

Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society  
of Friends (Quakers) in Britain



# Epistles & testimonies

Compiled for Yearly Meeting Gathering,  
University of Warwick, Coventry, 29 July to 5 August 2017



Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) In Britain  
Documentation in advance of Yearly Meeting Gathering  
to be held at University of Warwick, Coventry, 29 July to 5 August 2017

*Epistles & testimonies* is part of a set of publications entitled *The Proceedings of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain 2017*, published by Britain Yearly Meeting.

The full set comprises the following documents:

1. Documents in advance, including agenda and introductory material for Yearly Meeting Gathering 2017 and the annual reports of Meeting for Sufferings and Quaker Stewardship Committee
2. *Epistles & testimonies*
3. *Minutes*, to be distributed after the conclusion of Yearly Meeting
4. The formal *Trustees' annual report* including financial statements for the year ended December 2016
5. *Tabular statement*.

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All documents issued are also available as PDFs and for e-readers at [www.quaker.org.uk/ym](http://www.quaker.org.uk/ym).

Britain Yearly Meeting is a registered charity, number 1127633.

Yearly Meeting of the  
Religious Society of Friends  
(Quakers) in Britain

# Epistles & testimonies

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# Epistles

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## Introduction to epistles from Quaker World Relations Committee

*Quaker World Relations Committee is entrusted by Friends in Britain to build and maintain our relations with other yearly meetings around the world and to offer support at times of crisis. We are challenged by how best to uphold Friends through devastating experiences: violence, earthquakes, floods or hurricanes. We are challenged too by the growing diversity of our religious theology but remind ourselves that we are different branches from the same root. Throughout our history Friends have kept in touch, in part, through epistles from yearly meetings which let everyone know how the Spirit is faring, of the tests and celebrations in the life of the yearly meeting and to send each other greetings.*

*The following introduction explains the place Britain Yearly Meeting has in the world family of Friends and to set into context the epistles that we have received from other yearly meetings in 2016.*

### Background

From the earliest days of the Quaker movement, Friends travelled widely to share the message of our view of faith, convincing others to join them. They took their message to distant parts of the world, 'Speaking Truth to Power' where they saw a chance to build the Kingdom of God on earth. In the last 350 years, Quakerism has spread around the world and in the process has evolved and changed. Early Friends in Britain proclaimed a faith which they knew

experimentally, a faith that brought them direct, personal communion with the Divine and the Spirit that gave rise to the Scriptures. They were Christians who knew the Bible very well and who wanted their lives to mirror all the best characteristics of an early Christian community. In the 21st century, not all Quakers in Britain would call themselves Christian. Our approach to the Bible and to theology can be described as liberal. Our worship is based on silent waiting, seeking the divine in stillness. But while our lives are influenced and guided by our beliefs and testimonies, we are also fully involved in the wider society in which we find ourselves.

### Diversity

Unprogrammed worship can be found across Europe, in Asia, southern Africa, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and parts of the USA and Mexico. This tradition represents around 11% of the total world membership. It is not however necessarily correct to associate unprogrammed worship with liberal theology, and Christocentric theology with programmed worship (see below). Many combinations exist.

There are Quakers who describe themselves as conservative, whose theology, worship and way of life remain much closer to that of early Friends in the 17th and 18th centuries. These Friends (mostly in the USA) represent 0.03% of the membership, but they feel that they are true to the original guiding principles that George Fox proclaimed in terms of relationship to Jesus Christ and the Bible; there are a number of small groups and individuals around Europe who are akin to them although not formally affiliated.

Some Quaker meetings have evolved patterns of programmed worship, usually for special occasions. Just as we once appointed recorded ministers, and still appoint Friends to serve the meeting, so Friends in programmed meetings appoint pastors to minister to the community. Their form of worship may include hymns or songs, a sermon, Bible readings and prayers, and there is also a time of free or open worship, when other Friends can minister, as in unprogrammed worship. Programmed meetings represent 49% of the total world membership and have different ways of counting members.

Perhaps more than 40% of Friends worldwide belong to evangelical Friends churches, most but not all of them affiliated to the Friends World Committee for Consultation. They emphasise bringing the Christian message to unbelievers and the authority of the Bible.

### Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC)

FWCC was formed in 1937 to provide opportunities for Friends to meet, to talk and come to a better understanding of each other, thereby deepening their spiritual life and strengthening their outreach. It includes in its membership yearly meetings from all the traditions described here as well as small groups and individuals. It has four regional groupings. These are Africa Section (with 43% of world membership), Section of the Americas (47%), Asia West Pacific Section (4%) and Europe and Middle East Section (6%). Britain Yearly Meeting belongs to FWCC and to its Europe and Middle East Section, of which it is by far the biggest yearly meeting. In the USA, many yearly meetings of the unprogrammed tradition belong not only to FWCC but also to Friends General Conference (FGC), whilst programmed yearly meetings may belong to Friends United Meeting (FUM) and evangelical yearly meetings to Evangelical Friends Churches International (EFCI).

### Unity

Friends from these diverse traditions find common ground in the belief of 'that of God in

everyone', although this phrase is widely known in other branches, in the testimonies and in our Quaker business method – with great variations. On the other hand, there are differences in the way Friends work in the world: Friends of a more liberal persuasion would see it as important to try to make the world a better place, while Friends of the evangelical persuasion will be more concerned with saving souls and bringing them into membership. Understanding one another is not always an easy process – Friends come from very different cultural backgrounds and traditions, which influence the expression of their faith and practice in ways we may find unfamiliar or uncomfortable. We may need to remind ourselves that we have not necessarily found all the answers – “Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come?” (*Advices & queries* 7).

The epistles printed here are those which were received during 2016 and after the deadline for 2015 epistles. Their content reflects the diversity of our worldwide family of Friends.



# From Europe and Middle East

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## Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting

10–12 June 2016

To Friends everywhere: Greetings!

The theme of the 2016 residential meeting of Belgium and Luxembourg Yearly Meeting was ‘Who am I as a Quaker in this rapidly changing world.’ In our opening session, each of us dropped a stone in a bowl of water. We were able to see how even the smallest action can have a rich, rippling effect.

Thirty F/friends and attenders gathered together in the Jeugdherberg (youth hostel) ‘Die Loyale’ in Maldegem in East-Flanders, Belgium. We were very happy to welcome visitors from Britain Yearly Meeting, France Yearly Meeting, the Netherlands Yearly Meeting, as well as the Clerk of the Europe & Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation. F/friends who are no longer with us were also very much in our thoughts. We are thankful for the hospitality and the warm welcome extended to us by all of the ‘Die Loyale’ Youth Hostel staff.

We chose to explore the theme through the Open Space method. This was a new departure for many of us, and we were thankful to our team of facilitators from Meeting who talked us through the process step by step.

As a result, through spontaneous contributions from all participants, we built our own agenda for the three-day gathering. The children and young people present were also responsible for the agenda and brought their ideas and energy to

the gathering. All activities were open to all age groups. The children and young people led an exploration of our surroundings as well as games and craft activities. Meditation was happening alongside football. In building our agenda, we felt a great commitment to the success of our gathering. This was a gathering that was as much about being as doing, and found space for deepening, lightness and fun.

There was freedom to offer an activity, freedom to take part in activities, and freedom to move about between activities. We felt that the Open Space reflected the importance that we attach to freedom and to responsibility, both individual and corporate.

Our program included a wide range of themes, taking in the spiritual, the personal, as well as how we can make a difference in facing the challenges around us, such as the refugee crisis. A number of us were attending the protest against the arms trade at Eurosatory in Paris and our gathering was an opportunity to reflect on our peace testimony.

Our gathering testified to the energy and to the curiosity of our exploration of what it means to each of us to be a Quaker in a rapidly changing world. The richness of the stories that we shared, the ministry that we heard, and the fellowship that we enjoyed, gave us renewed hope and confidence that our voices – and our silences – may be heard in these troubled times.

Kate Macdonald, Clerk  
Chloe Tan, Assistant Clerk

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## Denmark Yearly Meeting

To Friends everywhere:

Greetings from the Danish Yearly Meeting

April 2–3 2016 about 15 Friends and friends of Friends met for Yearly Meeting in Copenhagen. Since our last yearly meeting, we have gained three new members, and one of our older members passed away. Again this year, it was necessary to keep the international guests to a minimum and therefore, we only had our two Nordic support Friends, Caroline and Vidar Salvigsen, and Norwegian Friend Ven Dag Hovda Sture (representing Friends World Committee for Consultation – Europe and Middle East section (FWCC/EMES)). We are grateful for the economic support we get from FWCC/EMES that makes it possible for us to have frequent visits from our Nordic support Friends.

Saturday, April 2 we met for a short silent worship, followed by an orientation in the official rules and regulations for refugees' and migrants' residency in Denmark. Roughly 17,000 refugees are expected to get a residency permit in Denmark in 2016. By listening to the stories of a Chechen woman, who has been living in Denmark for nearly 10 years with her two children, we were able to get an insightful impression of her situation in the wars in Chechnya, her husband's liquidation, and her flee to Denmark. She also provided a living description of the difficulties refugees face in terms of language barriers, and getting acquainted with the new societal rules. Today she is well integrated and almost finished with a medium-long education.

Later in the day, we examined the European refugee crisis from a Quaker perspective. We were reminded of the fifth Moses book chap. 24, v. 17: "You shall treat foreign and parentless justly ... remember that you too were once slaves in Egypt..." as well as number 22 in *Advices & Queries*: "Respect the wide diversity among us in our lives and relationships. Refrain from making prejudiced judgments about the life journeys of others...Remember that each one of us is

unique, precious, a child of God." One can also find "spiritual refugees" that are searching for a spiritual home, and we think we have something to offer these people in our Quaker group. At the end of the day, after a short business meeting, Vidar Salvigsen and Dag Hovda Sture shared some experiences from the World Plenary meeting in Peru 2016.

The following day, April 3, we held our usual hour-long Sunday worship. The question "how do I use my inner light" sparked many thoughtful contributions during meeting for worship. After a short coffee break, we asked our guests and new members to come with input about the future of the Danish Yearly Meeting. We only have a few hands to take care of the administrative and practical things, but thoughtful suggestions of how to involve more people were presented. We ought to be hopeful when we experience small positive victories and do our best to support and rely on the energy of our new and younger members. After a vegetarian lunch, we rounded off with an informal conversation among Friends and friends of Friends.

We believe that the Danish Yearly Meeting has a future.

På Årsmødets vegne  
Mogens Clausen, sekretær

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## Europe & Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF) All-age Gathering

We came together for a week in Bonn to celebrate the 30(ish)th birthday of Europe & Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF) with multiple generations: those who were attending EMEYF for the first time at 6 months old, and those who were there at the first gatherings 30 years ago. We looked back to the past, were together in the present and turned our faces to the future in hope and determination to meet the challenges of the world today and our own lives. We hope to share with other Friends in

Europe & Middle East Section some of our experience of being time travellers. What is communication? Since the beginning of EMEYF, we have wondered how to bridge the separation of languages. This week we were reminded that we all speak the language of silence and shared experiences.

### **1994 Spring Gathering (from the EMEYF archives)**

We took part in a ceremony to stimulate our thoughts about our involvement in our own life cycles. We covered our faces with masks and face paint, chose new names for ourselves, wrote our personal weaknesses and old attitudes to life on slips of paper and burned them on a bonfire.

### **1995 Annual Report (from the EMEYF archives)**

EMEYF continues to be an inspiring and important organisation for Young Friends around Europe. In 1995 EMEYF changed its structure slightly. The Annual Meeting, which is one of the main events of the year, was moved from spring time to the autumn so events are spread throughout the year, an arrangement which appears to have worked very well. (..) There is lots of energy and enthusiasm for new ideas in EMEYF.

### **AAG 2016:**

Obviously a sound base had been laid about 30 years ago, but what makes EMEYF so alive is that Young Friends reinvent themselves again and again in a continuous process led by the Spirit. (from the Epistle board)

### **2016 AAG in Bonn – Wake up, show up, and choose the light.**

Das Zusammentreffen von so vielen Generationen von EMEYF'ern kreierte eine Gemeinschaft, die schwer in Worte zu fassen ist. Das Gefühl zu einem EMEYF-Treffen nach Hause zu kommen, sich wie von einem Netz getragen zu fühlen, oder in der Gemeinschaft die Wurzeln zu festigen, haben Viele mit mir geteilt. Auch wenn ich nach einem Treffen doch komplett physisch erschöpft nach Hause komme, fühle ich die neuen Ideen, Visionen und Kraft in mir wachsen. (Wanda, current EMEYF)

### **All-Age-Gathering 2016 - Epistle**

C'est par des voix chaleureuses et des rires que j'ai été accueilli au "EMEYF All-Age Gathering", mon premier contact avec EYMEF et avec les Quakers. Pourtant ce ne sont ni ces voix ni ces rires que je retiens de cette semaine. Car c'est en silence, assis en cercle sous un même toit, que nous avons été les plus proches les uns des autres. C'est en silence qu'ont bourgeonné puis fleuri les liens entre anciens et nouveaux amis. C'est enfin en silence qu'ont mûri les fruits sucrés de cette rencontre, récompenses du voyage introspectif que nous avons mené.

C'est donc avec des amis, le sourire et des cernes que je vais quitter Bonn. (Iona, first contact with Quakers)

Dit jaar komt EMEYF niet bijeen in een hutje op het platteland van Noord-Engeland of Macedonie, maar in een conferentie-oord in de buurt van het centrum van Bonn. En we zijn niet met alleen 25 jongeren, maar met meer dan 100 deelnemers van alle leeftijden. Toch voel ik me bij aankomst onmiddellijk thuis, ik heb meteen weer het "EMEYF-gevoel". Het is heerlijk om dat gevoel met zoveel mensen te kunnen delen en te vieren. To all people that have not been to an EMEYF event in a while, or never at all, thank you for being there. (Mieke, current EMEYF)

We had discussions about aging, past and current changes in the lives of people and felt the presence of past EMEYFers among us, those who are still with us and those who are not.

They shall not grow old as we who are left grow old.

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun, and in the morning,

We will remember them.

(Laurence Binyon, quoted on the Epistle Board)

Throughout the week we had the opportunity to share our values and faith with so many exciting people, young friends and older Friends who are

looking forward to being Young Friends when they grow up.

We are quite sad to see the week coming to an end, and are already looking forward to seeing the EMEYF community living and reinventing itself again and again.

Thank you Friends.

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## France Yearly Meeting

16–19 July 2015

Letter to all Friends around the world,

During our Annual Meeting, held from 28 to 31 July 2016 at the Centre Naudières near Nantes, our goal was to build a better understanding of where we are on our Quaker path and discern the direction we want to take.

We understood our position on the path through a sociological survey of 44 questions: social, spiritual and ethical and material. We drew strength and inspiration from the European and global Quaker institutions (Quaker United Nations Office, Europe & Middle East Young Friends, Europe & Middle East Section, Quaker Council for European Affairs) when their representatives presented their aims and actions. We also discovered vitality amongst our own assembly with friends illustrating their Quaker practices in everyday life. We worked on how to apply the Quaker testimonies in the practice of our faith in a programmed worship. At a workshop we discussed the strengths and weaknesses of our Assembly in order to address them. Thanks to a real discipline, created by excellent pre-planning, we have enriched our lives with a lot of questions and sought answers together.

We commemorated, at the Nantes memorial to slavery, the slavery of the past and that which continues today. We were joined by representatives of the associations Tibhirine, ACAT, and the mosque of Nantes. By this commemoration we emphasized the unbroken link between the Quakers who came before us

and ourselves, both hungry for social justice. This commemoration has helped guide our Assembly ever outward. One example of this outreach was a person whom we did not previously know, joined us throughout the next day to get to know us. He was warmly welcomed and he has expressed his desire to return.

This bodes well for the future outreach.

Sylvette Thompson, Clerk  
France Yearly Meeting

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## Ireland Yearly Meeting

April 2016

To Friends Everywhere

We send warm greetings from Ireland Yearly Meeting, held from 31st March – 3rd April 2016 at King's Hospital School on the western outskirts of Dublin. The theme of our Yearly Meeting was "Who is my Neighbour?", underpinned by a quotation from C. Winifred Lamb written circa 1954: "How can we, such a small insignificant group of people as the Society of Friends help to stem the tide of evil and hate, and greed and fear that is so widespread in the world today?" (*Quaker Life & Practice: A Book of the Christian Experience of the Religious Society of Friends in Ireland*, paragraph 4.13).

We welcomed Friends from a number of other Yearly Meetings and worship groups and enjoyed sharing with them in our many sessions, in worship sharing, bible study and in special interest groups. Ten Irish Friends had the opportunity to participate in the World Plenary Gathering of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) in Peru in January. This was a wonderful occasion to connect with Friends from all over the world and to explore our shared heritage and beliefs. Ireland Yearly Meeting has answered the call from FWCC to initiate two concrete actions on sustainability by January 2017.

In our Ministry & Oversight session, the topic was "The Gift of Conflict". We were encouraged to welcome conflict rather than avoid it, as it

offers the potential for compassion, creativity and innovation. Our Public Lecture, given by William D.A. Haire, was entitled “Who is my Neighbour? What is our Testimony on Inclusion?” Drawing on the actions and testimonies of Fox, Bellers and Woolman, Will noted that our faith and tradition is only of value if we also live it now. Poverty and social exclusion are not inevitable and can be changed. Reflecting on his career working in Government in Northern Ireland, Will found that “unreasonable optimism” was a very necessary requirement in life. A positive faith is essential in the face of tough challenges. This is also essentially the message of Quakerism.

We considered the question of “Who is my neighbour in a European context?” and heard about the work of Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA) and how a few Friends can have a not insignificant impact on European Union policy. We heard from a group of Dublin Friends who are concerned with welcoming refugees. A Friend from German Yearly Meeting spoke movingly of the German approach to creating a “welcome culture” for refugees. Our Peace Committee reminded us that, while we help refugees, we also need to consider how to address the causes of the conflicts which lead to such misery.

We also considered the serious and increasing incidence of homelessness in our country, and decided to express our concern publicly in a statement addressed to the authorities in both jurisdictions of Ireland, urging them to take urgent action to tackle the underlying causes of homelessness.

Reflecting on our theme, we are mindful of the story of the Good Samaritan, and Jesus’s challenge to us to “go and do likewise”. We encourage Friends everywhere to work for social justice and to take action, both individually and collectively, to assist those on the margins of our society and address the causes of inequality in our communities.

Signed on behalf of Ireland Yearly Meeting

Daniel H. Sinton,  
Clerk

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## Netherlands Yearly Meeting

Dear Friends

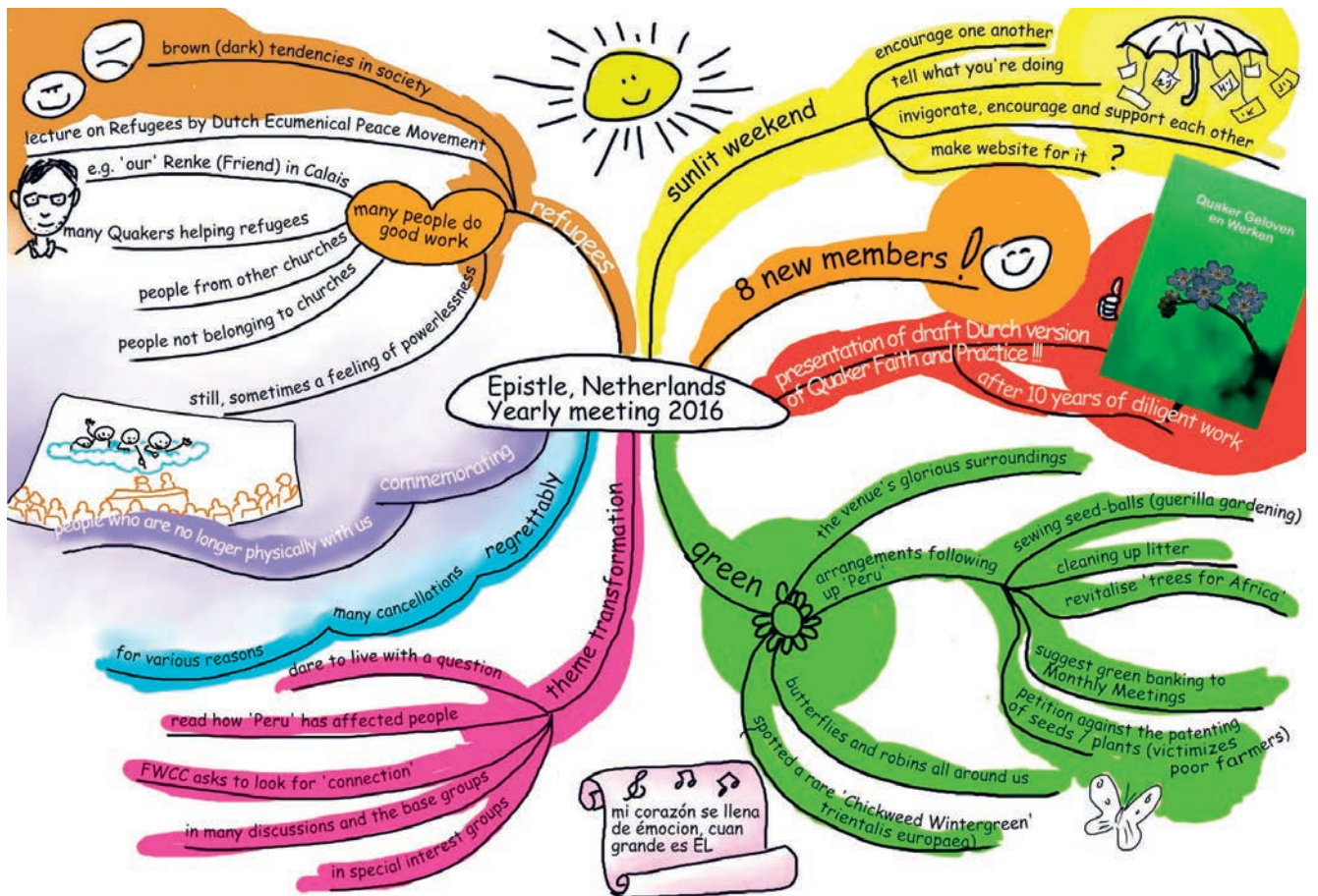
In this letter we send you the epistle of our Netherlands Yearly Meeting held on the first weekend in June in the nice Wildlife Friends House in Bennekom in the centre of The Netherlands. This time our epistle is made up as a mind map (*overleaf*) and I would like to add some explanation so that the reading of the mind map is understandable for people who did not attend our Yearly Meeting.

The pink branch is about the theme of the weekend: Transformation, which is connected to theme of the World plenary in January in Peru: Living the transformation. We explored the theme in our support or base groups, in the interest groups, in the Meeting for Worship and in the topics the Meeting for Worship for Business.

The purple branch stands for the Friends who died since the last Yearly meeting and whom we commemorated.

The brown branch tells about the lecture we had from a member of the Council of Churches who spoke about the work the council does to improve the situation for Asylum Seekers. After the presentation we asked Friends in what ways they are involved in work for refugees. We were very moved by the actual work Friends are doing with refugees: teaching the Dutch language, supporting families, supporting gay, lesbian and transsexual refugees. Working as a volunteer in Calais in France. Telling about this work stimulated other Friends to come and support in this work.

The yellow branch illustrates the sunny weekend. We had a weekend in October 2015 where we inspired each other, rather than doing concerns together, which is not so easy for a group spread over the country, we agreed to support each other, encouraging and motivating in what we are doing. This requires that we talk about the concerns we have in our own hometowns, like working on Peace, working with refugees



and sustainability. We felt the inspiration of this special weekend last year during the Yearly Meeting.

The light brown branch refers to 8 new members we welcomed in our midst. It was a great joy to welcome so many new Friends.

The red branch represents the presentation of two new books in the Dutch language: Kees Nieuwerth presented a new version of our Dutch Quaker Faith and Practice: Quaker Geloven en Werken. A committee worked ten years to write this book. It is still a preliminary version to work with, which will be finalised in two years' time. During the meeting we all read some parts of the book right there and then. After that we shared some quotes, which made that we felt very much the value of the book. The flowers on the cover refer to the 5 chapters in the book. We are very happy that we have this new version of our own Quaker faith & practice. The previous one was published in 1952.

The green branch refers to the topic of sustainability which was an important topic in Peru. We made seed balls which we could take

home to put in places where nothing is growing. The activity was done by Friends of all ages. We renewed our commitment to clean up litter in our own environment and to make sure we have bank accounts with green banks, like TRIODOS in The Netherlands. We ask Friends to sign a petition against patenting of seeds by Monsanto which is very negative for farmers in Developing countries. We want to renew our support for 'Trees for Africa' to compensate for the CO2 emission when travelling by plane.

We enjoyed very much the wonderful environment of our venue, we could sit outside enjoying the terrace, the flowers and the butterflies.

We felt very blessed with so much happiness and inspiration of our Friendship, deepened by our Meeting for Worship and our connectedness to God and to each other on Sunday.

We send our loving greetings to all Friends around the world. In deep connection.

On behalf of The Netherlands Yearly Meeting  
Marlies Tjallingii, Clerk

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## Norway Yearly Meeting

2015

To Friends Everywhere

In its 197th year the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Norway gathered at Agder Folk High School in Søgne for its yearly meeting from 25th to 28th June 2015. In all there were 70 participants, of whom 22 children and young people, in addition to guests from the British, Danish and Swedish Yearly Meetings

Our theme this year revolved around Climate Justice and meeting That of God in the whole of creation, summed up as follows: “Be the change that you wish to see in the world!” (Gandhi) “Sustainability and life – in spirit and in practice.” How may we, together with others, be a light for a sustainable future wherever we live. Per Ingvar and Frøydis Haukeland and Rigmor Fløgstad introduced the topic through relating inspiring examples. The theme was further developed in inspiring group conversations and a plenary session and ran as a red thread through all our activities, including a meditative pilgrim walk in the forest by the beach.

Through this theme we are encouraged to act and participate in activities near our homes to help create joy and fellowship. If we work together, we may resist feelings of powerlessness and may improve quality of life, achieving greater results than we might reach on our own. We are part of a loving network which connects all living things. This web is fragile and now threatened, and we are called to work for healing and renewal. We approach the call with joy, determination and love.

The groups of children and young people also used the theme in their parallel yearly gatherings. Five of our young people have worked in a group for two years to learn more about Quaker traditions and Quaker roots and gave us a slide show about their experiences, which included a visit to central Quaker places in England. Three of them chose to affirm their membership during our final period of worship on Sunday. This gives hope for the future.

Our Yearly Meeting has worked for three years on eldership and oversight. Julia Ryberg from

Europe & Middle East Section/Sweden YM and Linda Karen Eide from our worship group in Bergen reminded us how essential this work is, to foster and care for this fire that burns in us and between us – that all may warm themselves by the fire and none be excluded.

Quaker Service Norway held its own Annual Meeting during this weekend. They have been through important readjustment because of changes in the conditions for government project support. They continue to support work for peace and reconciliation in the African Great Lakes Area as well as Kindergartens in Gaza, and are working to develop more sustainable plans for future work.

The following quotes by the dear friend of Quakers, Martin Nag, who died recently, will follow us home: “The inner light never burns down”, and “Give us this day our daily courage.”

Søgne, 28th Day of 6th Month, 2015

Stephen Collett  
Yearly Meeting Clerk

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## Norway Yearly Meeting

To Friends everywhere,

Norwegian Friends were gathered for their 2016 yearly assembly from 23rd – 26th June in the town of Kragerø by the sea. We were 77 participants in all, of whom 22 below the age of 20. Our theme this year was Making peace locally with the help of the Alternatives to Violence Project.

During our first business session we remembered Friends who have died during the last year and heard greetings from home and abroad. Our epilogue that first evening was to learn Dag Hovda Sture’s new song The Wave, which he has written especially for this year’s assembly. We sang the song on several occasions during our gathering. We shall remember this line: We need no interpreter between us and God; he who sings within our minds. See his spark in others.

Friday morning we woke up to Brexit after the referendum in Great Britain, and we were

gripped by the many challenges this decision may bring. During business that day we approved the accounts and a budget for 2017, and discussed how peace work can be shown in the budget. We also made provisions for continuing the work on our Norwegian Faith and Practice as part of our process towards our 200 year anniversary in 2018.

After lunch we worked in three interest groups. Stephen Collett led a group on Conflict as a gift, Penny Heymans on Compassion and communication and Lars Verket on Mindfulness. The rest of Friday was dedicated to the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP). We enjoyed practical and entertaining exercises for all ages (from 6 months to 89 years). The basis for AVP consists in positive confirmation that we are all good enough and important, focusing on communication, listening, community building and how to deal with conflicts.

The Saturday morning sky was brilliantly blue and we all looked forward to our visit to Jomfruland. Before we left we worked in three interest groups, one on Contact with refugees and asylum seekers in our local communities, one on Quaker engagement in Palestine/ Israel in general and Gaza in particular, and one on Sustainability in our everyday life and communities – challenges from Peru.

We travelled to Jomfruland in two comfortable boats winding their way between islands and skerries. We enjoyed our packed lunches and many of us seized the opportunity of a refreshing wade or swim. Some also took a walk to Jomfruland Lighthouse, or past the pebble beach to see the oldest ash tree in the Nordic countries.

On our return we joined in the annual meeting of Quaker Service Norway and saw the documentary Reconciliation in Burundi by Øystein Rakkenes. During the social evening after dinner we saw a documentary from Palestine / Gaza, and we sang and played some more AVP games.

During a short business session on Sunday morning we started preparations for the Nordic Yearly Meetings' gathering in 2017. During Sunday Meeting for worship, two of our young people chose to confirm their membership in the Norwegian Quaker community.

Every morning offered early meeting for worship or some mindful exercises. Our days together were characterised by cheerfulness, delightful reunions, play and conversations across all ages. We leave our YM assembly with a desire and a commitment to make a difference in everyday life, in our own lives as well as in others'. Even if we are few we have many testimonies to share.

In Friendship

Stephen W Collett, YM Clerk

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## Ramallah Friends Meeting (Quakers)

Summer 2016

To Friends Everywhere,

We greet you with joy in our hearts, giving gratitude for the enduring friendships which Ramallah Friends Meeting has experienced with many of you over the years. We thank you for your visits, for your words of encouragement, your prayers, and for your work in service for a wider measure of justice in the Middle East and throughout the world. Your friendship gives us hope.

We greet you in love, knowing that we are one in the Spirit and drawing upon our unity as a source of strength. We thank you for your commitment to nonviolence, for joining hands with those experiencing the injustice of systemic violence –wherever that may be. Your courage gives us hope.

Our Meeting, along with the wider Palestinian community, has endured much hardship. Systems of violence press down on us and physically separate our meeting members. The pressures are enormous; the weight we carry is seemingly unrelenting. The uncertainty of it all is, at times, bewildering.

Yet, we know the Truth. And we experience that Truth, in relationship with you, and with the sure knowledge that God continues to accompany us –even in our deepest moments of despair. That although we may be isolated, we are never alone.



“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.” *II Corinthians 4:8-9*

Surely, you, too, wrestle with the same questions. The Spirit brings to all of us, in different ways and in different lands, the challenge of witnessing to that Oneness.

With a very warm welcome we invite you to join us in person, or in spirit, for Meeting for Worship, where we meet God and one another. Celebrate with us newly revived ministries such as mid-week Meeting for Worship and our ongoing dialogue with international groups who are eager to learn from the witness we bear to an oppressive occupation through the daily living of a theology of nonviolence.

In peace,  
Jean Zaru, Presiding Clerk

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## Sweden YM

To Friends everywhere

For our 82nd Yearly Meeting, some forty participants from Sweden, Finland, Gambia, Norway, Great Britain and Austria met at Svartbäcken amongst the wood anemones and trees bursting into leaf. In different discussion fora, as well as musical dissonance games and role-play, we have worked with our theme: “Non-violence: Possibilities and Limitations”.

Rather than non-violence, our invited guest, Jalka, from Austria, talked about learning to quarrel, so that we meet in the conflict and become more human – “This is just as important as learning to brush your teeth”. She said that Quakers often equate conflict with violence, but that avoiding confrontation is also a form of violence. Instead we can be more real for each other by saying how things are, listening to ourselves and understanding “the other”.

The annual report of our activities has given us insights into the work that Swedish Quakers are engaged in nationally and internationally. Quaker Service Sweden facilitates the planting of trees to protect crops and the building of bridges between

people. The Swedish Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Israel and Palestine, where Swedish Quakers are included in the steering group, is active in these two areas and supports both sides in the work for peace. Europe & Middle East Section is oriented towards “finding hidden Quakers” in Central Europe, so that they in turn find the Religious Society of Friends.

