This included a powerful time of having individuals stand and read passages of scripture about hope that gave us a felt sense of the Holy Spirit’s presence.

Children and middle school youth enjoyed programs offered at Camp Tilikum, and high school youth participated in a leadership program led by Kaleo Academy, a program of Barclay College with the purpose of building leaders for Friends churches. Annual Sessions concluded with time for fellowship and goodbyes, and an optional Friendly Golf Tournament at Chehalem Glenn Golf Course.

We departed with gratitude for time to be together. While we face uncertainty, we also feel more freedom to talk about change. We trust the wisdom of Romans 5.5 that “hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”

## To Friends Everywhere from Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends 2025

*The Lord isn't slow to keep his promise, as some think of slowness, but he is patient toward you, not wanting anyone to perish but all to change their hearts and lives.*

2Peter 3:9 Common English Bible

Greetings to Friends Everywhere,

As we have shared epistles from Friends around the world, we know from what we have read and hear from Friends, from many Friends who have joined our worship times online, from those of us who have traveled and reported back to us, and from our own experience in these challenging times, that there is much fear, frustration, anxiety and even despair about the very real sufferings people face throughout the world. We also know, and have heard testimony about, the One who overcomes the world, Jesus Christ, alive in every living thing, as a seed at least, and in many as a shining Light, to guide us powerfully in Love and Truth. It is this overcoming Light and Love that we are called, as Friends have been called throughout our history, to live into, to affirm in one another and proclaim to the world.

As we have attended to our business throughout these sessions, in our morning bible reading times, afternoon prayerful conversations around our faith, our evening presentations covering both the foundational principles, beliefs and practices of Friends throughout our history and how Friends are at work in the world today, and in quiet conversations over meals, along the way between the Olney School dining room and the Stillwater Meetinghouse, we have experienced and felt both the present anxiety and the overcoming Love of our dear Savior and Redeemer. It is this Love which we wish to share with the world, through our epistles perhaps but especially in what we say and do, with every breath we take, for we know and can proclaim, as George Fox proclaimed during troubled times those many years ago, that there is an ocean of darkness, yet behold, an infinite ocean of Light and Love that flows out over the ocean of darkness. It is a sweet blessing of our Creator, Lord and Savior, and the only Way we know.

We are delighted with the presence of a number of children this year and a dedicated group of adult leaders. Their playful laughter and genuine care for one another remind us serious adults struggling with the important business issues of the yearly meeting that Jesus is teaching us to, "let the children come to me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

For Ohio Yearly Meeting,



Charles Thomas, Jr, Clerk

To Friends Everywhere,

Loving greetings from Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting of Friends, gathered for our 205th Annual Sessions from June 11-15, 2025, on Wilmington College's campus in Ohio, as well as in a hybrid format during business meetings and several other activities. Our theme was "Gather Our Fragments into Wholeness," prompting us to see the ways we are broken and what it means to be whole.

A Spirit-inspired welcoming activity engaged us in puzzle solving and collaboration, as we were challenged to assemble large puzzle pieces printed on sticky backing. Once completed, the resulting banner became an opportunity to discover together a collage created of pictures from throughout the yearly meeting, as well as meaningful signs and images of Quakerdom. What had begun as confusing fragments were gathered into a beautiful testament we could each explore during the rest of the sessions. A special joy was hearing one of the youngest Friends showing his grandma the picture of himself: "There I am!"

Our business sessions were worshipful. Among our many tasks, we continued the good work started last year when we approved the Adult Sexual Misconduct Policy. Although the issue evokes strong feelings, we were able to unite on implementing new procedures and disseminating a personal boundaries agreement at our events and gatherings.

Our children and youth programs have long been places where we protect and safeguard participants from misconduct. We recognize the need to review and revise our documents as we extend this work to our larger fellowship, and learn from future training and experience.

Our plenary speakers were Marcelle Martin and Paul Buckley. Paul spoke of the nature of the Religious Society of Friends, a covenant community of which God is the center, and each individual has a primary relationship with God. Our job for growing our meetings is to be prepared for those God sends to us who will be drawn in by the quality of our worship and the strength of our covenantal community. Marcelle spoke of the many ways in which we are fragmented, both as individuals and as a society. She pointed out the culture of domination that persists and leads to oppression and environmental destruction. "We are more fragmented than we know," she said, but "The Wholeness that God is wants to heal us and will do so if we allow it."

During each morning, small groups engaged in a time of worship sharing using queries based on our theme. Friends find this an important time of connection and deepening. Afternoon workshops on Friday and Saturday built on our gathering's theme. Among other offerings, each of our plenary speakers led a workshop that enabled a broadened exploration of the challenges they'd introduced to us.

At each yearly meeting, an individual or couple share how they've let their lives speak in their Quaker journey with a session called "Living Witness." This year, we heard from Paul Ricketts, who has recently returned to fellowship with us. The reasons for his sabbatical from Friends are

well documented in his writings in *Friends Journal* (and we commend them to you). Though he took that sabbatical from us, he says he was “never taking a sabbatical from Quaker values.” Those values, he told us, “are a covenantal commitment,” similar to those made in a marriage, where we are committed to walking together to build the beloved community. His journey through grief from the loss of his remaining family of origin was what opened the door to return to silent worship after being away from it for five years. When we are fragmented, he said, what we are called to do is to step into brokenness with kindness.

At our memorial meeting this year, seven Friends were remembered by reading memorials written by their monthly meetings. During the accompanying silence, those gathered took time to reflect on the blessings we received during the time we were enriched by these lives.

What can we say about the movement of the Spirit among us? Our theme of Gathering our Fragments into Wholeness and our three speakers’ responses to it raised related issues in our conversations and contemplations. Can we acknowledge that our fragments include Shadow? How can we face the hard truths about ourselves both individually and corporately? How can we speak to one another of difficult things? How can we recognize more consistently that we are part of the great Cosmic Wholeness? How can we build our Covenant Community?

In love,  
Friends from the 205th Annual Sessions of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting.

À des amis partout dans le monde'

Salutations chaleureuses de notre assemblée annuelle des amis de l'Ohio Valley, réunis pour notre 205e session du 11 - 15 juin, 2025 sur la cité du Wilmington College en Ohio ainsi qu'en format hybride pour les réunions d'affaires et certaines d'autres activités. Le thème de notre assemblée était "Rassembler nos fragments pour en créer un tout" ce qui nous a mené à prendre conscience de nos ruptures et de ce que cela veut dire être entier.

Une activité d'accueil inspirée par l'esprit nous a engagés de résoudre un puzzle et de collaborer, nous défiant d'assembler de grandes pièces de puzzle imprimées sur un support adhésif. Une fois achevé, la bannière qui en résultait nous a permis de découvrir ensemble un collage composé de symboles significatifs de notre pratique Quaker ainsi que d'images de la session annuelle. Ce qui n'était au départ que des fragments incohérents a été rassemblé en un beau témoignage que nous avons pu chacun à son gré explorer au fil de la session. Une joie particulière a été entendre un des plus jeunes Amis s'écrier "Me voilà!" en montrant à sa grand-mère sa photo!

Nous avons comporté les sessions d'affaires en pleine dévotion. Parmi nos nombreuses tâches, nous avons continué le bon travail entamé l'année passée avec l'adoption d'une politique d'inconduite sexuelle des adultes. Bien que ce sujet suscite de fortes émotions, nous avons réussi à nous unir pour mettre en place de nouvelles procédures et de diffuser un accord sur le respect des limites personnelles lors de nos activités et réunions.

Nos programmes pour enfants et adolescents sont depuis longtemps des lieux où nous protégeons les participants contre les abus. Nous apprécions le besoin de réviser nos documents à mesure que nous étendons ce travail à l'ensemble de notre fraternité et que nous acquerons des compétences des formations et expériences futures.

Nos conférenciers à la plénière étaient Marcelle Martin et Paul Buckley. Paul nous a parlé de la nature de la Société Religieuse des Amis, une communauté d'alliance dont Dieu constitue le centre et où chacun maintient une relation primaire avec Dieu. Afin d'accroître nos réunions de culte nous devons être prêts à accueillir ceux que Dieu nous envoie et qui seront attirés par la qualité de notre recueillement et la vigueur de notre communauté d'alliance.

Marcelle a discuté les maintes manières dont nous sommes fragmentés, et comme individus et comme société. Elle a mis l'accent sur la culture de domination qui persiste et mène à l'oppression et à la destruction de notre environnement. "Nous sommes plus fragmentés que nous ne le reconnaissons," mais "l'intégralité qui est Dieu entend nous guérir et le fera si seulement nous le permettons."

Chaque matin de petits groupes se sont engagés en culte partagé à l'aide des questions basées sur notre thème. Les Amis considèrent ces moments importants de connexion et d'approfondissement. Les ateliers de l'après-midi du vendredi et du samedi ont fait fond sur le thème de notre assemblée. Parmi les multiples activités alternatives, chacun de nos conférenciers a animé un atelier nous permettant une exploration étendue des défis qu'ils nous avaient présentés.

Lors de chaque assemblée annuelle un individu ou un couple partage avec nous comment leur vie témoigne de leur périple quaker dans une session intitulée "Témoignage vivant." Cette année c'était Paul Ricketts qui a témoigné, étant récemment revenu à notre fraternité. Il a

richement documenté ses raisons pour prendre congé des Amis dans ses écrits du *Friends Journal* (on les recommande fortement). Bien qu'il ait pris ce congé de nous, il avère de "ne jamais avoir pris congé des valeurs Quaker." Comme il a dit, "ces valeurs constituent un engagement d'alliance" semblable à celui d'un mariage, dans lequel on s'engage à cheminer ensemble pour se bâtir une chère communauté. Son parcours de deuil suite à la perte du reste de sa famille d'origine lui avait ouvert la voie au retour au culte silencieux après cinq ans d'absence. Selon lui, lorsqu'on est brisé on est appelé à entrer dans le brisement avec tendresse.

Lors de notre culte mémoratif nous avons commémoré sept Amis défunts en lisant les textes rédigés en leur honneur par leurs réunions mensuelles. Pendant le silence qui s'ensuivait, nous avons pris le temps d'apprécier les bienfaits que nous avons reçus pendant le temps que leurs vies enrichissaient la nôtre.

