

Montana Gathering of Friends (Montana Quarterly Meeting)

April 4, 2017

Dear Friends:

We live in a time of real fear and polarization. It is a time when our faith calls us to act from the deepest values and principles of our individual beliefs and the tenets of our faith communities.

Montana Quakers met during the weekend of February 24 - 26, 2017 for worship and fellowship at Camp Mak-a-Dream in Gold Creek, Montana. Something profound and deeply moving happened. As a community we felt a deep and insistent calling during Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business. The Clerk put aside most of the planned agenda allowing Friends to worship together. We reflected on our own fear as well as the fear we see in response to the rise of hate and violence in our communities, and the targeting of many who are being labeled as different by their race, ethnicity, immigration status, gender identity or sexual orientation, religion and political beliefs. In the manner of Friends we adopted this **attached Minute** which is a statement of our deeply shared beliefs and commitment to those who are living in fear and distress at this time and are in need of support and protection.

We clearly knew this Minute to be a statement of the start of our journey and also were in unity with a commitment to another gathering this spring to continue this work. In just a few weeks the MGOF community will be meeting again to consider our next steps. This gathering is in itself an exciting and new step for Montana Quakers as MGOF usually only meets as a full community in February and August!

In the minute we speak of building connections and bridges. We share this minute with you in hopes of beginning this process.

In Peace,

Kate Weiss
Clerk of the Montana Gathering of Friends (Quakers)

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**The Montana Gathering of Friends,
a Quarterly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
Minute on Fear and Healing**

As Quakers, we believe that there is that of God in everyone. We find ourselves in a time of increasing fear for many who feel threatened and marginalized because of their gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, immigration status or political beliefs. We witness this same fear in communities across our country and around the world. We cannot ignore this conflict without violating our belief in the just, equitable and democratic principles of our country and our faith.

We acknowledge that labeling people as the "other" emphasizes differences between people and violates the testimony of equality we have shared around the world for the past 365 years. We therefore speak truth to power. When anyone's safety and security are violated with labels, hate and violence, we must reach out in love, offer protection and build connections between communities. We are committed to the hard work of building bridges and without judgement, opening our hearts to one another to address the fear of those delivering anger rather than love.

We step forward to protect all people who feel endangered by their differences. We seek to magnify our presence by working in alliance with individuals and organizations also offering loving protection. We are committed to healing, love and growth of understanding that there is that of God in everyone.

Action Steps:

1. *Meet again over Easter Weekend 2017 to continue to develop this leading and work to which Montana Friends are called.*
2. *As soon as possible share this Minute and an invitation to the called Easter Weekend Gathering with our entire mailing list .*
3. *Develop and address steps to address situations where "anyone's safety and security are violated with labels, hate and violence."*
4. *Share this Minute widely with other faith groups and allied social justice groups in Montana.*
5. *Send this Minute to local Montana papers.*

Adopted on February 26, 2017