For every year that passes we get better at making the content more accessible and the meeting more inclusive. This year we had a hearing loop for the first time. At the same time as we reminded each other about breaks in the circuit and distance from the microphone, we “quarrelled” about our own and others’ needs, so that they would not be overlooked. Children and adults took part together, in mixed groups, in the work with the theme. The children also had their own programme, which reflected their own wishes, and included everything from grilled marshmallows to improvised song lyrics.

It was unusual to have as many Attenders as Friends with us. It signalled a vitalisation and led to even more shared experiences. We could not lapse into Quaker jargon, but introduced our methods in a spirit of mutually care between clerks and participants. The meetings for worship for business were disciplined, engaged and at times filled with laughter.

We were glad to hear about the World Plenary Meeting in Peru, where participants from different Quaker traditions found a kinship beyond outward forms. A word that recurred during our yearly meeting was transformation. Making the most of change, renewal, and young Friends. The generations working together.

The threshing session on members’ financial contributions to the Society gave us an opportunity to discuss the subject openly in groups in an atmosphere of trust. In safety, we could share feelings, ideas and experiences – and even quarrel a bit.

We are grateful for the energies that have created both the meeting we have just taken part in and other forms of meetings the world over. At the same time, we see how ambitious activities sometimes collide with materialistic economic circumstances, where one of the questions is how we, with

our Quaker ideas as the starting point, should manage our finances in the world of which we are a part.

At the same time as we have met in the spring sunshine and warmth, a humanitarian crisis is taking place, where people in flight are deprived of their human rights. We realise, with pain, how difficult it is to make a real difference in such a situation. We unite with what is expressed in the letter of greetings from Britain Yearly Meeting. The importance of joining together and welcoming refugees, not just in words, but also in practice.

8th May 2016

Torbjörn Söderqvist , Presiding Clerk  
Catharina Gustafsson, Recording Clerk

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## Switzerland YM

Held at Herzberg, Asp ob Aarau,  
Aargau on 13-16 May 2016

Friends,

On May 13 we opened the 2016 Switzerland Yearly Meeting, themed “Out of Sight and Out of Mind? Refugees and us in Switzerland today”, with song and worship sharing. The refrain of the song, Nowhere to Stay, helped open our thinking on the topic:

*Everyone’s a refugee, we’re all afraid here, can’t you see?  
What’s happened to our empathy?  
Is this the end? Or can we reinvent this failed humanity?*  
(Kathleen Koch, 2016)

We were gifted that Patrick Taran, member of Geneva Monthly Meeting, shared his expertise having worked on migrant issues for the past four decades, leading an interactive keynote address on the present situation in Europe and Switzerland. During his presentation we discovered that about 75% or more of us in attendance would be considered “migrants,” or are the sons or daughters of migrants, under the United Nations criteria. Patrick pointed out that the refugee “crisis” is much more one of perception – and of values – than of reality, and challenged us to reflect on Quaker testimony and witness. We discussed this theme throughout the weekend culminating in an

epistle with a position and set of proposed actions, which will be considered by the SYM.

While we were considering the topic, the children went on a trip to visit an art museum in Aarau, where they enjoyed a special video exhibit called The Sleeping Eskimo by Portuguese artists João Maria Gusmão & Pedro Paiva, and then ate delicious cupcakes of all colors and flavors. Later on, they interviewed 21 of the attendees about their experiences as migrants and shared a selection of their results during the social evening. It was fascinating.

A notable characteristic of the SYM meeting is the number of languages spoken, reflecting the broader Swiss society. Several volunteers took turns translating between German, English, and French throughout the weekend. While at times our patience was challenged, we appreciated the variety and depth of expression enabled by this practice.

Herzberg offered a “green” location for our meeting – there was a new “smart flower” solar panel out front that moved throughout the day to catch the most possible sun.

Even though it rained continuously through Saturday, at least we knew where the sun should have been. Nearby trails were perfect for silent walks, where the backdrop of Aarau and the rolling countryside were finally revealed on Sunday.

Also of note: Small groups considered additional concerns focused on sustainability and CO2 emissions, and funding challenges faced by the Quaker United Nations Office. We came together for a lively social evening, where a huge variety of musical talent was shared: cello, viola, harmonica, saxophone, recorders, piano, and voices. We even had storytelling, hand massage, and Taizé chants.

We were 49 Friends and attenders in total, including five children and two delegates from Britain Yearly Meeting and German Yearly Meeting.

In closing we offer text from a Friends’ Hymn:

*As we leave this friendly place  
Love give light to every face  
May the kindness which we learn  
Guide our hearts ‘till we return*  
(Vincent Brown Silliman, 1932)

Greetings to Friends everywhere.

# From Africa

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## Central and Southern Africa Yearly Meeting

St Augustine's Priory, Modderpoort,  
South Africa, 27 April – 3 May 2016

To Friends everywhere,

We send loving greetings to Friends everywhere. Some 60 Friends came from four African countries to Modderpoort in the Free State. The venue was an old Anglican Mission Station school complex and we looked across to the blue-red Maluti Mountains in Lesotho some 15 kilometres away. We were joined by eight Friends from Britain Yearly Meeting and Churchill Malimo from the Friends World Committee for Consultation's Africa Section. For six days, we shared in: meetings for worship, worship sharing, meetings for worship for business, a Summer School, special interest groups, seven – (and some fifteen-) minute talks, excursions (including viewing rock art of the San people), and the Richard Gush Memorial Lecture.

Children and Young Friends enriched our Meeting. Young Friends had their own programme but spent much time participating in the main programme.

We were inspired by the range and quality of actions for peace and justice on the part of Friends. These include AVP (Alternatives to Violence), Phoenix Zululand (Restorative Justice in prisons), Beanies and Blankets for Babies, Zimbabwe Food Relief Action, the Quaker Peace Centre and the school-based work of the Friends of Hlekweni.

Summer School sessions over one day included Friendly Bible Study, a Q&A session, featuring weighty Quakers, and AVP.

We have always been aware of our diversity but this YM showed up some of the challenges we face:

- Tackling immediate needs (which caused us to set up a hunger relief fund to support families in Bulawayo and Lesotho), and longer-term issues (the facts that climate change means that drought is now the norm across wide sections of southern Africa).
- Building interpersonal peace (via AVP for example) but also living in socio-economic environments characterised by violence, poverty and inequality.

Such challenges were highlighted in the Richard Gush Memorial Lecture, presented by Jennifer Kavanagh and titled *No Other*; a journey into oneness, which can be found on our website [www.quakers.co.za](http://www.quakers.co.za). It is almost impossible to summarise a lecture so full of rich insights and we point you, as Jennifer did, to one of our own *Advices and Queries*:

“Do we divide our worlds into spiritual activities, family life, secular pursuits and political action, into good people and bad people, us and them, old ways and new ways? Let's make them one. Let's find the goodness in the other, the infinite in the humdrum, the wisdom in the ancestor, the eternal in the here and now.”

We conclude this Epistle with a Haiku written during the meeting:

*If you are feeling down  
Or uncertain of how to act  
Try love  
Love never fails*

In Peace and Friendship  
Justine Limpitlaw & Helen Holleman, Co-Clerks

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## Nairobi Yearly Meeting

To Friends all over the world,

We greet you all in the name of Jesus Christ,  
Amen.

The 30th Annual General Conference of Nairobi Yearly Meeting was held from 17th – 21st August 2016 at Friends Centre, Ofafa Maringo, about 10km east of Nairobi City Centre, off Jogoo road. During the Conference, the weather was warm with temperatures averaging 28 degrees centigrade. The delegates were jovial and cordial in sessions.

The Conference was attended by 277 delegates from twenty one monthly meetings. In attendance were Presiding Clerks of Friends Church in Kenya (FCK), representatives of Friends United Meeting (FUM), Friends Kenya in the United Nations (UN) and the Governor of Nairobi County among others.

In his opening remarks the Presiding Clerk emphasises on unity in the Church and Ministry. We also told the delegates to remain active in passing deliberations and resolutions during the Conference.

The main speaker, Reverend Paul Wawire explored the theme 'a call to obedience in Ministry' drawn from Ezekiel 37:6. He reiterated that obedience is not an option but a foundation to stand the test of time.

Other topics covered were; the impact of elections on the church's testimony of peace, taking stock, 2010 Nairobi Yearly Meeting constitution and enhancing investments in the Quaker Church.

We witnessed the launch of the Catechism Class and Sunday School curriculum books.

It was our pleasure for the first time in our history to have group Bible Study Sessions in the morning during the Conference.

May the Almighty God bless you all!

Yours in Christ,  
Simon Angote  
Presiding Clerk

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## Tanzania YM U.S.F.W. (United Society of Friends Women) Epistle

Dear Friends all over the World,

Greetings from the USFW of Tanzania Yearly Meeting. We held our fourth annual conference at Bonchugu in Serengeti, 18km from Mugumu town, based between Serengeti National Park and Ikorongo Game Reserve. This was during a rainy season.

About a hundred people attended the conference. The theme of the conference was taken from the book of Isaiah 61:1-3 that was talking about good news to the oppressed.

The main speaker was Pastor Margaret Musalia from Vihiga YM. Her message stressed on setting the captive free, a chosen race, and deliverance to the poor for we have the redeemer. To enhance the theme other topics were Natural Resource Management (using our natural resources to support ourselves) by Marian Baker of New England YM, Church Integrity by Beatrice Malongo of Bware YM, and Marriage and family life by Pamela Ngoya of Nairobi YM. Prayers were made for all and many were delivered and gave their lives to Christ.

The great challenge was that the conference was different compared to the last year's conference. This is because more people attended until the meetinghouse was not able to hold all of us, it was more organized, and there was a much greater understanding of what is a conference.

The climax of the conference was honoring three of our elderly Women of Substance. These were Elitha Kayundi, Catherine Magigi, and Maria John. We had them lead a procession as others sang and danced, had their histories read, gave them each a certificate of thanks and presented them each with a solar lamp, since they have been beacons of light to us.

We wish you the best. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Yours in Christ,  
Mary Joseph,  
Presiding Clerk

# From the Americas

In the USA, many yearly meetings of the unprogrammed tradition belong not only to Friends World Committee for Consultation but also to Friends General Conference (FGC), whilst programmed yearly meetings may belong to Friends United Meeting (FUM) and evangelical yearly meetings to Evangelical Friends Churches International (EFCI). Some yearly meetings belong to more than one grouping.

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## Friends World Committee for Consultation World Plenary 2016: Pisac, Peru

To all Friends Everywhere,

We send loving greetings to you from Pisac in the Sacred Valley of the Incas. We were blessed with both sunshine and rain. As we gathered together we lifted our eyes to the mountains and lifted our hearts to God

From 19 to 27 January over 320 men and women from 37 countries, 77 Yearly Meetings, 8 independent Monthly Meetings, and 2 worship groups, speaking dozens of languages met to consider the theme “Living the transformation: creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God (Romans 8:19).”

Our time together started in sadness at those who were delayed in their journeys or prevented from joining us – we felt a gap in our gathering the shape of God. Later, as we were joined by Friends from Kenya and welcomed local Friends from Peru and Bolivia. We were complete.

Many of the messages shared in our worship, speaking to the theme of transformation were both moving and uplifting: we were challenged to be transformed in ways leaving us more faithful to God’s purposes individually, as meetings/churches and as a World Family of Friends.

Our speakers emphasised the process of transformation. One spoke of spiritual transformation using the image of a heart transplant and what it means to be given the heart of Jesus. In this transplant of the heart we become

agents of change who show the love of Christ in the world. Another image we were given was that of a seed pod. Each pod contains the past, present and future, showing us how we remain connected to our past even as we look to the future, as God gathers us into one grand story.

We heard the message that we must be open and available to God, making space in our hearts, our communities and our churches/meetings. Transformation often finds us when we’re not seeking or expecting it. We must be willing to be vulnerable and open our hearts in order to undergo the change we want to see.

As we gathered we not only spoke of transformation, we invited it and created spaces for God to make it happen. Many of us experienced it while we were here. We found ourselves broken open and touched by the Living Spirit of Christ.

We are the children of God. We are who creation has been waiting for. We are called to reveal ourselves in our lives and in the work we do with our hearts and our hands. Although God can fill our hearts, God has no hands but ours to heal this broken world. We can be salt and light shining to the world and declaring the love of God.

As Quakers our faith is inseparable from our concern to care for all life on earth. We are reminded of the Kabarok call for Peace and Eco-Justice and the need to redouble our efforts now. We call on Friends everywhere to take practical actions to sustain life on Earth.

Listening together in our home groups, workshops, and consultations, where two or three languages were spoken, opened up

countless opportunities to pray, sing, ask difficult questions, learn, cry and laugh together. We have hurt each other with our words when we have spoken without love but this is a human failing and we have also experienced the healing power of Christ's love.

We learn from each other's ways of connecting with God; each offering of worship held within it the opportunity for the Spirit to move and speak and sing. Sharing worship in this way enables us to recognize that we must both listen to, and speak to God.

The presence of so many young adult Friends among us has been a blessing. We heard their moving testimony and experienced their inspirational leadership. As we go back to our churches and meetings we must allow this ministry and leadership to flourish.

We are different. We came together as a diverse collection of Friends. We were challenged by our differences. This challenge is not always comfortable but it is one we welcome.

We are one. We are one in the spirit of God which does not wash away or hide our differences, but allows us to celebrate them and enables us to move beyond the spiritual boundaries that may separate us. We are able to do this by coming together in worship where, while its form may be unfamiliar, God was present throughout. Through listening deeply and tenderly to each other and to God we reached a place where we can hear and sense where the words come from even when we may not understand the tongue they are spoken in.

We are Friends. In making the choice to come together and be willing to share deeply, pray boldly, and listen lovingly together, we seek to move beyond our differences, see beyond our labels and find ways to connect with each other. The work of FWCC depends on us all. In order to continue it, we encourage Friends, meetings/churches and Yearly Meetings to contribute financially to and participate in building connections between Friends.

As we leave here we will carry the love we have received from each other and from God in our hearts.

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## Alaska Friends Conference

Annual Gathering, Dickerson Friends Center, Wasilla, Alaska, 28 – 31 July 2016

To Friends Everywhere:

Alaska Friends Conference (Yearly Meeting) met at Dickerson Friends Center in Wasilla, Alaska July 28 – 31, 2016. We revel in the majesty of Alaska's natural landscapes and we sorrow at the increasingly visible effects of warming in our homeland. For several years, Alaska Friends have felt the leading to learn, pray, and seek right action to address climate disruption. We have come to recognize that our moral witness to address climate change will be a long-term struggle for cultural, social, and economic change. During our weekend together, we focused on deepening our spiritual community in order to sustain our witness over time.

Alaska Friends have a strong, visceral, first-hand experience of intact, functioning ecosystems and the communities they sustain. We feel deep love for the land, the waters, and the life around us but we see the effects of climate disruption occurring in our state. It is our witness to the world that we will act on this love.

Alaska Friends met five times in the past three years to discern our way forward. We had been looking for the one "aha" project, honestly, into which we could throw ourselves. Would it be in the realm of policy advocacy? Or a listening and accompanying project? Or creating and modeling sustainable lives, buildings, and communities? Meanwhile, individual Friends and meetings have been doing all of the above; we have been led to the conclusion that we need to expand and support each of these diverse paths.

Meetings and individuals in Alaska Friends Conference have recently:

- co-sponsored a climate jamboree, a climate symposium, and an ongoing climate coalition
- lobbied our members of Congress for recognition and action on climate;

- led workshops, appeared on panels, and spoken out on the moral and spiritual imperative in our climate change work;
- been invited to a Yup'ik village to share our perspective on faith communities and climate change;
- partnered with the NAACP on their climate justice work; and
- taken a case to Federal Court to spur action. In the words of one 16-year-old Alaska Friend:

I am suing the executive branch of the U.S. government for not protecting the Constitutional right of youth and future generations to live in a stable climate. I am called to act out of my Quaker value of equality, because previous generations have reaped the rewards from damaging the environment, endangering the future of others. I am acting out of the Quaker Value of stewardship in recognizing that we are part of the biota and must protect it; “that of God in everyone” means more than only humans.

At our Gathering this week, Visiting Friends facilitated our discernment of ways to address Alaska Friends ongoing concern for earthcare, climate disruption and sustainable community.

Members of our Yearly Meeting have been active in attempts (many coordinated by Friends Committee on National Legislation) to alter national policies to acknowledge climate disruption triggered by our prolific use of fossil fuels, and to encourage renewable energy. We determined to ramp up these efforts, to recruit additional Alaska Friends into this work, and to develop and emphasize specific stories about the impact of climate disruption on Alaska communities. We watched the world premiere of a music video featuring young Alaska Friends based on the song “Thinking Like a Mountain.” We heard from one young Friend that our efforts to bend national policy are not sufficient, leading him to take legal action for the right of the next generation to a future free from climate disruption.

We were inspired by American Friends Service

Committee’s model for witness and social action by “accompaniment” or humble service to those people and communities most impacted by injustice and conflict. Small groups discerned organizations or collaborations we might accompany as they work for needed changes and adaptations in the face of climate disruption, including local interfaith, justice, and rights organizations. Recognizing past deep ties of American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) to Alaska, we determined to host a traveling exhibit celebrating AFSC’s 100th anniversary next year.

We reflected that the transition from a society and economy based on exploitation to one based on sustainability and equality is profound and long term; we asked ourselves how we will maintain hope and joy through inevitable delays and setbacks. In a workshop on the Spiritual Deepening work of Friends General Conference, we reflected on the ways in which Quaker faith & practice at once break open hearts and require us to act in the face of injustices. We recognized that our work in the world has to be based on our faith and spiritual practices and a positive vision of blessed community even as we are accompanying and serving others.

Climate disruption, for Alaska Friends, is a place where the world’s great need and our great love intersect. We will become sharper about what is most effective. But always our Quaker values will guide us.

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## Canadian Yearly Meeting

August 13, 2016

*O wait to feel this spirit, and to be guided to walk in this spirit, that ye may enjoy the Lord in sweetness, and walk sweetly, meekly, tenderly, peaceably, and lovingly one with another. And then ye will be a praise to the Lord, and anything that is, or hath been, or may be amiss, ye will come over in the true dominion, even in the Lamb’s dominion; and that which is contrary shall be trampled upon, as life rises and rules in you.*

- Isaac Pennington’s Letter to Friends in Amersham, May 1667

Loving Greetings to Friends everywhere,  
Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends met for the 183rd annual gathering of Quakers in Canada, our 61st as a united Yearly Meeting, on the beautiful Augustana Campus of the University of Alberta in Camrose, situated in Treaty 6 territory.

During the week, the themes of grief and nurture arose in many programs and events. Many of us are saddened by the loss of CYM-in-Session for 2017 because we love CYM-in-Session for its blend of corporate decision-making and spiritual grounding. Our pre-gathering retreat explored how we may nurture our community during the upcoming fallow year in which we will not meet in person. We also grieved the deaths of several strong and spiritually grounded Friends. We shared our grief throughout the week, but most particularly during our Memorial Meeting and our session on the “Experience of the Spirit in my Life.” These experiences of sadness remind us of the need to care for ourselves and others.

The Sunderland P. Gardner lecture explored the topic “Continuing Revelation: Quaking with Grace and Joy in Modern Times.” It challenged us to consider how an inward condition of exhaustion can contaminate our ability to manifest the love that underlies our witness to each other and the world. This was echoed in our Bible study, which was an exploration of the Bible and how it relates to Friends’ testimonies. It reminded us that in overburdening ourselves we do violence to ourselves, and that this flies in the face of our peace testimony. When we take on too much, we deny ourselves the opportunity to practice communal discernment and experience the joy that can come from it.

We struggled to find ways to save our strength in order to dare greatly when the Spirit demands it. This condition of exhaustion was echoed by Clerks and others who serve our Yearly Meeting, and suggests that CYM-in-Session and its associated events and bodies, while beloved, can harm the people who serve them. Our faith in each other is high, but our expectations of each other are sometimes higher than we consent to

or can sustain. We were made aware of the ways that Clerks and people serving in other positions were being immobilized and sometimes pushed away by the labour involved. Just as we must take responsibility for the effects of our consumer habits on the Earth, we must mitigate the effect of what we take from the people who serve CYM.

We were moved by Friends who exhibited courage in revealing truths about their experiences living as the Other in our society. During our LGBTQ evening Friends challenged us to imagine experiencing gender dysphoria and gender fluidity. Our community is deepened when we have the courage to be vulnerable together.

We delighted in the presence of Young Friends and welcomed their involvement in the wider meeting, although they were few in number. We carry an ongoing concern about the importance of caring for Young Adult Friends, understanding their priorities, and making sure those priorities are reflected in our processes. We responded joyously to their request that we support them in fostering their community and strengthening their connection to the larger CYM community. Friends expressed appreciation for the rich children’s programming, which included daily worship.

We were encouraged to build harmonious relationships with our environment and surrounding communities. Friends participated in a service project to protect the local watershed, and nurtured our relations with the Maskwacis First Nation through mutual visits.

We were also urged to communicate our faith openly. This year’s session brought a means to do so: there was much excitement about the minute from Canadian Friends Service Committee detailing how we can take action in support of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which examined the cultural genocide experienced by Canada’s Aboriginal peoples.

Despite our sense of loss, we are facing a new future and stumbling, with God’s grace, toward healing. Our commitment to hiring a senior staff person and the newly-accepted personnel



policy bring us relief at having learned from our past mistakes as well as gratitude for the sometimes difficult work of the Friends who serve our blessed community. Many of us are finding a quiet joy in clerkship and committee membership. We are looking directly at difficult issues that would be convenient to avoid and are willing to address issues of financial and human sustainability. This shows a level of courage and care that can help us live up to the patterns and examples of our spiritual ancestors over the centuries

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## Cuba Yearly Meeting

Gibara, February 21, 2016

Dear brothers and sisters

May peace be with each one of you. United in prayer, the delegates of the 89th Session of Cuba Yearly Meeting proclaim the indispensable necessity of seeking reconciliation.

Our ideas express the need for restoration in obedience to God, in recognition of God's sacrificial offering of his son on the Cross.

We believe that in the community of faith reconciliation is everyone's ministry, because the light dwelling within us calls us to live together in peace, a basic need for each human being.

In that personal relationship we become workers for peace, based on a life of respect and shared labour, cooperating without letting power dominate the weak.

Today the church is called to bring about full reconciliation, following the theme of this assembly, II Corinthians 5:18: And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

In this session a concern arose about the need for workers; the harvest is abundant but there are few workers. We hope that our blessed God will show many people this path of guiding communities. We have new physical facilities which can be useful for the missionary work in Cuba.

It is a cause of joy to host the General Board of FUM next June. We hope that this meeting of brothers and sisters will be full of blessings.

With our faith in action, the Friends Church proclaims that we should all unite in universal love, and so in our own contexts let us seek the meaning of Christ's teachings, serving God and our neighbour.

This past year was blessed by the historic graduation of the first class of the Cuban Quaker Peace Institute, all certified as mediators in building peace, a tool for facilitating conflict resolution. This Cuban institution is continuing with a new structure, adding sites in other locations in this country.

Brothers and sisters, we have shared this time in search of unity with one another, in finding the divine light within our community. May this spiritual atmosphere reach out to you from the Gibara, the White Villa of Cuba.

In the Light,  
Cuba Yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers)

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## Fellowship of Friends of African Descent Annual Gathering

Greetings to Friends everywhere:

Friends of African Descent, their families and friends, representing meetings from across the United States, attended the Fellowship of Friends of African Descent's annual gathering, August 12–14, at Arch Street Friends Meeting in Philadelphia, PA. The theme of the gathering was Recharge, Renew, Rejoice.

Affirming the presence of God in all people, Friends gathered for three days of worship, worship with a concern for business, presentations and fellowship.

The gathering explored the concerns and crises facing the African American community, including state-sanctioned violence against men, women and children of African descent. A

minute was created to express the Fellowship's testament concerning the state-sanctioned violence against people of African descent. The minute contained four action items: to create a peace force; to establish peace centers; to promote community training of the police; and to advocate for disarmament of both the police and the community. (See attachment.)

The gathering began on Friday with a dramatic performance by Amanda Kemp which included a historical collage of quotes from the Constitution, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., Assata Shakur and autobiographical writings. She was accompanied on the violin by her husband, Michael Jamanis.

On Saturday, Friends gathered for a semi-programmed meeting for worship, led by Ewuare Osayande, Chief Diversity Officer of American Friends Service Committee. Out of the silence a message was shared that witnessed the struggle of singing God's song in a strange land with a call for spiritual and cultural authenticity. Ewuare's ministry, "Black Love for Black Lives," opened with a reading from Jeremiah 8:22: "Is there a balm in Gilead?" His message highlighted the components needed for a just and civil society. Ewuare also quoted Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.: "Power without love is reckless and abusive and love without power is sentimental and anemic." After worship Friends shared a time of memorial remembrance of our ancestors.

Friends reaffirmed our purpose for scheduling a trip to Ghana which grew out of the mission of the Fellowship to uplift Quakers of African Descent around the world. Friends agreed that it was important to have young Friends be a part of the Ghana trip and worked to find a date that the Peace Leadership and Arts Camp of Chester would be able to attend. As a result, the trip will probably be in August 2017.

The finances of the Fellowship were discussed and a clear need was expressed for more financial support from the wider Quaker community. Friends pointed out that the work of the Fellowship was a ministry filling a need for Friends of African Descent that is not being filled by Monthly, Yearly meetings or other

Quaker bodies. It was also pointed out that, as the Quaker community mirrors the larger American society in having great racial wealth disparity, how Quakers address this issue could be a model of racial justice for American society.

Friends minuted our appreciation for the hard work and dedication that Deborah and Felisha Saunders have given to the Fellowship. Friends also minuted our sincere gratitude for the faithful service of our interim clerk, Francine Cheeks.

Two afternoon workshops were offered. Sa'ed Atshan, Visiting Assistant Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at Swarthmore College, presented "From Ferguson to Bethlehem: Black-Palestinian Solidarity," examining the history of Black American and Palestinian reciprocal solidarity. Fellowship member Claudia Wair shared nurturing self-care practices that can be used to soothe the body and soul during difficult times.

Saturday night's keynote address was given by Lewis Webb Jr., a former New York City prosecutor, and the Healing and Transformation Justice Program Coordinator for American Friends Service Committee, NY. Lewis' talk, "Gathering the Villagers: A Call to Action on Behalf of the Children of Mass Incarceration," explored the plight of the children of those who have been devoured by the mass incarceration machine. Lewis asked the group to take on five questions without being dishonest and without destroying what we believe to be an 8-year-old's sense of fairness or hope. Participants found this to be a challenging exercise that brought out compassion and an urge to take action.

The gathering ended with Meeting for Worship on Sunday with Arch Street Friends Meeting.

On behalf of the Fellowship of Friends of African Descent,  
Ayesha Imani, Clerk

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## Fellowship of Friends of African Descent Minute Regarding State Sanctioned Violence

The Fellowship of Friends of African Descent at its 2016 Annual Gathering approved the following minute for public circulation to Friends and concerned communities worldwide:

The Fellowship of Friends of African Descent is a 25 year old Quaker organization that supports the spiritual nurture of Quakers of African descent and provides opportunities for the sharing of our concerns. As those of us in the United States witness the media portrayal of high profile police violence and the resulting racial tensions, we are moved by our compassion for our communities to call for action that will lead to justice and respect, particularly for black men but also for black women and children in America. We stand with those who have identified bigotry, structural racism and state sanctioned violence as historical and continuing sources of senseless suffering and death among our people.

We grieve the loss of any human life, including the lives of police. However, the presence of the police too often seems like an occupying force designed to protect and serve an invisible elite instead of protecting those who reside in our communities. We also recognize that the violence and tragic killing of innocent civilians have touched so many in our communities. We believe that these evil forces cannot be overcome through retribution and retaliation, and can only be overcome through respect, resources and love. Jesus taught us that the love of God and our neighbor is the greatest commandment.

The problems of racism, militarism and violence that we face are rooted in the deeper, less recognized sicknesses of materialism and greed. From the slave trade and plantation economies of the American south to the terroristic subjugation of Jim Crow to the modern-day profits of miseducation and mass incarceration, racial stereotypes have been used to mask and justify the exploitation and denial of economic

human rights to people of African descent.

As a result, these communities are under-resourced, as is evidenced by the lack of jobs, healthcare, quality education and decent housing. In the absence of real opportunities for employment and economic self-sufficiency underground economies rise up in our communities to fill the gap. People in these economies are criminalized and prosecuted even though they are only seeking to provide enough resources to support their families. We realize that we cannot have a meaningful conversation about ending racial oppression without also addressing classism, joblessness and wealth inequality.

In response to these realities, we, as Quakers and as people of African descent call for the following:

1. Peaceforce. The training, support and employment of a “peaceforce” consisting of police officers and community based peacekeepers, none of whom are armed. The peacekeepers will be local residents who have the community relationships and street credibility (especially with young people) to cultivate the capacity and inclination for the use of non-violent methods for de-escalating conflict. [Returning citizens are an important resource for this work.]
2. Peace centers. The development and support of “peace centers” in our communities which will provide safe havens and educational, cultural and recreational opportunities for young people in our communities. Quaker Alternatives to Violence trainings can be redesigned to be rooted in the cultural experience of African people. These centers will also function as spaces where Quaker worship and values can be modelled and developed.
3. Community training. Police training will be ongoing and consistent including sub-conscious bias training that is not just academic but rather is community based. Police departments need to revamp their training so its members are trained to deescalate potentially dangerous situations and are not expected to “shoot to kill” in every situation they consider dangerous.

4. Disarmament. Promoting the disarming of our communities (including segments of the police force responsible for minor offenses) through the elimination of handguns, rifles and automatic weapons. We realize that this goal is long term and will require a cultural shift from our current reliance on violence to solve social problems. However, we believe that we are all safer without guns than with them.

In the words of the poet, Nikki Giovanni, “Black love is Black wealth.” We as Quakers of African descent are making a personal commitment to these ends and invite others to join us in this effort. We call on Friends’ organizations to use some part of our substantial corporate investments to support this work.

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## Illinois YM

Dear Friends Everywhere,

*Sometimes there are mirages on the prairie to confuse one. Heat waves of summer reflecting places miles distant. Sounds carried far on the prairie. A gun shot could be heard three miles away; a “Hallllloo!” Could be heard a mile or more distant, while two people could converse one half miles apart.*

*The pioneer settlers soon learned that they owed a social as well as a material debt to the community. They realized it was completely rural. There was no nearby town with any entertainment or culture that the community could take advantage of. So, some of the better educated of the community started all kinds of projects for local people of all ages; literary society, singing school, spelling bees and writing schools in which young and old took part; there was no generation gap; from the baby in his basket to the teenager in school, each participated in whatever was offered.*

*The longer I live the more I realize how much I owe to that heritage that nourished me during all my years.*

From Reflections written by Lucretia Mott Franklin for her 1969 ILYM Plummer Lecture, talking about the late 1800’s. She was born in 1874, the same year that ILYM was formed. She was a member of the yearly meeting.

Two years ago, under the banner of Joy: Still a Gift of the Spirit we focused our hearts and minds on becoming more inclusive. We sought information and determined actions challenging ourselves to become more inclusive around gender, sexual identity, race, and personal preferences and styles.

Last year, under the banner of From Mystic Voice to Active Voice we focused our hearts and minds on actualizing our spiritual concerns for those both far and near. We sought information and determined actions, challenging ourselves to walk the talk.

The joyful stories told during this year have been about our strides with inclusion, our strides with actualizing our spiritual concerns. Certainly, we are a work in progress; for, we are not always able to speak frankly about uncomfortable issues. We acknowledge this and continue on, ever more willing to risk asking, “So do you want to be my friend or do you want to be careful?”

In this way we laid the ground for this year’s theme, Nurturing the Seed of Love, which has been focused on re-capturing the days described by Lucretia Franklin and becoming a yearly meeting where “...there was no generation gap; from the baby in his basket to the teenager in school, each participated in whatever was offered.” Today we call this being an intergenerational meeting.

We lovingly embraced consideration that the seeds we cast on soil that we hoped would be fertile will require nurturance. And, we are ever more mindful that too many seeds, if spread over too large an area, cannot be tended properly.

Our children and our young adults are our seeds and our beloved and beautiful Illinois Yearly Meeting campus our fertile ground. And if we accept this we must nurture both.

To that end, both during our Annual Sessions and in our monthly meetings, we have begun to design our programing to be intergenerational. We are organizing our fiscal and people resources to take care of both our younger Friends and our yearly meeting campus.