Quoi dire sur l'action de l'esprit parmi nous? Notre thème "Rassembler nos fragments pour en créer un tout" et les réponses de nos trois conférenciers ont soulevé des questions connexes dans nos conversations et recueils. Pouvons-nous admettre que nos fragments comprennent aussi l'ombre? Comment faire face aux dures vérités à notre égard en tant qu'individus et collectivité? Comment nous parler des choses difficiles? Comment reconnaître de façon plus constante que nous faisons partie de la grande intégralité cosmique? Comment construire notre communauté d'alliance?

Avec plein d'amour,  
Les Amis de la 205e Session Annuelle d'Ohio Valley Assemblée Nationale

**Pacific Yearly Meeting Epistle**  
**July 11-16, 2025, Whittier, California, United States of America**

To Friends across Space and Time,

The 79th annual session of Pacific Yearly Meeting met online and on the Whittier College campus from the eleventh to sixteenth days of the seventh month, 2025. Acknowledging the native lands upon which we met, we gathered at a time of crisis, uncertainty, and a trembling world. We hold a concern for whether climate change, war, economic collapse, oligarchy, or a combination of these will threaten our wellness, safety, or future. To say that we are living at a time of what Joanna Macy described as the Great Turning, is not an overstatement as we sit in view of Los Angeles, where mostly brown-skinned people are being detained without due process. We are also near to where fires, exacerbated by the climate crisis, burned homes and disrupted lives less than a year ago. For many of us, the call to action is great; and yet we have chosen to stop and drop into Spirit as we respond to our clerk's questions: Can we help each other balance? Can we reach forward with our hearts by returning again to the seed of our faith, in worship, prayer, devotion, while trusting in the divine and each other?



Our three keynote speakers ministered on how they found balance following experiences of intense crisis. John Pixley followed his heart repeatedly as he navigated physical and emotional challenges as a disabled, gay man and skilled writer. Aaron Terry, a seeker learning from many different traditions, disentangled spiritual truth from religious teachings, while healing from personal pains and large life transitions. Amy Cooke described her path to balance following destabilizing life events, including having her beloved home in the Sierra foothills burn to the ground. Amy learned that when “fires” emerge in our lives, immediately running into action may not help. Instead, we benefit from stopping, dropping deeply into Spirit, and when moved, rolling into action. All three ministers spoke of engaging in a version of this “stop, drop and roll” practice.

Annual session attendees, from Hawaii to Nevada and Mexico to California, carried these ministries into other activities, nurturing individual and community ties, which we recognize as essential to fostering balance and heart-led action. The Racial Justice Subcommittee provided conversational prompts to nurture new acquaintances and deepen connections and reflected on how the “Sacred Space Healing for Respectful Dialogue” workshop has positively contributed to the health and spiritual integrity of our yearly meeting. Worship-sharing challenged us to identify inner resources and act

authentically with respect for that of God in all. Spiritual Journey presentations nurtured online participants. The Ministry Committee collected ideas on beneficial and unhelpful spiritual guidance practices. Many attendees brought cutlery to reduce plastic waste. Some participated in daily walking worship. Interest groups united people working for Native American concerns, affordable housing, hybrid/distance membership, support of students in California as well as El Salvador, and kids' education about climate change. Individual ministries of Spirit-led action were widely evident.

Some Friends longed for greater corporate action that directly addresses the challenges of our day. The joyful sounds and presence of children and the growth of our Junior Yearly Meeting were strong reminders that our actions have meaning now and into the future. What more can we do together as we reach forward with our hearts?

Our epistle readers read from the 1957 and 1967 Pacific Yearly Meeting annual sessions to share what Friends did in previous times of war and political strife. We learned that, just as Friends united to provide humanitarian relief to the people of Vietnam, we united to support a second lawsuit to prevent immigration enforcement actions while people are engaged in their religious practices and at places of worship. We are continuing to discern how to preserve our fragile democracy.

We left with gratitude that our annual session provided ample opportunity to connect across generations, cultures, and diverse lived experiences, while sharing love with each embrace and smile. If at moments we challenge each other, we continue to strive to grow in our togetherness. We also left with a hope to those who read this epistle across miles and years: that you will be able to stop to experience the great peace that always waits deep inside us all, that you will drop deeply into healing (in all the forms needed), and that you will roll into action with compassion for yourselves and all others, including our beautiful world that is always giving generously and selflessly to us.

May we always make love our first motion whatever comes.

Signed,



Robin DuRant, Presiding Clerk of Pacific Yearly Meeting

## Piedmont Friends—Yearly Meeting & Fellowship Epistle Third Annual Session, Fifth and Sixth Months, 2025

Greetings to Friends everywhere,

Piedmont Friends—Yearly Meeting & Fellowship (PFYM&F) held its 2025 retreat and annual sessions May 30 to June 1 with participation both in-person and virtual.

Friends gathered by Zoom on Friday, May 30 for fellowship and an introduction to the theme of the retreat and annual sessions: *Grounded in Spirit; Nourished in Community; Prepared for Action*. Through a set of queries, we considered our motivation for attending the retreat and annual sessions, how Quakerism feeds our soul, and our experience with discernment. As we parted for the evening, Friends expressed appreciation for the opportunity to consider the theme and go deeper in relationship to one another.

More than seventy Friends gathered on the lovely Guilford College campus on May 31 for our day-long gathering. After greeting each other and enjoying an abundance of good food provided by Friends, we were called to worship and introduced to our plenary speakers for the morning — Mark Davidson from Raleigh Friends Meeting and Michelle Downey from Fayetteville Friends Meeting.

Mark spoke of the escalation of violence against Palestinian people in Gaza —an escalation that is not hidden, but visible to all. He has felt called to join scholars, human rights organizations and others in pronouncing this violence to be acts of genocide directed toward Palestinian people. Despite opposition of many US citizens and some Israelis, our government supports Israel's slaughter, and Mark feels that he can no longer remain silent nor maintain a neutral stance. He cited Desmond Tutu's statement, "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."

Mark has found similarities in his discernment process to that of John Woolman, the 18th century Friend who confronted the moral issue of his day, the enslavement of Black Americans. Mark described three gifts of guidance provided by John Woolman: knowledge of when to take a stand; profound empathy and compassion for those oppressed; and tackling the structure that supports oppression (the "seeds of war").

Considering Woolman's example, Mark asked us to examine all that we felt called to do in eliminating the "seeds of war," including boycotts, divestment and sanctions. Mark further challenged us to expand our circle of knowledge by getting to know Palestinian people who live and work in our communities.

After a period of silent worship, Michelle Downey spoke of Fayetteville Friends Meeting's growing concern for the vulnerability of immigrant people. This concern led to Fayetteville Friends Meeting's *Minute of Intent to Protect*, which has been widely distributed among Quaker meetings, as well as other religious and human rights organizations. Fayetteville Meeting has held a long concern for immigrants, organizing with others to provide needed food and clothing for those on buses stopping in Fayetteville while being relocated to northern locations by border and immigration agencies prior to the Covid lockdown. Fayetteville Meeting entered a quieter phase after

Fayetteville was eliminated as a bus stop. An individual Friend in Fayetteville Meeting felt a leading to assist as more severe anti-immigrant actions were taking place. The *Minute of Intent to Protect* resulted from the Meeting's further discernment from this leading. Fayetteville Friends, a small meeting, has reached out to larger organizations, such as Siembra NC and the NC Immigration Law and Justice Center to further advocate for immigrants' rights.

As did Mark, Michelle spoke of how Fayetteville Friends' discernment process had been influenced by John Woolman. Michelle spoke of how Woolman acknowledged that at times he had not "been keeping close to the Divine opening," and that further reflection was needed. Michelle entitled her presentation, "Like Dew on Tender Plants," thus describing Fayetteville Meeting's lengthy, reflective discernment process.

Friends gathered in small groups to consider queries related to the morning presentations. Friends spoke with appreciation for the faithful discernment of Friends both past and present.

After lunch and a much-appreciated time for conversation, relaxation and exploration of the Guilford campus, the clerks invited Friends to gather for the annual sessions.

We received a video message from Acting President of Guilford College, Jean Bordewich, who welcomed us to the campus. She spoke of the challenges now facing the college as they work to strengthen their financial base and maintain a strong Quaker identity.

The roll call of the sixteen Friends meetings and worship groups in Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting & Fellowship was taken along with the naming of the Native American tribes with historical connections to each of our meetinghouse grounds. With tenderness, Friends heard the names of those Friends who had passed away in the last year.

Friends learned much from our appointed representatives to Friends organizations that are supporting Quaker values and offering service in the wider world. We appreciated the time available after presentations to talk informally with representatives and learn more about current challenges and opportunities.

We received the Yearly Meeting/Fellowship's Spiritual State of the Meeting report drawn from State of the Meeting Reports submitted by member meetings. Common themes included renewed growth and vitality over the past year, in part due to the welcome return of families and children and to new opportunities for fellowship and worship in the form of small worship and discussion groups. Attention to the quality of worship in Meetings for Worship was seen as crucial to the life of the Meetings. Given our challenging times, efforts toward social justice, as well as engagement with PFYM-F and other Quaker organizations, have grown greatly.

As our time together drew to end, clerks asked Friends to consider what should be lifted up in the epistle. Friends' responses included an appreciation for the thoughtful plenary speakers and their inclusion of John Woolman's experience in their own discernment;

the extended lunch, which provided time for fellowship and conversation as well as opportunities to spend time with young Friends; less-structured time to converse with our representatives to Quaker organizations; an appreciation for all working behind the scenes at the retreat, including those who addressed technology, childcare, the needs for early set-up. Lastly, there was deep gratitude for the work of the planning and clerking committees.

After a sudden heavy and refreshing rainfall, we settled out with worship. Some Friends then joined New Garden Friends Meeting to sing music from *Godspell*. Others traveled home with appreciation for a full, rich day of learning, as well as new and renewed friendships.

On First Day (Sunday) morning Friends met virtually for worship from their homes as well as their meetinghouses. Friends reflected on how meaningful the retreat and annual sessions had been. In response to a query on “What is it that brings this particular group of people, who call themselves Piedmont Friends, together?” it was suggested that like the waters that flow from the mountains through North Carolina’s Piedmont, perhaps we as Friends can harness that energy to serve the good of our communities and the larger world. We closed our time of worship and this year’s annual sessions and retreat with heartfelt gratitude.

