

NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING OF FRIENDS

The Religious Society of Friends in New England

Witnessing to the power of God in our lives... Spirit led to faithful action

August 8, 2013

To all Friends everywhere:

We gathered in Smithfield, Rhode Island, for the 353rd sessions of New England Yearly Meeting, held Eighth Month 2013.

"Live up to the Light thou hast, and more will be granted thee" was God's ministry to 19th-century Friend Caroline Fox as she grappled with deep sadness. The story of how she received the first glimmer of light and the promise of more spoke strongly to our condition as we explored our own stories, both individually and as a body.

Many of us arrived already weary from lives burdened with concerns. We came seeking divine guidance and the nourishment we know we find in worship and love and community. The fragrance of scripture that infused the writings of early Friends invites us to draw sustenance from our roots.

As we considered many challenges, we acknowledged our agony at the condition of the world and our longing for more ways to redress injustice. Among these concerns, we report to you about an issue that Friends worldwide are considering -- the Doctrine of Discovery. We repudiate this doctrine, which is rooted in racism and which has been used to justify great harms to Native peoples. This is only the beginning of a process of study and self-examination that must lead to personal and collective action.

At this point in the story of our yearly meeting, we feel spiritual restlessness and continued discomfort. We are aware that many things that worked for us in the past are helping us less now. The stories we believe and tell will help to shape the future. The process of moving through transformation takes time and patience. We must not overstep our Guide. We have a joyous sense that new life is rising, but its green shoots are too small for us to know what the plant will be. Discomfort and uncertainty are part of growth. How shall we seek out and nurture those tender shoots of needed change?

Divine Lover and Guide, we know that your house is a wonderful place to be. Thank you for holding us all under the shadow of your wings. Help us to love your Truth even when it shows us our faults. O Thou who art closer than breath to us, hold us secure lest we fall.

On Behalf of New England Friends,



Jackie Stillwell
Presiding Clerk

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