We note our younger friends are often our examples, offering a pattern for that which we fervently hope to become.

An eleven year old seeks Noel, a member of our Environmental Concerns committee, a seed in her hand, asking him to identify it. Why? Because he and his wife had offered that child's age group an introduction to plant nurturance. She was delighted with his response and set off on an adventure to talk to others, spreading her new knowledge. This indicated a change, we are more deliberate about intentionally celebrating our intergenerational interactions.

An Adult Young Friend reports that while on a hike through prairie grasses she and her friends discussed making choices about fostering community and they plan to stay in touch when they return to their widely dispersed communities. This indicates a change, for this group is composed of 18–35 year olds, individuals who are often in different places in their lives with different needs and interests.

Many Friends have shared stories about their children spending time at our ILYM Campus. And stories about how they came to our campus as children. One friend talked about how his grandfather and father spent time on our property.

We are eager to increase usage of what we have at times called our Peace House on the Prairie.

We sense early signs of what we hope will become a groundswell and have evidence that in our committees' work an intergenerational focus is often included. We seek ways to hire someone to work on programming with our young children and already have someone to work with our high school Friends.

We are deeply excited about our vision — an intergenerational faith community linked geographically to place we have loved and owned since 1874. We note a sense of trust among one another, a vulnerable willingness to share in a safe place, even for those who are first-timers, both young and old. This was especially evident during a folk dancing session on our lawn: most everyone was willing to let themselves dance enthusiastically — without self-consciousness.

Of course, as our Field Secretary and our Peace Resources committee noted, we will continue to also do work around prison

reform, confronting issues of torture, social inequality, acknowledgement and appreciation of differences, the numerous social tensions confronting middle class Americans and, importantly, connecting with the Light of those across the oceans.

Presiding Clerk David Shiner  
Illinois Yearly Meeting

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## Indiana Yearly Meeting Outgoing Epistle

Indiana Yearly Meeting met in its 195th annual session from 7th Mo. 28 through 31, 2016 at Quaker Haven Camp, near Syracuse, Indiana. Other than some times of rain and showers, the Lord blessed us with wonderful weather to enjoy our camp, fellowship, and business meetings.

The theme of our yearly meeting, “Greatness from God’s Perspective,” was taken from I Corinthians 1:26-28 “For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are...” This text was used for our devotional messages, led by Amy Cornell, J.D., MDiv., chaplain at White’s Residential and Family Services. We were blessed to feel the Spirit of the Lord move through our services in the music and the speaking that was shared. This was truly a highlight of our time together.

We continue to rejoice in the work God is doing in Indiana Yearly Meeting. We come together with a sense of unity and common understanding in who we are in Christ as we worship, fellowship, and do business together.

We continue to stand in amazement at the way the Lord has blessed the yearly meeting financially and through our fundraising efforts.

Yearly meeting assessments continue to exceed 100% fulfillment for the third year in a row, and we exceeded our fundraising goal of \$95,000 beyond assessments for our 2017 budget by over \$5,000 in commitments and funds received. Not only is the Lord blessing us financially, but after many years of downward trends in attendance, we see stability and are looking forward to future growth as Superintendent Doug Shoemaker challenged us to grow through planting new churches. In the next year he would like to see at least 3 of our meetings step out in faith to start the process of planting a new church.

We approved the recording of five ministers of the Gospel during our sessions. One was a first time recording, three were transfers, and one was a reinstatement of a pastor returning to Indiana Yearly Meeting. Again, these are an encouraging sign of flourishing growth and life in Indiana Yearly Meeting.

Post reconfiguration, the Faith and Practice Committee continues to review Faith and Practice to streamline and work to make it more representative and responsive to the improved culture of Indiana Yearly Meeting. While some changes gained final approval and others had their initial reading during our business sessions, the changes evoked good discussion regarding the future of Quarterly Meetings and committee appointments, the use of Coordinating Committees, tenure of office for appointments, and the recording of new ministers of the Gospel.

At the “Feast of Faith,” the annual dinner near the end of our sessions, we enjoyed a well cooked meal by the staff at Quaker Haven Camp and a musical program by this year’s worship leaders, The Kramers, of Peoria, IL. This is always a wonderful time of celebration enjoyed by all.

We were pleased to welcome visitors from Everence, Georgetown Friends in Illinois, Danville Friends in Indiana, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, Mesquakie Friends Center, Barclay College, Friends United Meeting and other Quaker organizations.

As our sessions draw to a close and we reflect on the year that has just passed and anticipate the

year ahead, we humbly thank the Lord for his blessings and provision. He has blessed us with a spirit of excitement and unity in regards to the future and leadership that seeks Him in their decisions, which seems to be echoed throughout the monthly meetings. We are blessed indeed!

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## Iowa YM (Conservative)

Seventh Month 30, 2016

To Friends Everywhere,

“Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations wherever you come; that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone; whereby in them you may be a blessing, and make the witness of God in them to bless you.”

George Fox

Alive and fresh, we are children of this yearly meeting and we traveled home from places as far away as Montana, South Dakota, Missouri, Minnesota, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Indiana and Germany to be together during this blessed gathering in Iowa. It is striking that geographically we have become a diffuse group but our heartstrings are as strong as they are long. Visiting Friends joined us from Pennsylvania, Washington D.C., Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, North Carolina and New Zealand. The warmth of the weather matched the warmth in our hearts as we converged at Scattergood Friends School and Farm on Seventh Month 26-31, 2016 at the 139th annual session of our yearly meeting.

We searched for Truth this year through our theme “Be not afraid, for I am with you.” In one evening Collection we practiced active-listening in pairs formed by rotating concentric circles of Friends. Imagine “speed-dating” for God. The following evening Greg Elliot, Friends Relations Associate with American Friends Service Committee, and Jeff Kisling from Indianapolis, described how the Quaker Social Change

Ministry helps Friends share stories and spiritual exercises, and then work with people closest to problems we hope to solve. Greg reminded us, “Really simple things, right now, really matter.” He encouraged us to overcome fear in accepting God’s call for us to co-create the Beloved Community. Robin Mohr, Executive Secretary for Friends World Committee for Consultation, Section of the Americas helped us understand that we are not separate from any other person or concern on Earth; we share one story; and there are things for each one of us to do that are good and important. “God needs us to know about a lot, and work on a few.”

But how can we trust that we are not avoiding work that is meant for us? A Friend shared, “The practice of staying awake to God in myself is how I know I’m not running away.” Stephen Donahoe, Major Gifts Officer at Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) was a joyful presence with us this week; he offered a report on exciting changes made possible at FCNL through the financial support from Friends. In our last Collection, Aaron Fowler and Laura Dungan led us in an evening of joyful, thoughtful, spirit-filled song.

We cannot create the Beloved Community unless we know one another. Are we willing to listen deeply and truly know each other? Can we open ourselves to the transformation available to us through small acts of connection? Are we willing to be changed? The Spirit present in our midst challenged us with these questions, and our hearts were made tender as we took greater risks to connect. Often, it is not apparent how ready we are to reach out, to respond joyfully to the shedding of our masks and the sharing of our true selves. We rediscovered that in sharing the tasks of our faith community our connections are renewed and we are blessed.

We continue our shift from an assumed to a chosen relationship with our beloved Scattergood School and Farm. Miracles happen at the school every day and every school year. We look for ways to bring in youth from around the world and the U.S. who seek a rigorous education in an emotionally supportive,

ecologically minded, and spiritually grounded boarding school.

During our State of the Meeting and Query reports we sit together and listen to the voices of our monthly meetings and know our corporate whole a little better; these small meetings express our discernment of Truth. Our Bible study sessions helped us lean into God’s Love in order to know that sometimes the things of which we are afraid are much smaller than our fear of them. In our seeking we sometimes forget that God is always with us, just waiting for us to turn and open our hearts. Another moving program was led by our Ministry and Counsel Committee, which built our awareness for tending to the physical and emotional safety of our children and youth.

It is holy to be heard.

Our Junior Yearly Meeting Friends were a joy to us all week. JYM built and displayed a beautiful birdseed mandala which lifted our spirits. They brought adults into the ceremony of dismantling it in the manner of Tibetan Buddhists. In tossing the birdseed we experience the poignancy of lost beauty and we send out a blessing to all of Creation. May our epistle to you, our Friends, be such a blessing as we sadly close our annual sessions. Know the joy that we know – we are not separate; there is no “away”. We shall live in one another still.

In love and Friendship,  
Deborah Dakin, Clerk  
Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative)

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## Intermountain Yearly Meeting 2015

June 10–14, 2015 (with early days June 7-10), Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu, New Mexico, USA

Dear Friends Everywhere,

We arrived at Ghost Ranch this year — 329 strong. Some of us drove over mountain passes

wrapped in clouds. Others crossed rivers flowing high and fast with the runoff from late spring storms. Meadows and pastures were greener than usual. The cottonwoods lining the fields here at Ghost Ranch were vibrant with singing birds, many yellow warblers among them.

Friends contributed music of their own. Soon after we gathered, one of our seasoned musicians invited us to join in the singing of a song celebrating the 40th Anniversary of Intermountain Yearly Meeting. “It’s a fine thing to gather as Friends,” his lyric reminded us. “Where the silence that holds us, and love that enfolds us, are treasures on which we depend.” That same evening, the all-Quaker Contra Band began to rehearse for Dance Night. The next day we had an especially song-filled Meeting for Worship after Diego Navarro’s plenary address. Later that evening, a multi-generational campfire chorus gathered for a spirited sing-along. Though music has always been a part of our yearly meeting, it was especially so this year. Some of us wondered if we had wandered into a Quaker musical.

There were, of course, quieter moments. We gathered under the big cottonwoods for worship sharing each morning and afternoon to consider the practice of discernment. In his keynote address, Diego Navarro from Santa Cruz Monthly Meeting, explained that discernment was less about knowing and more about not knowing. The process of opening to the Light in discernment requires radical vulnerability—a willingness to abandon our comforts and welcome our despairs. It is disappointment, he explained, that often leaves us tendered and more open to guidance.

Diego then led us into worship with several queries: How does your comfort get in the way of your connection with Spirit? Have you given yourself over to God at any one point, and if so, what was going on in your life at the time? When have you experienced deep connection with the Spirit? What did it look like? We continued to explore these queries in worship sharing.

Discernment, Diego reminded us, is also a collective adventure. Who are we as a

community? How does our faith and practice wake us up from the trance of dominant worldviews and beliefs? How do our collective actions embody Quaker values?

Later, in a spirit-filled threshing meeting, Friends brought their collective discernment skills to the question of the yearly meeting’s budget, focusing on a possible deficit and how that should be handled. Some Friends wondered if we had strayed from the traditional notion that a yearly meeting is primarily meant for doing the business of the Religious Society of Friends. Others maintained that Intermountain Yearly Meeting has evolved into its own model of what a yearly meeting can be, which includes an expanded array of interest groups and seminars. (There were 67 different offerings this year!) Some Friends sought out ways to trim the budget. Others agreed that recent projects taken on by Intermountain Yearly Meeting—such as creative retreat opportunities during Early Days (for which two thirds of our attenders came this year), support for Mountain Friends Camp (which continues to expand and grow), and sustaining relationships with Friends General Conference and other Quaker organizations, clearly reflect our values and priorities as a yearly meeting. Still others suggested ways of raising revenues such as a sliding scale for yearly meeting registration fees. During this gentle and reflective session, many useful ideas were gathered and meeting priorities were clarified.

One of those priorities is to nurture a vital community of younger Friends who make up almost a third of our attending population. It was fitting that Diego Navarro’s ministry support team included three younger friends from Pacific Yearly Meeting: Kylin Navarro, his daughter, Thistle Mackinney, and Elena Anderson. Deepening relationships between older and younger Friends has been a renewed intention at Intermountain Yearly Meeting in recent years. This year, a cross-generational listening session helped both Adult Friends and Senior Young Friends share their experiences of grieving and loss. As one Friend pointed out, leaning on one other in difficult times isn’t limited to yearly meeting.



As the yearly meeting nurtures relationships that sustain us throughout the year, so too it is a center from which peace and social service concerns carry the Quaker way well beyond Ghost Ranch. How can we best accompany immigrants and indigenous cultures in their struggles for justice? How can we live into the principals set forth in the Kabbarak Call for Peace and Ecojustice? We bring these queries back to our monthly meetings for ongoing discernment and action, along with the good cheer, community warmth, and spiritual insights that we experience here at Ghost Ranch every year.

As the song says, "It's a fine thing to gather as Friends."

With Gratitude,  
Intermountain Yearly Meeting of Friends  
Sara Keeney, Clerk

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## Intermountain Yearly Meeting

To Friends Everywhere:

Greetings from Intermountain Yearly Meeting Friends. IMYM gathered once again, around 300 strong, June 6-12, 2016 at Ghost Ranch, New Mexico. The vast geographic scope of IMYM means that connections and fellowship among Friends of the intermountain west has enormous significance. One Friend observed that when Young Friends arrive and see each other for the first time in a year, they literally leap into one another's arms. Most adult Friends are somewhat less demonstrative but that does not mean they are less enthusiastic about renewing bonds with one another. We had visitors from FGC, AFSC, FCNL, Right Sharing of World Resources and Earlham School of Religion, as well as Mexico, El Salvador and a variety of Monthly Meetings from other parts of the country.

In attendance were both young and old; the youngest being one year old and among our elders, 91-year-old Marian Hoge, an early founder of our Yearly Meeting. And yet our

love and regard for one another go beyond our individual ties. We are a true Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in our attention to the important business that comes before us each year and to the theme we have chosen and the Keynote presentation we receive about that theme.

Callid Keefe-Perry, Quaker minister from Fresh Pond Monthly Meeting in Massachusetts spoke to us on Nurturing Spiritual Gifts and Ministry in our Meetings. "SIPAGA" was his acronym for the definition of Ministry. SI-PA-GA means;

Sustained-Intention

Prayerful-Attention

Guided-Action

He suggested that in our spiritual endeavors we "live in the dashes." He came before us with immense creativity and originality, presenting his message with humor and startling metaphors. He engaged us with his words, moving us toward one another with participatory exercises, and sending us back to our

Monthly Meetings with an inspired definition of our purpose in community and in worship for the conduct of our business: a meeting is "a community gathering of individuals willing to enter into a committed relationship with one another and with God."

Early days programming reflected the ways in which that commitment becomes manifest in our locales and in our world. Programs included stewardship in finance, Upcycling, Peru (site of this year's FWCC

Section of the Americas Conference), a play using historic Quaker figures in dialogue with one another, immigration, the creation of Soul-collages and their interpretation, and other topics. Of particular interest was the Pay as Led program of New England Yearly Meeting presented in a workshop. These programs added to our commitment to action and witness, as did the many informal conversations during meals and the quiet, reflective time in worship sharing on the vast Ghost Ranch landscape.

As part of our business, we considered several Minutes, one supporting a U.N. resolution proposing a Humanitarian Pledge for the Prohibition and Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. The economies of the four states that compose IMYM – Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and Arizona – are dependent to an alarming extent on the nuclear weapons industry. Another Minute was proposed on supporting continued federal funding for Planned Parenthood health care services. We heard an inspiring report on Mountain Friends

Camp, presented by several of the young Friends who have experienced the camp. Mountain Friends Camp is a Yearly Meeting initiative with growing significance to our youth and future growth. We had some heavy decisions to undertake for future yearly meetings, that we addressed as part of “our committed relationship with one another” and to witness in the world.

Our Senior Young Friends have been deeply concerned about today’s issues of gender and sexual equality. They were led to organize an educational listening session called “Sharing Our Truth.” Friends of all ages attended as Young Friends found a safe place to share their experiences about and within the LGBTQ community. Friends spoke as led across a wide spectrum of identities and ages providing a powerful witness that we hope will be continued in Monthly Meetings and beyond.

Singing introduced several of our business sessions, and one evening there was a well-attended sing-along and campfire with marshmallows! Although Ghost Ranch cut staffing for the cantina, Friends showed entrepreneurial initiative and brought ice cream and snacks to sell at the cantina to support Mountain Friends Camp. The ages didn’t matter, as the enthusiastic community formed as naturally as breathing. And, of course, the Friday night dance powered by our own IMYM contra dance band. As always, Yearly Meeting social time was capped off by the annual Creativity Night on Saturday night. Skits, poetry reading, musical offerings and much more demonstrated our abundance of creativity and brought us together in laughter and applause.

Worship sharing groups met for four mornings as well as Senior Young Friends-led intergenerational worship sharing groups after lunch daily. Friends reported these to create meaningful connections among the IMYM community. Departed Friends were remembered and celebrated in a Meeting for the reading of Memorial Minutes.

Emotions are running high concerning the possibility of leaving Ghost Ranch due to a variety of considerations. Many of us have become very attached to the beautiful natural landscape, but we recognize that a yearly meeting is much more than its setting. We recognized that our Meetings for

Worship for Business and our spiritual fellowship and mutual care are our reality as a Yearly Meeting and we trust the Spirit to lead us through these decisions to “come down in the place just right,” in the words of a favorite old song.

With love and Light,  
Sarah Keeney, Presiding Clerk  
Intermountain Yearly Meeting of the Religious  
Society of Friends

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## Lake Erie Yearly Meeting

Epistle from Lake Yearly Meeting in Annual Sessions at Bluffton University in Bluffton, Ohio, July 28-31st, 2016

*Wealth is attended with power, by which bargains and proceedings, contrary to universal righteousness, are supported; and hence oppression, carried on with worldly policy and order, clothes itself with the name of justice and becomes like a seed of discord in the soul.*

(John Woolman)

*What Would John Woolman Do?* Those gathered for our 53rd Annual Sessions found this question at the top and center of the schedule of events, meetings, and workshops, as if to announce that communion with Woolman’s spirit would bring to our discussions a discerning and loving elder from the mid-eighteenth century.

To the planners who presented us with this question, Woolman's life seems full of relevant advice for Quakers in 2016. Our program committee set up workshops to address our deepest concerns: institutional racism, climate change, economic and racial justice, financial stewardship, implicit racial bias in our court system and in ourselves, the extent to which our monetary system contains the seeds of war and injustice. Beginning with the Woolman quotation cited above, our Plenary Speaker, Natalie Finegar, the Deputy District Public Defender for Baltimore City, chronicled the long series of events and practices that led to the "Baltimore Uprising." She illustrated how systemic racism coupled with wealth and power can lead well-intentioned people to engage in horrific violence.

In worship sharing we considered queries that Woolman might have asked: Am I learning how to be aware of my own implicit bias that may interfere with my ability to see that of God in every person? Am I mindful of how my lifestyle and my investments can contribute to the improvement of the human condition, or to the exploitation of others?

There was little mention of Woolman in our business meetings, yet we must have wondered what he would do in the face of problems that we confronted in our business. We approved a policy to minimize child and sexual abuse by creating an environment that eliminates unnecessary risks and dangers. We agreed to support the call for an institutional audit of implicit biases and racial discrimination within Friends General Conference. The Peace and Justice Committee will consider LEYM's need for a similar self-examination. We approved adding our name to the list of signers of the Quaker United Nations Office's statement: "A Shared Quaker Statement: Facing the Challenge of Climate Change."

We celebrated our new on-line registration system with gratitude to our Meeting Worker and our Registrar. We also expressed gratitude to five of our members, who, in a two-day service project at the Habitat for Humanity ReStore in Lima, Ohio, supported recycling and housing for low income families, causes that Woolman surely would have appreciated.

In conversations during meals we mused over what Woolman said to slave owners or how he might have reacted to issues we grapple with today. We suspect he listened intently, drew people out, suggested prayer. Someone wondered whether he would attend a gay wedding.

Woolman learned from indigenous people, a member of the Earthcare Committee pointed out, their beliefs in spiritual unity and humans' need to connect with nature to be whole people.

One participant took home our idea of learning from Woolman and came up with a written resolve:

*Listen to people.*

*Meet people who are different from me.*

*Reach out to "the other" whoever s/he is.*

*Focus on needs, not wants.*

*Slow down, wait in silence, to say or do things.*

July 31 2016

Mike Holaday  
Clerk, LEYM

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## New England Yearly Meeting

Dear Friends everywhere,

We send you joyful greetings in the name of our Inward Teacher, known among Friends today by many names.

New England Yearly Meeting held its 356th sessions August 6–11, 2016, at Castleton University, Castleton, Vermont, exploring the theme, "Being the hands of God: A Call to Radical Faithfulness."

A parallel call is found in a poem attributed to Teresa of Avila:

*Christ has no body now on earth but yours,*

*No hands but yours,*

*No feet but yours.*

*Yours are the eyes through which Christ's compassion looks out at the world.*

*Yours are the feet with which He is to go about doing good.*

*Yours are the hands with which He is to bless people now.*

As a unifying thread running through most of the week's programs and activities, the theme of radical faithfulness reminded us that what we are doing together as a Yearly Meeting is holy work. In these unsettled but holy times of crisis and decision we can be the hands of God only when we place ourselves in the hands of God.

In the reading of memorial minutes for New England Friends who had passed away recently, we were mindful of George Fox's advice to be "patterns and examples" of Spirit-filled lives and thus become blessings to the world. Many of those Friends were exemplary not just for their lifelong dedication to good causes, but also for their willingness to become instruments of divine will – even when that path promised to be difficult, discouraging, and costly.

Yearly Meeting programs and activities took us deeper, into the radical commitment and openness that are required if we are to be transformed to minister to a broken and suffering world. The wide range of topics and current issues that we considered during the week all led to the basic questions: "What are we called to do about this concern as individuals and faith communities?" "What barriers – both personal and organizational – are holding us back from this work?" "What are specific steps that we need to be taking, now?" Plenary speakers, Yearly Meeting staff, and anchor groups offered many rich insights in response to these questions.

In discerning what we are called to do, Quaker meetings typically begin by naming and nurturing their members' diverse gifts and trying to match them with appropriate committees and offices. But "living in radical faithfulness" draws us back to something closer to the call for inner and outer renewal that early Friends heard and obeyed. This point was illustrated in Bible Half Hour stories in which God chose seemingly unqualified people as servants and sent them on unexpected missions that required inner calm under harrowing conditions.

An authentic leading, in contrast to a personal preference or private agenda, may come to us as a surprise, as something absurd, or counterintuitive. It can be baffling or mysterious because it arises from a deeper place than most humans' sense of morality and purpose can fathom. In an authentic leading, one does not carry a strong stake in the outcome. In the end, a leading is a leading; God demands obedience whatever the cost and difficulty and whether we initially feel qualified.

Some barriers to radical faithfulness were noted during the week. We may wrongly assume that a divine leading involves only things of earth-shaking significance. We may in our weakness choose personal comfort and security over the promises and risks of change, hoping for a crown without a cross. We may stay silent out of fear of failure, ridicule, or opposition from defenders of the status quo.

We may waste opportunities for radical faithfulness by waiting too long for perfect knowledge or perfect abilities. Protecting ourselves from the full range of our deepest feelings – from despair to anger – may prevent our hearts from being "cracked open" and made accessible to the leadings and power of the Spirit. These very human reactions are learned, and we must unlearn them to move forward.

Other barriers to moving forward in radical faithfulness are old habits, outdated thinking, and rigid structures. We work best, we learned, when our organizations are nimble and flexible, pruned of dead wood and crowded branches that block out the light.

Our youth and youth leaders were a vibrant and inspiring presence among us. Also, Friends from Vihiga and Malava Yearly Meetings in Kenya, Cuba Yearly Meeting, and Miami Friends Church visiting New England brought a powerful Christian witness.

With great tenderness we explored such difficult issues as unacknowledged white privilege and insensitivity to gender diversity. But we also recognized the many ways we do foster inclusion and diversity. We continue to feel great sorrow

for the victims of conflict and violence at home and around the world, and we look for ways that we can be healing forces.

New England Yearly Meeting made a significant commitment to take concrete steps in the coming year to address the global climate crisis, in response to a call from world Friends at the 2016 FWCC World Plenary in Peru. Several Young Adult Friends in our Yearly Meeting who had participated in the 2015

New England Climate Spring conference were instrumental in guiding this proposal through our meeting for business.

Racial tensions and wounds persist in ourselves, in the Religious Society of Friends, and in our country. Many are complicit in a culture of white supremacy that hinders white Friends' ability to respond appropriately, openly, and compassionately to people of colour. We were led to map out some of the concrete steps we will take to begin recovering from this grievous shortcoming in our Quaker bodies and faith communities.

We came to a fuller appreciation of the role of the beloved community in identifying and cultivating our gifts. Working in relationships empowers us while keeping us from outrunning our Guide. Even when we are physically isolated, we know that we are supported and loved by our community. Working together also brings us inner peace by relieving us of the burden of feeling responsible for every problem.

With greater clarity about what it means to be the "hands of God," New England Friends concluded this year's sessions with a renewed sense of energy, purpose, and urgency.

The harvest is great but the workers are few. May we tend faithfully to the portions we have been given and leave the rest to all the other living hands of God. Even a tiny pebble dropped into the middle of a pond eventually has an impact on the shore. May we open our hearts, our minds, and our eyes to the work that God wants us to do and with humility begin doing it now.

In the Light,  
Fritz Weiss, presiding clerk

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## New York YM

To Friends everywhere:

New York Yearly Meeting met at Silver Bay, New York, on the seventh month, from 24th day through the 30th day, in this our 321st gathering for Summer Sessions. In attendance were 476 Friends including 106 in Junior Yearly Meeting.

We lived and reflected upon how Friends best nurture the Blessed Community at every age. We recognized that the blessed community exists among us to be faithfully discovered anew at every turn. We can nurture the blessed community with faithful listening and a readiness to grow and change, even—perhaps especially—when growth and change are hard. We learned from our new Children and Youth Field Secretary, our Young Adult Field Secretary, our ARCH [Aging Resources Consultation & Help] Director, and our General Secretary, many ways that, by hearing deeply the needs of Friends and potential Friends, we can grow our faithful community so we welcome and learn from one another. This year we began two experiments. One was starting each day with a gathering of the whole community in worship; we found beautiful ways, in storytelling, song, play, and one-on-one responses to queries, to share the indwelling spirit with young and older friends. Several Friends remarked that they experienced the gathered body as more inclusive this year. Another innovation was "Whisper Buddies," the pairing of experienced Friends with those new to Meeting for Business, to explain the work of the Meeting.

Friends who attended the Friends World Committee for Consultation conference in Peru reported rich encounters with Friends around the world, with great energy around the work of young adults.

We yearn for a more economically and racially diverse body. We actively await leadings that envision action to move toward that yearning, including discernment around the Pay as Led payment system. In Meeting for Discernment, Friends dwelt on the need for trust as leadings unfold: trust in one another and trust in The

Source. We honored those who have cared for our Yearly Meeting, some of whom are stepping down after long service. As change comes to the Yearly Meeting, we consider what we wish to become.

In this year of terrible racial violence, we were especially tender about barriers to community that arise from the persistence of racism: how difficult it is to expel the legacy of white privilege, how painful it is that so many Friends and potential Friends are kept from us by mass incarceration and an unequal criminal legal system, by money and time constraints. We marveled anew at the strength of spirit with which some Friends surmount these obstacles. Friends' awareness of racism and privilege was amplified by more than one hundred New York Yearly Meeting Friends' attendance at the Seventeenth White Privilege Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. We rededicated ourselves to advancing a more equal society that recognizes that of God in every person. Our search for Truth as individual Friends and as a body demands that we seek to create a Blessed Community that is available to all. As Jesus instructed his followers at the end of a chapter we considered in Bible Study, "love one another, as I have loved you" (John 13:34).

Lucinda Antrim,  
Clerk

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## North Carolina YM (Conservative)

Seventh month 17, 2016

Dear Friends Everywhere

We gathered at Guilford College in Greensboro, NC on Seventh Month 14-17, 2016 for our 319th annual Sessions. As we gather we remember our distant Friends with great fondness and love. This year we are gathered under the theme "I Love to Feel Where Words Come From", a translated quote from Papunehang, a member of the Delaware tribe in response to John Woolman's ministry on Sixth Month 18, 1763.

We have been so excited this year as participation in yearly meeting has increased and our Young Friends number over 20. Our Young Friends have participated in annual sessions as Reading Clerk and by reading State of Society Reports for a monthly meeting. They have also helped illustrate stories during our morning Bible study and showed the Adult Friends how to dance. It has truly been a joy to be with and participate side by side with our Young Friends.

We were also blessed to have a young adult Friend, Elizabeth Rolfe, represent us in Peru at the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) World Plenary. Her report to the meeting of the event included queries that made us think about our role as citizens of Earth and how we plan to live out our Quaker testimonies of peace and equality in relation to young adult Friends in our meetings. She is now the clerk of the Young Adult Friends Committee for FWCC and has started traveling internationally to build connections all over the world among young adult Friends.

For the past four years we have been supporting a Bolivian young Friend who has recently graduated with a degree in engineering. We have decided as a yearly meeting to continue our support for Bolivian young Friends and commit ourselves to supporting another student for the next four years. We were also given the opportunity to support a Cuban young adult Friend who hopes to attend Guilford College.

The Journal Committee completed our yearly meeting's seventh Journal this year entitled, "Keeping the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace". There were 250 copies printed and they are almost gone! The Journal will be available on our website in the near future. By reading Yearly Meeting's Journals some Friends were convinced that this was their spiritual home. The Journal Committee is now working on the theme for the next issue.

The Book of Discipline revision is in its third year. The committee has been faithful in its work and the Body is grateful for all it has done. The revision process is giving us opportunity to share and discuss everything from important concepts to historical events to word choices. Even though this work can be slow and tiring, we are learning

from each other and learning more about ourselves as a body. We are richly blessed to have undertaken this work and to have people who are gifted by God to do this work.

On our final evening together we had a grand time with a sing-a-long led by talented musicians on guitars and piano along with percussion instruments for all who wanted them. Young and old sang their hearts out and laughed out loud.

We hold you in our hearts and pray that you are able to feel the Love that we have for you. May you experience the Love of God with which we have been so richly blessed. Please know that it would warm our hearts if you were able to visit with us next year. We will meet for our 320th session in Wilmington, NC, Seventh Month 12-16, 2017 if in accordance with Divine Will.

On behalf of North Carolina YM (Conservative),  
Nancy Craft, clerk

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## Northern Yearly Meeting

*A wildfire of love,  
Sparked in this community,  
Spreads into the world.*

A poem on signs by the path

Greetings to Friends everywhere from the 2016 Annual Sessions of Northern Yearly Meeting at Lions Camp, Rosholt, Wisconsin, USA. Two hundred and forty Friends, 57 of us young friends, gathered at the end of May, where sunlight and rain punctuated our days. We were smaller in number than most years due to the Friends General Conference Gathering nearby in a few weeks. Yet we felt full in the Spirit. Like a fractal, those of us gathered here are a part that contains the pattern of the whole.

We are a community of Faith and Practice. Our faith is in the divine wholeness and the prompting of Spirit, and is reflected in our session theme of “Spiritual Deepening – Bringing the Full Depth, Joy and Fire of Quaker Faith into Our Lives” We recognize that our Practice, our spiritual disciplines, are critical to this deepening.

At our Plenary we heard that spiritual deepening requires our intent; it requires an inchworm’s persistence from each of us, as well as support from others. Like the sun, which was there all the time even when it was raining, the Spirit waits for us. We are called to live in worship all the time and to take our practices into a world which is hungry for them. In so doing we may find surprise and joy like that which we experienced when an unexpected break in the clouds revealed the sun.

During worship Friends bore witness to the deepening that comes when we are able to allow multiple seemingly incompatible emotions to be held together. We heard from a daughter who watched with both grief and love as her mother died. And a mother, who watches with both joy and fear as her daughter, becoming the Quaker she was raised to be, works for justice in a conflict zone.

We worked in many ways to discern how Spirit informs our practices. How shall we move our Faith and Practice book to publication? How do we see our fiscal discernment as a spiritual concern and an expression of our values to the wider world? How do we respond to anticipated transitions in our session planning team as our long-term registration and housing leaders consider stepping down? Perhaps we can learn from the simple foods cooperative, which joyously developed new organizational structures in order to be more sustainable going forward. They affirm “our business model is Faith.”

We are a community with diverse concerns about the wider world; Earthcare, ecojustice, right sharing of resources, racism and religious intolerance all draw our attention. We are unified by our practice of waiting, listening for, and following the guidance of Spirit, and find that each part of our community seeks to be faithful to it.