**Epistle from Southern Africa Yearly Meeting – St Augustine’s Heritage Guest Farm Conference Centre****4-8 January 2025**

We send warm Greetings to Friends all over the world.

Many spiritual journeys take us through difficult and winding ways to a place of beauty and joy. As 2025 dawned, Friends began travelling, by ‘plane, by bus and by car meeting decayed roads, faded road signs, missed turnings, difficult border crossings and very hot temperatures, all deemed well worth the effort to reach the warm welcome and fellowship of Friends at St Augustine’s at Modderpoort on the border of the Kingdom of Lesotho. Friends hailed from Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Western and Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Kwazulu-Natal, Lesotho, with visitors from Britain, Kenya, and Sweden. Lesotho Friends played an important role in helping with pre-meeting arrangements, in welcoming Friends, and arranging an excursion across the border into Lesotho.

Our theme for the meeting was “What binds us together, what pulls us apart.” The “us” in the theme relates not only to our Quaker community but to the broader society in which Southern African Quakers live and breathe. Each morning began with a Meeting for Worship, followed after breakfast with Worship Sharing in small groups which provided an opportunity to explore mindfully how the ‘still small voice within’ guides us in our daily practice of Quakerism.

Yearly Meeting was a hybrid one to cater for those who could not join in person. Our theme was truly tested by the difficulties the technical team faced as they battled with intermittent electricity, stormy weather, poor and fluctuating connectivity. Intended to bind us together, technology seemed determined to pull us apart, but the technical team were equally determined to bind us together with those online.

Sipho Nsimbi from the Bulawayo Meeting gave the Richard Gush Memorial lecture this year. Born of Salvation Army parents she and her seven siblings were given names of personal traits that they were supposed to live up to as a collective group, making them an interdependent collective group. Sipho began training as a nurse but within nine months was offered a scholarship to study sociology in Britain where she worked as a social worker for two years after graduation. She married there and returned to Zimbabwe with her small son. She has served on the Board of Hlekweni and has been a SAYM Co-clerk. Currently she is an SAYM Elder and a Co-clerk and Treasurer of Bulawayo Meeting.

With her inspirational theme, “Love in Action – Bringing Hope for Healing a Wounded World,” Sipho reminded us of who we are, the journey that Quakers have been on in Southern Africa and the powerful work that Friends have done and could do, not only in Southern Africa but in the world. Her words took us into the heart of division but brought hope. At the core of Quaker unity – what binds us together and connects us – is our willingness to “constantly seek,” to seek the path to “righteousness and service to others” and ultimately to be the “ocean of light and love” to dispel the “ocean of darkness and death.” We have a mandate not to separate ourselves but to connect with the world.

Reports from the ten local SAYM meetings were received. While the increased participation and energy of Young Friends in the SAYM community is stimulating a sense of optimism, it was evident from the local meeting reports that many meetings are experiencing a reduction in numbers. This raises the on-going need for making ourselves known. It was also clear from concerns raised that, as a Quaker family, we need to address and resolve on-going differences – the issues that divide us. However, as Sipho pointed out to us, “Our differences can be our strengths,” and on difficult issues, we endeavoured to speak truth to each other with kindness.

Since 2021 the Finance Oversight Committee has carried out extensive work to clarify and restructure the finances of SAYM and was able to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date explanation of the SAYM financial architecture, together with the income and expenditure. Given that financial competence has become imperative in the modern world, SAYM, together with the local meetings, must focus on mainstreaming financial competence and building financial institutional memory throughout the organisation.

In 2024 SAYM was privileged to host the World Plenary Meeting of the Friends World Consultative Committee. Planning for this event began in 2019 and SAYM Friends, together with Friends from Africa and other International Friends, shouldered the challenge, persevered through the COVID pandemic, and delivered a successful WPM in August 2024 which was attended by Friends from 59 countries and 95 yearly meetings. This meeting piloted a hybrid format which was so successful that the decision has been taken to hold the 2027 WPM fully online. Friends present who had also attended the WPCC meeting enjoyed sharing their reminiscences. Young Friends also presented a vibrant and enthusiastic account of their intervisitations with Young Friends in African countries outside of Southern Africa and of their participation in the World Plenary Meeting.

Each evening, we were treated for five- and ten-minute talks on a variety of topics reflecting the varied personal interests of Friends. Special Interest groups were also offered, giving Friends the opportunity to share some of their concerns and community involvements.

Friends offered a variety of early morning wellness sessions which included breath work, aquaponics, hiking – all opportunities to offset the long hours of sitting in Meeting for Worship for Business. The Children’s programme provided powerful ministries in nurturing and caring. Among other activities, the children practised meditation and – using the Quaker testimonies as a guide – learned about peace, equality, truth and integrity, and homelessness.

The Young Friends carried out their own programme in parallel with the general meeting, and provided the following account:

Beloved Friends – we, the Young Quaker Friends gathered with joy, gratitude, and open hearts. Our time together was a testament to the power of community, love, and spiritual growth.

We were grateful for the opportunity to reconnect with old friends and welcome new ones. Our shared experiences, from worship sharing to the Death Café, fostered a sense of belonging and support. We appreciated the warmth and wisdom of our elder Friends, who shared their insights and guidance with us.

Our gathering was a celebration of life, love, and spirituality. We grew together, learned from each other, and deepened our understanding of Quaker values and practices. The World Plenary Meeting reflections, special interest groups, and the main programme offered us a rich tapestry of experiences, inspiring us to continue on our spiritual journeys.

As we part ways, we will carry with us a renewed sense of hope, connection, and purpose. We recognized that our roots in the Quaker tradition run deep, and we are committed to nurturing and growing our faith community.

To our fellow Young Friends, we offer these words of encouragement: may you continue to seek, learn, and grow in the Light. May you find joy, comfort, and guidance in our Quaker community. And may you remain open to the transformative power of love and spirituality.

We have been bound together in love, friendship, and fellowship. Now we pull apart as we return to follow our mandate to connect with the world.

Gregory Mthembu-Salter and Benonia Nyakuwanikwa

Co-clerks, Southern Africa Yearly Meeting

July 3, 2025

Western Yearly Meeting  
203 S. East Street  
Plainfield, IN 46168

Greetings to Friends Everywhere:

Western Yearly Meeting met at Quaker Haven Camp in Syracuse, Indiana from June 30 to July 3, 2025 for its 168th annual session. Held at the Camp to honor its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, this change of location encouraged us to enjoy family-centered activities, recall the camping experiences of our youth, and involve the next generation in making memories. By considering the themes of Creation, Transformation, Renewal, and Celebration suggested by Romans 12:1-2, we entered into a fuller understanding of what it means to be a vital link in our meeting and secular communities.

Days began with devotional messages. Olivia Kessinger gave the first message on "To Know and Be Known." She encouraged us to show mercy and walk with others, especially holding in mercy and love those with whom we have had conflicts. Michael Sherman shared his beautiful art of hand carved wooden bowls as an illustration of . examining our relationship with God and stepping out and accepting change and risk to be transformed. Tom Rockwell gave the final day's devotion. He presented on the situation of Friends and how Western Yearly Meeting can respond to the decline of Friends to bring new hope and growth. Tom's queries caused a Godly-covered Meeting as many Friends present rose to speak a wide variety of loving messages.

Meeting for business followed devotions. While most of the business was routine, there were a few areas of concern that received attention. One area of note concerned observation based on the annual statistics reports provided by the meetings. It was noted that the declining number of Junior resident members does not indicate a positive outlook for the future. The question becomes, "How can we engage the youth around us?" in meaningful ways. Another area of concern is the accuracy of the number of members reported. Meetings were encouraged to look seriously at their membership rolls and update them to reflect current active members. Although the truth may be difficult to accept, only an honest look at reality will let Meetings flourish in the future. We were encouraged to look beyond just Western Yearly Meeting to see how we can unite with other Friends groups to strengthen and grow our Friends community.

Early afternoon workshops on Tuesday were designed with fun in mind, incorporating art projects, games, and creative challenges as we explored each topic. These sessions included learning about creating change through legislation (Friends Committee on National Legislation, Sarah Johnson); Intercultural Community (Right Sharing of World Resources, Megan Fair); Quaker Testimonies/SPICES (Jim Fussel); Friends Journal projects (Renzo Carranza); Conflict Resolution (Shawn McConaughy); the importance of Women in Ministry (Marlene Pedigo); and the importance of estate planning (Everance, Steve Bustos). Wednesday afternoon started with a Memorial Service, rejoicing in the memories of those who have led the way for us. This was followed by a Friends United Meeting presentation. A new opportunity to work in service together was shared in painting the Quaker Haven chapel. It benefited the camp and benefited the painters in sharing an act of love together.

Late afternoons were used for a typical fun time at camp! Games, swimming, boating, hiking, and other traditional outside activities were encouraged. Enjoying these recreational activities as family and friends helped build the sense of community and strengthen bonds of faith. Building memories of shared times of fun and fellowship are the “glue” that hold us together in hard times.

Instead of a table of arts and crafts for sale this year, the Christian Outreach Board decided to publish a cookbook with the proceeds going to support the Mesquakie and Kickapoo Native American Centers. Marilyn Tucker and others worked hard to publish this Quaker cookbook. The cookbooks were available for sale and have many special connections to Western Yearly Meeting.

Two special minutes of appreciation were approved. The first was to Dale Graves who, before his death, made sure that the Friends Disaster Service trailer was stocked with good working tools. The trailer and tools were formally approved to be given to Quaker Haven Camp. A minute of appreciation was approved to honor Dale Graves for his foresight, devotion, stewardship and leadership in supporting Quaker Haven Camp. The second was to Brandon Dennis, Director of Quaker Haven Camp. Brandon is legendary for his decades of hard work at Quaker Haven. The camp has grown tremendously under his leadership and untold numbers of young campers have committed to Christ at camp.

Shawn McConaughey opened the sessions the first evening by asking us to consider the outreach, vitality, spiritual formation, and overall health of each of our Monthly Meetings. Shawn asked us to work on reconciliation for if God loves us and tells us to love our neighbors, how can we hang onto conflicts? Quakers have something to offer, and we may find the beginning of growth and transformation in our ability to reconcile and love each other.

