

Seventh Month 16, 2017

North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative)
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Dear Friends Everywhere:

We gathered at UNC Wilmington, NC on Seventh Month 13-16, 2017 for our 320th Annual Sessions. As we gather we remember our distant Friends with great fondness and love. This year we are gathered under the theme “Our Life is Love: the Quaker Spiritual Journey”, also the title of a book written by Marcelle Martin. Marcelle not only gave the plenary talk on Sixth Day evening, she also led the Bible Study based on the writings in her book. In her book, she outlines the ten different stages of the Quaker spiritual journey. She uses examples from both early Quakers and modern-day Quakers to illustrate the steps.

On Fifth Day evening, we were grateful to hear from several Friends during a panel discussion on Living our Love. Cynthia Doran spoke of her family’s journey into greater faith through her son’s incarceration. Morgan Barlow shared about saying “yes” to a leading to undertake Alternatives to Violence Project work with prisoners. Susan Wilson spoke about following God’s leading to love in various ways throughout her personal spiritual journey. A time of rich worship-sharing followed the panel discussion.

Our Young Friends always enjoy coming to Wilmington for Yearly Meeting as frequent trips to the beach are part of their program. Each evening the Young Friends helped lead intergenerational activities. On Seventh Day evening, they MC’ed an intergenerational talent show with many jokes, skits, and musical acts. The adults also participated with song and music and the first ever Quaker Lady Speed Knitting Competition. Good fun was had by all.

The Financial report is not usually the most spiritually inspiring time during Yearly Meeting. But this year we had put before us information that led many people to speak from the heart and share deeply. It is always amazing the places that God finds to shine a light from our hearts.

The Book of Discipline revision is in its fourth year. The committee has been faithful in its work and the Body is grateful for all it has done. The revision work this year moved us to listen deeply to each other and to allow time and space for everyone to sit with the revisions and hear God’s voice. We labored with the story of our Quaker ancestors and with language that reflects who we are in this present time. We identified discussions that we will need to have in the future that will allow us the opportunity to look at how we define ourselves. We are richly blessed to have undertaken this work and to have people who are gifted by God to do this work.

We were blessed to hear in-person reports from Quaker House, AFSC, FCNL, and FWCC. Incredibly passionate and productive members of our yearly meeting represent us in all of these organizations. Our representatives commented that for a small yearly meeting like ours we have a wide influence in the Quaker world. We are grateful. In particular we were grateful to have Lynn and Steve Newsom from Quaker House come and give their final report to us before their retirement in September. Quaker House has flourished under their direction and we look forward to seeing this continued under the new director, Kindra Bradley.

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 321st session in Greensboro, NC, Seventh Month 12-15, 2018 if in accordance with Divine Will.

On behalf of North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative),

Nancy Craft, clerk

North Carolina Yearly Meeting Conservative Young Friends Epistle to All Friends

Seventh Month 16, 2017

Dear Friends,

North Carolina Yearly Meeting Conservative (NCYMC) met at the University of North Carolina Wilmington from July 12th to the 16th. We had a fantastic attendance with about 20 young Friends. Some of our highlights off campus include going to the beach (twice), bowling, and serving at a nearby homeless shelter (The Good Shepherd). Back on campus, we enjoyed playing countless games, going outside (when it wasn't too hot), and going on golf cart joyrides.

Thanks to our incredible turnout, many new friendships were forged, both for those who came not knowing anybody, and for the 'seasoned veterans' of Yearly Meeting. We had two new Friends join us from Cincinnati, Ohio, as well as new Friends from right here in North Carolina. Because of the passage of time, many of our Young Friends have grown physically. It was wonderful to see how much those Friends had grown and matured in such a short time. Along with their physical growth and maturity, came spiritual growth.

One of the driving forces for spiritual growth this year was a Bible Study led by Marcelle Martin, who wrote the book Our Life is Love. In every session of Bible study the room was packed with Friends of all ages. Some of the best parts of the Bible Study sessions were how many Young Friends contributed to the discussion in the room, and how they carried on the discussion amongst themselves afterwards.

On the second night, some of the older members of our Young Friends joined in a panel discussion on Friends Living Their Love. The panel discussed many heartfelt stories and experiences of living their life with love. The older youth all say they were enthralled and loved being a part of that experience.

On a less serious note, there was a birthday celebration during our time in Wilmington. There was cake, presents, and a big party where all of the Young Friends were invited. Among the countless other fun activities the Youth participated in, some of the most fun were the water balloon fight, a legendary game of Stratego between Bruce (adult) and Bruce (kid), the best doughnuts in the world (Britt's donuts), and playing story games in the car.

The last 24 hours of Yearly Meeting included a spectacular Talent Show hosted and organized by Mia Graddy, Michael Lozada, and Toby Berla. There were about 15 acts, among which were speed-eating of an invisible banana, juggling fruit, and a number of musical acts. One of most entertaining acts was a speed-knitting competition between about 10 of Yearly Meeting's best knitters with color commentary by Toby, Reid, Richard, and Mark. We hope that it was the beginning of a new Yearly Meeting tradition.

In conclusion we had a ton of great experiences, made new friends, created memories, and had an overall fantastic (but hot) week.

In peace,

Michael, Mia, Miriam, Reid, Bing, Ana, Bruce, Liam, Luke, Nate, Imani, Caroline, Purrito (Caroline 2), Janie, Abe, Wyatt, Prakash, Ian, Caleb, Jeffrey, Kerry, and Ian and Jenna (Honorary Members)