Our youngest Friends joined our explorations as well. Our preschoolers discussed friendship, and then, despite struggles with cooperation and sharing skills, found a way to let each other have personal space when needed. The early elementary group described a variety of

experiences during meditation: a young boy felt “less stressed” while another child felt there was “a tornado” in her head. Small lines of signs sprouted along our pathways, gifts from the Older Elementary group, sharing messages related to our theme. One group of signs read: “Fire is good / fire is hot / and fire can change a lot.” Another: “Live and breathe and laugh. / Feel the joy, the light, the glow. / Your fantastic glow.” Fractal-like, we discovered similar lessons in our adult meetings.

We are a multiplicity within our wholeness. A swimmer watched a heron wading peacefully near children noisily frolicking and splashing on the beach. In the evenings an astounding array of games, singing and dancing filled our common spaces. This we know experientially: amidst the polyphony of our work and play, we live in a God-filled world, a place of One-ness. It is from this place that our actions must flow.

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## Ohio Valley YM (2015)

Greetings to Friends Everywhere!

Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting met for the 195th session at Earlham College campus in Richmond, Indiana, enjoying ideal sunny weather and graced by a “blue moon” from July 29 through August 2, 2015, with the theme “Transforming the World with Love.”

Our welcoming activity gave us an experience of abundance through playing musical chairs where there were always enough chairs for everyone! Our mornings began with worship sharing through queries about our experiences with transforming the world with love. This time created a place of deep reflection and personal sharing, where we were opened to one another and to the work of the Divine in our lives. Our goal of transforming the world can be an overwhelming undertaking; necessary first are continual personal transformations in humility and the testing we receive in community.

Our plenary speakers challenged us to ground our actions in love, but reminded us that

love is not enough. Eileen Flannagan, clerk of the board of Earth Quaker Action Team (EQAT), presented “Love, Power, and the Work of Transforming the World.” She led us in understanding the application of nonviolent direct action and shared a powerful quote from Martin Luther King, Jr.: “Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic.” Love is the first motion, and when we act in community, connected to one another to confront injustice, we can be powerful. Ross Hennesy, Assistant Director for Quaker Voluntary Service, presented “Thou Preparest a Table Before Me: Cultivating Courage Through Community.” We are called to act out of the intersection of passion and wisdom. He reminded us that we can find strength to embrace our shortcomings and to hold the pain in the world through the “perfect love that casts out fear.”

During our business sessions, we were blessed by the presence of visitors and guests from many of the wider Quaker organizations such as Diane Randall of Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), Vanessa Julye of Friends General Conference (FGC) and Erin Polley of American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), who shared with us about their work to transform the world with love.

Among the many reports of faithful work we highlight here: our Yearly Meeting’s largest ministry, Quaker Heights Care Community, whose work is love made visible; and a report from the Pfalzgraff-Carlson family, who travelled in the ministry to visit with Friends in Japan with the endorsement of the Yearly Meeting.

Our teens and young adults reported on their recent service trip to Monteverde, Costa Rica, which was inspiring, challenging, and opened their horizons to Quakers in another part of the world. A service trip such as this commits significant resources, but also provides unique opportunities to meet and learn from Quakers in other areas of the world, and engage in individual and community spiritual practices that will impact these youth all their lives.

In sessions we wrestled with questions and



concerns about our budgeting process, listening and discerning how we are led to balance transformation of the world with caring for our own needs as a Yearly Meeting. We have the joy of receiving two bequests to the Yearly Meeting that will support spiritual nurture and prison ministry. We came to heartfelt unity in approving a minute to divest our funds from corporations that profit from fossil fuel extraction. This action carries forward the vital work that we have corporately discerned must be done to protect creation for future generations. The committee revising our Faith and Practice brought forward several sections on our testimonies which were gratefully approved. Due to concerns about the slow pace of the revision, the committee will bring a recommendation to expedite this process in coming months.

Friends participated in a variety of workshops that related to our theme on topics of The Four Roles of Social Change, Restorative Justice, Quakers in Business, The Study of the Epistle of James as He Speaks to Friends, Spiritual but not Religious: Beyond the Catch Phrase, Radical Hospitality, Bible Study: Parables of Transforming Love, White Privilege, Charitable Work for Doers and Donors, and Transforming Ourselves through Yoga.

OVYM Friends JT Taylor and Evelyn Kellum shared as a Living Witness their long and rich history of working for social justice, transforming the world — and each other — with love. We held two special meetings for worship: a memorial meeting to gratefully remember the lives of those who are no longer with us, and a meeting for worship with concern for healing. Our teens again led a session called Simply Speaking, bringing queries to ask us to consider how compassion (defined as “suffering together”) might inform the way we think about our privilege.

During our traditional Variety Show on Saturday night we celebrated and cheered one another as Friends young and old shared creative skits, music, dance and laughter. This time binds us together as we shed our inhibitions and

appreciate the Light shining with unexpected joy and delight.

In a world that cries out for transformation, God calls us to live and act with open hearts, empowered and changed by love. We are filled with gratitude for our tender time together as a spiritual community, which has nourished us, challenged us, and encouraged us on this journey.

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## Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting

Greetings to Friends Everywhere!

Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends met for our 196th Annual Sessions on the campus of Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana from July 27 to July 31, 2016.

We considered the theme, “One in Spirit: Becoming a More Inclusive Religious Society.” As we gathered, we joyfully celebrated the harmony we find in lifting our voices together. However, we also listened to hear which voices might be missing in our yearning to create a more inclusive community.

In our business sessions, we considered some challenges we are facing, including difficulty with staffing several committees, and lack of participation by some of our monthly meetings in Yearly Meeting activities this year. Another serious concern laid before us is that Quaker Heights Care

Community, the largest ministry of our Yearly Meeting, is operating at a deficit, which may result in the need to affiliate with another faith based organization.

However, there were also many reminders that the Spirit is prospering among us. We were encouraged and joyful to learn that the Yearly Meeting has hired a new Youth Secretary, with expanded responsibility for leading activities and events for both teens and middle youth throughout the year. We were also encouraged to see the faces of many young adult Friends among us this year. A clear leading came to plan for a program of intervisitation to reach out to monthly meetings that are not active in

the Yearly Meeting, to build connections and increase engagement. In considering our budget priorities for the future, we entered a worship sharing process out of which came suggestions for ways to strengthen bonds and nurture our youth, and also a prophetic call that we are being made anew and transformed by the Holy Spirit.

We approved a number of new and revised sections of our Book of Faith & Practice in a more streamlined procedure, including sections on our testimonies of Integrity, Simplicity, Community, and Equality and a section on Listening to the Spirit. We worked faithfully together on the draft of the section on Equality in light of the inward work we are still undertaking to become more sensitive to racial injustice, and we felt divinely led in this process. Our goal is to complete the Faith & Practice revision process by 2018.

One of our Plenary Speakers, Michael Birkel, shared his experience of Religious Hospitality as a guest among Muslims, following a leading to learn about Islam. He shared some meaningful texts from the Qur'an such as "Wherever you turn, you shall see the face of God," and "Common kindness is a sacred duty." We learned that in Islam, as in Quakerism, prayer, meditation, and reflection are believed to open us up to a sense of beauty and sensitivity to injustice. We were encouraged to talk with our neighbors about their religion, because encountering other religious communities can change and enrich our lives.

Niyonu Spann spoke to us on "Trusting the Broken Heart" as a path of transformation to find our way to wholeness and healing. We learned that we must see beyond the illusion of the existing structures of oppression that separate us in order to truly acknowledge and appreciate one another. Through an exercise of speaking and listening in small groups, we were given a safe opportunity to be very honest about the pain we experience from the violence and division in our present world. Niyonu asked us to consider that to be truly inclusive and whole, we must open our arms wider, even when our hearts are breaking. When we lean on a deeper promise: God will assist us in being transformed and healed.

Our time together gave us many opportunities to reconnect over shared meals, singing, workshops and interest groups. In worship sharing sessions we had the opportunity to share more deeply and personally in small groups about our own interfaith experiences and ways to become a more inclusive community. At a memorial meeting we remembered and celebrated the lives of Friends we lost in the past year. At our annual Variety Show, we shared poetry, music, lively skits, laughter and tears.

We now return to our daily lives with opened hearts and outstretched arms, to live into a deeper understanding of loving inclusion. We have heard the call that we are being made anew, that God is transforming us. We know that the same deep mystery beckons and connects us all. We are called into holy encounters, the giving and receiving of hospitality, and listening with the heart past the illusions and boundaries that divide us. We are invited to heal, to reconnect, to share the hidden treasures that are desiring to be known, and to recognize and remember that we are whole.

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## Pacific YM

To Friends Everywhere:

*Lift the veils that obscure the Light of Truth within you.  
Sink down to the Seed that God sows in your hearts.*

From June 17 through June 22, 2016, three hundred and eight Friends gathered at Walker Creek Ranch in Petaluma, California, for the 70th Annual Session of Pacific Yearly Meeting. The theme of our gathering was, "Lifting the Veil," and during our time together, we sought the tenderness that comes from lifting the veils of everyday life. We felt the kindness that comes with the presence of Spirit.

Our invited guest from the Coast Miwok People, Sky Road Webb, opened our session with sacred songs, with tales of the land's history, and with stories of indigenous peoples today. As the wind swirled forcefully around, billowing the sides of the large tent in which we held our plenary sessions, we felt the breath of Spirit moving in the world around us, and among us, and within us.

Early in our sessions, we noticed and appreciated the careful preparations that had been made for our gathering, both physical and spiritual. It was clear that our clerk, our assistant clerk, and our Ministry and Oversight committee had designed our plenary sessions to serve both as learning experiences and as times for Spirit to enliven our business. At the start of each plenary, our clerk reminded us of the sacred purpose of our Quaker practices. He reminded us to lift the veils of our egos, to “speak only when spoken through,” to drop our preconceptions, and to open ourselves to Mystery. He also took these learning experiences to special sessions with our young Friends. Worship sharing groups, interest groups, and bible study sessions throughout the week were also designed to help us explore the countless implications of “lifting the veil.”

We opened ourselves to experimentation in matters both profound and mundane. Some of our experimentation concerned simple logistical changes that helped clear our way to attend more fully to Spirit and community. We enjoyed the return of our long-lost Information Desk. We experimented with starting our session on Friday instead of Monday, which allowed participation by Friends who were only available for the weekend. We increased the number of intergenerational plenaries and offered a new evening campfire event for our youngest Friends, which enabled parents to attend evening interest groups. And we tried overall to lessen the number of concurrent offerings in our schedule, to create a greater sense of simplicity and unity among us.

Another new occurrence this year was that our annual session was led by adult Friends who grew up among us. Our presiding clerk, Diego Navarro, and our keynote speakers, Darcy Stanley and Carl Magruder, all had participated in PYM as children. Of course, Friends from countless backgrounds bring us leadership and light, but we felt especially uplifted to find that “our own” leaders are uniquely qualified to speak to our condition as a yearly meeting.

Our condition is one of human imperfection. Although we did feel Spirit working through us frequently during our time together, we also found ourselves stumbling over details in our

business, found ourselves tripping over our worldly veils. We found it difficult to come to terms with the need to reduce the operating deficit in our budget. We suffered from confusion as we worked to approve the minutes of our meetings, confusion that diverted our attention from the task at hand and tempted us to reopen previous conversations instead. And throughout the year, between our annual sessions, we struggled to find ways to stay connected with each other – facing dilemmas over right uses of travel and electronic communications.

On a deeper level, we find ourselves falling short of our responsibility to nurture each other’s spiritual growth. Although we can feel inspired by descriptions of traditional, supportive relationships between Quaker ministers and elders, and can even feel inspired to see examples of such relationships in action today, many of us still find it hard to trust each other fully and to support each other effectively. Old memories of past hurts get in the way, which are sometimes hurts that we have caused each other. We struggle to learn ways to speak truth with love, to navigate between the errors of undue harshness and dishonest niceness.

At the same time, we sometimes find that conflict can open our hearts, and we continue to draw inspiration from each other. Our teens and young adults especially serve as models of faithfulness and good order for the rest of us. And we felt moved to see our young Friends embracing new experiences – from a wiggly baby tooth to the traveling minutes of two young adult Friends preparing to travel in the ministry in Australia.

We feel led to learn better how to reach down to the Seed that God sows in our hearts. We feel led to learn better how to pull away the veils that hide that seed, the veils of our daily worries, of our selfish wants, of our self-recriminations, of our wildest dreams, the countless veils that hide the Seed and Light of Truth. And when we ask whether we will choose to help each other in this work, we have learned to answer, “I hope so.”

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## From the 11th Pacific Northwest Quaker Women's Theology Conference

Canby Grove Christian Center, Canby, Oregon, June 15-19, 2016

Greetings to Friends everywhere,

Quaker women from the Pacific Northwest in the United States and Canada gathered from June 15-19, 2016 amidst the beauty of God's creation under dripping cedar trees at Canby Grove Christian Center in Oregon, USA. We came together to share our experiences of the Divine, and the Gifts of the Living Presence, our theme for the gathering. Seventy-six women gathered from three Yearly Meetings and one independent congregation in the Northwest. Twenty-eight women attended for the first time, in part because of the encouragement and hard work of the planning committee. Eight women were under 35 years of age. Sixty-three percent were from unprogrammed worship communities, and thirty-four were from programmed or evangelical traditions. Two Friends attended from outside the Pacific Northwest.

Friends from North Pacific Yearly Meeting, Northwest Yearly Meeting, Canadian Yearly Meeting and Freedom Friends Church found ourselves worshipping, learning, singing, and discerning together as we listened carefully and grew to know and understand one another, ourselves, and God more deeply. We were a loving, diverse group and we were blessed by the wisdom and passion of Resident Friends Jan Wood and Chris Hall, who tenderly guided our studies and learning. We met, embraced by love and beautiful quilts hanging in our meeting hall.

Our first evening we were welcomed by the planning committee and encouraged to create nametags that did not name any Quaker affiliations we carried. This allowed us to welcome one another with open hearts. As we worked in partnerships, shared in home groups or fed our bodies in the dining room, we met one another as Quaker women, curious about our lives, passions and where our understanding of Spirit met one another. It allowed us to gather as one people and delight in one another

as we raised beautiful voices together, circle danced, laughed and chanted. Friends supported one another in a specially called Meeting for Grieving.

Chris and Jan encouraged us to consider where our spiritual gifts lay through Bible study, self-reflection, and the experience of trying to create a body from many parts. We came to understand more fully that being faithful to our Quaker traditions means embracing every member of our Religious Society, as God requires each part of the body to labor, build, and create an inspired, healthy and challenging landscape to live out our faith.

We return to our faith communities filled with the gifts of the living presence, more connected to one another, and determined to make our lives matter in the converging body of Friends. After meaningful study of Exodus 4:1-5, we are inspired to throw down our staffs as called by God, and watch in wonder as the Spirit transforms them, and us, to take our spiritual gifts and callings out into the world.

In friendship,  
Virginia Wood, Clerk; Norma Silliman,  
Recording Clerk; Meredith Egan, Deborah  
Lewis, Evelyn Myers, Epistle Committee

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## Southeastern Yearly Meeting

Loving Greetings to Friends Everywhere:

Southeastern Yearly Meeting gathered in Fruitland Park, Florida, in Third Month 23-27, 2016 with 133 Friends in attendance, including 17 children. The joyous comments about the beauty of our setting by visitors from Quaker organizations, reminded us to appreciate how fortunate we are to meet at The Life Enrichment Center on Lake Griffin. We are ever mindful of the benefit offered us by nature as we worship beneath the ancient live oaks and listen to the ministry of birdsong.

Peacebuilder Bridget Moix delivered the Walton Lecture on our theme 'Active Peace: Friends Ministry of Hope in a Despairing World' in which she shared a framework of understanding to guide us in our peacemaking efforts. In

her workshops, YM Friends heard stories of peacemakers from around the world and were led through a series of small group discussions exploring our stories and where we sought the spiritual nurture needed to be peacemakers. Sharing from her extensive life experience as a peacebuilder, Bridget gave us valuable insight into the wealth of peacemaking efforts around the world as well as concrete resources to support our work and witness for peace.

Friends expressed gratitude for the quotes and queries, which gave rise to spirit, led reflection in our worship sharing groups. We delved deeply in personal consideration of the theme 'Active Peace', seeking to recenter and renew ourselves to be strong in meeting the challenges ahead, and to be open to act upon the leading of spirit. We are also grateful to the many Friends who shared their gifts and leadings through a wide variety of informative and inspiring workshops.

Our youth are continuing their climate change work and witness with focus on water issues. They brought forward strategies in which both individual Friends and Monthly Meetings can participate in addressing this concern. Part of this work includes creatively raising donations to support the Field Secretary for Earthcare.

Friends were excited to receive a report from the Field Secretary for Earthcare Search Committee. Having developed a job description and an ad, SEYM is moving forward to fill the position. Friends look forward to fulfilling our commitment to act on climate change.

The Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) report was another highlight of our gathering. Hearing the epistle of 320 Friends from around the world, who gathered in Peru, while seeing their faces, was a touching opportunity to connect with our brothers and sisters from around the world.

SEYM Friends mirrored this connection among Friends through our active participation in conversation, study, worship and intergenerational dance and play.

SEYM Friends feel renewed in our call to be faithful and look forward to using what we have

shared and learned in seeking to fulfil our call to be active peacemakers.

In the Light,  
Joel Cook, YM Assistant Clerk, Presiding

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## Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association

To all Friends everywhere, greetings from the 46th annual session of Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association (SAYMA) gathered at Warren Wilson College in Swannanoa, North Carolina, June 9 – 12, 2016.

Our theme this year was "Unraveling Racism." Over the last year our yearly meeting's planning committee worked to create an opportunity for us to gather together around this theme. We are grateful to the committee and particularly appreciate the gifts of the Friends of color who joined the committee. We explored our theme through plenary sessions, interactive exercises, workshops, small groups and worship sharing.

In our first plenary, invited speaker Vanessa Julye, Coordinator of Friends General Conference (FGC) Ministry on Racism, laid out a systematic analysis of the origin and development of the structures of inequality and oppression in the United States. We understand the oppression of today has deep roots in history. On our second night together, a facilitated dialogue and interactive exercises allowed us to express and witness our differing life experiences and the effects of systematic racism. In these interactions, we witnessed and experienced the continuing hurt and damage of racism along with the struggle to find reconciliation and understanding. We felt both the fierce urgency of this work and the need to be tender with each other.

During the weekend, we were brought to realize we have a long way to go to unravel racism, including within the Society of Friends.

Twenty-one workshops were held permitting Friends the opportunity for deeper exploration

of topics, most of which related to the theme of unraveling racism. Workshops included healing the wounds of racism and oppression, mass incarceration and racism, and supporting African women through micro--lending projects.

In our business sessions, we considered proposals seasoned in our monthly meetings. We considered and approved the creation of the standing Committee on Racial Justice. This will provide a space at the yearly meeting level for Friends of color to come together and support each other, to educate the wider SAYMA community and to gather resources for education. A proposal for action regarding the water crisis in Gaza highlighted our continuing struggle to discern right action regarding the conflict in Israel--Palestine. We agreed to share this concern with our constituent monthly meetings and worship groups, encouraging them to take action as led.

To meet the needs of our yearly meeting and expanding program costs, we are seeking the right way to insure the appropriate level of financial support. Our finance committee brought a recommendation to increase assessments and while this will provide a short--term solution, a long--term approach is needed. We appointed an ad hoc committee to explore this issue. We are also seeking to discern the right level of support for our Wider Quaker Organizations, from both monthly and yearly meetings. We asked our monthly meetings to provide guidance as to the Wider Quaker Organizations that reflect our current concerns and the appropriate level of support we should provide them. We struggle to cover all the business and permit all the contributions. We struggle with good order. The excitement and passionate urgency of the issues challenges us to stay present in worship.

We were blessed by visitors from Wider Quaker Organizations. We heard reports from Shan Cretin, General Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee who shared information on their new program direction. Jacqueline Stillwell, General Secretary of Right Sharing of World Resources described their microloan programs, the ripple effects of them and transformed lives that resulted. Vanessa Julye shared the work of Friends

General Conference. We were particularly excited to receive an update from our newest WQO, Quaker Voluntary Service. Christina Repoley, executive director of Quaker Voluntary Service provided a report of their work. Quaker Voluntary Service provides a yearlong service opportunity for young adults in which service, spiritual development and life in community are united. QVS's first service house began in Atlanta and has now expanded to four cities, by the end of this year 70 young people will have completed their year of service and another 30 will begin.

Our yearly meeting was enriched by the presence of 18 young Friends less than eleven years. They participated in a variety of activities with Junior Yearly Meeting. Their presence at mealtimes reminded us of new ways of looking at our world and of the joy to becoming as children. Our Southern Appalachian Young Friends Program (SAYF) graduated 14 young friends this year. SAYF provides a deep and rich opportunity for our high school friends to meet and support one another. We look forward to their continuing participation as young adults. Young adult Friends (YAF's) are moving into positions of yearly meeting leadership and we are supported by their energy and technological savvy.

There were opportunities for us to gather in worship. We began and ended our business sessions in worship; we worshipped early in the morning, late at night, and in men's and women's groups. We worshipped to remember the lives of those who have died in the last year. Worship sharing offered queries about racial justice based on our testimonies and faith. Our worship has been rich. It has provided occasion to be grateful for the beauty of this place, and provided a time to hold in the Light the difficult work we have done in this gathering. We have been refreshed and energized. We can deal with difficult issues and conflicts and stay together.

We are called to be witnesses. Our clerk opened our sessions reading from the writing of Whittaker Chambers who described the witness as "one whose life and faith are so completely one that when the challenge comes to step out and testify for [our] faith [we] do so disregarding all risks, accepting all consequences."

We are grateful for this time together. We are grateful for the Friends of color from our yearly meeting and beyond who participated with us. We are grateful for the work of the yearly meeting planning committee and the Friends of color who shared their gifts on planning committee.

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## Western Yearly Meeting

July 17, 2016

To Friends Everywhere:

“So that Faith, Love, and Truth Might Flourish” was the theme for this year’s gathering of Western Yearly Meeting. Using 2 Thessalonians 1:3 “...thank God for you, because your faith is flourishing and your love for one another is growing,” and a quote from Thom Jeavons (1987) “It is a challenge to become a people with a vision...so that Truth might flourish in our lives for the benefit of all,” as a guide, Western Yearly Meeting gathered in Plainfield, Indiana from July 14-17, 2016 for our 159th annual session. We were joined in our sessions by representatives and visitors from meetings around the world: Vihiga Yearly Meeting, Kenya; Elgon East Friends, Kenya; Guatemala Yearly Meeting; Bolivia; New England Yearly Meeting; Washington, D.C.; North Carolina Yearly Meeting; Vermilion Grove Meeting, Illinois; Ridge Farm Meeting, Illinois; and Richmond, Indiana.

Over the past three years, the themes of each gathering have built on each other in order to help provide a solid foundation for growth in today’s busy world with its unique challenges. Identifying our tools (resources) in 2013, considering the stewardship of those resources in 2014, and planning for the future in 2015, have led to this year’s emphasis. For the past three years, the Western Yearly Meeting has sponsored a spring retreat at Quaker Haven

Camp. In 2014, the retreat focused on discovering individual spiritual gifts. In 2015, that knowledge was used as meetings

collaborated to develop strategies for growth, with a catch phrase, “Get out of the Castle,” that encouraged opportunities to meet and work in non-traditional environments as a way of impacting local communities. The retreat of 2016, with the theme “Discipleship Matters” expanded the vision of discipleship with a catch phrase of “Chicken Pie” as a reminder that keeping things the same because they have always been done that way can limit our effectiveness in the world.

For the first time, our summer meeting not only built on the spring retreat theme, but has been blessed by being able to have the speaker from that retreat be the Devotional speaker for the July sessions! Scott Wagoner has continued the spring theme and has encouraged us to look seriously at some of the issues that may be limiting the growth of meetings. He has encouraged us to look beyond the idea of membership to one of Discipleship. A key insight was that to be an effective meeting, the meeting has to be a healthy meeting: in terms of emotional health as well as the more traditionally accepted indicators of meeting health, such as membership, facilities, and finance. Only in a healthy environment are people willing and able to grow into the best possible witnesses of faith.

Quaker Lecture speaker, Jonathan Vogel-Borne, continued the Faith, Truth, Love theme with his insights. As he provided historical perspective, Jonathan provided current real life anecdotes to emphasize the importance of these attributes in today’s life. “What makes our Friends Meetings flourish? It is individual and corporate acts of faith, truth, and love that strengthen the bonds of unity among us, deepen our community, and compel our witness for peace and justice in the world.” He pointed out the need to embrace conflict as an opportunity for growth and also pointed out that unresolved conflict leads to tension within the meeting. That tension is often a reason that newcomers leave or refuse to engage fully.

The order of programming was adjusted this year, picking up on the “Chicken Pie” theme of the spring retreat. Thursday was devoted to “How are we doing?” This dealt with business

reports and included highlights of activities of local meetings. The annual Memorial Service provided an opportunity to remember the Faith, Truth, and Love exemplified by those who have gone before us.

Friday considered “Looking ahead” with reports and business emphasizing plans for the future. A high point of this day was the approval of the recording of two new ministers, Katherine Murray and Beth Henricks. Following the evening meal, a “Conversation Cafe” sponsored by the Young Friends encouraged multigenerational conversation and relationship building. Saturday’s emphasis was “Reaching Out” with reports and business that dealt with outreach into the world beyond the local meetings. The mission emphasis was continued through the evening as Quaker Men and the USFW met for a combined session, followed by separate meals and business. Sunday was a day of rejoicing. Musical gifts of individuals and groups from within Western Yearly Meeting were highlighted in an uplifting program presented prior to the Sunday morning closing worship service and the official recognition of our newly recorded ministers.

Workshops are always a highlight of Western Yearly Meeting. The Friday workshop, led by Jonathan Vogel Borne and Minga Claggett Borne, presented the Alternatives to Violence Program and Help Increase the Peace Program. This brief introduction to the program showed how use of the techniques taught can help individuals and meetings learn to deal with conflict in a healthy and productive way. They continued this idea in the Saturday workshop; focusing on dealing with the difficult issues that occur within meetings and doing so in a loving, supporting, and encouraging way. In addition to these two primary workshops, there were opportunities for small groups to gather and discuss topics within “Interest Groups” designed to provide multiple opportunities for interaction. Among those groups were opportunities to meet with representatives of affiliate bodies, discuss legislative action, explore crafts, read and reflect, and practice as a choir in preparation for the Sunday morning service.

As a step toward moving the “Faith, Love and Truth” theme into practical reality, the Western Yearly Meeting approved a minute from the Peace and Christian Social Concerns Board encouraging action to encourage legislators to reconsider mandatory minimum sentencing for low-level, nonviolent drug offenses; recognizing that current laws, while providing punishment, are not treating the root issues and are leading to additional problems within families and communities.

As we move forward “So that Faith, Love and Truth Might Flourish,” your prayers of support and encouragement are appreciated.

In Christian Love,  
Pam Sims, Presiding Clerk; Elizabeth Ann Carter, Recording Clerk; Sarah Lookabill, Assistant to the Clerk



# From Asia & the West Pacific

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## Aotearoa New Zealand Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri

Held at St Cuthbert's College,  
Auckland, 15-18 July 2016

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa,  
greetings to Friends everywhere.

Our Yearly Meeting gathering 2016 opened with mihi/greetings, worship and the honouring of our ancestors including the volcanoes that form the land here in Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland.

What is it to be a Quaker? We talked about how our Yearly Meeting can help us to drink from the stream of Quaker spirituality and learn to become everyday prophets. We are working towards our Yearly Meeting structure strengthening the spiritual life of our local meetings. We have grappled with how to hear the calling to flourish in the ministry and the call to service. We are still threshing how best to apply our resources to living our witness within the wider world, using our heritage to support our activism and our mysticism at all ages. We aim to shift our attention to discernment and spiritual growth while living our social testimonies. What does God require of us?

Our monthly meetings are impassioned to continue our important work of peace-making and acknowledge the needs and concerns of young people in our society. We had the privilege of being joined by our Junior Young Friends from their gathering. Along with Young Friends they helped shape our deliberations. Our Quaker lecturer, Marian Hobbs and

other speakers inspire us to be faithful in our responsibility to hold ourselves, our leaders and our politicians accountable to the challenges that face our planet and our communities. We need to advocate on issues from disarmament to climate change. We are a community dedicated to equality – how do we speak plainly to meet the challenges of inequality in our own community and worldwide?

We heard from Ōtautahi/Christchurch meeting who continue to move on from the earthquakes five years ago. They have moved into their newly acquired Meeting House and are feeling a fresh energy emerge. Whanganui-a Tara/Wellington Friends are fundraising for the earthquake strengthening of their Meeting House.

Our developing diversity was woven as a thread through the meeting with regular use of Te Reo, our indigenous language and hearing the successful development of an app to develop parenting skills, initially targeted at the Pacific Island community but available for all families. This was made possible with one of our Quaker Peace and Service Loxley grants.

We sow seeds and we trust that they will blossom in unexpected ways. Often we wonder how effective we are being, but are aware that weaving the fabric of our community relies on organised activities such as gatherings, at the Settlement and elsewhere, as well as fortuitous growth from unexpected meetings, social media and personal journeying.

Murray Short  
Clerk

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# Australia YM

13 July 2016

Dear Friends,

One hundred and eighty-two years ago James Backhouse and George Washington Walker came to Hobart Town with a concern for the just treatment of convicts and Aborigines. This week we have come from all states and territories of Australia and beyond to meet at The Friends' School, Hobart.

Our Winter School asked us: "How can our faith and action inspire?"

The State of the Society address asked us to consider: "How has the Spirit moved through me this last year?"

As a Yearly Meeting we face challenges and changes. The most evident this year was the change to a winter YM.

Our Earthcare Committee encouraged us to "walk country" in the manner of indigenous people so we can have a sense of belonging and a right relationship with the land. We need to pray/ read/ act/ celebrate the earth to begin the healing process in our "three minutes to midnight" world. An Indigenous Friend acknowledged the importance of right language, but impressed upon us the reality of poor health, despair and suicide in his remote community.

Our Membership is getting older; our children, Junior Young Friends and Young Friends wish to be engaged but face the difficulties of finding their own path. We celebrate the wealth of experience and wisdom in our elders and the freshness and enthusiasm of our Younger Friends. We are enjoined to accommodate both.

Ministry in the All Ages Meeting for Worship affirmed our unity in diversity – and diversity in unity – reinforcing the importance of including children, Junior Young Friends and Young Friends in all aspects of the life of our Meetings. Young Friends remind us of our disquiet about Australia's decisions and policies in our local regions – which have directly affected human rights and freedoms, not only of refugees but also of all of us.

We are reminded in the Backhouse Lecture that the base and the nourishment for our social concerns come from the inward Light.

Faith in action is evident in the breadth and depth of peace and social justice work done by Australian Friends. We recognise the need for longer-term projects in areas of ongoing concern. We value the links we maintain with Friends in the Asia Pacific Region and the wider world. As always, we are enriched by visiting Friends from overseas.

"Everyday prophets" in our midst demonstrate courage and heroic action in answering their leadings. This requires of us willingness to change, and being prepared to go in indirect and unforeseen directions, like the sailor tacking into the wind to move forward.

Isaac Pennington said:

"When the life is at any time lost, the only way of recovery is by retiring to the invisible, and keeping there, and growing up there."

Yours faithfully,

Julian Robertson  
Presiding Clerk  
Australia Yearly Meeting



# Testimonies

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## Introduction

Testimonies to the Grace of God in lives – an enduring presence

The advice in the current *Quaker faith & practice* at paragraph 4.27 that “a testimony should not be a formal obituary or eulogy, but should record in thankfulness the power of divine grace in human life” is not always easy to carry through.

The following paragraph, 4.28, a minute from the then Hertford Monthly Meeting\* of 1780, records “the purpose of a testimony concerning our deceased worthy Friends [is] intended as a memorial, that they have walked as children of the Light, and of the Day, and to excite those who remain to take diligent heed, and to yield to the teachings of the still small voice, that they may follow them as they followed Christ, the great captain of their salvation”. Much of this expresses Friends’ interest in the writing of testimonies today, but how is it carried out?

Historically in Britain the issue of records concerning deceased Friends in the ministry began in the 17th century. “An early record maintained by London YM is now lost but a series of volumes begun in 1740 were maintained until 1872 with retrospective entries copied up from 1719. These volumes are known as ‘Testimonies concerning ministers deceased’. From the 19th century [they] contain minutes from quarterly meetings recording the lives of Friends rather than ministers. From 1861 quarterly meetings were at liberty to prepare a testimony concerning any Friend “whose life was

marked by conspicuous service to God and the church” (text typed up in Friends House library subject files c.1970).