Evan Wilkin, Executive Secretary of FWCC Section of Americas, gave the message on the remaining evenings. Evan shared meaningful times of his own transformation and learning to listen to the still, small voice of God. He asked each of us to consider how we started in our spiritual journey and where acts of transformation physically occurred for us. We were challenged to change our regular course and open ourselves to new encounters and new paths where we may find that God has been speaking to us.

Evening messages were followed by time around the campfire enjoying s'mores, popcorn, ice cream, and games and shared fun.

The outgoing epistle was presented following morning devotions on Thursday. After packing up and eating lunch, campers returned home, re-energized by the outdoor experiences and encouraged by the call to transformation that echoed through the activities and opportunities of the week.

Please pray for Western Yearly Meeting as it continues to look for ways to be a relevant transforming and renewing example to those in the troubled world around us.

In Christian Love,

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Sarabeth Marcinko, Presiding Clerk

Brenda Rodeheffer, Recording Clerk

John Heshelman, Ass't to the Clerk

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. Romans 12:1-2 (NIV)*

Summary: For use in Translations and/or digests

Greetings to Friends Everywhere:

Western Yearly Meeting met at Quaker Haven Camp in Syracuse, Indiana from June 30 to July 3, 2025 for its 168th annual session. Held at the Camp to honor its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, this change of location encouraged us to enjoy family centered activities, recall the camping experiences of our youth, and involve the next generation in making memories. By considering the themes of Creation, Transformation, Renewal, and Celebration suggested by Romans 12:1-2, we entered into a fuller understanding of what it means to be a vital link in our meeting and secular communities. Devotions, Workshops, and Messages helped us understand our individual and corporate roles in the process of growing God's kingdom.

Please pray for Western Yearly Meeting as it continues to look for ways to be a relevant transforming, and renewing example to those in the troubled world around us.

26 July, 2025

To all Friends everywhere,

Greetings from Friends of Wilmington Yearly Meeting, who gathered in Wilmington, Ohio, from July 24–27, 2025. From southwest Ohio we came, but also from East Tennessee, Indiana, Massachusetts, New York, and Kenya. We gathered in the theme of “God Created... and it was Very Good,” with an intention of celebrating the creation and considering our stewardship thereof. Thus it was fitting that, while we gathered at the Campus Friends’ meetinghouse for our Friday programming, we spent Saturday the 26th at our Quaker Knoll Campground for all activities. Granted, it was because Wilmington College was undergoing maintenance on that day and it made connecting a challenge for our virtual attenders - but nonetheless it was a joy to be at that beautiful site in the middle of God’s Creation. Likewise, we began our activities on Thursday evening at Great Council State Park, the site of a historic Shawnee village for three years near Xenia.

It seemed that Friday’s activities could best be summed up as a “Day of Caring.” We began with a report from Tanya Maus of the Peace Resource Center, a great concern for our Yearly Meeting reflecting our care for all people. Our budget discussion Friday became complex - but as we see it, not from a lack of care, but from a surfeit of concern, because Friends spoke of a desire to, among other things, increase the compensation for our Quaker Knoll caretaker Jay Schroeder to reflect our appreciation and care for his services. Likewise in this theme of caring, we were deeply impressed by Wilmington College President Corey Cockerill’s report. Both because of the impressive work that she is leading regarding retention and growth, but for two particular items. A Friend asked President Cockerill what the College would be doing regarding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives given the current environment in the country. To the delight of all, Corey responded - roughly quoting - “We are deeply grounded in our Quaker heritage, which says to be inclusive, to accept all persons, and to foster inclusivity.” Likewise we find ourselves deeply impressed by the reported gift from Wilmington College Coach Jerry Scheve, who upon his recent passing gave \$23 million to the College (the largest single gift ever), including a significant portion of that towards ongoing peace programming for students which Coach Scheve cared deeply for as a ministry of the college.

Continuing on the theme of acting from a place of deep caring, Friends express our deep appreciation to Clerk Patricia Thomas for her generous gifts to the Yearly Meeting, in the form of an unrestricted fund, The Living Faithfully Fund, with a balance of \$450,000, and \$50,000 for the Aged Ministers Fund. Friend Patricia also endowed the Campus Ministry at Wilmington College. Friend Patricia, like Coach Jerry Scheve, acted in generosity out of care for the future of our ministries. We encourage friends to consider how we can best demonstrate our care for our joint ministries, whether a

bequeathal at the end of life, or a gift of time, talent, or wealth while still among us. We recognize that showing care includes expressing our appreciation, and thus Friends saw fit to make a point of preparing and endorsing a Minute of Appreciation for Friend Mike Miller, for his long and excellent work as Treasurer. Our afternoon programs likewise demonstrated this emphasis on caring, as Karla Jay of Friends United Meeting sharing with us the work of FUM's Global Ministries and how, even in very difficult situations like Ramallah Friends School finds itself, or in times of transition that the Belize ministries are currently undergoing, FUM's concern extends to all. Our delicious USFW Banquet preceded a moving presentation by Katie and Jason Hollingsworth about their trip to Kenya for the Friends Bringing Hope ministry. Katie and Jason shared stories, pictures, and both laughter and touching moments as they shared about their experience helping women who had been widowed and found themselves in difficult life situations, and an overriding theme was a sense of Joy.

If Friday was the Day of Caring, Saturday was a day of Looking Ahead, and of Possibilities. We opened our activities at Quaker Knoll with a worship service led by the Young Friends - including reading scriptures, sharing moments of peace, and seeing images of a double rainbow they had seen, and admiring the recently-completed mural in the basement of the Quaker Knoll House. We appreciate the vision (and boundless energy) of Lydia Donovan, and the joyful industry of the young friends in producing this delightful piece. After multiple songs and open worship, there was a transition into Ministry and Counsel. After spending time being led by the future leadership of the Yearly Meeting, we began to talk more in earnest about Looking Ahead. In particular, an ongoing theme that popped up in multiple programs was the possibility of future collaboration, interaction, and cooperation with the New Association of Friends and Western Yearly Meeting. We noted quite a bit of energy and potential each time this came up, with an invitation to a program on spiritual formation of young adults and - perhaps - some sort of joint seasonal gathering, along with an afternoon discussion led by Dave Goff, Tom Hamm (of the New Association) and Tom Rockwell (of Western Yearly Meeting and the New Association) and ongoing plans for joint ministerial retreats and some youth activities.

"Looking Ahead" also seems to apply to the theme that we settled on for 2026; "Called in Joy For These Times" with the scriptures Acts 10: 14-15 and Esther 4:14. Likewise the resolution of our budget discussion, as Friend Michael Anderson led us in a discussion and conclusion that seemed to be animated less by worry over what we don't have, than the potential of what we could have with clear eyes. Our Memorial Service was, as always, meaningful and touching to Friends, and included attendance by Friends who had not been around in some time from Massachusetts and New York. We find ourselves encouraged that we've come to a decision that committee membership will be more flexible as we Look Ahead, after some discussion and, dare we say, wrangling. After this discussion one Friend shared that it felt familiar to be at a

place where our focus is less on survival but rather hashing out specifics; another who recently arrived from another Yearly Meeting shared her perspective that that sort of lively discussion would not have been permitted and that, delightfully, our method felt more like family working matters out.

Our afternoon clerking workshop also struck friends as feeling like “Looking Ahead” - or perhaps rather “Going beyond.” Rather than seeking mechanical consensus, friend Dave Goff’s workshop focused on going beyond mechanics and reminding friends that leading a meeting should be emphasized as “worship with attention to business,” to seek the leading of God rather than consensus per se. Our Saturday lunch was provided by the young friends, and many friends partook for dinner as well. Not quite feeding the 5000, but the leftovers were enough to feed the disciples.

We found ourselves moved by Ursula McTaggart, whose Peace Lecture was focused on the Wilmington College Prison Education Program. She spoke first about how Quakers have been “seeing injustices and establishing a committee to deal with it” since the 1798 establishment of the Committee on Indian Affairs. We found ourselves strongly encouraged by Wilmington College’s commitment to the prison education program, established by Neil Snarr in 1967. It’s estimated there will be up to 140 students registered in this program for the fall between three different facilities. To quote Ursula, “Friends are the first to do something and the last to give up,” and this persistence and resilience was shown in the restart of the Wilmington College prison education program. We see this, likewise, as a case of Looking Ahead by providing these incarcerated people with tools and hope for a positive future. To quote Ursula again, “All long-term relationships involve conflict; the only people who don’t make mistakes are the ones who don’t try.”

After two and a half fulfilling days together, Friends gathered at Wilmington Friends Meeting for a brief closing business session, leading directly into joyful worship.

Prayerfully Submitted,  
Jonathan Goff  
Hannah Lutz  
Miriam Speaight





**Quaker action for a just world**  
 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102  
 afsc.org

*If not now, tell me when  
 We may never see this moment or place in time again  
 If not now, if not now, tell me when  
 I see sorrow and trouble in this land  
 Although there will be struggle, we'll make the change we can  
 If not now, if not now, tell me when*

— Carrie Newcomer, 2019  
 Quaker singer-songwriter

Dear Friends Everywhere,

Greetings from the American Friends Service Committee. In these devastating times, there are an uncountable number of threats to human rights, the fundamental principles that undergird democracy, and the well-being of our communities. AFSC is ready for this moment. Based on our century of experience as a Quaker organization, we are equipped to act boldly and take risks. We have built an agile organization that is able to respond to immediate needs, build power in communities, and resist until justice and love prevail. We also recognize individual Friends and Quaker congregations who are independently exercising their testimonies to create a better, peaceful, and more just world. Thank you for your witness and courage.

This epistle briefly describes our annual Corporation meeting and offers a few highlights about our programs and campaigns. Far short of being comprehensive of AFSC’s current work, this epistle seeks to build awareness among Quakers about AFSC’s current presence in the world. It also calls upon Friends to act in partnership with us to meet urgent community needs, challenge injustice, and build peace.

**AFSC Annual Meeting of the Corporation**

The theme for this year’s annual meeting of the AFSC Corporation is *Healing Through Justice: Our Collective Journey*. Despite what politicians might say to divide us, policing and prisons do not keep communities safe. Neither does militarism. But today, we see a host of new policies that seek to expand on those oppressive systems. Mass detention and deportation of immigrants are modeled after other policies that criminalize Black and Brown communities. Threats in the international arena, including in Palestine, Sudan, Myanmar, and Ukraine, also undermine the pursuit of peace and justice.

