

2016 Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting Epistle
From the First Annual Sessions Third Month, Eleventh Day 2016

Greetings to Friends Everywhere,

We offer warm and tender greetings to Friends everywhere from Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting and Piedmont Friends Fellowship, who met together on the campus of Carolina Friends School in Durham, North Carolina on March 11-13, 2016. We came together joyfully to celebrate the first annual meeting of Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting. Formed under the auspices of the wider Piedmont Friends Fellowship, and currently made up of six monthly meetings and one worship group, Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting had its formational meeting in March, 2015. At the end of our first year as a yearly meeting, Friends experienced joy, excitement, and promise as we realized how productive our work together has been in establishing the framework of a yearly meeting and building the community that gives it life. We met jointly with Piedmont Friends Fellowship for this annual spring retreat and gathering, so Friends had opportunities for worship, fellowship, and participation in the business sessions of both groups.

The first blush of Spring on the campus, with singing birds and early flowering trees and shrubs, was a beautiful reflection of the hopefulness that permeated our gatherings. This love and optimism were further magnified by the presence of our youngest participant, two-month-old Zeb Barnhardt-Hornsby, who slept and gurgled peacefully in the arms of his parents Christin Barnhardt and Gary Hornsby throughout the weekend.

Max Carter, recently retired director of the Friends Center at Guilford College, shared with us his thoughts on the current events among the various branches of Friends in North Carolina, drawing interesting parallels between the Hicksite and Orthodox separation in 1827 and modern day North Carolina Friends. In another session, Max provided us with a brief history and update on Friends' work in Ramallah, Palestine, and addressed the prospects for a peaceful solution to the continuing Middle East conflict.

Listening to Max Carter and thinking about 350 years of Quaker history in North Carolina, juxtaposed with attending the first annual sessions of Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting, brought to one Friend the phrase, "new growth from old wood." Within this context we gave thanks for:

- Our hope for the future of our fledgling yearly meeting
- The empathetic clerking and diligent recording of our first annual session
- The feeling of love among us sparked by the presence of baby Zeb
- The appointment of a young Assisting Clerk who will rise next year to Presiding Clerk
- The detailed work done by our representatives to Interim Meeting
- Our shared concern to lift up the need for care of the environment among all our meetings
- The sharing and fellowship of meal-times together

During the second annual session, monthly meetings and worship groups were asked to share their responses to the query, "What has most been on the heart of your meeting this year?" A representative from each meeting rose to share the response, with time between each contribution for worship and reflection. One meeting spoke of their journey beyond the words "welcome" and "inclusiveness" as they seek a spirit of deep welcome to all. Another shared their experiences with their on-going ministry to

individuals in a nearby correctional center. One meeting, never before affiliated with a yearly meeting, found the discernment process on affiliation with Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting to be a healthy and helpful exercise as Friends worked toward unity. One meeting spoke of their peace witness; another about their work to raise awareness of earth care; and another about their ministry of delivering food boxes and providing medical transportation for those in need in their community. One meeting spoke of profound loss as beloved Friends had passed from this life this year. We were moved by how this sharing deepened our sense of the larger community. It allowed us to better appreciate and affirm one another in the variety of ministries to which we are called, and reminded us that all of our contributions are part of a larger witness in this world. Like the making of a great quilt, we are each working to complete the work on our own square, while also weaving a covering of love, light and hope for the world around us.

When the Yearly Meeting attendees were asked to share their reflections on our time together, some of the aspects of the gathering that were lifted up included the fun and learning from the cooperative bridge building exercise; the tenderness of the meetings' responses to the query; the joy of being together, face to face, for the first time since last year; and the attentiveness and involvement of all the meetings.

We were blessed during our weekend to have among us Peter Blood and Annie Patterson, compilers and editors of the "Rise Up Singing" series, who shared their ministry of music. One of their songs clearly expressed the message of hope that we celebrated during our annual sessions together:

Give Light
And people will find the way
Give Light
And people will find the way
Give Light
And people will find the way I do believe

In Love, Light, and Hope.

Marian Beane, Presiding Clerk
Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting
11th of Sixth Month, 2016