An early American testimony written around 1690 advises “it is a justice due to the righteous, and a duty upon us, to contribute something to perpetuate the names of such who have left a fragranciness behind them, and through faith have obtained a good report” (Samuel Jennings’s testimony concerning John Eckley of Philadelphia).

Coming forward to the 20th century, London Yearly Meeting *Church government* of 1931, in use for more than three decades, stated “A Monthly Meeting may issue a testimony concerning the life and service of a deceased member whose life has been marked by devotion to the cause of his Lord and to the service of the Church. The object of such a Testimony is not eulogy, but to preserve a record of Divine Grace in the lives of (wo)men.” This last sentence bears a close similarity to para 4.27 in the current *Quaker faith & practice*. The text goes on to refer to progression of a testimony to Yearly Meeting “only if it is likely to be of service to the Society”. This is in line with our current practice.

In today’s fast-moving world Friends face a double challenge: to concentrate on the Divine and to write a short but rounded record. The first is not easy as it necessarily relates to our temporal experience; the second is increasingly important if posterity is to hold learning from an inspiring text in an age of complexities, speed and an increasing multiplicity of knowledge and communication. Friends can be long-winded.

This puts some off from joining in our business meetings for worship.

A testimony should radiate the Grace of God as shown in the life of the Friend who has passed from this world. It differs from an obituary account of achievements, yet a few milestones in the life of the deceased will serve to illuminate the spiritual gifts bestowed.

Date of birth, date(s) of marriage(s), and date of death describe the setting of time. This is a necessary aid to living Friends. It is also a recognition of the times in which the life is set for posterity, where future Friends can relate the spiritual gifts received to the cultural context of the era. Reference to immediate antecedents can anchor the recall of a name for more distant Friends. Reference to children can demonstrate the enrichment of life.

Recognition of a spiritually lived life and its application characterises the preparation of a testimony. Worship through quiet waiting upon God prayerfully alone or where two or three are gathered together in meeting is the hallmark of a Quaker. This does not deny the devotional or biblical emphases in other traditions. As seekers after Truth, Friends should be open to new learning as God's revelation continues in the world.

It is against this background that the application of talents, whether within the life of the Society or in witness in the wider world, are described. There is a temptation to link these to a career pattern or an extended voluntary body commitment, and hence border on an obituary. Rather, it is the spiritually inspired application of the talent for good that matters. Examples of the flowering of each talent in the life pattern of the departed Friend can then be quoted. If carefully knit together these convey an image of the whole.

Writing a testimony to the life of a departed Friend may not be easy. How far do we understand the familial and cultural background, the stresses and successes in that life? Did the light shine forth in life? Where we see glimpses of the inner spiritual life, how do these reflect in outward activity?

Were outward concerns truly a reflection of inward Grace? How does economic comfort sit easily with God's Will? Then we come back to what to include, what to leave out and how to outwardly reflect a spiritually inspired life to future generations.

Not far distant may be the expectations of relatives of the deceased. When a close relative died I had anticipated a prepared obituary in *The Friend* but instead I read a note from one who had only known her in her last years. I know a Friend now who feels hurt that no testimony was written around her partner who died some years ago. On another occasion a Friend who was to die shortly afterwards made plain that he did not want a testimony written to his life. It is difficult to know the aspirations of family members, and particularly so when anxiety and grief intrude. With a little passage of time, such aspirations, if known, should not cloud the consideration within monthly meeting of how appropriately to remember a Friend. Such an interlude of perhaps a few months may help the meeting also in its discernment as to whether to prepare a testimony to the Grace of God in a life. It is the Light shining in life that matters.

That meetings might hold a short record of the lives of members is commendable. That these should be developed into testimonies is not necessarily the right use of time for the living. It is difficult to distinguish between the Martha and the Mary, and neither should we judge. Meetings need prayerful thought before committing the strengths of a life to a Quaker testimony.

John Melling, Assistant Clerk to General Meeting for Scotland

As endorsed by General Meeting for Scotland by its minute 15 of 11 September 2004.

Approved by Meeting for Sufferings by minute 6 of 2 December 2006.

\*Monthly meetings are now known as area meetings.

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## Elizabeth Brown

7.iii.1935 – 20.ix.2015

When Elizabeth joined Golders Green Quaker Meeting and North West London Area Meeting in 2005, she had already lived an adventurous and often difficult life. She came to London to be nearer her daughter and family. She joined the local Meeting with a good deal of energy and commitment, essential to the Meeting at that point. She was one of several Members of the Meeting who had grown up in Quaker families and brought a rootedness with a light touch.

She had many setbacks in her own life, but she was amazingly resilient and bounced back. Those who knew her as a child often remark on the fact that she was an unconfident and somewhat insecure child who grew into a confident person who coped with whatever life threw at her and who was able to look after and support others.

Both her parents were from Quaker families (they might even be called ancestral with some roots going back to George Fox's time) though her father resigned his membership when he became a communist. She went to Sidcot, a Quaker school, which did not require the 11+ exam that had recently been introduced.

Elizabeth did not embrace the opportunity to go to a Quaker boarding school with great enthusiasm and suffered bullying during her time there. She did not excel academically and left with minimal qualifications. One word that crops up in the memories of her family and friends is 'adventurous'; Elizabeth loved travel and encounters with new people and places. In 1959 when it was still unusual for people to travel the world she went to Australia by boat on her own.

She embraced the opportunity to work for a family with children as their nanny during the voyage and became so friendly with them that they took her on holiday during her time in Australia. However, her purpose in going was to visit the Australian branch of the family; her grandfather had emigrated there and his family were active members of Australia Yearly Meeting.

By the time she went to Australia, she was already engaged to David Brown whom she had met in Cambridge where he was studying Chemistry and where she was working as a nanny to the family of a Fellow at Corpus Christi College. They were both active Young Friends. They married on her return from Australia in 1960 and joined a community of Young Friends at 136 Wellington Road in Manchester.

She was a key member of the early 136 community; she was the only adult member of the household who stayed at home looking after her first child and thus took on the mantle of housemother to the others, listening to them and supporting them in difficulties.

When Rachel Pinney was touring the country and was looking for somewhere to stay overnight she brought her back to 136 and inaugurated a new element into the lives of those who lived there. Several Friends and Elizabeth's children were deeply affected by their encounter with Rachel.

In 1962, she and her husband moved to Bulgaria where David had a job working as a Chemistry teacher in an English-speaking school. Part of the impetus for going to Bulgaria was David's conviction that you had to make peace through meeting 'the enemy' face to face, a conviction Elizabeth readily shared.

Bulgaria was not an easy place to live; Elizabeth knew basic Bulgarian and the older children picked up the language very quickly and so they managed. She made friends there – one of whom was described as her best friend throughout her life. There was little about life in Bulgaria that Elizabeth found too difficult. There was just one incident when – on their second stay, this time in Ruse near the border with Romania, at the time of the Prague Spring in 1968 – they found themselves surrounded by troops and David was taken into custody because his bird-watching was interpreted as spying. Family recall this as one rare moment when Elizabeth was frightened.

Soon after they returned to England, Elizabeth and David parted and Elizabeth moved to the

Swindon area with the three children. Here, she qualified as a teacher of children with special needs, which involved first taking a maths O-level (at the same time as her eldest son); she became an active member of the local meeting, she took up painting and she developed an interest in eastern spirituality, particularly the teachings of one Hindu guru, Sri Baghavan Ramara Maharshi. One of her children had to have a small operation and stay in hospital and Elizabeth was horrified to find the restrictive visiting hours for parents. She became active in the National Association for the Welfare of Children in Hospital (NAWCH).

She helped to make profound changes to the way children are supported while in hospital. These now seem commonplace, but in the early nineteen seventies they were revolutionary: parents staying overnight; reading to and playing with their children. It was also the time of the arrival of Vietnamese refugees; Swindon had been designated as a destination for them and Elizabeth worked in the office of the organisations helping them but also acted as a volunteer helper.

She agreed to foster a teenage boy who had arrived as an unaccompanied minor in her home, not an easy thing to do with her own three teenagers. He was, understandably, quite difficult because he was forced to go to school (which he had been trying to avoid). But she managed to get him through to school leaving and to get some qualifications.

Much later, after he had gone to join his brother in the US and had established himself there, he invited Elizabeth to visit him in Las Vegas and despite some reluctance to go there, Elizabeth went on a trip that included a visit to the Grand Canyon; he introduced her to others as his 'English mother', testament to the fact that her fostering in the long term had achieved much. She is, however, very possibly, the only visitor ever to Las Vegas who did not go into any casino!

Elizabeth had a career, which, in her case, zigzagged into what became her forte: counselling. In the 1990s, Elizabeth travelled to

London at least twice a week for rigorous study in counselling with the Westminster Pastoral Foundation. She gained qualifications as a counsellor and worked for a while in one of the doctors' surgeries in Swindon, as well as using her skills to help others, no doubt not always in a paid capacity.

One Friend recalls: 'I saw Elizabeth only the once, but it was possibly the deepest instance of spiritual direction I've ever experienced. She articulated things about me that I hadn't dared articulate to myself. She had a gift of astonishing spiritual insight.' The quiet and stillness of Meeting for Worship was at the heart of Elizabeth's life as a Quaker.

She maintained a strong, quiet faith in God/Christ as an ever-present guide, with whom she could have a personal relationship. In her spoken ministry in meeting, and in her many kindly communications to individual Friends, she would draw on this faith experience, sometimes quoting helpful passages from the Bible, poems or prayers, of which she had a wide knowledge and sometimes singing hymns in meeting.

She served the local and area meetings in Swindon and London in many roles; too many to mention without the risk of leaving some out but it was in the service of eldership that Elizabeth brought her life's experience to bear most fruitfully.

She led Spiritual Nurture Groups; she engaged with and led groups on 'Experiment with Light'; she was an active and founder member of 'The Kindlers'; she was a key member of the Quaker Fellowship of Healing. In her quiet and confident way, during her lifetime she affected, influenced and supported many individual Friends as well as important strands of developing Quaker thinking and theology.

She was, in her own words, a 'retreataholic' who embraced the spirituality and quiet of retreats as one of the most important strands of her life. In the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, she was a member, committee member and – for a time – Clerk of the Quaker Retreat Group (Q-Room).



The group was an important influence on Quakers in Britain, ensuring that retreats and other related practices are now firmly embedded in Friends' practice. As one member of Q-Room recalls: 'Both when leading a retreat, and in her ministry with individuals, she brought a gift of listening, responding but not intervening, so that the retreatant could hear the Spirit more clearly. She was at home with the Spirit'.

But she was also an adventurous person. The trip to Australia in her youth is testament to that; but so is a trip to India in 2009 to the village of her Indian guru, where she had the chance of meditating in the cave in which he had lived at the top of the holy hill Arunachula looking down on the temple across the plain. Elizabeth was not well during much of the trip, in part due to her recently diagnosed diabetes for which she received Ayurvedic treatment whilst there.

Elizabeth loved driving. She had a little Vespa when young and enjoyed cars and driving to the end of her life. The trip to Bulgaria was made in an MG sports car she and David had, although she came back by plane at the end of the second trip as she had three young children. But even into her later years the freedom and maybe the fun of driving never left her. One member of North West London AM recalls that when he was appointed to visit an applicant for membership with Elizabeth, she asked him whether they could travel to the visit together on his motorbike. They did. She was in her late 70s at the time and showed no fear as they roared along the North Circular somewhat in excess of the speed limit.

And Elizabeth was fun loving with a wicked sense of humour who never took herself too seriously. One Friend recalls her enthusiastically joining into circle dancing at a time when ill-health was already taking its toll and leaving her unable to walk very far. Elizabeth displayed contrasting aspects of her personality. Having decided to tackle some practical task – clearing out her home in preparation for moving, for example – she could busy herself in a whirlwind of activity, with which others could not keep up! On the other hand, she truly lived the words in the third Advice: "Seek to know an inward

stillness, even amid the activities of daily life. Do you encourage in yourself and in others a habit of dependence on God's guidance for each day?"

In the end, with a series of health problems, Elizabeth was comfortable with the idea of dying and spoke freely about it. She had a keen sense of some other reality that would come after death. She died surrounded by her three children and maybe it was only us, who were left behind, who were surprised and shocked at what seemed to us to be a sudden death.

Signed in and on behalf of North West London Area Meeting

held at Hampstead on 18 January 2017

David Henshaw, Clerk

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## Christine A M Davis

5 iii 1944 – 17 ii 2015

In 1990, a ground-breaking International Quaker Women's Theology Conference was held at Woodbrooke. In the informal sessions, the participants worked together sewing patchwork squares, which would be made into a quilt for presentation to the retiring FWCC General Secretary. At the final business session, no doubt anticipating potential clashes over the text of the epistle, the organisers called on the services of one of their most experienced clerks. Afterwards, one of the participants was heard to remark, 'I had no idea the little sewing lady was so competent'.

Christine Davis' life manifested an extraordinary range of competencies. She had a warm personality, which was just as effective in a large gathering ('Dear Friends...') as it was one-to-one; she had a measured way with words, which was especially suited to the crafting of Quaker minutes; she had the listening skills and imaginative responses which enabled her to discern the way forward for a meeting, even in the most intractable of situations. She drew on these gifts throughout a remarkable life of public service, to Scotland, to Quakers in Britain Yearly Meeting and to the wider world.

But what gave Christine's life its singular character was the particular place and period into which she was born. Introducing herself in her 2008 Swarthmore Lecture, *Minding the Future*, she wrote 'I am a Scot who grew up in Scotland'. Her parents, Bill and Betsy Aitken, were firmly embedded in Scottish cultural life; their home echoed to the poems of William Soutar and of Hugh MacDiarmid, a family friend. Verses of MacDiarmid which she incorporated in her lecture conjure up the colours of Scottish moorland – 'the sage-green leaves of the bog-myrtle... the golden flowers of the tormentil... milkworts blue as summer skies'. She brought these colours to her needlecraft – at her last Yearly Meeting, she was one of those who contributed to a group artwork 'Groundcover', which later formed the centrepiece of Judith Bromley Nichols' climate-change exhibition 'Climb up to the Moor'.

For Christine, this beauty of landscape was a manifestation of the Divine. She was born into a religious environment – her paternal grandfather was a Presbyterian minister – and she and her parents started attending Quaker meeting when she was 12. A young lecturer, arriving in St Andrews in 1964, found to his surprise that the Quaker Meeting, founded the previous year, was tiny, 'and the sole member was Christine Aitken, just starting her second year of study and surely not yet much more than 18. She was, even then, very self-assured and serious, if out-going, leaving an impression of someone much older than her biological age... and with a sense of responsibility for the Meeting that few students would demonstrate'.

Christine studied history, and this too she incorporated into her life, her faith and her embroidery. She was proud of the achievements of Scottish Quakers, and, when the Quaker tapestry came along in the 1980s, she was an early participant, working on two panels which celebrated the publication of Robert Barclay's *Apology for the True Christian Divinity* in 1676 and the winning of the right not to swear oaths by the burgesses of Aberdeen in 1714. Growing up herself at the time of the civil rights campaigns in the US and the anti-apartheid campaign in South Africa, she understood that she was living in an age of hope, but that to achieve radical change required personal and sustained commitment. To a lifetime of public service, Christine brought a clear mind, a passion for good governance and a drive for change. Her energy and her range of interests seemed inexhaustible: if one ever had to imagine a tapestry panel to sum up Christine's contribution to Scottish public life, one would be spoiled for choice. Should it be an austere bench of judges (Scottish Legal Aid Board), well-heated houses on the Scottish islands (Electricity Consultative Council), a combine harvester (Scottish Agricultural Wages Board) or even a newly-named locomotive (Rail Passengers Committee for Scotland)?

On the international stage, she made her contribution primarily through her long service on the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (1996-2015), meeting grant applicants and following

up successful applications. She concentrated especially on Ireland and on Africa: one Friend has written appreciatively of their visit to an ‘amazing theatre group in Kwa Zulu Natal – I never thought a group could create so much energy and noise!’ One piece of work of which she was particularly proud was JRCT’s centenary ‘Visionaries’ project, in which six individuals were supported for five years, with no requirement for specified targets or deliverables, to pursue their particular vision for just and peaceful change.

Christine had already visited South Africa in 1992, as part of an ecumenical Eminent Persons Group in the lead-up to the first free elections. At the time she was representing the Scottish churches as one of six inaugural presidents of the Council of Churches of Britain and Ireland. Recalling this period, the then general secretary wrote that it was largely due to Christine’s influence that this group of very senior clergy adopted a consensus mode for decision-making, rather than majority-voting. Christine served as clerk of what was still London Yearly Meeting from 1991-4, a period which included acceptance of the new Book of Discipline, Quaker faith & practice (1994). She was well placed to do so, having served for the past eight years on the Book of Discipline Revision Committee, and she clerked the meeting with grace and authority, even when it was led to decisions, on such cherished matters as what the book should be named, which differed from those suggested by the Revision Committee.

It’s hard to think of anything which Christine turned her hand to which she did not do well, though her grandchildren report that in family games such as Mah Jong, she would often try for ‘special hands’ and would either score spectacularly well or spectacularly badly. Such characters can be overwhelming – at her memorial service, which filled Dunblane Cathedral, one Friend drew a sympathetic laugh when she observed ‘Christine could be scary...’, and her husband Robin, her ‘ever-present sure centre’, occasionally had to remind her that she wasn’t addressing a public meeting. She was saved from these dangers partly by her genuinely wide range of day-to-day interests – shopping

trips with her granddaughters, delight in her iPad, box sets of adaptations of Jane Austen – but mostly because it was impossible not to recognise and respond to the love and empathy which she brought to all her relationships. She herself recognised the source of that love: ‘I am in love with life and with God; I can only do with that love what I do with other love, which is to warm myself with it as I give it to others; it is not mine to possess but to pass on’.

We often use embroidery as a metaphor for life. ‘[Life] ... is like a stitch of embroidery which appears above the canvas, runs along and is seen, then dips back below out of sight.’ (Quaker faith & practice 22.85) Christine Davis’ life had its dark threads; she and Robin provided resolute support for their daughter Alison and her family during her illness, but her death from cancer in 2013 was a dreadful blow. The following summer, though, the marriage of her twin Marion brought some lifting of the grief – and another sewing opportunity. In the last few months of her life, Christine was still sewing. Along with three others, she contributed a panel to the Scottish Diaspora Tapestry, and once again she took Robert Barclay as her theme, this time focusing on his period as governor of East Jersey (1682-88). The panel takes its central image of the parable of the sower from the last verse of John Greenleaf Whittier’s ballad, ‘Barclay of Ury’, a celebration of Robert Barclay’s father, a distinguished soldier and a convinced Quaker.

*After hands shall sow the seed  
After hands from hill and mead  
Reap the harvests yellow*

*Thus, with somewhat of the Seer  
Must the moral pioneer  
From the Future borrow;*

*Clothe the waste with dreams of grain  
And on midnight’s sky of rain  
Paint the golden morrow*

Signed in and on behalf of West Scotland Area Meeting

held at Glasgow on 14 January 2017

Michael J. Hutchinson, Clerk

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# Moira Field

30 xii 1914 – 26 i 2015

Moira Field, whose life spanned one hundred years, was an intellectual of formidable ability who enjoyed an eminent editorial career at Encyclopaedia Britannica before becoming a Quaker meeting house warden in her sixties. When Moira and her husband became wardens at Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, about thirty five years ago her razor-sharp attention to detail and intolerance of muddle, which had served her so well throughout her career, soon reminded us that part of the cost of discipleship is living with the other disciples.

Sometimes Moira's efficiency as a warden was perceived as bordering on officiousness, and some of us found her difficult to love. Yet throughout her life she bestowed compassion on those whose own lives were a muddle, and many who sought sanctuary at the simple holiday accommodation at the meeting house found her benevolence heart-warming and restorative. At the memorial meeting after Moira's death one of her closest friends described her loyalty in friendship as legendary, adding: 'She would spend hours supporting people in need at whatever time they called on her.'

If Moira found indecisiveness in Quaker business meetings infuriating, and readily showed annoyance when meeting house chairs were moved out of line by an unwary cleaner, she worked tirelessly behind the scenes whenever her time-honoured professional skills could be pressed into action. When Wells Quakers launched a bicentenary appeal to restore the meeting house in 1982, Moira and her husband Jonathan spent countless hours writing individually-tailored letters to grant-awarding charities and trusts so effectively that the eighteenth-century building was transformed for a new generation of Quakers.

Moira was born at Wigan, Lancashire, five months after the outbreak of the First World War, one of four children of mining engineer Ralph Stephenson and his wife Elizabeth, and was brought up in the Church of England.

Her prodigious academic ability won her a scholarship to Oxford at the age of seventeen, and she spent some months at Heidelberg University in Germany before taking up her place at St Hugh's College. Receiving her degree in 1933 and choosing a career in stage management, she met the aspiring actor-playwright Jonathan Field whom she would marry in 1938, beginning an inseparable partnership which flourished for fifty two years until his death.

In the 1930s Moira's ardent pacifism precipitated her interest in Quakers, and the closure of theatres on the outbreak of the Second World War halted her stage management ambitions. Though she and Jonathan did not seek Quaker membership until many years later, both of them were conscientious objectors. Moira was appointed secretary to the Chinese ambassador at The Hague and, on her return to London, forged close friendships among the Chinese community. By 1943 Moira's delight in meals shared with these friends had resulted in the publication of her first book, *Easy Chinese Dishes for Today*, a collection of recipes devised to be achievable despite wartime rationing.

Moira and Jonathan made their home at Horley, Surrey, founding an amateur dramatics group at the nascent Archway Theatre and, having no children of their own, took under their wing three young men who thrived on their care and encouragement. For many years to come Moira and Jonathan watched with joy as each of this trio went on to achieve outstanding success: one as executive producer of blockbuster musicals on Broadway and in London's West End, another as a society portrait painter, another as a distinguished writer now living in Hawaii who would compose a poem, *A Pattern of Miracle Named Moira*, for Moira's memorial meeting.

In 1949 Moira began the career which was to make her name, joining Encyclopaedia Britannica in London where her sobriquet was 'the woman who knows all the answers'. As head of the research department leading a team of fifteen specialist researchers, her mission was to respond to five thousand written questions

posed each year by subscribers to *Encyclopaedia Britannica* worldwide who, under the terms of their subscription, were each allowed to ask up to fifty questions in ten years. From Peckham to Peking questions poured into her office on every subject under the sun, from how to feed an adopted baby bullfinch to how to cycle across the Sahara desert.

Moirā's inexhaustible zest for life ensured that no moment of any day was wasted, and her daily train journeys commuting between Horley and London gave her time to write two detective novels which were commercially published. After her retirement she and Jonathan moved to Wells where Moirā's sister and brother-in-law, Hilda and Robert Reid, were Quakers, and in 1981 they jointly applied for membership. The report by two Friends appointed to visit them noted: 'For a very long time they have been Quakers in all but name.'

Soon they became wardens, and Moirā's writing days were not yet over. In 1985 *The Lamplit Stage* was published, followed in 1991 by *The Methuen Book of Theatre Verse*, co-authored with Jonathan. *The Lamplit Stage* was the zenith of ten years' exhaustive research into the celebrated theatrical family of Fishers, whose Norfolk and Suffolk Company of Comedians spelled glamour and romance in a dozen East Anglian towns for most of the nineteenth century. Moirā's tenacity as a researcher never flagged and, largely due to her efforts, the Fisher Collection of papers and artefacts achieved its rightful place at London's Theatre Museum, and is now held at the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Moirā's orderliness was always her hallmark. Her written reports to Quaker business meetings were felicitously composed and immaculately typed, the meeting house library was transfigured and flawlessly indexed, telephone directory entries for every Quaker meeting in East Anglia were standardised for the benefit of enquirers. Some of us found Moirā's precision admirable and her presence life-enhancing, others found her disputatious and reluctant to accept that she might be mistaken. She and Jonathan served as wardens until 1988, two years

before he died, and after his death she continued to live at the flat beside the meeting house where they had welcomed countless visitors with warm and memorable hospitality.

As Moirā's health and endurance declined family members and friends sought to support her and, in 2010, she moved to a care home ten miles away. She anticipated death with foreboding, yet in 2014 she enjoyed celebrating the centenary of her birth surrounded by her family, entertaining them by singing in German a 1930s song and pronouncing herself pleasantly surprised to receive a birthday card from the Queen. She died peacefully at the care home a month later.

The poem composed for Moirā's memorial meeting concluded with a couplet adapted from the closing lines of Shelley's lyrical drama *Prometheus Unbound* which held profound meaning for her:

'This, like thy glory [...] is to be  
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free.'

Moirā taught some of us the veracity of *Quaker faith & practice* 10.28:

'It is often hard to accept that other people have their own valid relationship with God, their own specialness and insights. We are not just disciples – we are disciples together. Our vision of the truth has to be big enough to include other people's truth as well as our own. We have to learn to love difficult unlovable people. Accepting each other, and each other's relationship with God, let us continue to hold together at our deepest level. We are a forgiven community. Part of the cost of discipleship is living with the other disciples.'

Signed in and on behalf of Norfolk and Waveney Area Meeting

held at Wells-next-the-Sea, on 19 March 2016

Michael Johnson, Clerk

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# Leslie Forster

7 iii 1916 – 11 xi 2014

Leslie Forster was a good and faithful Friend whose life was an example of service and dedication, and whose sense of fun and impishness enriched our lives.

Anybody meeting Leslie, even briefly, would have recognised him as a Tynesider. Not only his accent, but his down-to-earth outlook on life and exceptionally dry humour came from his Tyneside upbringing.

In his youth, Leslie was marked by two experiences that made him a lifelong socialist. His severely disabled brother died at the age of twenty, and he would recall his parents' difficulties in providing twenty-four hour care without any assistance from the state. Secondly, Leslie's first job was as a rent collector in the depressed Gateshead of the 1930s. He would remember how impoverished tenants might offer him sixpence towards their arrears, hoping not to be evicted.

Leslie became a firm supporter of the Labour Party. The politician he respected most was its pacifist pre-war leader George Lansbury, and his particular bugbear was Winston Churchill, whom he never forgave for sending troops against the striking Tonypandy miners. Leslie agreed that Clement Attlee had been a fine prime minister – except that he gave his agreement to President Truman to drop the atomic bomb. A friend at the meeting recalled how Leslie had confessed to not knowing the text of *The Red Flag*, and she had taught it to him. She sang two verses in his memory.

Leslie grew up in the Methodist tradition, and sought to be registered as a conscientious objector during World War II. His statement to the conscription tribunal at Newcastle-upon-Tyne has survived:

'I am a Christian and a member of the Methodist Church. I believe that war is alien to the spirit, teaching, and example of Jesus Christ. The Methodist Church has, in Conference, expressly declared this to be so and

the declaration has my full support. I cannot, therefore, take part in war or any activity or organization associated with war directly or indirectly.

'My views crystallised over two years ago, I have held them ever since and the present situation has only served to strengthen them. I heard about the Peace Pledge Union in May 1939 and became a member. Later in the year (October, 1939), as my objection to war is essentially religious, I desired to be linked with a Christian pacifist organization and joined the Methodist Peace Fellowship. In December 1939 I joined the Fellowship of Reconciliation and when the Gateshead branch of that Organization was formed in the same month I became the first General Secretary. [...]

'To take part in war would for me be a complete and impossible reversal of all my beliefs, deepest convictions about God, the world in which I live, and my whole way of life.'

He was granted the status of conscientious objector. He said he believed that the chairman of the tribunal was a Quaker.

At this time Leslie came to London and under the terms of his exemption from military service worked in a demolition team, pulling down the ruins of blitzed buildings.

He became a member of Friends House Meeting in 1947, and talking to Leslie put one in touch with old Quaker traditions that have now been forgotten or modified: he slightly disapproved of Quaker Quest, which he thought smacked of proselytism, and he believed that Quaker work should be done by members of the Society, rather than qualified and paid staff. Leslie served in all the offices of the meeting, except the clerkship, for which he may have felt disqualified by his stammer. He was a meticulous observer of Quaker procedure, but always with ironic humour and without pedantry.

Many members recalled how Leslie welcomed them to the meeting as newcomers, and gay Friends particularly remembered him making them feel at home at a time when this could not be taken for granted. Leslie was also welcoming

presence in the reception area at Friends House when he had retired from work.

In the early 1950s, Leslie was closely involved with the Friends International Centre, then in Tavistock Square, acting as secretary to the wardens, Fred and Dorothy Irvine. The centre's activities involved talks, film shows, cultural visits, discussion groups, excursions and retreats. One of the group's members recalls Leslie at this time as 'a man of instinct, given to often impulsive but always sincere expression, often with considerable spiritual depth.'

In 1966, recalling his experiences of housing poverty in the 1930s, Leslie became a founding member and the first treasurer of the Camden Community Housing Association (CHA). He served as treasurer for twenty years until the growth and success of the CHA required this role to be put in professional hands. During Leslie's time, the CHA came to manage 1,400 units of housing, including 15 special needs projects and two hostels. In 1994, the CHA built the block of eight flats for elderly people and five family flats which bears the name 'Leslie Forster House' next door to Friends House garden.

Leslie worked as a circulation manager of *The Friend*, and had an encyclopaedic knowledge of who was who in Quakerism. 'Who's dead?' he would cheerfully enquire each week as the new edition was going to press.

He was a member of the Quaker Socialist Society and Friends Historical Society, attending meetings of both until well into his nineties. Indeed, he became a photo model of Quaker old age, and his face adorns one of Quaker Life's outreach pamphlets. He was a punctilious attender at meeting until the very last months of his life, although at the end his insistence on turning out in his Sunday best sometimes made him very late. He would arrive in a flurry of walking sticks and hearing aids, at last thankfully docking in a reserved chair with arms opposite the bench. 'Isn't getting old awful?' he would exclaim with a beaming smile. He was prepared for his end, and would occasionally announce

with perfect good humour, 'It can't be long now.' Once asked if he believed in an afterlife, he announced, 'I've never given it a moment's thought.'

Signed in and on behalf of North West London Area Meeting

held at Golders Green on 13 July 2016

Dugan Cummings, Clerk

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## Leonard and Betty Gray

Leonard Gray: 27 v 1920 – 3 ii 2015

Betty Gray: 23 x 1925 – 29 iv 2015

Nobody who knew Leonard and Betty Gray was surprised by their deaths within weeks of each other. They were inseparable companions for over seventy years and their marriage in 1945 coincided with their decision to attend Quaker meeting. Deeply religious all their long lives, they found their way to Quakerism from different Christian backgrounds, having agreed that a shared religious life was an essential part of married life. Their membership of the Religious Society of Friends has since benefited Friends in many different meetings, in London, Essex and Sussex and latterly in Banbury and Northampton. Len and Betty have left us with indelible memories of two Quaker lives faithfully lived, in unity with each other and in harmony with those around them. Neither sought prominence in national service, though Len briefly served on Meeting for Sufferings and both regularly attended Yearly Meeting. Instead, they shared their gifts at local level, serving their religious community in the roles of elder, clerk and treasurer as well as playing an active role in wider community life. Their family life was central, and was equally a model of love in action.

Both Len and Betty came from poor working class families, making their way into professional occupations through educational opportunity and the hard graft of self-education alongside the responsibilities of work and family. Len's childhood in Bethnal Green was a tough one, and by the age of fourteen he found himself taking on the responsibilities of an absent father. Betty's family was better provided for, by a train-driver father and a mother who had worked as a domestic servant in a country house. Both Len and Betty soon proved their academic ability by winning coveted grammar school places, and Betty went on to achieve the distinction of the highest English matriculation marks in all England. Len was also highly intelligent, but poverty denied him a smooth progression into

university. Instead he began work as a docklands clerk, and it was only years later that he was able to study in the evenings to become a Chartered Secretary: a job which drew on his personal qualities of integrity, thoroughness and attention to detail, and was to prove of great benefit to his voluntary work in the community. Betty became a highly competent secretary, trained as a teacher while her children were at school, and eventually taught commerce and office practice in schools and colleges: a job which gave her the satisfaction of nurturing and encouraging girls who had often started out with low ambitions and self-belief. Privately, she dreamed of becoming either a writer or a singer, and poured her talents into three unpublished novels and her local choir, as well as into the creative side of the domestic arts. She loved cooking, knitting, needlework and dress-making and was prodigious in her work-rate. 'Must get on' was one of Betty's favourite sayings, and her loving care extended beyond her son Jerry and her adopted daughter Sue to include her garden and a wide array of household pets.

World War II was a key formative experience for both Len and Betty. Betty was evacuated as a teenager to a new home in a Gloucestershire village, where her domestic labour was exploited but she gained a deep love of the countryside. Returning to Ilford, she expanded her lively engagement with the social and religious life of her local Baptist church, and it was through a 'blind date' on a church outing that she soon met her future husband.

