

EPISTLE 2018

Greetings to Friends Everywhere:

The nearly 300 Friends gathered at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, WA, send you our hopes for building a world where bigotry is uprooted and equality of justice is the basis of all our social relations – a Commonwealth of Divine Peace. We have shared a taste of that under hot, sunny skies at the foot of Mount Rainier, land traditionally occupied by the Puyallup People (/spujələpabs in L̓šútsijd Coast Salish). In our 45<sup>th</sup> Annual Session we worshipped and shared together, while considering our role in the racism that afflicts our society.

We are grateful for the ministry of our Friend in Residence: Vanessa Julye, from Friends General Conference's Ministry on Racism, who lovingly rebuked Quakers for upholding white privilege over the centuries up to the present day, and called our largely white gathering to undo the powerful silent forces which actively keep other Friends away. There was an enormous range of emotional responses. As Vanessa reminded us, "we live in a world of traumatized people, harmed by the effects of White Supremacy" – harm done to people of all colors. White Friends especially often feel anxious, powerless to respond, and baffled as to how to "do it right."

How **do** we make it right? Our Friend in Residence warned against seeking to be comfortable: white people should not confuse one's discomfort with lack of safety; at this the room quaked with a gasp of recognition. Language is often a sore point: we wish to be authentic and speak the truth of our experience, but in ignorance we use words that wound others. We know we will make mistakes even as we go forward in a brave way, and feel exasperated by that reality. In follow-up workshops Friends considered how to deal with the manifestations of cultural and systemic bias. We are thankful for the Friends of color that offered resources and open insights while supporting each other in healing. We began to look at a proposed minute supporting engagement to uproot racism. Our worship group discussions helped us look more deeply into the privileges of our educated, Euro-American majority, and to empathize with the sufferings of vulnerable people at the corner of invisibility and exposure.

Friends considered a variety of other topics in interest groups. Many Friends spent time discussing responses to world climate change and its underlying causes. Other concerns and Quaker organizations also received Friends' attention and support. The xenophobia and racism in the U.S. immigration system siezed many Friends' attention. [We appreciate their many good actions and opportunities for our involvement.] After laboring all day, the music ministry by Anna Fritz soothed our spirits in the evening.

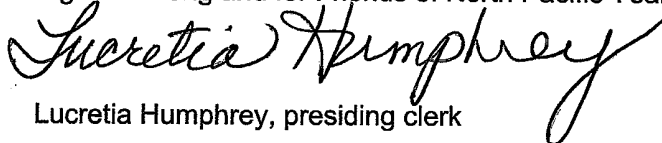
Junior Friends Yearly Meeting (high school age teens) were most visible in taking part in small worship groups, and in leading a plenary session with a game to highlight the issue of privilege or lack thereof, including race, gender identity, sexual orientation and dis/abilities. We were reminded of our commitment made last year to welcome transgender and gender non-conforming people.

In a time when the outside world's business roils and breaks our hearts, the gathering's business rolled out lightly and smoothly. Our children's program, traveling ministry program and other initiatives give us hope for the future. The new Abundant Financing funding ["Pay as you are led"] brought in more attendance and opened doors for some who otherwise might have been burdened by costs. Overall our Yearly Meeting's local meetings find themselves spiritually grounded, though with diminishing numbers and aging members, which leads to difficulty in Nominating Committee's filling all 97 positions at the YM level. This is not a new difficulty for our YM nor for other Quaker meetings; a sign not of lack of commitment but of flagging energy and fewer new, young members.

We are challenged to make effective witness, to uproot racism from our hearts and our communities now. This is not the time to talk about our ideals; it is the time to act to bring forth actions that manifest ideals we cannot yet see. The Spirit is working among our Beloved Community, leading us to recognize past failures, to acknowledge our progress, and to live up to the Light we now have.

In peace,

Signed among and for Friends of North Pacific Yearly Meeting

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lucretia Humphrey". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the printed name below it.

Lucretia Humphrey, presiding clerk