As Friends, we are led to act in solidarity with communities facing violence and oppression. Our theme for this year’s Corporation Meeting spotlights AFSC’s Healing Justice programs, which adopt a long-

term abolitionist vision as they work to reduce our society's reliance on incarceration and policing. It also responds to calls for justice and healing among immigrant communities and in regions of the world that have been devastated by recent and ongoing wars.

### **Defending migrant rights**

AFSC believes that *everyone* deserves a chance to build a good life, regardless of where they were born or when or how they migrated. When people make the difficult choice to leave their homes, they are seeking safety, opportunities, and a chance to contribute to a new country. They should be welcomed with respect and dignity. The U.S. has the resources to ensure humane, comprehensive support for newcomers. However, the Trump administration is threatening immigrant safety by calling for mass deportations, the dismantling of longstanding rights, and policies that dehumanize immigrants.

As a Quaker organization, we affirm the divine worth of every person, and we refuse to accept these unjust policies. We will not sit back and watch as communities and families are torn apart and fundamental rights are eroded. AFSC is working to address the economic and political drivers of migration, reflecting our commitment to systemic change. One way we do this work is by amplifying the voices of people who have been most impacted by unjust immigration policies. AFSC's TRACES project aims to highlight those untold stories, providing a platform for migrants to share their powerful experiences. AFSC conducted storytelling sessions in New Jersey, Jordan, El Salvador, Mexico, and Guatemala, where we helped immigrants reclaim their individual power over their own stories.

We also support migrants, refugees, and internally displaced people at each stage of their journey. To ensure that migrant communities are safe and protected, we offer legal services, training, human rights monitoring, and humanitarian relief. And we support immigrant-led organizing and advocacy.

We are asking Friends to familiarize themselves with our [six principles of a welcoming, dignified, and just approach to immigration](#). These include: (1) valuing immigrant leadership, (2) welcoming people with dignity, (3) offering paths to citizenship, (4) protecting the right to seek asylum, (5) ensuring that everyone can meet their basic needs, regardless of immigration status, and (6) helping people live safely wherever they are. We call upon Friends to affirm these six principles through their public witness by taking action. We know that when we take action together, grounded in love, we can make a difference. Learn more at [afsc.org/6pillars](https://afsc.org/6pillars).

AFSC has resources to equip individuals and communities with the tools they need to make effective change, which can be found at <https://afsc.org/migration>. These resources intend to support Friends and others when they talk with family and friends, write letters to the editor, comment on local media websites, meet with editorial boards, and host community conversations. A list of [five tips](#) on how to advocate for migration justice can also be found on our website: [afsc.org/migration-messaging](https://afsc.org/migration-messaging).

Additionally, we are offering yard signs with the message “QUAKERS WELCOME IMMIGRANTS WITH DIGNITY” to meetings and churches that are ready to stand in public witness with migrant communities. Order a sign for your meeting or church at [afsc.org/migration-justice-yard-signs](https://afsc.org/migration-justice-yard-signs).

### **Peace and Justice in Palestine**

AFSC has had a historic presence in Palestine, dating back to 1948, when the United Nations commissioned AFSC to lead humanitarian work in Gaza after 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced from their homes. Since then, our programs have provided humanitarian aid, agricultural development, kindergartens, midwife training, and trauma healing to Palestinians for over seven decades. In Israel, we support civil society organizations working to counter militarism, build awareness among the Israeli public about injustices, and advocate for the right of return for Palestinian refugees. We also have staff working in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Jordan who deliver humanitarian aid and advocate for Palestinian self-determination and freedom.

Since October 2023, tens of thousands of Palestinians have been killed and many more injured by Israel’s ongoing attacks on Gaza. People are dying of starvation and disease. Most hospitals are shuttered, and 90% of homes and buildings are uninhabitable. Nearly all of Gaza’s more than 2 million people have been displaced, including AFSC staff. Since March 2, Israel has blocked all aid from entering Gaza, and people urgently need food, water, medicine, and other essentials.

AFSC’s emergency relief efforts has helped to alleviate suffering in the short term and reduce inequality and oppression in the long term. Despite facing grave personal losses themselves, AFSC staff in Gaza have provided lifesaving assistance to hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians, including hot meals, food parcels, and fresh vegetables. We have also distributed hygiene kits with soap, toothbrushes, women’s hygiene products, and other critical supplies, and offered recreational activities for children and counseling to help people process the impact of the violence. Friends can see the challenges our aid workers face on a daily basis and the courageous action they are taking to save lives in AFSC’s short documentary titled “[Lifelines](https://afsc.org/lifelines).” Watch the film at [afsc.org/lifelines](https://afsc.org/lifelines). To find more resources to help you take action and speak out against the genocide, visit [afsc.org/crisis-gaza](https://afsc.org/crisis-gaza).

Quaker testimonies teach that injustices must be eliminated for peace to prevail. In 2022, AFSC joined the international human rights community—including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch—in amplifying calls to end the Israeli apartheid system, which for decades has been oppressing, suffocating, and humiliating Palestinians. Today, AFSC is calling upon Quaker meetings and churches to join our interfaith coalition of over 500 congregations known as the [Apartheid-Free communities](https://afsc.org/apartheid-free-communities).

Over 40 Quaker Apartheid-Free communities have joined our coalition. In just the past year alone, the number of Quaker meetings and churches that have joined has more than doubled! Quaker

communities in the coalition are demonstrating their commitment to the Apartheid-Free movement in various ways, including (but certainly not limited to) outreach to other faith communities, hosting education programs for Friends about apartheid in Palestine, moving their assets and money to divest from supporting Israel's military occupation, and demanding that elected officials address apartheid in their policy decisions and public speaking appearances. Today, we ask that other meetings and churches accept our invitation and, when led to do so, sign the Apartheid-Free pledge and take action against racism, militarism, and denial of human rights in Palestine and beyond. Learn more at [apartheid-free.org](http://apartheid-free.org).

### **And more . . .**

There are so many more ways to take action with AFSC.

Our [Emerging Leaders for Liberation](#) program, now in its fourth year, equips young adult Friends and other young adults with the skills they need to effectively enact social change. We encourage more young adult Friends to consider applying for this program so they, too, can receive mentorship from our staff.

Anyone can learn from the esteemed social change leaders on our staff by joining our [Third Tuesdays: Protect, Resist, and Rebuild](#) webinars, hosted every third Tuesday of the month at 8 p.m. EST / 7 p.m. CST / 5 p.m. PST. Join us for [Meeting for Worship with Attention to Peace](#) every Thursday at 5:30 p.m. ET / 3:30 p.m. CT / 2:30 p.m. PT.

We encourage Friends to sign up for our weekly newsletter "Weekend Reading" and our monthly "Acting in Faith" newsletter, specifically tailored for Friends, for the latest updates about AFSC's work and how you can get involved. More information can also be found at [afsc.org/friends-engage](http://afsc.org/friends-engage).

There are so many ways for Friends to partner with AFSC towards creating a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world. Our staff will be visiting over 20 Yearly Meetings this year and over 80 events at Quaker meetings, churches, schools, and retirement communities. You can submit a request for a speaker to attend your meeting here: [afsc.org/host-event](http://afsc.org/host-event).

From AFSC to all Friends worldwide, we send peace, prayers for resilience, and our solidarity. In the words of the Quaker refugee rights activist Jim Corbett: "Asking not 'what can I do?' but 'what can we do?' we open the way for each individual offering to be incorporated into a cathedral of love and service that our life as people builds for the Kingdom in human history." Striving forth together, we will build the beloved community that this wounded world needs now.

**Epistle from the  
Friends World Committee for Consultation Asia West-Pacific  
Section Annual Gathering held in-person  
Seoul, South Korea  
19 - 23 October 2025**

폭풍이 나무를 뽑고 바위를 굴리지만

하루를 못갑니다.

정말 크고 강한 것은

소리 없이 흐르는 맑은 시내입니다.

- <우물 안 개구리>, 『씨울의 소리』 36호 중 -

*The typhoon uproots trees and rolls boulders,  
But it doesn't last one day. What's truly great and  
Powerful is the clear, silent stream that flows.*

- Ham Seok-heon (1901-1989) "Frog in the Well," , *The Voice of the People*.  
(Sound of Seeds, 36)

Loving greetings to Friends everywhere from the Asia West Pacific Section (AWPS) Annual Gathering 2025 held in-person in Seoul.

On a late October weekend, around 50 Friends from more than eleven countries came together near the banks of the great Han River. During the day the river shines and at night the buildings do.

Our gathering began with an excursion to the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) with Young Adult Friends (YAFs) and members of FWCC's Central Executive Committee. We felt the pain, sadness, and despair of the people who continue to be separated by war. We were confronted by the contrast between a joyful local festival with music and laughter and the fact that not far from where we stood were the remnants of the Korean War, with estimates of two million landmines still buried in the land.

We know that peace is not merely the absence of fighting. War still exists here in Korea. We were touched by Friends' sharing of their efforts for peace in Myanmar and Gaza and were reminded of the turmoil that remains in other sections of the world.

Throughout our gathering we have considered the ways conflict arises in our day to day lives and the tools we have to resolve these conflicts. These tools include holding clearness meetings, listening before reacting, having humility and humbleness, remembering that sometimes we are wrong, consulting scripture, and listening to God.

We have to make the choice to pause and listen to that which flows in us: the ever-present and infinite love of God giving itself to us in and as our very lives.

We worshipped in the colourful garden of the beloved Friend (친구) Ham Seok-heon, a 20<sup>th</sup> Century pioneer of nonviolence in Korea. We learnt about his life and his dedication to ensuring peace in and between North and South Korea, his two homes. Ham Seok-heon wrote of his experiences as a Friend and emphasised that regardless of religion we at our core, share the same values. His life speaks to us today.

We took part in the Peace Games facilitated by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). This simulation of regional diplomatic negotiations quickly showed us that even though cooperation is for the common good, it is often hindered by the various roles we take on.

Through the game we learnt how the voices of those affected by violence can be too easily minimised in international structures and negotiations. We were moved to write to the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) to share our appreciation for their work in bringing the voices of survivors of violence and injustice to institutions of political power.