Len's wartime experience was more traumatic. His Anglo-Catholic religious life had always been important to him, and as the 1930s advanced his childhood service as an altar boy and choir member deepened into a religious concern about matters of war and peace.

By 1938 he was finding it more and more difficult to reconcile the teachings of Jesus with the concept of war. He read pacifist literature and attended Peace Pledge meetings, and conversations with two school friends who attended the local Friends Meeting eventually led him to the Bedford Institute. Here he found the support, fellowship and information



which gave him the confidence to declare his conscientious objection. In January 1940 Len left his disapproving employer and family behind to join forestry work at Kershope, north Cumberland, under the pacifist auspices of Pierre Ceresole's International Voluntary Service for Peace. For the first time in his life he found himself undertaking hard manual labour, in the company of university-educated men whose refusal to serve was rooted in both moral and political objections.

The Carlisle tribunal granted him conditional exemption from military service, and later in the war he found himself back in London clearing bombsites, helping out at air-raid shelters, assisting displaced families and at the same time lodging alongside Quakers and serving at Friends House as a volunteer fire-watcher. His war work was eventually managed through the Friends War Victims Relief Service. As he later wrote, 'I still felt myself to be an Anglo-Catholic and attended Mass whenever I could, but I began to find that Quakers somehow had a better grasp on the reality of religion.' The seeds had been sown for Len and Betty's joint entry into Quakerism at the end of the war.

Towards the end of his life Len realised that his personal testimony as a conscientious objector was of interest and importance to later generations. He overcame the inhibitions of deep personal modesty to write and record a reflective account of his experience, published in a local book of Quaker Peace Stories (2010). He also gradually came round to the idea of a national memorial to Quaker non-combatant service, and was present at the inauguration of the Quaker Service Memorial at the National Arboretum in April 2013. During the return journey from this event he reflected upon Sydney Bailey's comment: 'Peace begins within ourselves...Peace is a process to engage in, not a goal to be reached' (*Qf&P* 24.58). Len's thoughts on Quaker pacifism were the fruit of deep experience and wide reading. He found Remembrance Day difficult, respecting the sacrifice of others but complaining that 'it's sort of ambushed to become a militaristic operation'. His personal choice of life-long pacifism had not

been an easy one, but came down to one simple truth: 'if I were to say "Yes, this armed conflict is right", then I'd have to be prepared to kill somebody. And I'm not.'

Len and Betty were never at the forefront of the organised peace movement, but they witnessed to its values from within their family life and their local Quaker meetings. They are remembered by their children as devoted parents, offering the emotional security of fairness and consistency as well as generous love. As her son put it, Betty 'had a real and true belief and was at peace with herself'. This spiritual strength flowed into Meeting for Worship, and Betty's often-poetic ministry was so much enjoyed that in 2007.

Northampton Meeting published a small collection of her favourite poems, with her comments below. Len remained a seeker all his life, sometimes depressed by the world's evils and unable to find solace in worship. Yet his religious insights were deeply valued by those who knew him well. He put his faith into practice through helping to set up an ecumenical rent guarantee scheme in Banbury, perhaps the only one in Britain funded entirely by voluntary donations. After his death Betty said that he 'lived true to what he believed in', and that is a fitting Quaker epitaph.

In small things as well as large, Len and Betty Gray will be remembered as kindly, considerate and deeply spiritual Friends. Betty loved the natural world and Len's humane pacifism was bound up with his sense of awe before the grandeur of God's universe. His favourite biblical quotation placed mankind in a position of due reverence before a God demanding 'Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?' before reminding us of the moment of creation 'when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy' (Job, 38.4-7).

Signed in and on behalf of Northamptonshire Area Meeting

held at Northampton on 10 January 2016

Abigail Maxwell, Clerk

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## Andrée Hastings

18.xi.1924 – 12.viii.2014

Andrée was the younger daughter of Jean and Lucile Inebnit, emigrants from Switzerland. Her father, formerly an officer in the Swiss army, left Lausanne in 1920 where he was persecuted for his pacifist views. Andrée and her sister Colette grew up in Leeds; they were bilingual with dual nationality. The family always retained their Swiss nationality and kept close links with their original village and their grand-parents at Chateau d'Oex. They spent many happy holidays there. As a child Andrée was artistic and showed a talent for drawing. Her picture of her grandfather still hangs in the chalet today.

The Inebnit family's first house was in Lyddon Terrace near the University, where Jean was a lecturer in the French department. Colette and Andrée attended Leeds Girls High School. By the time of WWII the family had moved out to The Drive at Adel and attended the Quaker Meeting on New Adel Lane, established in 1939. Andrée must have attended or helped with the Sunday School which was held at their home. For many years they met in a railway carriage in the garden and Andrée delighted in the family of foxes who had their den beneath it. Edward Starkie of Adel Meeting remembers the railway wagon Sunday-school very well, and how Colette and Andrée's presence, and their parents' welcoming home was very attractive to the numerous children who lived in the neighbourhood at that time. The carriage was still there many years later when the new owners moved in with their children!

Andrée studied at Leeds University during the war, gaining a degree in French and Philosophy. After the war she followed her father's example as a peace maker. Jean Inebnit helped Pierre Ceresole to set up "Service Civil International" and promoted peace all his life. When he went to France to work for Friends Relief Service, Andrée went too and worked for Quakers in Paris from March 1945 to July 1946. One French woman she supported had fallen in love with a German soldier during the war and was persecuted by her fellow citizens when the war

ended. Andrée gave this lady a lot of support and maintained a friendship with her throughout her life.

Afterwards Andrée lectured in French at the Royal Holloway College, part of the University of London. This was a happy time in her life. She continued painting, and her picture of a wild part of the college grounds is still enjoyed by her son today. She met Anthony Hastings who was a brilliant scholar at Cambridge. She recalled a beautiful summer day when Tony took her boating on the river. They must have been a handsome couple. They were married at Brentford and Isleworth Meeting House and later established a home in Leamington Spa. They had two boys, Laurie and Luke. Andrée continued to take an active part in Quaker life and represented Warwickshire Monthly Meeting on Meeting for Sufferings from 1979 – 1985.

Sadly Andrée was widowed when her children were still very young. Several years later her elder son, Laurie, died in a drowning accident while he was on an outdoor adventure holiday in Switzerland. Despite these sorrows Andrée was a joyful person, open and loving to everyone. She maintained a sense of proportion, accepting things as they were, and had a great sense of humour. Luke recalls her courage and lack of self-consciousness dealing with strangers that sometimes embarrassed him! She once approached some hell's angels daubed in swastikas and asked them why they were wearing these symbols and spoke to them about the horrors of the camps and the people she knew who had survived the holocaust, leaving countless loved ones behind. As a more elderly lady, where possible she wouldn't just drop a coin in the cap of someone begging but would invite them for a cup of tea and a bite and listen to their story.

Andrée returned to the family home in Leeds when Colette and her husband Badi Lenz moved to the old family house in Switzerland. Thus Adel Meeting was enriched by Andrée's presence. She radiated warmth and love and spoke of 'this precious meeting'. In her frequent ministry she often seemed transported and filled with the spirit. The children loved to sit and talk with

her after Meeting. For many years she was our representative to 'Leeds 16 Churches Together'.

Luke married Silke, a German student whom he met at university. When they graduated they worked in Leeds for a while, then Luke took a job in Switzerland where they still live with their three daughters. Andrée visited them regularly while she was able. When she could no longer travel she enjoyed their visits to Leeds and was delighted when they eventually took over the family chalet at Chateau d'Oex.

When Andrée's mother-in-law Cherie grew old, she came to live in Leeds, and had a bungalow built for herself in the garden of the old Inebnit family house, where the vegetable plot and compost heap used to be. When Cherie died, Andrée moved into that lovely little bungalow, which became her last home, and the family house was sold. Her garden and garden room were a miniature Nature Reserve, abundant and flowering like her personality.

Following a serious car accident in Canada, Andrée became frail and less steady. She was still delighted to come to meeting when she had a lift and for many years also attended the fortnightly Meeting for Worship at Bedford Court, the Quaker retirement home at Horsforth, Leeds. She had several falls, one of which resulted in a broken femur and a long hospital stay. (The nurses loved her cheerful and outgoing nature.) After that she was never able to walk again. She was housebound for many years and dependent on carers for the rest of her life.

Despite having no family left in Leeds Andrée never lost her interest in other people. She enjoyed visits from folk whatever their age, background or circumstances, invariably leaving the visitor feeling better for their visit. Latterly Adel Friends shared many uplifting Meetings for Worship in Andrée's sitting room where she often regaled them with tales of living adventurously in her youth. While Andrée claimed to never give gifts, she gave the gift of herself unstintingly and could be quietly very generous if she saw a worthy cause.

When confined to home she kept in touch by phone with Luke and his family, and Colette

who was still living in Switzerland. When Colette died in January 2011 Andrée felt the loss deeply; they had been devoted as sisters despite being so different in character and temperament.

We were very privileged to have known her and been loved by her. She touched everyone's hearts. When she died in August 2014 a precious light went out, but our wonderful memories remain. She truly lived up to her Quaker faith:

Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one. George Fox, 1656

Signed in and on behalf of Leeds Area Meeting held at Adel on 11 December 2016

Veronica O'Mara, Clerk

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# Audrey Holding

30.viii.1923 – 16.i.2016

Audrey Holding was one of those Friends who are the backbone of their Meetings. In later years she seldom spoke during Worship or Business Meetings, but we were always aware of her loyal presence and willingness to serve – whether helping in the kitchen or taking the minutes of The Woodlands Quaker Home committee. She lived being a Quaker rather than talking about it. When Dudley Meeting was very small in the early 1990s, a midweek meeting for worship was started which she supported regularly, bringing rolls, homemade biscuits and a thermos of soup. She was not interested in Friends' doctrinal issues, but a good supporter of practical work to make the world a better place.

Audrey's father was a locomotive driver, and she lived as a child in a railway company house in London. Then her school was evacuated during the war, and she often recalled the experience. She was placed in a house full of books, which she said was "sheer bliss", the beginning of a lifelong love of reading. She left school without a Higher School Certificate, but went straight into hospital laboratory work, ending as the Department Head (Haematology) at Wordsley Hospital. When she had to see doctors in later years, she always asked them if they knew their blood group, and was shocked if they could not tell her!

Audrey never married. But when a tiny girl from a problem family was brought into hospital to save her life, Audrey took her into her house "for a fortnight" when it was time to discharge her. Fifty years later she was still providing Maureen with a caring home and loving support. Together they shared an interest in history, music, architecture and theatre. Audrey had never learnt to read music, but in her first few days at school, aged less than five, she astonished her teacher by sitting at the piano and playing tunes. When the teacher asked her where she had learnt to play, she was surprised; she had thought that everyone was born knowing how.

After attending Stourbridge Meeting for about five years, Audrey became a Member sometime

in the 1960s. As a Quaker she valued above all the testimonies to equality and peace. She supported the West Midlands Quaker Peace Education Project from its beginnings. Her passionate belief in equality also led her to be a lifelong Labour Party member, and she could not understand why all Friends did not do the same. She had no time for royalist sentiments. She canvassed at election times and strongly supported the miners' strike. Her vote in the recent Labour leadership election was determined by the hope that the railways might be re-nationalised. But she did not inherit her father's driving skills! A close friend said, "Her parking has to be seen to be believed." She once claimed "I've never been done for speeding," a boast one could well believe, as she was once overtaken by a hearse.

She was warm, witty and kind, and Friends in any kind of need could rely on her help and sympathy. But she could speak her mind, clearly and sometimes sharply. She was a great favourite with her friends' children, who enjoyed working with her in the kitchen. She loved to laugh and gently tease. During her final years, when her memory was failing and she was often confused, she could still make and understand jokes. As a resident in the Woodlands (the same Home where she had served on the committee) the staff particularly remembered her unfailing appreciation of those who cared for her. Her closest friend, Eileen, said, "She spread happiness wherever she went, and that is the ultimate justification for living."

Signed in and on behalf of Central England Area Meeting

held at Edgbaston on 17 September 2016

Vic Grainger, Clerk

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# Christopher Lake

19.iii.1920 – 26.vii.2015

Christopher was born in March 1920 in Teddington, Middlesex, and spent most of his childhood in the Berkshire village of Burghfield Common. His father a fruit farmer, his mother the tenth child of a Yorkshire miller, were both well educated; they enjoyed an active social life, joining with others in the area of a very similar background. The house had a large, wild, garden surrounded by extensive woodland, in which Christopher, an only child, was very happy to play.

Christopher's mother brought him up 'strictly but lovingly'; she took him to Church every Sunday, gave him a good basic knowledge of the Bible, and saw herself to his education until the age of seven. Following a memorable two-month trip to Jamaica with his parents, where he stayed with a mixed race family, he then went to a succession of schools, arriving finally at one where he felt really happy and where the pupils, he reported, came from many different countries – something greatly contributing to his early acceptance of others. At fourteen, he visited Greece and Turkey, thereby beginning a lifelong interest in the Byzantine world. The trip later inspired him to present his own plans for solving the problems in the Balkans, his ideas being passed to the Turkish Ambassador's Private Secretary, who then became a friend and further encouraged his interest. His first steps, it could be said, as a committed peacemaker.

Christopher left school at fifteen and then, following in his father's footsteps, went into farming. But he was not happy; he was again drawn to the Eastern Mediterranean and when sent to Geneva to improve on his French, then travelled on to Turkey for a second visit to this country, staying first with a pen-friend and then with the Private Secretary who had moved back to Ankara. When he arrived back in England after six months away, World War II, very significantly, was on the point of being declared.

Eligible for military service, but now a registered Quaker, the prospect of war produced

considerable challenges for him. After initial conscription for non-combatant duties, and after doubts steadily growing in him about the rightness of his involvement, he eventually 'absconded', became subsequently court marshalled, and then sent to Leicester prison for a three month sentence. He was insistent throughout that the proper process should be followed and was supported not only by members of the Society, but also remarkably by fellow recruits and even his friend, the composer Michael Tippett, who had a similar experience.

In 1943, Christopher became Travelling Secretary of the Friends Peace Committee and soon after joined the League for Democracy in Greece. In 1944, he married his first wife Hazel, the mother of his daughters Eleni and Tina. Unfortunately, the marriage did not last; the many commitments he had then, and was to acquire much later, clearly put a great strain on normal family life. These were years when he was regularly attending peace gatherings of the Peace Association, of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, as well as talks with Greek and Turkish leaders as a member of the Peace in Cyprus Committee.

His connection with Greece was reinforced once again when, in 1968, during the time of its military dictatorship, he was appointed to be chairman of the Greek Relief Fund. Set up to assist families of political prisoners, it involved the difficult and dangerous task of bringing money into the country under the ever watchful eye of the military authorities. Memories that Christopher would often fondly recall were secretly delivering pamphlets that were hidden in his Bible and being returned to Yugoslavia as an undesirable alien, having crossed into Greece and got as far as an exchange bureau. After democracy was restored in 1974, he was one of ten Britons invited to Athens to be honoured and feted for the work they had done.

In 1970, he came to live in the Buckinghamshire village of Wendover, at the foot of the Chilterns, of which he was tremendously fond. At the same time, he began attending the Quaker Meeting in nearby Aylesbury. There he met his soul-mate, Leni, a fellow Quaker. They married

in 1977, but far from a life of cosy retirement, as one might have expected at this particular moment, Christopher's activities on the contrary only appeared to increase. As a member of Aylesbury Meeting, he became a very active Quaker, involved in many Quaker projects. At the same time, he was taken on by Kenneth Robertson, another member of Aylesbury Meeting, to assist him in his music publishing business. His office, at the top of Wendover Windmill, gave views of the Chilterns and the surrounding Vale that helped to reinforce his love of the area.

Music was a great passion. So, too, were other things: he had a lifelong interest in genealogy and served as both Vice-President and President of the Bucks Family History Society. In 1981, he published 'European Rulers 1060 – 1981: a Cross-referenced Genealogy' and produced a beautiful family tree to celebrate Prince Charles marriage to Lady Diana Spencer. In addition to books, to which he was also much attached, his intellectual pastimes included the Workers Education Association and his enduring interest in the Greek language. Right up to his last years, he continued to give lessons in it.

He was the National Trust Warden for Coombe Hill and joined the Chiltern and Wendover Societies. He not only walked, but cleared and maintained the footpaths that he felt himself responsible for. He loved to be outdoors 'doing', and if there were nothing on the hills that was needing his attention, then he would ask younger neighbours if he could prune their fruit trees.

Christopher and Leni loved to travel, especially if their trips, when considered beforehand, could be made to include some spiritual aspect. They walked the Pilgrim routes of Spain; in their late 70s, they travelled to Mount Sinai and to St Catherine's Monastery. Their cottage was always full of interesting and stimulating people, coming from all walks of life, and reflecting much on Christopher's own. A life, it could be said, that had a permanent message, and which perhaps, nearing its conclusion, was never more impressive than when he looked after Leni as her health gradually failed.

Christopher was an unassuming man; the events of his life were always related with modesty and usually with a chuckle coming finally at the end. But behind them was something that was rather more serious that defined him as a person with very deep seated thoughts: his belief in mankind, in the importance of peace and the need to be caring in our approach to all things.

He had, as one Friend has expressed it 'the wonderful knack of establishing meaningful, loving friendships. His combination of listening, wit, good humour and engagement with the world were a very special mix'. In spite of increasing frailty, faith and the Grace of God within him never ceased to shine through, offering strength and inspiration to all those he encountered.

Signed in and on behalf of Chilterns Area Meeting

held at Amersham on 13 September 2016

Val McFarlane, Clerk

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## Marie J. Lasenby

5. ii.1928 – 8 viii.2016

Few of those who have attended Hampstead Meeting in North London over the past forty years will not have been touched in some way by Marie Lasenby. She was a loving and vibrant presence, affecting us deeply through her spoken ministry and the warmth of her welcome at social occasions. Marie really did seem to “walk cheerfully over the world answering that of God in everyone”.

Marie was born in New Zealand. Her family lived in Waharoa, a fairly remote community south of Auckland. She had two younger brothers, and always reminisced fondly about the life they led as children, especially on holiday staying at her aunt’s “bach” by the sea, with stories of boats, fishing and swimming in the warm water. But her childhood was not straightforward. Her father, to whom she was close, died in a shooting accident when she was nine, and her mother looked to her for help and support. Marie developed a very close relationship with the Maclean family. Neil Maclean was a colleague of her father’s, and his daughter Catherine became a lifelong friend, as did Cath’s children and grandchildren. They visited her regularly, and so did many other friends from New Zealand.

After leaving school Marie had jobs in the business sector including with Shell, but came to feel that she wanted to work more closely with people, and aged twenty eight did a two year teacher training course as a mature student, followed by teaching jobs in Auckland. She developed a particular interest in children with learning and behavioural difficulties, and in 1963 came to Britain to increase her knowledge in this area, as well as to see something of Europe. The visit became permanent.

After a summer teaching in Hertfordshire, Marie became a student at Woodbrooke, undertaking biblical and religious studies. Shortly after this she joined the Society of Friends. In 1964, with encouragement from Woodbrooke, she joined Birmingham University’s Centre for Child

Studies, taking a Diploma in Special Education and gaining practical experience of working with disadvantaged children. She became a social worker at a large mental health hospital, but decided she would prefer a career in teaching, and took a diploma in child psychology with financial support from the Friends Education Council.

She then spent ten years as a senior lecturer at an Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) college of education in Deptford, seven as director of the community division of the Centre for Urban Education Studies and three as a district inspector for early years. Throughout her professional career Marie was drawn to young children, especially those who were disadvantaged. She treated children with directness and respect and they warmed to her. After retiring she had many friendships with children.

Marie moved to Hampstead in her late forties, remaining until her death in 2016 aged eighty eight. She joined the Quaker Meeting in 1975. Her gifts were soon recognised. She recounted with some amusement that within six weeks of joining she was asked to be an Elder. Over the next forty years this early confidence was proved right; she was seldom released from this role, often acting as clerk to the group. She also served as clerk of the Local and Area Meetings, showing not only the depth of her spirituality but also her administrative abilities. Even the most fervent Quaker must admit that discussion at business meetings can be discursive, and she could incisively bring this to a conclusion with a definitive summary and a pointer to a clear way ahead.

Outside these formal structures Marie showed a huge interest in and concern for members of the Meeting, offering warm hospitality to newcomers and established friends. She had a particular concern for those facing personal problems and for those who left the Meeting because they no longer felt they were Quakers. Her friends ranged from the very young to the very old, and included many who were not Quakers. Marie had the ability to make all those

who came in contact with her feel they had a special relationship with her, and thereby feel blessed. But she could also practise another Quaker trait – plain speaking. She would not hesitate to point out behaviour that she felt was foolishness. Having done so she was always ready to reach out, reconciliation being another of her gifts.

Marie was also active in the wider Quaker community. She served on the Britain Yearly Meeting panel that selected young people to undertake overseas service for the Society, and was a prison visitor at Pentonville. She had an important role in starting Quaker Quest, which has helped rejuvenate outreach work and has now become a significant part of Quaker life world-wide. She was one of the founder members who saw the need for this, and she clerked the lively core group meetings which, with some bumpy moments, developed the format still used today, over ten years later.

But perhaps her most important gift was her regular spoken ministry. Her subject matter varied widely, drawing on her knowledge of literature, the Bible, Quakerism, and her own experience, often as a child and young person in New Zealand. Her clear, confident voice resounded round the Meeting room, and she always sought to be inclusive of the wide variety of beliefs amongst those attending. One thing she emphasised was that, whilst Quakerism was free from rules and creeds, being a Quaker was a discipline (one that she certainly followed with her regular attendance, her commitment to Quaker activities and her willingness to do whatever was necessary to help those needing her support). She once said that she moved from starting the Meeting for Worship with the words “be still and know that I am God” to “be still”, and finally just “be”.

In her search for the truth Marie would enquire deeply into spiritual, social and political issues. This led both to a continually developing insight and to a humility about what she felt she knew and what continued to open up before her. One example was her search for what she really meant by the word “God”. She eventually concluded

that what she could say was that there was “something other”. She sometimes said that the Sermon on the Mount was all that she felt she needed.

Although Marie was disciplined and serious, she took great joy in life. She found nourishment in art, music and poetry, and delighted in her garden and in the countryside. Most of all she enjoyed friendship; being with her was always fun, the conversation full of laughter. She had many gifts – intelligence, humour, friendship, wisdom and sound judgement.

As Marie reached her late eighties she still led a full life, and indeed was clerk to the Meeting at eighty six. A few months before her death the first symptoms of kidney cancer appeared and she didn't expect to live much longer. She responded by saying how peaceful she felt. She learnt later that she had an aggressive and untreatable brain tumour and responded with the same peaceful equanimity. Her approach to death was an inspiration to those in contact with her at this time. Reflecting her lifelong love of children she asked for her coffin to be bedecked with children's paintings. It was.

After she died the whole Meeting felt bereft. Those who knew her will be left with an enduring sense of loss, but also deep gratitude for the gift of knowing her.

To the doctor who asked if she had a religion she replied “I'm a Quaker. I'm a Quaker through and through”.

Signed in and on behalf of North West London Area Meeting

held at Hampstead on 18 January 2017

David Henshaw, Clerk



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## Maureen Dale/Mandelstam

3.viii.1926 – 15.v.2016

Our dear friend Maureen Mandelstam, who has died in Jerusalem, became a Quaker by conviction in 1981 at Oxford meeting. She was born Mary Maureen Dale in South Africa in 1926 and learned early to deal with adversity: her mother was hospitalised when she was a child and she was brought up partly by two strict great-aunts. Later, Maureen was undaunted when her stepmother opposed her training as a doctor. Maureen financed her medical studies by working in a laboratory and became one of the ‘boffins of 1945,’ as her Medical BSc class was known: a stellar group of medical students who included a Nobel prize-winner and ground-breaking scientists (such as the team that developed the implantable cardiac defibrillator). Maureen became famous in medical circles for her best-selling textbook, *Pharmacology*, written with Dr Humphrey Rang.

While in South Africa, Maureen campaigned actively against apartheid. After qualifying as a doctor, she joined the Institute of Family and Community Health in Durban, which was a progressive, multi-racial training scheme for medical staff to work in a network of health centres throughout South Africa. Maureen wished to work as a family doctor in one of the Institute’s teaching health centres in Durban, but agreed instead to take over for a time the training of prospective laboratory workers. Meanwhile the apartheid government was becoming suspicious of the Institute’s activities. Soon after she was arrested on a demonstration against the pass laws, Maureen was told by a government representative that it was ridiculous to think of blacks being laboratory technicians, that the course must end, and that she would be transferred to a leprosy institute as a laboratory technician.

Maureen promptly resigned, and was invited to join the faculty of the newly-established Durban Medical School to head the sub-division of Pharmacology. She had no experience in pharmacology beyond what she had learned as a medical student, but responded heart and soul to the challenge.

In 1961, she accepted a position in the Pharmacology Department at University College in London, where she taught, researched and gained a PhD in immunopharmacology. Before she retired, her medical research focused on the immunopharmacology of asthma and rheumatoid arthritis.

Maureen’s innovative teaching methods found their way into *Pharmacology*. Now in its eighth edition, the textbook has been translated into Chinese, Greek, Portuguese, Polish, and several other languages and has sold over half-a-million copies. The latest editions include an interactive programme that uses high-level animation and graphic techniques: Maureen was adept with her beloved Apple computer. Knowledgeable conversations with teenagers about the best apps continued into her 80s.

After moving to London, Maureen married Joel Mandelstam, whom she had known in South Africa, and who was Professor of Microbiology at Oxford University. For 25 years Maureen commuted daily by train to London, marking her students’ papers on the way, and developing long-lasting friendships with fellow-commuters. After her retirement, one of them introduced her to *Racing Demon*. She enjoyed it so much that she played regularly with a group of friends. Although the constant travel made it hard to attend Quaker meeting until she retired, Maureen attended regularly thereafter, both at Oxford meeting and with North Oxford Friends.

Susan King writes: “I met Maureen at the Oxford Meeting House and four of us decided to get involved in a “friendly four”. The four were Maureen, Linet Arthur, Rosemarie Marks-Crockett and myself. Our chosen activities were:

1. Getting to know each other.
2. Poetry.
3. We viewed twenty paintings at the Ashmolean Museum and then discussed them.
4. Evensong service at a candle-lit Oxford chapel.

“I feel blessed and am very thankful to have known Maureen.”

Following Joel's death, an old friendship with another South African medic, Joe Abramson, blossomed into romance. Joe had proposed to Maureen when she was 19 and he was 21, but she felt then that they were too young to marry. He asked again, using the same book (Will you marry me?). This time Maureen said "Yes," and they married when Maureen was 85 and Joe, 87. She already had two stepchildren, Michael and Annie, and 4 step-grandchildren from her marriage to Joel. She acquired three more stepchildren – Joe's two sons, Larry and Howie, and his daughter, Cara from his first marriage – as well as 8 step-grandchildren and 5 step-great grandchildren. She revelled in them all.

Maureen moved to live with Joe in Jerusalem, where she was "verrrrry happy", as she wrote on numerous occasions. She was typically brave about her final illness, mentioning to friends only the annoyances of dizziness and difficulties with her sight, without ever revealing the seriousness of her diagnosis.

Judith Atkinson writes: "Although I only got to know Maureen when she was already spending most of her time in Israel, I really valued our friendship. Even at the stage when she was rarely in Oxford, she loyally kept in touch with North Oxford Friends, sending us bulletins and gorgeous photos, so we knew she was keeping us in mind, as we were her.

"Because her flat was just round the corner from our house, she often walked past and it was a joy to welcome her in for coffee and chat about Quakerism, medicine, family relationships and much more. Maureen had lost her first husband to cancer, and I got to know her shortly after my own husband had been diagnosed with myeloma. She was a kind and very sympathetic support to me when I was struggling to cope with shock and fear. As she began to spend more time in Israel, she remained very loyal to Friends in North Oxford and sent regular bulletins about her life there. I think we always hoped she would return for more visits – and we shall miss her."

While Maureen was in Jerusalem, she welcomed visiting Quakers to her home and enjoyed with them short but much appreciated silences and

worship. Gwithian Doswell writes: 'I went to see Maureen in her flat in Oxford, but it was on my short visits to Jerusalem that I connected most deeply with her. During a time which was very challenging for me personally, Maureen's friendship and welcoming smile were invaluable. The profound gathered silences we shared were very precious, a special gift for both of us.'

Linet Arthur writes: "I am really going to miss Maureen. She was such fun to spend time with – her joie de vivre had extended into her 80s and she was a wonderful raconteur. Maureen's intelligence shone through too, not just in her conversation, but also in her medical career. She continued to write and update her textbooks until the last few years of her life. She was exceptionally kind-hearted, always eager to help others. She rescued me when I temporarily had nowhere to live – she invited me to stay in her top flat for as long as I wanted. I am particularly glad that I accepted her offer, because it gave me a chance to get to know her and I feel that she has been a major blessing in my life."

Maureen Mandelstam Dale. Born in South Africa 1926. Died in Jerusalem, 2016.

Record of Remembrance collated by Linet Arthur and edited by Marieke Faber Clarke, August 2016

Signed in and on behalf of Oxford & Swindon Area Meeting

held at Oxford on 7 September 2016

Sandra Figgess, Clerk

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## Sally Mason

23.ix.1943 – 12.ix.2015

From an upbringing with humanist parents, Sally came to Quakers in her teens, through friendship with a girl who lived next door. Throughout her life, she experienced both the pain and benefits of being different, in her gay sexuality as well as through illness. She had to overcome inner barriers as well as negative attitudes in coming to terms with this. In her late forties, after the death of her long-term partner Jacquie, she also knew what it was to suffer the grief of bereavement. From these experiences, Sally gained the inspiration and courage to enable others to reach acceptance in their turn, with her Quaker activities always a part of this healing process.

Friends knew Sally (known nationally as Ruth) through her long service with the Quaker Lesbian and Gay Fellowship (QLGF), valuing her as National Contact, her willingness to listen and her faithfulness as letter-writer. Having first attended Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham as a student in 1981, she was to stay there many times over the years until her death: attending courses, serving as a Friend in Residence, and staying for periods of quiet reflection. In later years she took part in the 'Equipping for Ministry' (EFM), Quaker Concern for Death and Dying and Applesed programmes. In many ways it was her spiritual home.

Over the course of her life, Sally worshipped regularly at Keynsham, Swindon and Ross meetings; and in her last years, as an active member of Forest of Dean meeting.

In reflecting on the grace of God as shown through these many connections in Sally's life, these themes shine through.

### *Her sense of humour*

Recalled by one Friend as a 'person of great integrity, dry humour, care for others and spiritual depth', Sally found humour in many situations; often sharing 'uplifting giggles' with Friends over the small things of life. Her humour could also be quirky: as this suggests,

from the notes she wrote on *Advices and Queries*:

'It is all very well to 'rejoice in the splendour of God's creation' in an "All things bright and beautiful" kind of way, but just admiring it is not enough. Time is ticking away.'

Friends often enjoyed, too, the way that her mischievous imp delighted in wordplay and in puncturing pomposity (sometimes found even among Quakers).

### *Her love of language and writing*

A copious and generous correspondent, Sally kept in touch with Friends through letters and cards, preferring pen and paper to keyboard. She also wrote longer pieces of work: short stories, personal reflections and a novel with a strong Quaker theme. She delighted to share her love of poetry – her knowledge of this 'Soul Food' approached the encyclopaedic.

A teacher by profession with a commitment to traditional Quaker disciplines, Sally provided guidance and instruction on these (to an extent which could sometimes rub others up the wrong way). The care of Swindon meeting's library was a special interest of hers, which she passed on to others. As one Friend recalled:

'This was a job in which we worked well together, and which I inherited when she moved on. I mentally greet her with a smile when I come across her handwriting on file cards and lists.'

### *Her commitment to Quaker faith and practice*

Sally's way of living her faith daily drew others closer to the Quaker family. Her ministry was very much at the practical rather than mystical end of the faith spectrum.

In her more than 35 years' membership of QLGF, she was active at local as well as national level, being in at the start of new groups. She had sensitivity and wisdom in dealing with Friends and others who were having (or being given) a hard time regarding their sexuality. Such support could often lead to an interest in Quaker worship. Looking back on her role as National Contact, Sally herself reflected: 'It is a joy to have answered an inquiry and then maybe a year or

more later to encounter the inquirer at national gathering or YM or at another Meeting.’

