

To Friends Everywhere:

Friends from Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana gathered virtually, from July 14 – July 18, 2021, for the 49th Annual Session of the North Pacific Yearly Meeting.

Friends throughout North Pacific Yearly Meeting have faced the past year with courage, resiliency, humor and creativity. The Coronavirus Pandemic has challenged everyone, and Quakers have reached deep into the reservoirs of love to affirm community, respond to injustice, educate themselves, help others and remain faithful to our deepest convictions.

This was our second year to meet on-line instead of in-person because of the pandemic, and we found valuable ways to take advantage of the situation: We stretched out our time together by meeting for worship groups and interest groups for several weeks before Annual Session. We also organized a variety of opportunities for small group socializing, which took some of the sting out of not being able to give and receive hugs, and optimized our efforts to (in the words of our Presiding Clerk) *"renew and strengthen ourselves and our communities so that we can be the Quakers the world needs"*.

We welcomed visitors from Friends General Conference, Friends World Committee on Consultation, Friends Committee on National Legislation, and Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends. The clerk acknowledged that Friends are committed to uprooting racism, and at this Annual Session we concentrated on stopping the harm done by racial microaggressions, also called micro-assaults. We used the practice of calling out such instances by saying "Ouch!" if we feel them, "Whoa!" if we observe them, or "Oops" if we make the mistake ourselves.

Our theme this year was *"Courage in the Face of Fear — Faith, Hope, Love"*, which we explored during worship sharing with queries such as *"What are the stories we tell about the past year of heat, smoke, pandemic, social, political, and environmental challenges? How have you cared for others in these hard times? What might a right*

*relationship with the living world be like for you? What have you learned over the past year that informs your vision of a new future?"*

Our Finance and Legal Committee spent this past year transitioning to a new Treasurer, and revising the NPYM financial procedural manual. Our Faith and Practice Committee is working on creating an audiobook copy of Faith and Practice, starting with a series of podcasts that could be combined later.

Our Friend in residence was Cherice Bock, a former co-clerk of Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends. Cherice works as the Creation Justice Advocate at Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon through which she voices her witness on ecotheology. Cherice spoke about *"Courage, Fear, & Care: Creating Resilient Communities to Meet Climate Justice."* She asked, *"What is an appropriate response to an emergency?"*

Friends have experienced adversity and challenge during the last year, as has our Earth and all life on this planet. We have lived through a pandemic, the rise of fascism, continued injustice, infrastructure failures, and growing climate chaos, threatening all life on Earth. Friends have worked to acknowledge and increase awareness of our historical responsibility for these conditions. Cherice spoke of the response to immediate crisis as flight, fight or freeze and asked *"What do we do when the emergency is not instantaneous, but is slow moving, drawn out, a low-lying and impending level of threat that continues for months, years, lifetimes? What is an appropriate response?"*

In responding, she reminded us of the experiences of early Friends—The Lambs War, the well-known “Valiant 60” and lesser known “Boring 600”—exhorting each of us to do our part; to discern what we are uniquely led to do to meet the current emergency. She asked us to recognize that we are part of the beloved community with whom we discern, labor and grow together. She called us to walk into our fear with courage.

As we mourn the losses of those people close to our heart, and of countless other members of the living world, we recognize that we humans are profoundly out of balance with the rest of the life on

Earth. Many Friends have made a commitment to changing that relationship. Cherice suggested that we need to strengthen our empathy muscle and practice radical care for each other and our Living World. We are at a decision point—the old “normal” was not just or sustainable, and we cannot go back to business as usual. We must change radically so that we can come to live in right relationship with the living world.

Cherice left us with these queries: *Where in your life are you noticing the Divine breaking through in glimpses of the Beloved Community? How are you feeling invited to courageously take the next step toward participating more fully in that community? What is currently holding you back? With whom are you being drawn toward deeper relationship so you can partner to form a more just and resilient community?*

Friends expressed a need for a new vision. We look both to our youth and to our creative community for that vision. And we recognize that we must each be faithful to the leading of the Divine Spirit and do our part on behalf of all life on Earth to build a peaceful and just community.

On our second day, we heard a presentation from Robin Mohr and Simon Lamb, of Friends World Committee for Consultation. Robin is the Executive Secretary, Section of the Americas, and Simon is Clerk of the World Central Executive Committee of FWCC. Robin reminded us that the FWCC is made up of representatives of all Friends around the world, and their mission is to bring together different traditions of Friends, find the commonalities, and consolidate our message. Quakers are a deeply diverse group but we build bridges. Simon praised NPYM's faithful participation in FWCC over the years and encouraged us to continue to serve the world community of Friends. They invited us to participate in a story-telling project for World Quaker Day on October 3 this year.

We also heard from Andy Cross and Steve Aldrich from the Friends Peace Teams, a spirit-led organization working to develop long-term relationships with communities in conflict all over the world, to create programs for peace-building and reconciliation. They have

experimented with presenting Alternatives to Violence Project training online until it is safe to meet in person again. They invited us to get involved in outreach, or in local Peace Teams, or become an AVP trainer or a Right Relationship facilitator.

We heard a moving report from our Junior Friends (High-School-aged Friends) with a long list of what they miss about meeting in-person for Annual Session and Camp, including Cuddle-Puddles, and falling out of hammocks. They asked us to share memories of our times as young Quakers and also to offer ideas for creative ways to have a greater connection now to each other and to the adults. The older Friends shared verbal support and some suggestions for locations to meet in-person, but also acknowledged a need to better understand what kind of support is truly needed.

Our Youth Committee seasoned last year's draft Youth Safety Policy through the monthly meetings and worship groups, and brought a revision to Coordinating Committee in March 2021. Coordinating Committee reached unity to approve the revised policy, but our Yearly meeting continues to struggle to find a balance between safety and autonomy for our youth that we all can find unity with.

On day three, we approved a minute to support HR40. In part, it states that *"North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends supports HR 40, which is a resolution to establish a commission to examine slavery and discrimination in the colonies and the United States from 1619 to the present and recommend appropriate remedies. We believe that the establishment of this commission is a good first step in encouraging a national reckoning and determining appropriate remedies."*

We have been fortunate to come together this year as Friends with many diverse gifts and leadings and to go forward with renewed energy, focus and unity. Many look forward to an in-person gathering in 2022 with the hope that we can have an accessible virtual option for those unable to travel.