

North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative)
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North Carolina Yearly meeting (Conservative)
Epistle to Friends Everywhere

Seventh Month 18, 2015

Dear Friends,

We gathered during Seventh Month 15-19, 2015 in sunny, humid weather on the campus of the University of North Carolina – Wilmington for our 318th annual session of North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative).

Our theme this year was “Living Into Our Gifts.” Our first business session opened with the reading of I Peter 3:8-11: “... have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind.” We are aware of how these and other gifts of the Spirit have nourished and fed our Yearly Meeting throughout the years. It is for us now and in the future to strive to “live into our gifts.” In our daily Bible study we were reminded that prayer is the cornerstone for a deeper relationship with God which is needed if we are to recognize, accept, and employ our gifts.

As always we found that our monthly meetings’ sharing of their query responses and State of the Society reports gave us a richer sense of connection with one another. Friends spoke of a deepening of their worship creating fertile ground for the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit present in each meeting community. Through the reports we heard that the Spirit has been moving in our meetings and has particularly tended to what was needed in each community.

Our Yearly Meeting has spent two years in the process of revising our Book of Discipline. This process is helping us both to articulate our current practice and to discern what we hold dear and wish to preserve about our Conservative Friends’ traditions. Prayerful discussions of draft sections among and between the Revision Committee, the monthly meetings and the Yearly Meeting have involved us in a fruitful reflection on our faith and practice. We continue this slow process in a careful and respectful way.

Visiting Friend Kathryn Damiano was invited to lead us in exploring the theme of “Living Into Our Gifts.” On Fifth and Sixth Day evenings she shared personal experiences of how she and others have been faithful in exercising God-given spiritual gifts. Kathryn’s deeply grounded and grounding presence led us into sharing our own experiences and into exploration of what speaks to our condition as a Yearly Meeting. She encouraged us to consider how to nurture our unique Conservative Friends’ culture of listening and to be faithful to God in everyday life. Friends named spiritual gifts that have been experienced in our monthly meetings and in our Yearly Meeting. Trust and risk were recognized as integral parts of being in community. We also recognized that trust and risk become possible only in the power of the Lord which allows us to be open and vulnerable with one another. Kathryn Damiano shared the term “to bear another’s burdens” as a way to care for each other, all others, and for groups and institutions in suffering and turmoil. We are grateful for Kathryn’s leadership this week as we identified some of those gifts into which our Yearly Meeting is being called to live.

Lyn and Steve Newsom shared information about the work of Quaker House of Fayetteville, North Carolina in dealing with the “moral injury” experiences of military people. We continued our letter writing to prisoners near and far. We seek to hold in prayer the burdens of all at home and abroad who struggle with fear, violence, and the abuse of power.

Our children and youth group enjoyed making new Friends and renewing acquaintances with one another. Our dedicated adult workers accompanied them in enriching activities which opened the opportunity for new experiences. They had excursions to the beach, a turtle hospital, and the 1859 Bellamy Mansion, which is unique in having urban slave quarters. They joined the adults for a morning Bible study of I Samuel 3 and made audio recordings of adult Friends who answered questions about their experiences of living into their gifts. Saturday evening was an intergenerational celebration of our testimonies of integrity, community, equality, simplicity, and peace. In our shared activities we affirmed that the Spirit is in each of us and spiritual gifts flow from the Spirit as we wait, as we listen, and as we follow the Spirit leading us.

We leave our Yearly Meeting with gratitude for the love and unity we share, and with prayers for the faith and courage which will enable us to “live into our gifts.”

On behalf of the yearly meeting,

Nancy Craft, clerk

Dear Fellow Friends,

14 Young Friends gathered as part of the North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative) on the campus of the University of North Carolina - Wilmington from 7/15-19/2015. We had Young Friends of all ages from several monthly meetings in the region, including West Grove, Friendship, Durham, Rich Square, and Nashville, TN.

Our theme was "Living into our Gifts". We did an audio recording project where we interviewed some of the adult Friends who were identified as having gifts that they share with our community. We also attended and participated in intergenerational Bible study led by Bruce Arnold where we learned about how Samuel learned to listen to God's calling. On Saturday evening, Elizabeth Wintermute and Toby Berla led an Intergenerational program on our theme where we got to know each other better through fun activities and heard a Faith and Play story on the how the testimonies are gifts of the Spirit.

We especially enjoyed going to the beach, visiting Bellamy Mansion, going bowling, visiting the Turtle Hospital and eating Brit's Donuts. We thought that seeing the slave quarters at Bellamy Mansion was especially interesting. We were reminded of our visit to Mendenhall Plantation last year and how we discussed that Quakers had participated in the Underground Railroad to help free slaves. One low point of our weekend was when Ian Gilmore-Cronin got stung by a jellyfish. Luckily, he was not seriously hurt. We enjoyed leading the adults in intergenerational games on Friday and Saturday after dinner.

The food was good and we were thankful for all the people who cooked it and cleaned-up after our dishes. A few of the Young Friends had the chance to join the spontaneous music and singing on Saturday evening. We felt very connected with one another as our community of the yearly meeting during that time together.

One of the older Young Friends pointed-out that we have a real strong community of Young Friends of all different ages, from 5 year olds to 18 year olds, and that we do a really good job of taking care of each other and enjoying being with each other.

We are also thankful for all the adult Friends who bring us to yearly meeting and welcome us at yearly meeting. Thank you to our monthly meetings who support us and enable us to have this special time together each year.

In the Spirit,

The Young Friends of North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative)