Dear Friends,

March 2020

It is with some sadness and with deep gratitude that I have decided to leave my position as General Secretary of FWCC after serving 8 years. It has been a privilege to serve Friends around the world, bringing us together as a family, gaining strength and courage from each other and from our faith in God’s guiding presence. How very rich it has been! I am grateful for the friendships, the accompaniment, and the encouragement I have received -- gifts too numerous to name, but they fill my heart to overflowing.

As I reflect on my time at FWCC we have, together, accomplished so much. I was approved at the World Conference in Kabarak, Kenya and I began work at FWCC as we were bringing some closure to that amazing gathering. It informed the organizing of the 2016 World Plenary Meeting in Pisac, Peru, during which we revised the FWCC Constitution, allowing us to meet less frequently. More recently, we held the online Sustainability Conference with 300 Friends in attendance. We have learned to use technology, not only for our meetings that span the world, and producing videos that inform, but also as a way to gather the Quaker voice, now possible for many more consultations, including around issues of faith.

During my tenure, we started World Quaker Day, celebrating our presence in the world and sharing our experience of our meetings and churches on the first Sunday in October.

We also raised funds to begin FWCC’s Sustainability Programme, strengthening the Quaker network and building understanding of how climate change affects us in different parts of the world and considering how collectively we can make a difference. A Friend recently shared in worship that the tensions we used to feel among Friends has grown into a greater love and acceptance of differences, allowing us now to come together for the health of our world and the relationships that only strengthen the Quaker message in the world.

I have put a high priority on my work with the Quaker United Nations Offices in New York and Geneva, because Friends value having a presence at the United Nations, and FWCC offers valuable connective tissue through our appointments and governing function.

During my time, we have engaged in fundraising both for the organization and for short-term disaster relief in Rwanda and the Philippines. We engaged Michael Wajda who assisted us in working more as One Organization and who continues to help increase our fundraising capacity across the world.

The World Office has a unique role among Friends, as the only office who represents Friends at the world level, not only through the Quaker United Nations Office and the
World Council of Churches, but also by participating in the Christian World Communion Conference of General Secretaries. It is a supportive group who understands the rigor of our unique jobs within our communions and ecumenical work. I serve as its chair person, the first Quaker and the first woman. It is an honour.

I can think of no greater privilege than to have served each of you and the family of Friends in this way. I thank you. I thank God. I am humbled and grateful. And as my friend Ben Pink Dandelion has said, if we stay within the Quaker fold, we will see each other again and again. And won't that be delightful!

With gratitude and in God’s care,

Gretchen