We were grateful for the contributions of Friends online and Friends in-person from the Sections of Africa; the Americas; and Europe and the Middle East. Hearing about the online youth group for Junior Young Friends running in EMES, the inclusion of Young Adult Friends in all areas of the Africa Section and the greater accessibility brought about by having interpretation at various Quaker gatherings was inspiring.

Young Adult Friends enriched the Gathering and we appreciate the ways they are developing our Section.

Our Section's efforts for greater language inclusion are making a difference in allowing more Friends to participate in the life of our Section, though we know we are just beginning. We were delighted to see a draft version of our own AWPS Advices and Queries. Translating texts from our Quaker lineage, including those written by Asian and Pacific Friends into the languages of our region, will strengthen the ties between us and help us to know from where we have come and apply it to our context today.

And so, we thank those who made possible our multilingual event, the interpreters and those who shared their skills and resources. We thank our kind hosts at Association Fraternelle Internationale (AFI) Jeonjin Sang Center for their care and generosity which nurtured the spirit of our meeting.

The sharing of Quaker words in our various languages, having Korean calligraphy in the morning, and a rooftop game of 윷놀이 yutnori added fun and joy to our days, shining a light on the potential we have to be more deeply connected.

We discussed what each Meeting and church could do to connect with their community. The question was *“What more could you do or what else could you do to nourish your meeting?”*

In sharing back to the group, four main ideas came up:

1. Recognising that we all carry some kind of wounds, and need support in healing them.
2. Opening up meeting houses to be a gathering place for community services such as support groups for drug rehabilitation, or counseling for domestic abuse victims.
3. Learning sign language to connect with those who are hearing impaired; and
4. Connecting different interest groups together, such as climate change and environmental groups.

Our time together has spurred our discernment for the future and how we chose to act going forward in our current global climate.

We closed with a joyful, musical concert where Friends shared their talents and voices with one another as we bid each farewell, longing to see each other soon.

Greetings to Friends Everywhere,

Black, Brown, Indigenous and People of Colour Friends from many Yearly Meetings gathered on 31 May 2025 for our first time together. Thirty one of us came with hope, joy, and some wariness. We are from diverse backgrounds and locations including the US, Canada, South Africa, Kenya, Philippines, Zimbabwe, the UK and the Kingdom of Hawai'i. We came from Baltimore Yearly Meeting, Britain Yearly Meeting, Canadian Yearly Meeting, Intermountain Yearly Meeting, the Nairobi Yearly Meeting, New York Yearly Meeting, Pacific Yearly Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting, Southern Africa Yearly Meeting, and Southern Appalachia Yearly Meeting and Association. We may be the first worldwide online Meeting between Quakers who are Black, Brown, Indigenous and People of Colour (BBIPOC), initiated by a grassroots group of Friends of Colour. Many are involved in anti oppression/ decolonization, racial justice, reparations, and community empowerment work through Quaker and other organizations.

In break-out groups and in our broader meeting, we approached key themes, which included: addressing white supremacy, supporting marginalized communities, environmental justice, and personal growth/healing.

We exchanged ideas about future initiatives, including organizing regional meetings, gatherings and having, someday, a BBIPOC Yearly Meeting. We emphasized the importance of recognizing indigenous traditions and building inclusive Quaker communities.

We touched on the visceral nature of Quakerism and the importance of grounding ourselves in somatic experiences. We voiced feelings about the global resonance of challenges faced by Quakers of colour, the need to recognize existing community efforts, and the importance of considering diverse perspectives from different regions. Our faith came to the fore when our conversations shifted to a more worship-like format, with participants reflecting on ancestors, gratitude, and the concept of "truthability" in sustaining harmonious relationships

A Friend emphasized the need for people of colour to come together and build their own Quaker communities rather than relying on white European people, cultures and structures. Another Friend highlighted the importance of personal growth and sustaining momentum in this work. A Friend from Kenya extended invites to the group to a gathering in Ghana in October to strengthen relationships and discuss decolonization. There was a suggestion about ways in which we could learn about decolonization efforts in different regions, including Africa, Asia, and Spanish-speaking areas, to better understand diverse perspectives

### **Indigenous Peace Traditions and Diplomacy**

An indigenous Canadian Friend shared a story about Papunhunk, a prominent Munsee Lenape leader and diplomat who interacted with anglo-american Quaker missionaries in

the 18th century. The story highlights the sophisticated peace traditions of indigenous peoples that predated Quaker pacifism. We learned about an interaction between Papunhank and Quaker missionary John Woolman, where Woolman recognized the spiritual depth of the indigenous community.

We left physically tired but spiritually invigorated - looking forward to our next meeting, sitting with the joy and contentment of newly acquainted f/Friendship. Hopeful that the shoots of our new bonds will grow to become strong trees that give leaves of shelter and grow deep and connected roots.

We went our separate ways, listening to birdsong and on the screen was a picture of trees, the sky, shining sun. We felt the dawn of what is to come.

In hope, in peace, in joy, in Friendship,

Gloria Simon-Gould  
Clerk  
Tomi Nagai-Rothe  
Assist. Clerk

Epistle Sub-Committee:  
SY Boland  
Diego Navarro  
Marghuerita Remi-Judah

### **Imagine a world**

Imagine a space  
Imagine yourself a part of a special human space  
Celestial in nature  
Spiritual in performance  
International in presence  
Yes we are a part  
Of a future present relational reality  
We gather here  
We gather there  
By zoom we gathered from everywhere  
May 31, 2025  
31 Friends of Colour gathered  
For a called meeting  
We inhaled and exhaled individually and collectively  
The multiple sounds of voices  
Politeness are witness  
To global majority discernment everyone was sure a stare

Staring eyes opened wide.. how did you meet  
You know racism keeps you on your feet  
The sounds were deep and held a space for energy, enthusiasm, cultivating  
relationships and so much more  
A million ideas, thoughts, expressions, sounds and movements around  
Liberation in the air  
Philosophizing with care  
Signifying on all we have had to bear  
We are building community  
We are building trust we are eliminating the indoctrination that has kept us apart.  
We listened for progress we spoke with enlightenment.  
We listened for enlightenment and we spoke for progress. Distance cannot divide us  
White comfort cannot separate us. The engagement of each other is like an egg being  
birthed and cracking aloud and we are all in  
Ahhh  
to see what we are becoming  
Ahhh  
to know what we are creating  
Ahhh  
to know the essence of who we are caring  
Ahhh  
to know  
we do  
even in the unknowing  
We know we are becoming  
Completely anew  
A new birth  
A new vision  
A new mission  
I imagine, **what say you?**



Friends World Committee  
for Consultation  
EUROPE & MIDDLE EAST SECTION

**Europe & Middle East Section**  
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**Executive Secretary: Michael Eccles**

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

**30 April and 8-11 May 2025**

**How do we live together as a community of Friends in Europe & the Middle East?**

*It seemed good to us, having come to one accord. Acts 15:25 (ESV)*

***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, drazi p átelé, dragie draugi, dragi prijatelji, Ñ Ç Ñ £ Ñ Ø Ñ £ , kedves barátaim, drodzy przyjaciele, Shanovni Droozi, a chairde, Salamaat Asdiqa, ძვირფასო მეგობრებო!

The Annual Meeting of the Europe and Middle East Section of the Friends World Committee for Consultation sends you our greetings, light and love.

At the wonderful assembly in Warsaw and online, nearly 80 Friends gathered from the diverse FWCC EMES area from Austria, Belgium, Britain, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Russia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Ukraine, along with Friends from Kenya and the USA.

We come together as Friends, as individuals and as bridges. Our own histories and those of our countries and people live through us as we gather together to create a community for this weekend and for time to come. We are living in times of crisis and uncertainty in many parts of the world, yet we create together a model for how community can still thrive.

Emily Provance enlightened and moved us, speaking about Acts 15 as a story about discernment, and inspired us to look at what it means for a community to experience spiritual unity in the presence of big cultural and theological differences. We experience unity of purpose when we allow ourselves to be changed through listening for points of connection rather than for points of disagreement. Through this we can connect to that of God in everyone, get acquainted better, and encourage the inward light that could overcome even the deep darkness of suffering.

The wars in Ukraine and in Palestine have provided a heavy backdrop for our gathering; we feel deep grief for those who suffer, and we feel hope listening to stories of courage. We have heard of Friends within our section working to maintain the dignity and humanity of all people affected by war: those who fight and those who refuse; those free to stay true to their conscience and those

persecuted; those who stay and those who flee; those welcomed in new countries and those who are turned away. Our peace testimony requires us to act. We ask all Friends to lend their support in whatever way they can.

Many of our meetings are young with few Friends. As we heard about the Council of Jerusalem, following the leadings of our faith sometimes requires us to reconsider our customs - maintaining traditions of the past while also welcoming and accepting the new. In light of our commitment to simplicity, what accessible modern ways can we adopt to take care of proper Quaker process digitally and online?

Communication within any group of people is essential to establish strong relationships and we continue to explore how we can do that better to include more people. During many occasions of worship, we were asked to talk slowly and make pauses, that was helpful for deep and inspiring ministries, and we are grateful to our faithful interpreters for their help in understanding each other.

God speaks through every community and there is always a sense of the meeting. How do we listen and follow the leadings of the spirit? The bells ringing in the stillness, like the heavenly ringtone, call us to connect more deeply with the Divine and with each other.

In Friendship, mewn cyfeillgarwch, i vennskap, i vänskap, i venskab, ystävydessä, bien amicalement, in Freundschaft, in Vriendschap, en amistad, in amicizia, v p átelství, u priateľstvu, draudzība, baráti üdvözlettel, sõpruses, w przyjaźni, Zi Droozhnim privitom, ഏകദേശം, ഏകദേശം, ഏകദേശം, le cairdeas, fi alsadaqa, მეგობრული მოკითხვით.

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

# 2026 Report to Yearly Meetings

April 2026



*Dear Friends,*

I share greetings as you gather for your Annual Sessions and gratitude for your support for the Friends Committee on National Legislation's work to change federal policy to advance the world we seek.

The challenges to this vision of peace, justice, and an Earth restored have only intensified in the last year. So have our efforts to meet the moment.

