

2017 Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting Epistle
From the Second Annual Session Third Month, Eleventh Day 2017

Greetings to Friends Everywhere,

Feeling the Spirit with us, joining our hearts in the joy of coming together, Piedmont Friends Fellowship and Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting gathered at Carolina Friends School in Durham, NC to celebrate our annual spring retreat March 10-12, 2017. The second Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting annual sessions met on Saturday afternoon March 11, 2017.

The highlight of annual sessions this year was the welcoming of two additional monthly meetings into yearly meeting affiliation: Abingdon Friends Meeting of Abingdon, VA, and Eno Friends Meeting of Hillsborough, NC. Abingdon Friends moved to our yearly meeting from Baltimore Yearly Meeting and are a new monthly meeting to Piedmont Friends Fellowship as well. Eno Friends Meeting was a worship group under the care of Durham Friends Meeting and were in the Piedmont Friends Fellowship family. They were released to monthly meeting status in 2016, taking the historic name of Eno Friends from a long-ago area meeting, and now affiliate with Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting. Eno and Abingdon Friends shared their meeting history and introduced their meetings during annual sessions. Those introductions and participation in session worship and deliberations, retreat workshops, committee work, and sharing casual meals all contributed to the joy of getting to know new Friends who bring wonderful gifts to yearly meeting.

There was much discussion around peace and social justice concerns in annual sessions and throughout the weekend with particular attention to our responsibility to care for the earth. Friends continue to work on how to connect across the yearly meeting for effective action in areas of concern for Piedmont Friends. Two minutes of concern were brought by monthly meetings for yearly meeting consideration, one supporting Guilford College's role in their *Every Campus a Refuge* initiative and the other supporting the work of the North Carolina Commission of Inquiry on Torture. It was thrilling to experience Quaker process working in our large group as we considered, deliberated, and acted on these minutes. Words spoken of having been a refugee were "awakening" for some in attendance. Interest in reports from AFSC and FCNL was high, particularly in seeking how to join in important advocacy work. Finally, Friends acknowledge shared concern around actions of the U S administration which have made it very difficult for so many people to feel safe in our country. With this in mind, Friends seek a way to hold the administration in the light in a sincere way... in loving kindness, sometimes a true challenge.

Each of the monthly meetings shared what has been on the hearts of their meeting during the year. Especially moving was the sharing from Fancy Gap Meeting on their experiences with helping refugees, feeding families and caring for their community in many ways, logging over 3000 miles delivering food to those in need, and transporting folks to appointments. This touched the hearts of many and inspired us to do yet more in our communities if possible. Fancy Gap is a small meeting and does so much, a true testament to what “Quaker” means.

On Saturday evening we celebrated with Steve and Lynn Newsom their nearly-completed five-year term as Co-Directors of Quaker House in Fayetteville, NC. It was amazing to hear the work they have accomplished and shows that when people are determined to help, there are no obstacles too big to overcome in order to give love and support to our military returning from war zones. Since its founding by Piedmont Friends in 1969, Quaker House has time and again stepped up to help service members heal from “Moral Injury” and physical injury. We are so proud of how Lynn and Steve have carried on this fine tradition.

As we consider our 2017 Annual Sessions, we note the thread of concern of care for those more vulnerable and for the earth; and the accompanying worry whether we have the capacity to meet the needs before us. And linked to those concerns, dear Friends, we found at annual sessions the joy of gathering, the comfort of shared concerns, the excitement of growing in numbers and energy, and the ever-present love of spirit among us.

In Love, Light, and Hope,

Marian Beane, Presiding Clerk
Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting
24th day of seventh month, 2017

