

2019 Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting Epistle
from the Fourth Annual Session, Fourth Month, 2019

Greetings to Friends everywhere,

Piedmont Friends Fellowship and Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting gathered April 19-21, 2019 for the spring retreat and annual sessions at Carolina Friends School in Durham, North Carolina. Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting (PFYM) Annual Sessions were held Saturday, April 20, 2019 in the School's Meeting House.

The gathering brought together Friends from member monthly meetings and worship groups in North Carolina, Virginia, and South Carolina. Visitors were welcomed from Quaker House, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Friends General Conference, Quaker Earthcare Witness, Quaker Voluntary Service, Baltimore Yearly Meeting Stony Run Meeting, Five Rivers Meeting in Conway, SC and Palmetto Friends in SC. The retreat registration totaled 83 adults.

During annual sessions we came to unity around the proposal to establish a Friends Committee on North Carolina Legislation (FCNCL) under the spiritual care of PFYM. A working group under the auspices of the PFYM Interim Meeting had labored with this leading for over a year. We enthusiastically supported the founding of FCNCL and committed ourselves to ongoing support of its mission: "to strengthen our service and witness in the broader world by advocating for North Carolina state law and policies that are just, compassionate, and respectful of the inherent worth of every person and the Earth upon which we live."

Friends accepted reports from our organizational representatives, and we received with thanks a summary of our member meeting spiritual condition reports. "Regardless of our size, the richness of meeting for worship is both a reflection of and a support for the deep spiritual work that is happening in our respective meetings. We are diverse in some important ways, yet there is unity in how collective silent worship guides us to reflect the light within out into the world." In our outreach to the broader community, meetings have come under the weight of the yearly meeting's minute on climate change that was approved during our 2018 annual sessions. As before, the responses out of the silence to the query "what has been most on our hearts this year?" was enriching, as was hearing about those who have passed from our midst this year.

We joined with Piedmont Friends Fellowship in celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of Quaker House, a peace witness near Ft. Bragg in Fayetteville, NC. We watched in awe a video on the history of Quaker House from 1969, when a Ft. Bragg soldier, Dean Holland, hitch-hiked from Fayetteville to Chapel Hill Friends Meeting asking for the presence of Friends in Fayetteville. This concern was carried by Bob Gwyn to Piedmont Friends Fellowship (PFF), then in its second year. The film was followed by a panel of former and present Quaker House directors, Chuck Fager (2001-2012), Lynn and Steve Newsom (2012-2017), Kindra Bradley (2017-) and Joanna, the domestic violence and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) counselor, who shared stories and remembrances during their tenure. Another video told the stories of some of the many who have been helped by Quaker House over the years. Their titles are *Conscientious Peacemaking Since 1969* and *Personal Stories of Gratitude*. Both videos will soon be available to the public. How to access them will be posted at www.quakerhouse.org. The celebration program was very moving, and we were filled with inspiration and appreciation for this important life-saving peace witness that we were instrumental in establishing and that we continue to support.

We appreciated the opportunity to hear about the faithful Quaker witness of Ramallah Friends School in Palestine for 150 years. Arthur Meyer Boyd and Margaret (Meg) Boyd Meyer of Stony Run Friends Meeting in Baltimore Yearly Meeting spoke about their recent six-month sojourn at the School and their impressions of everyday life in Palestine which continues to be challenging under occupation.

We value the fellowship we enjoyed this weekend and opportunities to strengthen and deepen our connections with each other, through conversation and worship. This was uniquely enhanced by the Friday afternoon tornado warnings that delayed the planned programs while we sheltered in place. We invite Friends everywhere to stay connected with Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting on its new Quaker Cloud platform: www.quakercloud.org/cloud/piedmont-friends-fellowship-and-yearly-meeting/2019.

In peace,

Gary Hornsby, PFYM Clerk

With thanks to John Shuford for this photo of PFYM annual sessions participants