## War Is Not the Answer—At Home or Abroad

Again and again, we are witnessing the Trump administration's overreach and abuse of authority. In Venezuela, Iran, in Minneapolis and on our neighborhood streets, the executive is grabbing at power and pursuing violence. In the face of these challenges, FCNL is equipping people of many ages, backgrounds, and faith traditions to speak truthfully and strategically to lawmakers. More than 3,250 people lobbied with FCNL in 2025, on a range of issues.

Congress has the power to rein in the administration. We know that persistent, nonpartisan advocacy can pay off. In October 2025, Congress repealed the 1991 and 2002 Authorizations for Use of Military Force in Iraq, a focus of FCNL's work for decades. FCNL Advocacy Teams, more than 130 strong in all 50 states, are building on this success with this year's "No War at Home or Abroad" campaign, focused on accountability for unlawful and unjust military action around the world and in U.S. streets.

## Love Thy Neighbor (No Exceptions)

Our advocacy on just migration focuses on ensuring everyone, including immigrants, can find safety in places like churches, meetings, and schools. The 10th cohort of our young adult Advocacy Corps is organizing around this portfolio.

In this and other areas, we work closely with people across Quaker and other faith traditions, for example in hosting an in-district faith leader lobby day in Richmond, VA, focused on aid to Gaza, and a gathering of faith leaders held at Friends Place on Capitol Hill to advance passage of the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools.

Find updates about these and other issues at [fcnl.org/issues](https://fcnl.org/issues), and see current legislative priorities at [fcnl.org/priorities](https://fcnl.org/priorities).




## Looking to the Future

Gathering in November 2025, FCNL's governing General Committee adopted new policy language around Artificial Intelligence (AI). It states, "AI policymaking must be continuously probing, nimble, anticipatory, and protective." See [fcnl.org/WeSeekStatement](https://fcnl.org/WeSeekStatement) for more. FCNL has also adopted a new preamble to its statement on Antiracism, Anti-bias, Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Integrity (AJEDI) to make clear our ongoing commitment to this work. Find out more at [fcnl.org/ajedi](https://fcnl.org/ajedi).

In April 2026 we are hosting our first intergenerational lobbying conference, Friends Changemaker Weekend. This hybrid event brings together leaders and advocates from across the FCNL community to push back against this administration's unprecedented, militarized actions. Among the participants are members of our campus chapters, located around the country, and participants in our Diaspora Organizers program that supports members of diaspora communities to be leaders in advocacy for peace and justice.

We are also looking ahead to the 120th session of Congress, which begins in January 2027. Thank you to the hundreds of Friends meetings and churches who regularly take part in discernment around FCNL's legislative priorities. The Policy Committee is weighing your responses and will bring recommendations to FCNL's 2026 Annual Meeting, to be held in Washington, DC and online November 12-14.

Thank you, Friends, for being part of this work, and for all the ways that you participate in building a better world. 

In peace,

Kitty Ufford-Chase

*Clerk, FCNL General Committee*

*Northeast Kingdom Friends Meeting » New England Yearly Meeting*



Bridget Moix (General Secretary), Kitty Ufford-Chase (Clerk), and Michael Fuson (Assistant Clerk)



Senator Raphael Warnock (GA) shows off his Love Thy Neighbor (No Exceptions) pin.



FCNL's Advocacy Corps is training a new generation of advocates.

## **Epistle from the Jordans Young Adult Friends Gathering, 8/2025**

"Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give will never thirst. But the water that I shall give them will become in them a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life. God is Spirit, and those who worship God must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:14, 24)

To all Friends everywhere, and to a world that God yearns to heal, we send our love.

More than thirty young adult Friends gathered at Jordans Meeting House, near Beaconsfield, UK, to experience the Spirit of God in and between us, nurturing and transforming us. We came from many places: Kenya, the US, and all over Britain. We have been united in being drawn to this place, and united in finding Living Water to quench our thirst, even though we call that Water by different names. We want to share our hope with the world: the place we found this Water is within. You can join us there without even a step.

The Divine Hand has been shaping and forming us to hold the Living Water together. We have felt held, loved, and understood, not because we are all alike, but because we are different, from different traditions and backgrounds, with different stories and experiences. This has meant we have much to learn from each other. The Spirit has used our differences to connect us more deeply. Look into each other's eyes if you want to see the Light.

Our times of worship have been deep and sincere, in spirit and truth. We have been restored by water from the eternal well. This has come in song, silence, speech, caring, cooking, washing up, and sitting around a campfire. In all this, we have been convinced again of the connecting and revitalizing Power in and among us all, present in all creation. We thank God for all we have shared: joy, laughter, tears, and a home away from home.

The Kingdom of God is among us: together, imperfect, a vessel for the Water of Life. In our togetherness, God's goodness becomes manifest in the world.

We have experienced the reality of openness to the inward Teacher, not as Quaker jargon but as lived experience. We have been on an adventure together, trying to be receptive to our Guide. It has been new, hard, and deeply joyful.

We came to this place looking for guidance for our lives. Are we moving at the right pace? Are we heading in the right direction? We have learned to move, not with haste and anxiety, but at the pace of the Spirit, in God's time and in the matrix of prayer.

We have come in trust that we will find what we are looking for. We have trusted each other, being open and vulnerable. We have trusted our Guide to lead us into community and show us where we are needed. In true community, each need is tended as each person is given the ability. Trust in God and each other has drawn us into depth, stillness, and openness to the Teacher. We hope to carry this openness and share it with everyone we meet. It is hard to stay tender in a spiky world, but it is what we are called to.

We felt welcomed, by the Lord and each other, as if encountering the heart of God. God has a heart for the joy and the suffering, the beauty and the pain. The gift we have experienced in our time together is for each of us, but it is for our world too. Each of us has a place where we are planted and sometimes struggling to bloom. We take heart that we can experience the Living God at any time, wherever we go. This is the place where the grace of God never stops falling. We come to it broken, hurting, loving, with great joy and passion. We pray: help us to be faithful, dear God. Thank You for showing us Your heart, dear Jesus. You are in each one, whatever we call You. Thank You for fulfilling Your promise to show up and lead us wherever two or three - or thirty - gather in Your name, Your life and power.

We have felt encouragement to open the door, let the Lord Jesus in, and let His love show. We hope to keep opening our hearts to the Spirit of Love, just as we opened the double doors that unbolt and swing open in this meeting house, to let the light and wind in. Even in small moments, conversations and quiet togetherness, we can feel ourselves being visited by a Power greater than ourselves.

We met at a time of fear, with uncertainty about the future - our own and the world's. Sitting with this, we felt God prying open doors we had closed, inviting us home, inviting us to trust, inviting us to lean in to God and each other. We heard a voice of Divine comfort and assurance: "I will provide. I will be there. I am always there, even and especially when things are hard and uncertain."

Together, we are answering the call to come home, to extraordinary peace that passes understanding. This peace endures even in times of fear, uncertainty, and crumbling institutions. What is the ground of our faith? Not our meeting houses, or our practices, or our structures, but the Life we have felt together, the peace that Life gives, and the fire it lights in us.

In days like these, we must not be ashamed of the gospel message: that the Light is in and with us, and the darkness of the present time cannot overcome it. Let us rejoice in sharing that Light with each other, as we have begun to here. Thank You, God.

Jordans Young Adult Friends Gathering 2025

## **Epistle from the Oxford Young Adult Friends Gathering, 3/2025**

*Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30).*

To Friends everywhere, greetings in the Love that draws us together.

Oxford (UK) young adult Friends gathered from 15-16th 3rd Month (March) 2025 at Wallingford Meeting House to listen together to our Guide. We thank Wallingford Friends for their generosity and warm welcome. In times of worship, conversation, rest, and discernment, we felt new willingness to be led, to name and exercise our gifts, and to support each other to live faithfully. Our hearts were softened, our ears were opened to our Teacher, and our eyes were made more able to see God's loving hand in our lives and community.

As we met in worship, with the early spring sunshine streaming in through the windows of the meeting house, the sweet power of the Spirit helped us come into the slower rhythms of grace, where we can hear and rely on the Guide's voice. We heard a call to the peace of abiding in the Vine, the source of our faithful work in the world. We must allow ourselves to be pruned so that we can bear the fruit we are called to bear. We are called, not to lives of busyness, but to give over our own willing and running; resting in the Presence, the tasks that are truly ours come into view, and as God has God's way with us, we find that our lives are given new depth and new meaning.

We reflected together on where we see the gifts and leadings of the Spirit in our lives and in each other's lives. We considered how we can encourage each other to sing, in our own ways, the song we hear God singing. We were reminded of the value of friendships in which we can ask each other how God is working in our lives. We felt the need to nurture each other into nurturing each other. There are many gifts in our community, and by appreciating the gifts God is giving us, we can become more willing to live adventurously.

In a living meeting, we need elders: spiritual midwives with a sensitivity to the conditions of Friends and meetings. We need gospel ministers willing to bravely and vulnerably speak the words they are given. We need the gift of care that enables us to see more in others than they see in themselves. These gifts are given for the good of our community, so it is our responsibility to help each other deepen in them. We feel a concern to invite Friends into this deepening work.

We are comforted to know there is a lasting Power that can join us to each other, whoever we are, however we find our way to Friends. We heard a call to offer fellowship to those in our midst who may not yet know our ways, whom we may not yet know, but who are reached by the love we feel for each other. Can we challenge ourselves to open our doors and hearts more widely, allowing ourselves to be helped and changed by this? Are we listening for the new life the Living Teacher is calling us into?

We have enjoyed time with each other, recognized each other's gifts, and strengthened our bonds of friendship. We will carry from this place the love we have for each other and our meeting. We

have felt close to many who were with us in spirit, aware that our Precious Friend rejoices in our unity.

As we have encountered the Presence in this meeting house, like many Friends before us, we have witnessed the thread of Living Fire that runs from the prophets to the outpouring of the Spirit of Christ at Pentecost to the early Friends who found Jesus living in their hearts. That Fire has not gone out. It will not go out. We young adult Friends seek to know this Fire for ourselves, in our time. We have found it roaring here. This gives us hope for the future of our Religious Society. We have gathered around this Fire in worship, and we plan to leave it burning.

