

Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends (Conservative)

61830 Sandy Ridge Road, Barnesville OH 43713 USA

Eleventh Month 19, 2019

“But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” - John 4:14

Dear Friends Everywhere,

As we have met in worship this year, we have been repeatedly baptized in the awe-inspiring, yet sweet presence of the Lord. We were told of the river of the Life-giving waters of Truth, that flows from the heavenly country, and the streams thereof flow to every side, to water the land, and bring Life overflowing to renew all the Earth.

We are few in number, yet still the Presence of God has been as a cherishing wing extended over us, keeping us in a close, confiding love with the Father and with each other. Our circle is enlarged by love, as many visitors join us, some for the first time, and some who have been constant in returning. We rejoice in fellowship with Friends Chagala Ngesa from Kenya, Nancy Craft from North Carolina Yearly Meeting, Tom Roberts from Western Yearly Meeting, Samantha Smith from Pendle Hill, Jim Eblin from Oregon, Patricia Dallman of Marlborough Meeting, Heather Mikolaj, Chesterfield Meeting, Sean Lentz of White Lake, Michigan, William Pomeroy of Zanesville, Ohio, and John and Elizabeth Edminster of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting.

As we began our Yearly Meeting, Christ drew us into a blessed, deep stillness. Ministry was given, calling us to see how our cup is overflowing with God’s blessings, which we receive fully by sharing with others. We gently entered into decision making and planning in a contemplative and spirit-led manner, seeking to keep our thoughts in tune with our Guide and sensitive to each other. Our business process, as much as our times of fellowship, can be used by the Spirit to strengthen our love for each other; to bind us together and make us open to individual concerns from members of the body.

Thankfulness fills us as we hear epistles from Friends Yearly Meetings that often speak to our condition. Morning Bible reading and scriptures before business prepare our hearts. And even in our committee reports about familiar responsibilities, we have felt God’s blessing that we are entrusted with this work, and feel thankful that we are served by such careful, faithful Friends. Our members who are able to actively partake in the work of the Yearly Meeting are few; and we seek with God’s guidance for ways to lighten their burdens.

This year we seek divine help as we try a new approach to the questions of dwindling membership and multiplying tasks. A Prayer and Listening Committee has begun the service of listening to, and praying for our Ohio Yearly Meeting family. One Friend reminds us that even before we understand we have a problem, God has been preparing a way forward for us. Indeed, God’s care is blooming all about us, and we find that wrestling with organizational ideas, conversations with Friends, fellowship opportunities and evening activities, often give us yet another illuminating piece of the picture.

Throughout our exercise, we have been counseled to focus on and extend those things which build our communion together and bind us to Christ: reliance on the Presence in waiting worship, readiness to share in spoken ministry, and ministering care for each other and our community. We ask God to help us to be able and obedient to share these blessings more broadly.

A Friend reminds us of the excitement and energizing life that is given when we share our faith with others, as through the Friends Center. He recalled the vision of an elder Friend some years ago who saw the walls of the meetinghouse coming down to accommodate all the people being drawn here. He went on to say that although the description of the original vision mentioned only the walls, it is more important to recognize the foundation under the walls, which is the immovable rock of Christ. The truth of His promise on which we depend, is the only sure unchanging ground.

Another Friend noted the many windows set high in the meeting room streaming with sunlight. She urged that we not block our metaphorical windows with opaque habits, but rather keep our windows open wide, letting Christ’s Light flow out beyond our walls.

We celebrated the encouraging report from our Walton Retirement Home, including a good vision and planning for future independent living facilities in a faith-based community. The enthusiasm and dedication of their administration, staff and board is clear, and reflected in the smiles of residents. A beautiful array of flowers frames the buildings which is created by caring residents. At the Walton Home

Corporation meeting and open house, Friends enjoyed a history presentation by Marie Bundy which included slides from its founding 75 years ago to the present.

In an evening session, Seth Hinshaw diagrammed the development in Biblical thought of how God speaks to or acts upon us through dreams, visions, voice and prophecy, etc. He led us up to that unproductive stuck place where all our human plans and efforts are going to fail and we are at our end; and then God is able to bring us where he wants to begin with us. For this possibility, we need to ask God to intervene, then accept the new creation that rebounds from His leading.

A panel of Friends of various ages shared memories and answered questions about growing up in Ohio Yearly Meeting. Recollections from our oldest Friends were so precious to hear. Deep experiences and humorous ones engaged us and helped us get to know each other better. We look forward to an evening program on Meeting the Spiritual Needs of New Attenders tomorrow. Our time together will round out with creative presentations by Junior Yearly Meeting.

Friends, we are comforted to think of you, to exchange epistles with you, and to be able to visit some of your gatherings. We lift up a prayer of thanksgiving for faithful Friends around the world and we welcome your prayers for us. As we are obedient to the motion of Christ among us to love one another, may we become as the leaven mixed into the bread, which makes it nourishing. Surely Christ, the Great Friend, continues to gather a people to himself all over the world. May we in live in the love and power He extends over us and thereby hold high the Light that draws and guides those He is calling.

“But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.”

- Isaiah 40:31

In Christ,

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