Sally was a prison chaplaincy volunteer at Usk Prison. In devoting her EFM project to creating a more accessible version of *Advices and Queries* for the prisoners, her hope was to provide something that would also appeal to the more general enquirer, especially those with no particular faith-base. (‘Walk cheerfully... live adventurously! Living daily as a Quaker’ 2009)

#### *Her courage*

Sally faced a complex range of ill-health in her life, including neurofibromatosis (a genetic condition first diagnosed when she was 5 years old) asthma and chronic fatigue syndrome. She had fears and complaints about her illnesses and could get stuck in a depressed frame of mind about them. In her many conversations over the years with her brother Stephen and in later life with others, she was able to speak of these and, with their support, to hear herself and move on.

Sally gave clear information to her meeting and others about the limits she had to face. At the same time, she kept her guard up, only letting it down towards the end of her life, after the breast cancer diagnosis that she received at the age of 69. In her approach to this, there was a special grace. Writing to *The Friend*, she explained how she wanted not to spend the last years of her life ‘fighting cancer’, choosing instead to make friends with it, and giving it a name – “Carcie”. To her brother she said that she regarded the cancer potentially as a liberation from her other medical problems, both existing and anticipated.

Sally died peacefully in the place where she wanted to be, the Sue Ryder Hospice near Cheltenham, just short of her seventy-second birthday. Her life was a testimony to the Quaker Way.

Signed in and on behalf of Gloucestershire Area Meeting

held at Gloucester on 12 November 2016

Jane Mace, Clerk

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## Margaret Le Mare

14.i.1907 – 8.iii.2014

Margaret Le Mare died on 8th March 2014 at the great age of 107. It is hard to comprehend the length of her life, her first major memory being the sinking of the Titanic when she was five. It was the quality of her life, rather than its length, which was remembered and celebrated at her funeral, which was held at Sibford Meeting House on 15th March, following her burial in the Burial ground.

Margaret joined Friends as a teenager at Reading Meeting. Recently she recalled Friends House being built in the mid-1920s when she was at university in London.

Like so many Sibford Friends, it was Sibford School that brought her here. She served on School Committee from 1948 until she was asked to become a member of staff in 1959; after retiring, she again served on Sibford School Committee. She taught French and Religious Education and was responsible for introducing a language laboratory into the school. She was also a house mother in a boarding house. She retired in 1967, and continued to live in the village well into her 90s. Her attendance at Meeting never faltered, and although she could appear to be somewhat austere, and was a stickler for right ordering, she had a warm and loving heart, and was supportive to Friends in need. She was always willing to welcome us into her home, where Friends gathered each month.

Margaret became a founder member in 1968, holding share certificate #4, of the Quaker Bray D’Oyly Housing Association, where she was secretary for over 20 years.

Margaret loved early Quaker history and was a particular fan of her namesake, Margaret Fell. It was a great joy when, already in her late 90s, she joined us in a Monthly Meeting holiday at Swarthmoor Hall, where she was able to share her knowledge. She had previously given a memorable, thoroughly researched, talk at Armscote General Meeting, on the life of Margaret Fell; about this time she drove a yellow Mini with distinction.

Her commitment to Monthly (now Area) Meeting was huge. She was Clerk of Banbury Monthly Meeting for over 17 years, and instrumental

in helping to create the new Banbury and Evesham Monthly Meeting. She registered all the Monthly Meeting properties with the Charity Commission 15 years before it became mandatory: she was a doer before her time!

She served as Elder, as Overseer, and on many committees. In 1986 she arranged a Monthly Meeting trip to Charbonniers in France. Later, when the Quaker tapestry was displayed at Bayeaux, she took a group to visit that.

Increasing frailty took her to live nearer to her relatives in Adderbury, whence kind Friends brought her weekly to Sibford Meeting. When that became too much for her we met regularly at her Bluebell Cottage home for Meeting for Worship. Margaret was fiercely independent and she was in her late 90s before she decided to get some home help – one hour once a fortnight! At the age of 102 she decided to move into residential care, and the last five years of her life was spent at The Ridings in Banbury where, despite increasing frustration and grumpiness, she received devoted care. She loved visitors, and made us welcome until, at the age of 105, she began to be confused and frightened and her ability to recognise us became patchy. Those last two years were not happy ones for her, nor were they easy for those who cared for her. Because the staff had grown to love and respect her in her earlier time at The Ridings, however, they continued to care for her right to the end with great devotion.

Her funeral and the announcement in *The Friend* brought many memories of her, not least from those she had taught at Sibford and in London prior to that. We learned of an initiative following World War II when she joined a group of educationalists in bringing exhausted and ill German teachers (some of whom had been interned for their anti-Nazi beliefs) to a school in Arnside (near of course to the beloved Margaret Fell and George Fox territory) for a recuperative holiday. From the account received it proved hugely beneficial and led to continued peace building.

Margaret came into membership when she was 15; in celebrating her life, we celebrate 92 years of commitment to Quaker beliefs and values: a life well lived!

Signed in and on behalf of Banbury & Evesham AM held at Evesham on 10 January 2016

Maria Huff, Clerk

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## Michael Keith McPhun

25.iii.1934 – 4.vii.2015

Mike McPhun was for many years the green conscience of Alnwick Meeting. He reminded Friends of their obligations as Quakers for the care of the environment when they sometimes overlooked the consequences of their own actions. He was never puritanical, rather a gentle rebuke, a reminder of Quaker traditions. A kind and thoughtful man, Mike's personal example, coupled with his incisive and analytical thinking, was an often silent challenge to the rest of us to seek the light.

Mike was born in 1934 in Hornchurch, Essex. Living under the flight-path of the German bombers was frightening enough, then a missile burst through their front door shattering his mother's leg. She was in hospital for two years and never walked normally again. This experience of war profoundly affected Mike.

Already keen on electronics and radio, at eleven Mike chose to go to technical college, then an apprenticeship at the Royal Radar Establishment at Malvern. Royal Radar Establishment work was military projects, which Mike refused to do. He won a Technical State Scholarship to Durham University, Newcastle Engineering Department, to study electronic engineering.

While at Malvern Mike joined a youth fellowship and was baptised. On holiday at Lee Abbey Anglican Retreat Centre, Mike went out with the young people. Walking along the cliffs it started to rain heavily, and Mike shared his mackintosh with a young woman. He learned that she was Anne Dove from Newcastle, and managed to get her address. A few weeks later he turned up at her house one Saturday afternoon in his old Austin Seven "Sleeping Beauty". Saturdays soon turned into a regular date (it was the day on which his Whitley Bay landlady left tinned spaghetti for the students' tea).

A year later they were married and shared fifty seven years together. On their fiftieth anniversary they both said that the births of their daughter and three sons were the most important events in their lives.

After graduating, to avoid National Service Mike worked for the Atomic Energy Authority, then the electricity board, then Philips research labs. Mike wanted a fresh challenge and looked at the opportunities in academia.

As a lecturer at Warwick University, Mike's teaching career was guided by his commitment to sustainability, long before the concept gained its current popularity and theological appeal. He was central to the creation of a new and somewhat radical degree programme called Engineering Design and Appropriate Technology (EDAT), which ran for twenty four years. With his foresight and care of his students, Mike undoubtedly influenced many to become engineers with a conscience.

Mike cycled to work, saddle at the highest setting because, as he explained, this meant greatest efficiency of motion and energy. His battered brown leather briefcase was frequently mended to squeeze more life out of it.

He was also focused on everything else: his study, his garden, his tools, his projects. At home in Coventry Mike spent hours winemaking and in the garden, weeding, pruning and planting. When a fox killed all seventeen chickens, he and Anne set to making the best of the situation, maybe making feather pillows as he was enterprising and didn't like waste of any kind.

A shed in the garden was full of mystery: the latest shiny gardening gadgets, tools to work on the house or car, things to extract honey from beehives, all manner of contraptions. If Mike could do it himself he'd buy the tools and do the job! There was always something that needed fixing. He was very skilled, worked with precision and discipline, and was happy to teach his children who have put these skills to good use.

Holidays were always camping in easy range of wet mountains. Dealing with a capsized dinghy on Coniston Water, flying through the air with a tent at Harlech, escapades such as these and a good dose of reasonable risk gave their children a life-long sense of adventure which has led them to fulfilling lives all over the world..

Mike's strong personality and high expectations

were very challenging for his children, but his altruistic values were passed on, and all four have a deep commitment to justice and a wish to help others, are adventurous, curious and creative, and have a confidence in life that is expressed by some as faith.

A sabbatical year took Mike to work at the Centre for Alternative Technology near Machynlleth, West Wales, where he and a colleague started Dulas Engineering, designing things needed in the third world such as lights for school children in Outer Mongolia to do their homework.

Liking the beautiful scenery, Mike and Anne bought a twenty acre holding, part woodland and part riverside meadow. Mike had always been a keen gardener. Believing that many chemical inputs were bad for health, they gardened organically. Organics were just beginning to take off commercially but though he had taught a course in starting a business at Warwick, he soon discovered how hard it is in practice. Mike taught the odd course back at Warwick to help make ends meet. A lack of interest from the Welsh community and a squeeze from the banks eventually made them give up before becoming bankrupt. To support Anne's mother, then in her nineties and still living in Newcastle, they moved to Shilbottle in Northumberland.

Finding work was difficult. First Mike taught at the Cramlington ITEC, rewarding as it enabled lads to learn computer skills and find jobs. He started organic horticulture in Wallsend, where it continues under the wing of Disabled Training. Mike joined a team setting up North East Organic Growers, which still flourishes, serving a wide area.

Mike became involved with Shilbottle Forum, set up to benefit the community of this ex-mining village. The local response to both the Skill Centre and Community Garden was very frustrating, but planting the verges was a great success. For ten years Mike worked to obtain grant funding for a much needed community hall and was finance manager during the building works. Appropriate technology was

very dear to Mike's heart and a wind generator to help pay for the hall's heating costs was Mike's project.

Mike loved music; he played clarinet, saxophone, trombone and piano, jazz and classical music, and over the years was a member of bands, orchestras, and a choir.

Mike and Anne became members of the Religious Society of Friends while in Wales, going to Dolgellau and Bala Meetings, although Mike regularly stood in for the organist at Pennal church. They were glad to meet with local Friends in North Northumberland, who at that time met in each other's homes on Sunday afternoons, which was similar to what they were used to in the Welsh meetings. Mike served Northumbria Area Meeting as an Elder, and member of Area Meeting Nominations Committee. He was a deep thinker, diligent, honest, generous and very kind, a man to respect and treasure and now to miss. He truly did 'let his life speak.' He was ahead of the game and maybe one day the world will catch up with him.

Signed in and on behalf of Northumbria Area Meeting

held at Newcastle on 13 December 2015

Susan Bennett, Clerk

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## John Melbourne

8 viii 1938 – 7 xi 2015

*Brother, sister, let me serve you,  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.*

It was with these words that John Melbourne ministered in Meeting for worship on one of the last occasions, if not the last occasion on which he spoke in meeting. As someone who did not often share his thoughts in meeting it seems apposite that he should have shared these words from a hymn that he had recently heard, which sums up so well his attitude to life and his care for others.

He will be remembered for his sense of fun, his thoughtful contributions to discussions, his caring and concern for others, his empathy and ability to know exactly the right words to say.

John was brought up in Ringwood Hampshire, an only child. After leaving school he studied Politics and Economics at the London School of Economics and then completed his military service. Though he was not a Quaker at that time, the impression was that his military service never sat quite comfortably with him in later life, and he must have been glad to seek out and find other opportunities for service through International Voluntary Service (IVS) and work camps. His interest in IVS was maintained throughout his life. It was at an IVS work camp on Fair Isle that he met Louise who subsequently became his wife. They were married in December 1963.

Soon after their marriage he undertook a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course in Zimbabwe (then Rhodesia) through which he was then committed to undertaking a teaching post in Zambia. One of his colleagues describes him as someone who "had a natural authority as a teacher, firm but kind and popular with the students and the staff. His commitment against racism was total – he was active when studying at the University of Rhodesia and Nyasaland before coming to Kalomo and he chose to keep away from the "white" club in Kalomo. He followed up his interest in voluntary service ...when the Ministry of

Education decided to organise “nation building” workcamps bringing together students from different provinces.”

John and Louise returned from Zambia in 1968 with two sets of twins, and after a brief spell in Northumberland, settled in the Nailsea area where, initially through the involvement of the family at the local Quaker meeting, they came into membership. John remained in teaching in Nailsea until he took early retirement in 1988. A Friend from Nailsea described him as someone who was fully involved in the life of the meeting and remembers his ‘careful and considered contributions when he was clerking the Monthly Meeting General Committee, dealing with finance and property matters’ – not to mention his distinctive black italic handwritten minutes. (A practice he continued as clerk to Minehead meeting for some time after most others had taken to word processing.)

There followed a new phase in John’s life in Bristol as warden (together with Louise) at Frenchay Meeting and in working with the elderly in occupational therapy at a nearby hospital. He was said to have an ‘instinctive feel for wardening’.

John continued this service to others with Social Services part time after he and Louise moved to live in Dunster and become part of Minehead Meeting in 1996. He also became involved in bereavement counselling; his sensitivity and ability to empathise would have fitted him well for that role.

He served the meeting in various capacities over the years as clerk and elder for several years (and both at once at one time). He carried the same natural authority into his role as clerk, never hurried and always with good humour. As clerk of Area Meeting he is remembered with warmth and affection. ‘He was always there with a warm smile and encouraging words’ and had an ‘ability to make you feel happy with yourself’. As an elder he dealt with more than one sticky situation with great tact, care and compassion knowing exactly the right words to say.

He was also active in many ways in the community; quick to volunteer when a local Amnesty group was set up, continuing with Cruse bereavement counselling until a few

months before he died, and in the University of the Third Age (U3A) in Minehead where he was always a welcoming presence at coffee mornings.

He also entered into the social life of the meeting with enthusiasm, not least taking part in entertaining sketches at socials. He was an active and fit person walking the dog, playing cricket in his village team until the year before he died. When he led Friends on walks he was always aware of the least able in the group, would set an easy pace and pause and chat to allow people to catch up. In the same way he would walk round to a disabled Friend’s house to walk back with him to his own house when discussion groups took place there. He loved his garden and the meeting often benefitted from the jams and chutneys that he made from the produce.

John had always had a love of the theatre and volunteered behind the scenes and at front of house in the local, volunteer run theatre.

Above all he was a committed family man much involved in the lives of his children and latterly with the happy addition of grandchildren to the family. One friend says ‘both John and Louise had presence – a loving and calming atmosphere about them which sprang from a contented family life and a harmonious attitude which must have grown from their Quaker faith.’

Although he actively took part in discussion groups he was not one for putting forward strongly held beliefs; unconcerned with the articulation of religious concepts, his values were demonstrated in his manner of living and concern for others. He lived the life to which we, as Quakers, aspire. One of John’s favourite extracts from the writings of George Fox was the well known:

*...be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may preach among all sorts of people, and to them; then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in every one.*

Many of us will remember John with great warmth, walking cheerfully over the world and letting his life speak.

Signed in and on behalf of West Somerset AM held at Minehead on 10 July 2016

Christina M Lawson, Clerk



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## Connor Edward (Ed) Morris

24.ix.1952 – 03.vii.2015

Although Ed did not become a member of the Religious Society of Friends until 1984 or thereabouts he was, if Quakers are identified by how they live and act, a Quaker all his life. Many who have had the good fortune to know him will be conscious of how much that knowing has enriched their lives.

Like his father, Ed studied medicine at St Bartholomew's Hospital, London. He then undertook his house jobs at the Royal Free in London and Addenbrooke's in Cambridge. After completing his General Practitioner (GP) training, he and his wife Lesley and daughter Katy were off in 1982 to South Africa where he practised medicine in two bush hospitals, one in The Drakensberg and another near the Swaziland border. The contrasts between these hospitals and those in the UK made a lasting impression on both Ed and Lesley.

On returning to the UK they moved to Witney, Oxfordshire, in 1984, where Ed took up a post at the Nuffield Health Centre as a GP. He remained here for the rest of his career, latterly as senior partner. Ed's reputation was as a committed and compassionate doctor.

Lesley, who had some experience of Quakers in her youth, started to attend Burford Quaker Meeting and Ed soon joined her. They became members in 1984. Later the Morrises visited Africa again; this time to Kenya. This trip gave his children, Katy and now Tilly, the experience of a culture that was so different to that in the UK but it also encouraged in them what he had in abundance, a sense of adventure.

Burford Friends have happy memories of Ed's involvement with the Meeting during the time he was a member there and the thought of him brings a smile to many a face. During coffee after Meeting for Worship, wherever Ed was in the room there was always a lively conversation and a sharing of interests. One Sunday, when Ed and Lesley were expecting their first grandchild, he brought for us all to see the rocking cradle

which he had lovingly made in preparation for the baby's arrival. On another occasion Ed gave his time to help organise a residential weekend for Friends in the Monthly Meeting at Sibford School. Part of his contribution then was to run a session on bread-making, another example of his creativity and his willingness to share his skills.

For many years Ed was a strong supporter of the Anthony Nolan Trust which was formed in 1974 to create a register of donors for those people with blood disorders in need of life-saving bone marrow transplants. As a doctor Ed was well aware of the difficulty of finding the right genetic match between donor and patient so he signed up to be added to the register of potential donors. This led later to his being asked by the Trust if he were willing to donate some of his bone marrow, which matched the tissue of a patient in America. Characteristically Ed agreed to undergo the procedure, which was not without risk. In addition to this he regularly took part in the annual bike ride to raise funds for the Anthony Nolan Trust.

Ed made two visits to Israel/Palestine via Quaker Voluntary Action. He was very disturbed by what he found but again characteristically he did something about it in that through his actions local Quakers were able to purchase Zatoun Olive Oil and other products of Palestine. Further, he was known to go into Waitrose and surreptitiously stick 'buy Palestinian' labels on Israeli goods. It is not surprising that one of Ed's GP colleagues described Ed as a 'moral and rebellious man.'

When Witney Local Quaker Meeting became established Ed and Lesley transferred their memberships there. The new Quaker venue attracted newcomers and one, on meeting Ed for the first time, admitted to feeling a little awestruck. However, Ed's spontaneous friendliness and sense of humour soon dispelled such reservations. His combination of gravitas and light-heartedness proved to be a powerful and welcome mixture.

Ed's retirement was only partial in that he served as a medical adviser to an appeals panel where

the cases were heard of those whose disability pensions were being threatened by Government welfare cuts. As with Ed's other acts of care and compassion one heard of this activity only in passing. Sadly his life was cut short when, aged 62, he died in a microlight accident. During his funeral service in St Mary's Church Witney, conducted in part in the manner of Friends and in part by his cousin the Bishop of Reading, ex-patients or their family members stood up spontaneously across the church to testify to the quality of attention and care he had afforded them across three decades.

In this testimony Connor Edward Morris has been referred to simply as Ed. This informality is totally in keeping with his lack of pomposity and he would surely approve. Ed was a man who lived life to the full and who radiated joy and compassion in equal measure.

Signed in and on behalf of Oxford & Swindon Area Meeting

held at Swindon on 12 November 2016

Sandra Figgess, Clerk

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## Margaret E (Mel) Nash

19 ii 1923 – 30 iv 2015

Margaret E Littleboy (known since her childhood by those initials as "Mel") was born in 1923, the daughter of Wilfrid and Winifred (nee Edminson) Littleboy of Birmingham. From the outset she was steeped in Quaker faith and practice: her parents both came from longstanding Quaker families, she grew up in Selly Oak Meeting, and her father was a seasoned Friend who served as clerk of Meeting for Sufferings from 1928 and then as clerk of Yearly Meeting from 1934 to 1942. These early experiences were to resonate throughout her long life and service among Friends.

She was educated at The Mount (the Quaker girls' boarding school in York, with which she maintained a lifelong connection) and went up to St Hilda's College, Oxford where she read Philosophy, Politics and Economics and took a two-year wartime degree. After training as a hospital almoner, Mel moved to London in 1944 and worked at the Brompton Hospital for chest diseases, caring for the families of patients there and observing how her job was transformed by the first effective antibiotic treatments for tuberculosis. It was while she was living at the Penn Club (a Quaker-run residential establishment in Bloomsbury) and singing in the international choir there that she met Kevin Nash, an Irish civil engineer who had joined Friends after being educated at the Quaker Newtown School in Waterford. Mel and Kevin were married in Dublin in 1947. They lived initially in London but moved in 1954 to Shandon, a house in Jordans village in Buckinghamshire where they spent the rest of their lives. They had four children – David, Bridget, Deb and Beth – and nine grandchildren. Kevin's sudden death in 1981 on his 59th birthday tragically cut short a partnership which had become a bedrock of Jordans Meeting. With the support of the family and friends, Mel bore this loss bravely and stoically in public, but deeply felt the impact of early widowhood and the premature closure of a chapter of life which had seemed to have so much more to offer in the community of Jordans and beyond.

And it was in Jordans that the rest of Mel's life was rooted, though her service often took her well beyond the village. Among her many interests, she had four particular passions which became intertwined: Quaker community and service; music; education; and walking in the countryside.

For Mel, the Society of Friends formed part of her extended family, and she faithfully served it in many different ways, locally and nationally. At various times she was an Elder and an Overseer: to eldership she brought a thoughtful and well-read approach to consideration of spiritual issues, and her pastoral care for others and her ready hospitality were widely appreciated fruits of her overseer role. She was an eager participant in study groups, sharing her experience and insights from the Christian roots of her Quaker faith. This was reflected, too, in her vocal ministry in meeting for worship which always seemed carefully considered, rightly ordered and profoundly spirit-led, while acknowledging that there are not always clear answers to fundamental questions. She took a lively interest in and gave encouragement to others in Jordans Meeting, whatever their age or stage in their spiritual journey, and would take first time attenders under her wing, treating them at once as part of the community. She was not afraid to speak her mind, and to uphold what she felt to be the Quaker principles that infused her life. As a long-serving member of Jordans Burial Ground Committee and a first point of contact following a death, Mel was noted for the kindly and helpful way in which she responded to the needs of bereaved families, striking just the right note.

She had a particular interest in Swarthmore care home in nearby Gerrards Cross, established by Friends: she was a member of its management committee for the 1970s decade, and its chair from 1987 to 1993, dealing sensitively with several crises during this time. For many years she was actively involved in the eldership and oversight committee for the small worshipping group of Friends at Swarthmore, under the care of Jordans Meeting. She also served as clerk of Jordans Meeting for a period in the 1980s. Mel was perhaps less visible at the national level, though she regularly attended Yearly Meeting and served both on Meeting for Sufferings and on Quaker Committee for Christian and Interfaith

Relations, the latter giving her special delight in the opportunities for dialogue in bringing together different faith groups. Latterly she had been working with her family to transcribe her father's letters from prison to which he had been sent as a conscientious objector during World War 1. Mel saw this as an important documentary record of the practicalities of Quaker witness in action.

Her passion for music extended throughout her life, and was infectious. Having grown up in a musical household and been encouraged by both of her parents she became an accomplished pianist. However, she preferred playing as part of an ensemble or accompanist to solo performances. Her delight in music made her an excellent teacher who taught the piano to countless children, and adults too, over more than fifty years. She played the violin in the Jordans orchestra (with Kevin playing the cello), and sang in the madrigal group that they founded. Mel with others organised an annual children's concert in the village hall, and the musical elements of the children's play performed for the Gift Service at Christmas. She started the tradition of annual carol singing at Shandon which she accompanied on the piano – few will forget her virtuoso rendition of "The 12 days of Christmas" with which the evenings concluded. She shared her love of music with others, and especially enjoyed the Bach Choir's performances of Bach's St Matthew Passion. She and the family were enthusiastic supporters of the Jordans Music Club's summer concerts in the Mayflower Barn.

Education was another passion. Mel greatly valued the opportunities offered by Quaker schools, and served as a member of the joint school committee (governing body) for Bootham and The Mount in York. For many years she was treasurer of the Lydia Rous school bursary fund. She was President of The Mount Old Scholars Association in 1980 where she set up a Music Fund. Later in the decade she became a member of Sibford School committee where again her wisdom and far-sightedness, as well as her concern for interfaith dialogue and her ability to help resolve differences, were brought to bear in the committee's business, including the appointment of a new headmaster. She also helped the School to buy a grand piano. Kevin had been a governor of Leighton Park School,

having just become chairman of its Board at the time of his death; Mel continued the family interest in the School by serving for several years as a representative on its General Meeting, where her wise and moderating presence was felt. She also organised the annual “pudding Sunday” when Leighton Park pupils visited Jordans for meeting for worship followed by a picnic lunch in which the sumptuous desserts were provided by local Friends. In her eighties she worked as a volunteer at Jordans Nursery School where she played the piano. Mel loved working with children and took the children’s meeting at Jordans for many years. She never underestimated their abilities and covered a wide range of topics including John Bunyan’s “Pilgrim’s Progress”.

Amidst this active life of service to others, Mel also relished simple personal pleasures, notably walking in the countryside – whether with her dog in the rural surroundings of Jordans or more distantly in the west of Ireland where Kevin had built a house which she readily shared on holidays with family and friends.

Throughout her life Mel continued to show a deep and loving interest in the welfare and development of others, particularly children. She welcomed others’ friends as her own, making them feel part of the family. Life as a spiritual journey, informed by the Christian origins of Quakerism, was at the heart of her faith and relationships. She was a great talker and listener, always ready with a smile. She was known as a “healing” person. She personified all that is best in life, in human relationships, and in Quakerism. Knowing her has been a great and enriching joy for so many.

In the last few weeks of her life as she became more frail, Mel was unable to attend meeting for worship at Jordans as regularly as she wished. A short meeting for worship was specially arranged for her on one weekday afternoon in 2015 at the Meeting House, and her face lit up as she experienced again the spiritual fellowship among familiar Friends. She died at home that evening, upheld by the community she so loved. Truly was the grace of God shown through her life.

Signed in and on behalf of Chilterns Area Meeting

held at Chesham on 15 January 2017

Val McFarlane, Clerk

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## Anna (formerly Ann) Needham

5 .i.1938 – 27.v.2016

Anna was an inspiring and supportive figure in Carlton Hill Quaker Meeting. Immediately she transferred from Ackworth in 2005 there was no resting, she set to living her Quaker values with steadfast energy and enthusiasm.

Born in Bradford, followed by sisters Christine and Elizabeth, they all lived over the family’s bakery and shop in Five-Lane Ends. She gained an entrance to the prestigious Bradford Girl’s Grammar School at eleven. In 1952, her father moved the family to Frinton-on-Sea, where they established a continental bakery and patisserie with a cafe attached. This was galling for Anna, who had to transfer to a co-educational high school in Clacton-on -Sea for her sixth form years. The children worked summer holidays in the bakery, shop, cafe or doing the business accounts over the next eight years.

Perhaps it was from her dad that Anna inherited the adventurous gene. After earning a general degree in English Literature, Drama and Philosophy at Bristol University, she gained a diploma in Social Administration at the London School of Economics (LSE) to become a social worker. She took a position in a psychiatric hospital in Denbigh, North Wales and moved to “New Town” Harlow, where she found her first community of Friends. Anna returned to LSE for her Psychiatric Social Work diploma and joined the Quaker community of Toynbee Hall, East London (residency required a give-back of service to the community) where she lived for seven years and met her husband-to-be, Grenville, a Unitarian. They had a Quaker wedding in 1968, where all attending signed the wedding certificate. Grenville was probably responsible for the Unitarian touch of a quartet playing classical music in the courtyard. Anna’s have- a-go spirit resulted in the sewing of her own, 60s fashion, wedding dress the resultant hemline being rather shockingly shorter than intended.

In 1969 Anna and Grenville moved to Rothwell and from there Anna accompanied Grenville to

a Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) teaching post in Malaysia with her children Rosie aged 3 and Tom 6 months. On return to the UK four years later, Grenville started a teaching post at Ackworth Friends School and Anna recommenced social work at Pinderfields Hospital. Whilst living at Ackworth Anna put into practice Advice Number 26 to the full: make your home a place of loving friendship and enjoyment. New Year Curry Days live in friends' memories. Her generous and open spirit helped to bring Ackworth Friends School and Meeting together by holding Open Evenings for 6th formers to meet with Friends at her home. Anna's proof of living the testimony is warmly remembered by a friend who with her son was given shelter and space at a traumatic period of her life. Anna later reconfigured the house structure to provide more space for the friend and for her own counselling practice. As a social worker at Pinderfields hospital, she was very involved with the Head Injuries Unit and was instrumental in the founding of the head injury support charity 'Second Chance' raising funds for it using recipes she had learned in Malaysia. Her time in Malaysia gave her experience of other faiths which was carried into her ministry.

She also brought practices from Maine to Ackworth Meeting, introducing them to the Friendly Eights programme which continued for many years. Anna was confident in speaking and living her truth. She spoke clearly and calmly to the presiding magistrate before being fined at Barnsley for the withholding of taxes as part of the Peace Tax Campaign. When in her later years the Meeting took on 'Living Simply' Anna tenaciously set about a carless life even cycling across London to Kilburn to attend her counselling course.

Anna's lively, generous and supportive interest in others continued even when her brain health was deteriorating. She was resolute that parents encountered no financial discouragement from attending Quaker trips/weekends away and was a vital cheerleader in the early days of Carlton Hill Teenage Meeting. Also halfway through BYM 2011 (Canterbury University campus) she invited Carlton Hill friends to her room for a

discussion forum to share their thoughts of BYM so far and that autumn troubled to make the bus journey to see a newly house-moved friend, bringing half of her newly baked Christmas cake as a moving in gift.

After nursing Grenville through the cancer which ended his life in 1999, Anna returned to Maine, to the cottage they had built so that she and Grenville could be close to Rosie, their grandchildren and their beloved Maine countryside. She embarked on several weeks' solo journey camping with her canoe, along the Appalachian Way. Around this time, after a lifetime of helping to others to develop, Anna made further quests for meaning and made changes in her life. She joined a Women's Group in Bradford where she met Jill who was to become her next partner and changed her given name of Ann to Anna. With her characteristic gift for outreach she also set about learning Spanish to be able to converse with daughter-in-law Llanos and her family when she visited them in Spain.

Anna met head-on the fact of her memory deterioration and pursued medical professionals for appropriate assessment, diagnosis and whatever treatment was available. In right ordering, Anna made courageous adjustments to her changed circumstances: moving out of her down-sized house in Leeds to a Quaker run sheltered housing complex in Philips Court, Horsforth, then into the main house, Olive Lodge, and finally to Kingston nursing home in Roundhay.

Anna embodied her Quaker values in her daily life which was generous and fulfilled. She had a gift for helping others to fulfil theirs.

Signed in and on behalf of Leeds Area Meeting  
held at Adel on 11 December 2016

Veronica O'Mara, Clerk

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## Winifred Page, nee Dunn

28.v.1921 – 12.vii.2015

Winifred was the second of five children and became a lovely “big sister” for her younger siblings. The family lived in Essex. Winifred started her career at Ilford Public Library in 1937 where she stayed for nine years becoming in charge of the Lending Library staff during the war years. In 1946, following the return from the war of her male colleagues, she decided to move on and joined the British Council as a librarian. Her first posting was to Trinidad and then Nigeria from 1952, where she met John Page. The couple married in 1954 and continued to live and work in Nigeria until the 1970s when they returned to the United Kingdom. Winifred trained as a primary school teacher, which she loved, and taught in Bristol and Dursley. On retirement Winifred and John moved to Kings Stanley.

Having previously worshipped with other Christian faith groups, Winifred started to come to the Religious Society of Friends in the 1980s. She came into membership by conviction on the sixteenth of January 1988 and maintained her commitment throughout the last third of her life.

After caring for John until his death in 1995, the strength of Winifred’s commitment to Quakers and specifically to Nailsworth Meeting and Gloucestershire Area Meeting led her to set up home close to the Meeting House at Nailsworth in 1997, which enabled her to engage fully with the Meeting.

Winifred was lively minded. She enjoyed feeling of use to the Meeting and over the years was an elder, overseer, clerk, librarian, supporting friend (for Friends expressing an interest in membership), member of the children and young people’s committee, facilitator of meetings for learning, the first enabler of our “Getting to Know You” sessions and the author of a history of the first 100 years of the Meeting. All these roles were carried out methodically, with care, attention to detail and according to Quaker discipline. She upheld Quaker values and ways and, while sometimes concerned that she would be experienced as “bossy”, worked tirelessly to support right ordering in decision-

making and action. She was a guiding star and Friends responded to her integrity, wisdom and experience. It was with sadness that she felt she should gradually relinquish most of her work within meeting but she was always a welcoming presence in meeting.