Oxford (UK) Young Adult Friends  
3rd Month 2025

## **Epistle from the Quaker Council of European Affairs General Assembly held on Friday the 14th and Saturday, the 15th of November 2025.**

Greetings to Friends everywhere!

Friends from 14 of the 17 member organisations of QCEA – Yearly Meetings from Belgium and Luxemburg, Britain, Central Europe, France, Germany, Ireland, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, France, and the Netherlands, plus the European and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation, Europe and Middle East Young Friends, British Friends of QCEA, and the Dutch support group VVQREA – were joined by staff and the newly-appointed Friend in Residence at Maison Quaker for their second meeting of 2025. We felt privileged to spend time together in this beautiful building in the heart of Brussels.

We heard from the Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppressive Behaviour Group which had met several times online since our last meeting in March. We decided to rename it the Diversity and Inclusion Group, which better reflects our aspirations for the membership of the General Assembly and our staff. We want all European friends to feel enabled regardless of physical limitations language skills or background to become members of the general assembly and the Executive Committee of QCEA.

Since our last meeting, we have appointed a Friend in Residence: Janice Thomson, who now lives in Quaker House. Janice reported to the General Assembly about her experiences of her first four months, during which she has been supporting staff and investigating how the usage of Quaker house by outside groups may be increased. She invited the general assembly to consider exciting opportunities as to how Quaker House may become a thriving Quaker centre for the international community based in Brussels and led an inspiring exercise in mindful reflection for those present and online.

On Saturday morning we heard from staff about their recent work. Changes in the personnel of the European Commission and Parliament have meant that QCEA staff have to rebuild relationships with new individuals in the Commission and new Members of the European Parliament which is much more rightward leaning than previously.

We heard that as part of the renewed focus on conscientious objection, good connections had been made with the European External Action Service in relation to their work with the Ukrainian government to enable its application for EU membership. This was a topic that really engaged Friends.

We continued with consideration of the QCEA strategy 2026 to 2030. The three pillars of the strategy are the Intersections of Climate Migration and peace, rethinking security, and speaking truth to power in the crisis of democracy. We split up into three groups World Café Format, and each group commented on each pillar. In addition, an online group provided valuable commentary. Some very helpful amendments were received from GA members who were pleased to support the three pillars approach

recommended by the Strategy Group. We plan that a revised draft will be ready before the end of the year which can be distributed more widely. We asked Friends to bring home the idea of the three pillars and share it with their member organisations. We felt energised by being able to look forward at ways of tackling the many challenges that we all face at this time of uncertainty.

We ask Friends to spread the word about our work amongst their communities and to give whatever support they are able to the activities of our Yearly Meeting Representatives as they bring back more news of this meeting to you.

We approve the epistle and thank the Friends who prepared it.

**Quaker Council for European Affairs**  
**15 November 2025**

April 18, 2025

Dear Friends in U.S. and Canada Yearly Meetings,

We write to you as a group of U.S. Quakers who formed the Quakers and 'Indian Boarding Schools' Research Network (QIBS) in late 2022. Our collective purpose is to thoroughly research 19th-century Quaker involvement in assimilationist boarding schools, and to make our findings accessible to Native American families and tribes and to the Religious Society of Friends.

Native Americans call us to this work as they seek answers to the question, “*What happened to our children?*” We share our research findings with the [National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition \(NABS\)](#), the [Native American Rights Fund \(NARF\)](#) and the tribes, and we seek guidance from Native elders, past and present.

We come to this work through spiritual leadings and carry it out through collective discernment. Most of us conduct our QIBS work with spiritual accompaniment, including committees of our yearly or monthly meetings. The [Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples](#) program of Friends Peace Teams provides technical and programmatic support. We believe that for Friends to build positive relationships with Native communities today, we need to examine our shared history with open minds and hearts. QIBS members apply rigorous research standards to this task. We also listen lovingly to the testimonies of both Native people and Friends as they speak to us through historical documents and through our interactions today.

We hear cries of grief and anger from Native communities whose young people were taken away and taught to reject their entire way of life – their languages, cultures, and spiritual practices. We hear the earnest desire of our Quaker forebears to offer the perceived benefits of the European-American Christian way of life to Native people by means of assimilation. We hear from Native people today who express gratitude for these benefits, including those who became Quakers. At the same time, many continue to feel acute pain and grief. We hear Native and human rights organizations define the assimilationist programs of the boarding schools as cultural genocide. And we see how Native communities are working to heal these deep wounds by teaching their languages, revitalizing their cultures, and defending their sovereignty.

Quakers can support Native-led healing processes, and some monthly and yearly meetings are already doing this. We invite you to learn about the efforts of Alaska Friends Conference, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, and New England Yearly Meeting (included in the Resources below). Other meetings are supporting Indigenous language education programs, Land Back projects, and legislation to create a U.S. Truth and Healing Commission. We are encouraged by these Friendly acts of conscience and pray that they will multiply in the coming years.

We invite you to join us in considering these queries:

- *How are we learning the history of Quakers' interactions with Native peoples from various points of view?*
- *What might right relationship with Native peoples look like in our meetings and communities today?*

Thank you, Friends. Please hold our Quakers and 'Indian Boarding Schools' Research Network in your hearts and your prayers as we seek to be faithful to our callings. We send warm greetings and good wishes as you gather together, and we entrust you to the transforming love and power of the Spirit that unites and guides us. Let us see what love can do.

In Faith and Friendship,

Taylor Brelsford, Santa Fe Meeting, Intermountain Yearly Meeting

Gordon Bugbee, Beacon Hill Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting, NEYM Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools Research Group

Beth Burbank, Northside Friends Meeting, Chicago; Member, Racial Equity and Education Committee, Illinois Yearly Meeting

Elizabeth Cazden, New England Yearly Meeting, NEYM Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools Research Group

Elizabeth Claggett-Borne, New England Yearly Meeting, representative to Friends Peace Teams

Julie M. Finch, 15th Street Meeting, New York Yearly Meeting

Andrew Palmer Grant (MLIS), Quaker Indigenous Boarding School Research Group and Right Relations Resource Group of 'New England' Yearly Meeting

Janet Hough, Cobscook & Three Rivers Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting, NEYM Quaker Indigenous Boarding Schools Research Group

Terrence F. Kayser, Minneapolis Meeting, Northern Yearly Meeting

Paula Keeth, South Central Yearly Meeting

Art Koeninger, Homer Alaska Meeting, Alaska Quakers Seeking Right Relationship Committee of Alaska Friends Conference

Merrill Kohlhofer, North Shore Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting

Max Lockwood, 15th Street Meeting, New York Yearly Meeting

sandra boone Murphy, First Contact Reconciliation Collaborative, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

Judy Lumb, Atlanta Meeting

John Meyer, Friends Meeting of Washington DC, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, BYM Indigenous Affairs Committee

Pamela Moore, Pittsburgh Friends Meeting, Lake Erie Yearly Meeting

Daniel Patrick Morrison, 15th Street Meeting, New York Yearly Meeting, Recording Clerk of NYYM Indigenous Affairs Committee

Paula Palmer, Boulder Meeting, Boulder Meeting’s Indigenous Peoples Concerns Committee,  
Intermountain Yearly Meeting, Co-Director of Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples,  
Friends Peace Teams

Mary J. Parish, Pittsburgh Meeting, Lake Erie Yearly Meeting

Suzanna Schell, Beacon Hill/Three Rivers Meetings, New England Yearly Meeting, clerk of  
NEYM’s Right Relationship Resource Group

Terri Whitesong, friend of Friends

Note: We welcome correspondence at this email address:

[coordinator@qibs-research.info](mailto:coordinator@qibs-research.info)

## Resources

[This document](#) includes a list of the Quaker-operated Indigenous boarding schools and other Quaker documents, reports, and videos (including actions taken by yearly meetings).

We welcome interested Friends to join us if they would like to be actively engaged in this research. [Contact us here](#).

To learn about the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition, [visit this website](#). To learn about the role of the federal government, read these reports by the U.S. Department of the Interior:

- [Volume 1](#)
- [Volume 2](#)

To learn about the role of other religious denominations and how they are holding themselves accountable, see:

- November 2024 webinar: [“Toward Truth and Healing: How Churches Face Accountability for their Indian Boarding Schools”](#)
- [Resources on Churches’ Actions Toward Accountability](#)

To advocate for a Truth and Healing Commission on the Indian Boarding Schools, [visit this website](#).



Dear Friends of Illinois Yearly Meeting,

5/13/26

Since 1967, Right Sharing of World Resources (RSWR) has embodied the Quaker concern for global inequity. From the beginning, we have recognized that economic justice and spiritual growth are deeply connected. Our work continues to respond to this calling—transforming unjust systems through shared reflection, wealth redistribution, and mutual care. RSWR's two core programs—partnerships with women's groups and reflection on materialism and generosity—are inseparable parts of one movement, each strengthening the other.

[RSWR creates space to explore the spiritual dimensions of money, simplicity, and consumption.](#)

Through experiential workshops, curricula, and events, participants reflect on the connections between abundance, scarcity, and simplicity. These offerings are well suited for Quaker meetings, families, and individuals, and are available both in person and online. We invite your meeting to participate in a workshop, host a program, or explore and share these resources within your community.

[In Guatemala, India, Kenya, and Sierra Leone, RSWR partners with women's groups](#) that build personal savings, launch small businesses, collectively manage revolving loan funds, and strengthen women's influence in their communities. In April, RSWR issued its first round of second grants to groups that had previously received funding. These grants strengthen and expand the groups' loan funds, supporting both sustainability and growth for the groups and their members' businesses. This step reflects program shifts made over the past two years, including longer-term partnerships of up to four years and expanded training and support.

In February, RSWR launched [a new website](#) featuring [an events calendar](#) and a centralized space to explore and download [free activities and resources](#). We hope this updated platform helps more communities connect with and use RSWR's offerings. Over the past year, we also welcomed Yasmin Khan as Director of Community Development and Genty Ambeva as a team member in Kenya. Our staff carry this work forward each day, and supporters like you sustain it. We are deeply grateful for the ways you and your community contribute to building a more just and equitable world.

Thank you for your continued support and for holding this work in the Light.

The RSWR Team

*We are called to the right sharing of world resources, from the burdens of poverty and materialism into the abundance of God's love, to work toward equity and lives of dignity through partnerships with our human family throughout the world.*