

## **2019 Epistle of Alaska Friends Conference to Friends Everywhere**

Alaska Friends met in our rustic Dickerson Friends Center in Wasilla, Alaska, located on land long occupied and cared for by Dena'ina. We celebrated the strength of new Meeting House foundations that withstood a 7.1 earthquake the past winter with epicenter just 10 miles away. We were joined by Friends Robert Rader from Sierra Cascades Yearly Meeting and Diane Randall, Executive Secretary of Friends Committee on National Legislation.

“Love, Joy, and Empowerment” was our theme, formulated with and in response to concerns of young Friends for more meaningful and effective integration of youth and young adult Friends into the life of our Meeting. We rejoiced in greater attendance of youth than in previous years. Diane Randall described many aspects of deliberate and successful integration of young Friends into the work of FCNL including Spring Lobby Weekend, Young Fellows program, and, crucially, establishing an endowment for ongoing financial support for young Friends’ work with FCNL.

We were challenged to focus our work as a Yearly Meeting on inclusion, integration, and financial support of young Friends. We committed to this direction with a new intergenerational committee charged solely with engaging youth and making their concerns a focus of Yearly Meeting work; and we revised our budget to reflect this priority.

Alaska Friends are keenly aware of and concerned about visible and destructive consequences of climate disruption: delayed formation of sea ice resulting in dramatic winter storm damage to our coasts; salmon perishing in unprecedented warm river waters before they reach spawning ground; more and larger wildfires triggered by more frequent lightning and fanned by unseasonable winds. We noted ongoing constructive work of Alaska Friends to raise awareness of and counter climate disruption, including work within broader coalitions, lobbying members of Congress, creating local climate action plans, programs to address climate justice, a carbon offset program, and one young adult Friend’s role as a plaintiff in the Juliana vs US Government Federal lawsuit for a sustainable future. We urge Friends everywhere to join this vital spirit-led work to defend creation.

We renewed our commitment to act in accord with the sacred admonition to “love thy neighbor” with no exceptions. This admonition seems all too pertinent. Alaska Friends name the danger of increasingly violent abusive rhetoric in the public sphere including from the highest office in our nation – rhetoric of hatred that seeks to divide, pit neighbor against neighbor, and dehumanize entire groups of people. Alaska Friends ask all people of good will to join with us in countering racist and divisive words and actions. We have asked ourselves how our own Quaker history has contributed to divisions, intolerance, and white supremacy. We discern a need for healing work that confronts past actions including those of Friends that devalued and damaged indigenous cultures.