

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

II Timothy 1:7

“There is that near you, which will guide you; oh! wait for it, and be sure to keep to it....”

~ Isaac Penington

Greetings to Friends near and far from the 132 Friends attending the Inaugural Annual Sessions of Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends (SCYMF),

We are grateful for the ways many of you have been prayerfully holding us in the Light of Love as we engage in the work set before us. We are also filled with gratitude for your epistles, well-wishes, and visitors to our Annual Sessions at the Canby Grove Christian Center in Canby, Oregon. Our gathering was enriched by visitors or representatives from American Friends Service Committee, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Friendly Water for the World, Friends World Committee for Consultation, Illinois Yearly Meeting, The New Association of Friends, New England Yearly Meeting, North Pacific Yearly Meeting, the Western Association of the Religious Society of Friends, and Western Yearly Meeting.

We carry mixed feelings at the beginning of this journey, because it started with our forced separation from Northwest Yearly Meeting. Even as our emotions ranged from grief, tears, and anger to joy, hope, and laughter, our fellowship and worship felt covered in grace. In light of that emotional mix, our Meeting for Business was held with grace for each other as we heal from past trauma. The Spirit remained present and spoke to our condition with words of comfort and a deep, abiding love. One example was our discussion around a proposed recording process. The discussion exposed some raw nerves, as people shared the residual pain that came from years in a two-tiered system in which some ministers were treated as second class because their public ministry did not fit the preconceived notion of church pastor. Most of the weekend’s work involved following the leading of the Spirit as we practiced discernment, threshing through feelings and former assumptions to see a vision toward a new path. Some leadings are beginning to take shape: We are a Christ-centered yearly meeting, even as we discuss and discern together what that means. Is it possible to go deeply into one faith story, one Way of understanding God, holding one Truth, and still allow others with a different model of the Divine Life to feel comfortable traveling with us on this amazing journey? We want to welcome and share with others who think differently, or practice differently, but who seek and feel the same Loving Center.

During our sessions we were led to minute our gratitude to those who have provided leadership in our service and were hurt in the events leading up to the formation of SCYMF. We are grateful for all those, named and unnamed, who put livelihoods, relationships, and access to community in jeopardy for the sake of integrity, justice, and love of neighbor.

We joyfully accepted the transfer of recording of the following Friends as ministers: Gil George, Mike Huber, Johan Maurer, Judy Maurer, Faith Marsalli, T. Vail Palmer, Caryl Menkhous Creswell, Carol Twichel, Lorraine Watson, Carol Whorton, and Jan Wood. We also transferred and renewed ministry

licenses for the following Friends: Matt Boswell, Ruba Byrd, Thea Cowley, C. Wess Daniels, Claire Nail, Mark Pratt-Russum, and Judy Scott.

Over the course of our first year, we wrote and approved bylaws and incorporated as a non-profit organization called Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends. At our annual sessions and as we look toward the future, we move into a phase of exploration and ongoing discernment of how we are called to live into the Quaker way together at this time and in our particular places.

A seed has been planted: a little, tender, growing plant. May we be good soil even as we are good gardeners, trusting God to give the increase.

Your Friends in Expectant Waiting,
Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends

Cherice Bock, Presiding Clerk

SCYMF Epistle Committee:

Julie Peyton, Gil George (clerk), James Hibbs, and Promise Partner