She struggled with the peace testimony but came to view peace as a path and a way of life. She faithfully attended the meeting for worship at the Fairford US Air Force base until it was laid down.

Winifred has expressed that she had no real sense of a personal God, which she thought was a failing on her part. Those who have been fortunate in knowing her have been aware of a quality of Grace, which is a beauty of the personality. She had a present-ness, was all there in the moment with her complete attention. She had great sensitivity to the here and now, the time and place that the spirit within can become visible. She had a huge warmth of spirit and was a spiritual and friendly guide.

She had a gift for friendship. She had a rare ability to listen lovingly to the confidences people shared with her and to treat everything she heard with discretion. She did not create dependency, while herself being totally dependable. Surprisingly, for someone who meant so much to so many people, in so many different circumstances, there was a kind of personal integrity that made her able to remain available to everybody without demanding anything back. Her favourite text from *Quaker faith & practice* was 10.01 “Our life is love and peace and tenderness...”

Winifred became increasingly frail over the last two years of her life. She continued to express her views and wishes clearly and to carry out actions to leave her affairs in good order. She knew that she was loved and found the strength to reach out to and thank others for what they had given her. She also stated clearly that she needed time to herself as well and ultimately that she needed to feel that she could let go and asked for her need for stillness to be heard.

Signed in and on behalf of Gloucestershire AM held at Staunton on 8 May 2016

Jane Mace, Clerk

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## Norman Peacock

14 viii 1925 – 10 viii 2015

Norman was born in 1925, and died on 10 August 2015, four days short of his 90th birthday. While a schoolboy at West Hartlepool Grammar School, he enjoyed gardening, and had an allotment to grow vegetables for his family. He won a scholarship to study physics at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. Here he joined the rambling club, which led to his interest in English country dancing and Morris dancing.

Norman and Margaret met in the Department of Textile Industries, in Leeds University, and they were married in 1959. Norman's 3-line diary entry for that day reads: 'Fine – Wedding day – went well!'

He was appointed lecturer in textile physics in the then Royal College of Science and Technology in Glasgow, which became Strathclyde University, and where he worked for 59 years. He became a member of the Society of Friends in 1970.

Norman served in many capacities: in Milngavie as treasurer of the Lib Dems; and as secretary of the Community Council, whence he submitted written and verbal arguments to the planning authorities. He also worked for the Association of University Teachers in Strathclyde University for many years after he had retired from his university post, using its resources to help members who were threatened. The Principal referred to him (affectionately?) as "my hair shirt". His long memory of previous activities was highly valued in all the bodies on which he served.

When the new Meeting House for Glasgow Meeting was sought the jumble of opinions illustrated Quakers at their most disparate but it was the quiet work of Norman analysing the practical details that made the final decision acceptable for everyone. On the property committee of Glasgow Meeting he helped to search for their present premises and set it up with DIY constructions. Allegedly his answer to any problems in the new Meeting House was: "I have a bit of wood..."! When a home for the library was urgently needed Norman again took responsibility for the upkeep of the books and precious records, making a new layer of shelves up to the ceiling.

Norman Peacock – the intrepid pilgrim – was the still-centre around which many an unexpectedly long-lived organisation rotated. When Bearsden and Milngavie Quakers met for the first time to see if there could be an off-shoot of Glasgow Meeting it was the presence of Norman that gave it viability – his steady Quakerly governance and financial probity instantly guaranteed its thriving against the odds. He was crucial in encouraging the holding of our General Meeting family weekends at Bonskied and later Kindrogan. These provided an environment where all ages could flourish in beautiful countryside.

When Norman spoke in Meeting for Worship one was aware of a deeply spiritual mind at work quietly analysing the very essence of his theme – holding current life up to the light of eternal truth. No person ever felt slighted by this humble man even if they held differing views. He was well-grounded, but not overly serious. He had a lively sense of humour and relished pointing out the absurdities in politics, and elsewhere – but never with any malice. Although Norman didn't speak about God or use God language openly, his life and actions were always driven and guided by the Spirit. A Milngavie Friend said: "it was mainly Norman's ministry which convinced me that this was the right place for me."

Norman's funeral was a joyous celebration of all aspects of his life, when Morris dancers and sword dancers came to Scotland from throughout the UK. They not only sang a traditional North country farewell during the Meeting but later performed for us, involving us all in the dancing which was such an important part of Norman's life. To quote one of the Morris men: 'Norman was the one that despite his learning, always made it fun'.

He was a loyal and good husband to Margaret, father to Sheila and Judith and friend to everyone. And he loved to visit his talented young grand-daughters in the United States, and later for them to visit him in Scotland, when his face would light up – especially when they danced or played their violins. Norman's vision and example will be their inspiration and ours.

Signed in and on behalf of West Scotland AM held at Castle Douglas on 9 April 2016

Michael J. Hutchinson, Clerk

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# Audrey Price

1944 – 2014

Audrey was a quiet and sensitive person. It seemed her favoured means of communication was through her many and varied artistic and gardening activities, and her ideas were invariably expressed through using her skills in these areas. She not only produced her own paintings and creative textiles to a very high standard, but she spent many hours helping others, both children and adults, to enjoy and develop their own creativity. She was unusual for a Quaker in often not being comfortable with expressing herself verbally, but she enjoyed the written word, and wrote creatively about her experiences.

She was inventive in “doing something” either by herself or with others, to foster a caring and receptive environment for people to feel secure enough to contribute. Quite often little caring notes would appear through the post if she knew you were feeling low. She often organised simple baked potato lunches, visits to gardens and craft and felting workshops, the results of which will be treasured by Farnham Meeting for years to come. Her genuine care and empathy were shown through a quiet and humble manner and conveyed with gentle humour, coupled with a very realistic, no-nonsense approach. If she thought something wouldn't work she said so without any malice and because of her loving attitude it was easy to accept.

She liked to act rather than talk about something, which is why business meetings were not her thing, although having her in the meeting helped to move matters on amicably because her quiet background actions drew people together and made them feel valued.

Outwardly, Audrey was always positive and found joy in simple things, but having experienced significant suffering herself, she actually had a deep understanding of life's harsh realities. She was not easily shocked.

This quote about Elizabeth Fry taken from *Q&P* 23.99 seems to describe Audrey's way of dealing with life:

There was no weakness or trouble of mind or body which might not safely be unveiled to her. Whatever various or opposite views, feelings or wishes might be confided to her, all came out again tinged with her own loving, hoping spirit.

Bitterness of every kind died; when entrusted to her, it never reappeared.....

She always could see hope for everyone; she invariably found or made some point of light.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Audrey's approach to life was shown by the way she unobtrusively managed her own illness and dying. Her wonderful spirit shone through, and despite her suffering, she continued always to think of others before herself. During her last months, many who visited came away feeling calmed, inspired and full of admiration for her strength of spirit. Her husband of forty nine years, John, commented that they had gone on this journey together and ironically he “could not have got through it without her”.

She found beauty all around her, even in places others would not have bothered to look. Her garden, though on the wild side, was a treasure trove to her of beautiful things waiting to be discovered and harvested. She loved life. One of our most abiding memories of Audrey will be of her (almost) girlish giggling and the way in which she always brought a splash of colour into our meeting house.

It was part of her nature to walk “cheerfully over the world answering that of God in everyone.”

Signed in and on behalf of Surrey & Hampshire Border Area Meeting

held at Guildford on 24 January 2016

Cindylou Turner-Taylor, Clerk



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## Norman Richardson

6.i.1928 – 6.iii.2016

Norman was born in Hereford into a family of devout Exclusive Plymouth Brethren. His father had been imprisoned as a Conscientious Objector during World War One. It was an unusual childhood. He won a scholarship to Hereford Cathedral School, but as a member of the Plymouth Brethren was not allowed to attend Christian Assemblies or Cathedral Services. In his home there was no radio, no newspapers and no contact with the outside world beyond their small exclusive community. As a special dispensation Norman was allowed to go to the public library for his studies and he found this a doorway to an enchanting world where he was soon delving into religion, philosophy and psychology. It was here that he read about the Society of Friends, but thought they no longer existed.

In his early 20s he discovered there was a Quaker Meeting in Hereford and it was then that he broke free from the Plymouth Brethren by attending his first Meeting for Worship. This led to a split in the family as his father would never eat with him again. He had burnt his boats and experienced feelings of utter loneliness and vulnerability.

The stress of all this took its toll on Norman's health and he contracted tuberculosis and was seriously ill, spending long periods of time in hospital. During this time he records a powerful experience when, on recovering from a general anaesthetic, he had an intense feeling of all the evil in the world threatening to destroy trust and love. In his extremity he called out, "I will go on loving, come what may!" The feelings the experience evoked never left him, and throughout his life he remained convinced of the power of love above all else.

The family could not afford for Norman to stay at school or go to university where he wished to study medicine, so a job was found for him in a firm of quantity surveyors. This set him on a course to become a quantity surveyor, choosing to work in the National Health Service where he progressed to become Head of Design for the large

South West Region. His skills as a quantity surveyor, manager and his knowledge of buildings and contracts have been put to good use by Friends.

As a member of different Premises Committees he was involved with major building projects at Hall Green, Redland, Horfield, and Ross on Wye Meeting Houses as well as housing for elderly people at the West of England Friends Housing Association and Leicester Quaker Housing Association. He has been a member of several Central Committees and Charitable Trusts in particular Advisory Committee on Property, Finance Committee and he was a member of Meeting for Sufferings.

Norman and his wife Doreen married at Hall Green Meeting in 1954 and in 1955 they both became members of the Society of Friends. Drawing on his interest in all the world faiths and his conviction that the religious search was common to all humankind, Norman became one of the first members of the Quaker Universalist Group and was the point of contact when the first advertisements appeared in *The Friend*. He found it pleasurable responding to enquirers and the couple enjoyed serving as hosts when the annual conferences took place.

As well as Norman's practical skills and advice, Local Meetings have benefitted in other ways. Following Doreen's untimely death in 1987, he married Julia the next year and the couple moved to Leicester as wardens of the Meeting House. The Clerk at the time remembers when they "arrived at Leicester like a burst of fresh air and sunshine – we couldn't believe our luck!" Later they were to move to Ross on Wye where the Meeting appreciated their welcoming presence in the adjoining flat. Norman was wise and gentle and treated everyone with kindness. Callers would find a willing listening ear, though he sometimes thought he might be hearing a made up story!

Norman had an affinity with older people. He served on the committees of the two Friends Housing Associations as Chairman and with Julia on the Committee on Care for Elderly People. Later they were both involved in the Spirituality and Ageing project and felt privileged to have conversations with older

Friends. When the findings of the group were published in the form of the Elders & Overseers publication, "This is Who I Am" Norman's hands graced the front cover.

Another form of service was as Quaker Prison Minister at Ashwell Prison. At a time when prison chaplaincies were actively engaged in becoming multi-faith the Anglican Chaplain valued Norman's quiet support. Later when Julia became Quaker chaplain at Usk prison he supported her in this work – always accompanying her until too frail to do so. Inmates were pleased to find such a friendly, concerned and knowledgeable listener.

Norman's faith was not wishy-washy. His life spoke strongly of his beliefs. Whether it was through ministry in Meetings for Worship, facilitating a discussion, clerking a business meeting, seeing on-site builders at a Meeting House or rising early to make bread for a Link group's breakfast, his love and care shone through. In his later years he gradually became more and more frail and for the last five weeks was nursed by Hospice at Home nurses who described him as a "real gentleman. It was a pleasure to nurse him". A Friend of long-standing writes, "We know of no other person who has so evoked our admiration. His gentleness, his utter probity, his consideration for and understanding of others were unparalleled. One could not fail to love him, and he has left a mark on all who knew him. The world is poorer without him."

Signed in and on behalf of Southern Marches Area Meeting

held at Hereford on 12 November 2016

Jeff Beatty, Clerk

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## Howard Tansley

25.v.1919 – 8.i.2016

Howard was a birthright Quaker and a founder of Bognor Regis Quaker Meeting helping to find a permanent home and venue where Quakers in Bognor Regis could worship.

He was born in East Ham of Quaker parents, the fourth of five children, two of whom sadly died in early childhood.

Howard was devoted to his late wife, Joyce, to whom he was married for 64 years. They had three children whom he loved dearly and cared about throughout his life. As a family man Howard exemplified all that a good father, grandfather and great grandfather should be.

Howard was a loving, friendly, thoughtful and approachable person, someone whom you knew if you wanted help or advice would never, ever, turn away or walk on the other side of the road.

He had no time for material things, he simply loved God's world and all its peoples; he appreciated that the really good things in life are those that cannot be bought. He never had a bad word to say about anyone, regardless of who they were or what they had done; he simply exemplified the Quaker belief that there is 'that of God in everyone'. He accepted everyone and was willing to learn from them.

Howard was a thoughtful man who had strong opinions and beliefs to which he held fast. This meant that he became a conscientious objector during the war.

His love of music and his garden were well known. Howard was an accomplished pianist; he had a love of the countryside and enjoyed travelling and appreciating all of God's creation. He had a genius for designing and making gadgets and always repairing things rather than spending and wasting money unnecessarily. He delighted in keeping up with modern technology and was truly young at heart.

At Meeting, Howard was a quiet man of few words yet when he spoke his words were imbued with great wisdom. His was always a reassuring

presence. We knew that 'all would be well' when he was with us.

Howard was a truly generous man although his own life style was one of simplicity. He saw the value in all things.

His faith was a joy to him and a comfort in his later years. He upheld and lived out Quaker testimonies and was not afraid to acknowledge them publicly.

All his activities were undertaken prayerfully and with an awareness of God being with him. He was loved by all who knew him, an example.

Signed in and on behalf of Sussex West Area Meeting

held at Bognor on 10 September 2016

Kathryn Pearce, Clerk

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## Arlo De Vere Tatum

21.ii.1923 – 2.iv.2014

Arlo was a loving and compassionate man who walked in the spirit of truth, equality, peace and justice. He lived a Quakerly life, abiding by the Testimonies and living his faith and convictions. He was a Friend beloved by those who worshipped with him at Wadebridge and St Austell. He was generous of spirit, forthright, and worked with diligence to support Quaker faith and practice. The characteristics we remember most keenly are his sharp wit, his great personal integrity and his ability to see the bigger picture. Let us remember also the obstinacy and persistence which helped him through the difficult times in his life.

Arlo was born into a Quaker family in Iowa, USA, and was registered as a birthright Friend. He attended William Penn College in Oskaloosa. At eighteen, when he was required to register for the Draft (conscription) he went to seek guidance from Quakers in New York. They urged him to register as a conscientious objector, but as an absolutist with deeply held beliefs he could not. Disillusioned, he resigned his membership of the Society of Friends. He then wrote to the US Attorney General announcing his intention to refuse to register and was sentenced to three and a half years in prison at the Federal Correctional Institution in Sandstone, Minnesota. He was then its youngest prisoner. In 1944 he was paroled to Bethany Hospital in Chicago. The hospital was run by the Church of the Brethren who offered jobs to imprisoned conscientious objectors so that they could be paroled.

Arlo was blessed with a very fine bass baritone voice. He won a scholarship to study voice at the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago. After winning a competition (the prize for which was to sing with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra) he became a soloist with the Chicago Concert and Opera Guild. He ran Tatum School Entertainments, bringing live music to local schools.

In 1948, a new Draft law came in and he was required to register again. He was sentenced to

another term in prison, this time in Springfield, Missouri. Upon release he resumed his singing career.

In 1951 this musical life came to a tragic end when he was very seriously injured in a car/train crash; the four other people in the car died at the scene. Arlo was not expected to live but during many months spent in hospital he made a remarkable recovery, due not only to excellent medical care, but also because he was sustained by his faith, his inner strength and his courage.

Now no longer able to sing professionally, he went to live in Philadelphia with his brother Lyle and his family, and was given a job with the American Friends Service Committee. He began to build a new life and became co-executive secretary, with Bayard Rustin, of the War Resisters League.

In 1955 he moved to London to become the general secretary of War Resisters International (WRI). He wrote peace and protest songs, some for the Aldermaston marches. He was a director of Peace News and started the World Peace Brigade. He set up the first Nigerian WRI group and travelled extensively in India, also for the WRI. He was proud to have walked with Vinoba Bhave, the missionary and peace campaigner.

In London, Arlo worked with sociologist Richard Hauser in some of Richard's social work experiments and there he met Polly Carton. In 1962 Arlo and Polly married and moved to Philadelphia when Arlo was appointed Executive Secretary of the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO). Under his leadership, during the years of protest against the Draft and the war in Vietnam, CCCO trained Draft counsellors, advised attorneys and counselled thousands of men – among them Arlo Guthrie and Muhammad Ali. Arlo undertook speaking tours and testified before the Senate Employment, Manpower and Poverty Subcommittee, chaired by Senator Edward Kennedy.

With Joseph Tuchinsky, Arlo edited the Guide to the Draft, published by Beacon Press. The Handbook for Conscientious Objectors, first published in 1952, was re-written by Arlo. With the 12th edition it had run to more than 420,000 copies. CCCO sued the US Government over the US Army's surveillance of lawful and peaceful

civilian political activity – the case was won but the Secretary of Defense, Melvin B. Laird, appealed and it went to the Supreme Court where the decision was overturned. The case of Laird v Tatum is well known in US law circles.

In 1964, twins Janet and Sarah were born and in 1972 the family moved to London when Arlo was appointed warden of Winchmore Hill Meeting House; here he re-joined the Society of Friends. He was soon involved in peace work again, becoming a council member of the Peace Pledge Union; he was its chairperson from 1978 to 1981. He managed the Circle Trust Club in Camberwell for ex-offenders and started a second club in Brixton – and he joined a choir. When Polly was appointed warden of Friends House, the family moved again. Arlo worked for the Albany Trust, the National Council for One Parent Families and then they went to the Thomas Coram Foundation where he was the resident caretaker for ten years. There followed a brief time as warden of Purley Meeting House.

After retiring to Cornwall, Arlo continued to enjoy choral singing and gave a recital at the Betjeman Centre in Wadebridge on his eightieth birthday. At a Christmas concert given by the University of the Third Age (U3A) Choir in 2013, at the age of ninety he sang Mighty Lord from Bach's Christmas Oratorio without the score – no mean feat! He enjoyed gardening, walking and table tennis. He wrote extensively about his life and his time in prison, as well as short stories and poems. When he was a teenager, he won a poetry competition in the Middle West.

We miss Arlo's beautiful singing at Meeting – his voice was deep and filled with passion.

Arlo was devoted to Wadebridge Quaker Meeting. He revived Meetings in Wadebridge, the first Meeting for Worship being held at the John Betjeman Centre in October 1990, and attended faithfully for as long as he could. In his final weeks it gave Arlo and Polly joy when Friends held Meeting at their home in Bodmin.

We give thanks to God for the life of our Friend, Arlo Tatum.

Signed in and on behalf of Cornwall AM  
held at St Austell on 29 January 2017

Rachel Bennett, Clerk

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## Evelyn Thixton

15. xii.1920 – 15.viii.2015

Evelyn was born in Clapham, London, in 1920 and was brought up in a strict Baptist family. Her brother became a Baptist minister. During the war, she worked as an auxiliary nurse, caring for wounded servicemen at Park Prewett Hospital near Basingstoke, where pioneering plastic surgery was undertaken, especially for those suffering from burns.

After the war, Evelyn worked for a time in the Ministry of Works, in a clerical capacity.

In 1948 she married Bob, who worked in publishing, and they had two children, Robert and Celia. In the 1960s, now living in the Morden area of London, Evelyn made the decision to train as a teacher and, at the same time as bringing up her children, she studied at college to qualify. For the rest of her working life she taught in middle and upper schools, mainly in the London Borough of Merton. She specialised in Religious Education and Special Needs teaching, eventually focussing on children with dyslexic problems.

It was whilst she was a teacher that she moved away from her Baptist roots, finding things rather too prescriptive, and was drawn towards Quakerism. She started attending Wimbledon Meeting and became a member in the mid 1970s. Her contribution to the Meeting included taking on the role of clerk.

In 1986, Evelyn, having retired from teaching, moved with her husband to Stowupland in Suffolk. She transferred her Quaker membership to Woodbridge Monthly Meeting. During the thirty years that she was a member of Bury St Edmunds Meeting, Evelyn took a full part in its life, serving at times as elder, clerk and also librarian – books being one of her passions. As a school teacher, Evelyn knew the importance of being firm and methodical and she brought these principles to her work in Quaker affairs, but always in a loving way.

In Bury Meeting, she initiated an evening study group and, later, pre-meeting study sessions on Sunday mornings. Even in recent times, after

she had become physically too weak to get to Meeting, she would encourage Friends to meet at her home for silent worship and discussion. She continued to be passionately concerned about the welfare and spiritual health of Bury Meeting. Her wisdom meant that she knew when something needed to be said and when something was best left unsaid.

Evelyn read widely on Quaker matters and on spiritual matters in general. She engaged in correspondence with Friends both locally and nationally, discussing various issues, especially the future of Quakerism, about which she was often very worried. In one of her letters she said “I am afraid that Quakerism as I know it will die out, but [...] I comfort myself with the thought that God’s spirit would always be active in the world in many other ways.”

Evelyn’s plain speaking, commitment and compassion will be remembered by many Friends and her Quaker life was an inspiration to all those looking for an example of the Grace of God.

Signed in and on behalf of Ipswich & Diss Area Meeting

held at Diss on 23 January 2016

Jen Larner, Clerk

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## Jack Unite

1.xii.1912 – 26.vi.2015

Jack was born in London and one of his earliest memories was being taken down into Maida Vale Underground Station during a Zeppelin air raid in 1916.

He and his brother were brought up by their mother as their father had died when they were young. Jack talked about attending many concerts and operas at Sadlers Wells and elsewhere before walking home past market stalls lit by flaming torches.

Jack attended churches of many denominations before coming to Friends. He first came into contact with Quakers through his involvement in the Peace Pledge Union and the Fellowship of Reconciliation. During World War II Jack was a conscientious objector and spent a short time in prison for this before attending Spicelands Training Centre near Uffculme in East Devon. This was a time that Jack always remembered with pleasure, especially the friends he made there and the Friends at Spiceland Meeting. It was at this time that he joined the Religious Society of Friends.

After the war Jack worked at Lloyds of London in insurance and this meant a good deal of overseas travel.

Jack met Marjorie and they married in 1950 despite his mother's disapproval. They lived at Wembley and Jack became a member of Harrow Meeting, a Meeting he always remembered with great affection. They had one child, Roger.

Jack and Marjorie first came to Wincanton Meeting in August 1971 when they were thinking of retiring to the area. In 1977 Jack did retire and they moved to Maperton, a few miles away, Jack becoming a very active member of Wincanton Meeting and Shaftesbury and Sherborne Monthly Meeting. Within the Monthly Meeting Jack was active in outreach and worked with the "Peace Caravan" project.

The membership of Wincanton Meeting gradually declined as Friends died or moved away until Jack became its only active Friend.

In 1978 the Monthly Meeting decided that Wincanton Meeting was no longer viable and proposed that it be closed with a view to selling the premises. Jack strongly resisted the idea and eventually persuaded the Monthly Meeting to grant him a year's grace. Jack rose to the challenge, he advertised in *The Friend* in case anyone was considering moving to the area and attracted at least two new members during 1979. He was well supported during this period by Friends from Mid-Somerset Monthly Meeting who provided regular support at Meetings for Worship.

Gradually more Friends and Attenders joined the Meeting and Jack was very willing to stop being clerk, treasurer, overseer and elder at the same time and encourage others to share his responsibilities. When Shaftesbury and Sherborne Meeting decided to adopt a system of corporate eldership and oversight Jack felt this would not be suitable for a small Meeting and eventually Wincanton moved into Mid-Somerset Monthly Meeting where it remained.

Jack continued to regularly attend Wincanton Meeting where he provided a spirit that was always welcoming and embracing until 2013 when physical frailty meant that his attendances grew less frequent.

Jack was convinced of the loving goodness of God and lived his life under that conviction. In his ministry in Meeting for Worship he offered us his unshaken Christian faith with prayers for his beloved Wincanton Quaker Meeting and also for the shaken wider world.

Jack was an old style Quaker who was sometimes puzzled by the ministry in Meeting for Worship of younger Friends. This did not prevent him from accepting that there could be more than one path to finding the light. His path was firmly centred on the teachings of Jesus and the blessings offered in the Sermon on the Mount to all who heard and followed.

Signed in and on behalf of Mid-Somerset Area Meeting

held at Long Sutton on 12 March 2016

Andy Hall, Clerk

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## Betty Morgan West (née Bowen)

9.viii.1921 – 31.i.2016

Betty loved stories. Her stories were not just the imagined ones in the children's books she authored and illustrated, but also the real lives she touched through sharing her home with family, friends, students and boarders for decades. Her life was filled with visitors from the community and around the world; at her funeral, people came from three continents, eager to speak about the impact of her generous spirit on their lives.

Betty's own story began in Chicago, on August 9, 1921. The place of residence noted on her birth certificate is 800 South Halsted St., which is the location of Hull House, a settlement house founded in 1889 by Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr to foster the cultural integration of European immigrants. A pioneer of American social work and a committed suffragist, Addams is recognized as a prominent reformer of the Progressive Era. William and Elma Bowen, Betty's parents, were among the residents of Hull House who worked to bring social services and cultural events to the immigrant neighborhood. Baby Betty would be put to nap on Addams' bed amidst the busy activities of the house. This start in life turned out to be significant; the plight of immigrants and refugees became a central concern for Betty as an adult.

Betty attended Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania, where she was inspired by Quaker ideals and became a lifelong member of the Society of Friends. She graduated from there with a B.A in English Literature in 1942. She loved working with children and was drawn to writing and illustrating children's books. After Swarthmore, she studied illustration for two years at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and then worked as an assistant editor in the junior books section of Longmans, Green, and Co. in New York City.

In the summer of 1945, Betty volunteered with children at the Emergency Refugee Shelter in Oswego, NY set up by President Roosevelt to

help a thousand refugees recently brought over from war-torn Europe. From September 1945 to May 1946 she took part in a War Relief Study Team at Haverford College, PA in a course on French language and culture designed to prepare the team for relief work in post-war Europe. After joining the American Friends' Service, however, she was sent to Aachen, Germany instead of France, and worked there with survivors from all sides of the war from June 1946 until December 1947. In Aachen, she met her future husband, Gordon West, who was a British member of the Friends' Ambulance Unit. They married in 1948 and lived in West Yorkshire, England until the marriage dissolved in 1964. Three children were born of this marriage: Andrea (Andy), Bill, and Sally. In addition, she fostered baby Iyabo (Yabby) from Nigeria for three years. During the years in the north of England, Betty wrote and illustrated several children's books, including her most successful work, *For Love of a Donkey* (1963), a story rooted in her own experiences in Germany about an orphan girl who refuses to leave behind her beloved donkey. This book won the Junior Literary Guild award in the USA.

In 1964, Betty moved with her children to Saffron Walden, Essex, a town with a strong Quaker community and a Friends' School. She became a mainstay of the Friends' Meeting and was a central figure in the Children's Meeting for generations of children. She also began a professional teaching career, initially in a village primary school. Despite full-time teaching and raising a family alone, she found time and energy to study for a Certificate of Education at Saffron Walden Teachers' Training College, passing not just with distinction but also as the top student in her class. She was subsequently offered a teaching position as a lecturer in English Literature at the same college, where she taught from 1969 to 1977. Realizing that the college was to close and be transformed into an English language school for international students, Betty once again retrained as a teacher of English as a foreign language through the University of London, staying on at the renamed Bell College in Saffron Walden until her retirement. She was an energetic and beloved teacher of many from

across the globe, constantly inviting foreign students to her house for dinners or just a listening ear, making them feel welcomed in a home away from home.

As a committed pacifist, Betty campaigned for many years for a nuclear-free world with the CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament), taking part in demonstrations well into her seventies. In addition, she responded as actively as she was able to refugee crises, helping, for instance to meet and settle Ugandan Asians expelled by Idi Amin in the 1970s, and taking Muslim refugees from Kosovo into her home in the 1990s.

In her retirement, Betty found great pleasure in writing and illustrating picture books for younger children, and in her eighties began publishing again after a forty-year hiatus. For over twenty years, until a stroke left her incapacitated in 2011, she enjoyed her annual Christmas travels to Connecticut to be with her family. She died in her own home in Saffron Walden, looked after by her daughter, Andy.

The stories told at Betty's Memorial Meeting in February 2016 demonstrated the depth and breadth of her impact on so many individuals, left by her seemingly endless ability to be there for others' needs. The Grace of God shone through Betty's life and work. Her ministry in Meeting for Worship was always memorable and inspirational. She believed that each of us has a soul, and she would be ready to offer kindness to all, including those who were unpopular or difficult.

On June 12th 2016 a street party in her memory was held outside her home. Her many friends and neighbours came out to enjoy the fun, especially local children. Betty would have loved that.

Signed in and on behalf of Thaxted Area Meeting

held at Bardfield on 11 September 2016

Paul Parker, Co-clerk

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## Olive Yarrow

07.ii.1926 – 12.vii.2015

Olive's parents, Beatrice and Bertie Jenkins, lived in the Shoreditch area of East London, at the time closely associated with poverty and deprivation. The family had some unusual 'liberal' features: Bertie committed himself to peace after bad experiences in World War I, and gave Olive and her four sisters a taste of a variety of religious denominations, so they could decide for themselves which church they wanted to go to, finally lighting upon Friends.

Olive often spoke about how she and her sisters worshipped with her parents at Hoxton Hall and Bunhill Fields Memorial Building – both being philanthropic establishments with Quaker connections and designed to improve the lives of the working classes. Writing about her memories of the time, Olive said she was well occupied: "Morning Meeting 11-12; Sunday school 2 to 3.30; Children's Service 5-6; Evening meetings 6.30-7.30 and a meeting called 'At Home' from 8-10."

In 1940 the Jenkins' home was damaged by a landmine and they were evacuated away from London. When they returned, activities at Hoxton Hall had ceased and Bunhill had been severely bombed.

In childhood Olive was seriously ill for some time, which made her determined to make the most of life. She had various jobs including being a messenger in the City amid wartime bomb damage, which she enjoyed despite her mother's fears. She developed a great knowledge about London history and geography, particularly about London Quakers. Later she took up bookbinding, a skill she was able to put to use in Friends House library until she became ill.

In 1953 Olive married Ernie Yarrow, a carpenter, in the bomb-damaged warden's house which was all that remained of the Bunhill Fields Memorial Building. They travelled to Germany, and to Russia long before the advent of package holidays.



After the war the Jenkins family took on many of the Meeting's offices and roles in a great effort to keep what was left of Bunhill going, against great odds including fluctuating attendances (Olive was occasionally the only worshipper). In 1956 Olive became Clerk, a post she held for nearly thirty three years despite moving to South Woodford with Ernie in 1966. She stood up to Six Weeks' Meeting, responsible for London Quaker properties, which was demanding that Bunhill be closed. Olive remained committed to Bunhill and the Area Meeting all her life, attending business meetings as often as she could, and her lemon cake at the teas afterwards was legendary.

She was a devout Christian and well versed in the scriptures. Her relationship with God was vital, Jesus was a living presence to her, and likewise the early Quakers whose lives and works she studied. She had sense of duty towards God and the Meeting. Also a duty towards herself: for example after her stroke she diligently did the speaking and physical exercises the doctor prescribed for her. Olive could appear quiet and pious, but in fact she had a wicked, sometimes teasing sense of humour. She often jokingly talked about her expectation of being "elderred", remembering a run-in with a famous Quaker woman when she was a child.

She and Ernie did well in life, though they remained unpretentious. She was not afraid to speak her mind, and she could say things in a straightforward way, in a refreshing contrast to a Quaker tendency to intellectualise. Above all Olive was friendly and would speak to almost anyone on public transport. In her commitment to the testimony to equality, she liked the idea of racial diversity in meetings, and late in life she built a close friendship with a gay man.

In later life she became less mobile, but still liked her independence and time for herself. When finally she was forced to leave her house and go into a home for a few weeks, she found a room where she could sit alone and read, while remaining bright and friendly to all the staff, volunteers and residents. There was no feeling that Olive was stuck up when she chose to be alone.

On the other hand she liked things to be done nicely, and had high expectations: she might take offence at bad manners, whether from neighbours or a Quaker meeting which fell short. Olive represented a part of the Quaker story in London that might be easy to miss, but her strength of spirit made it shine out through her life.

Signed in and on behalf of North London Area Meeting

held at New Barnet on 24 January 2016

Oliver Robertson, Clerk

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Printed on paper from sustainable forests.  
All documents issued are also available as PDFs  
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Britain Yearly Meeting is a registered charity,  
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