

PIEDMONT FRIENDS YEARLY MEETING ANNUAL SESSIONS TWELFTH DAY THIRD MONTH 2016  
RESPONSES PREPARED BY MONTHLY MEETINGS AND WORSHIP GROUPS TO THE QUERY

***“What has been most on the hearts of your meeting this year?”***

**Chapel Hill Friends Meeting**

In 2015, the Chapel Hill Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends experienced many occasions for celebration, thankfulness, and growth. Perhaps the largest undertaking we made this year was the exploration of and subsequent joining of Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting. A review of the minutes from the year’s Meetings for Worship with Attention to Business shows this to be a leading topic that has gladdened the hearts of our Meeting. This new relationship informed our Spiritual State of the Meeting gathering in March, during which we considered some organizations in the wider Quaker fellowship and their mission statements. From that report:

“In small groups, we answered the query, ‘How do we envision the meaning of our personal and corporate relationships with local and national Quaker groups?’ Sharings on the responses to this query in the large group revealed a resonance with many of the mission statements, an excitement about the opportunities ahead to connect more fully with fellow travelers, a recognition of the chance to help shape the formation of the new Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting, an awareness of the challenges of deepening relationships with those who are different from us, and a concern about the energy needed to make these commitments outside the Chapel Hill Friends Meeting. One Friend spoke about seeing a great people gathered to influence North Carolina.”

Throughout the year, Spirit was revealed to us in so many different ways. We received and recorded with immense pleasure conscientious objector letters from Keegan Durovich and John Hite, as well as a report on the fifteen years’ work of attender Curt Torell in supporting young people in writing these powerful letters. With others, he has worked to extend to a wider network our work with young people considering and eventually laying a claim for conscientious objector status, and to publish this curriculum through Quaker House. Along those same lines, Friends in our Meeting have also been concerned about reducing military spending and military confrontation, and in building peace through diplomacy--in particular the Iran nuclear deal. We have also focused on the support of minorities, rejecting anti-Muslim rhetoric and combating discriminatory legislation. A special concern as we entered an election year was promoting voter registration and opposing voting restraints.

We have stepped up our efforts to welcome newcomers to our Meeting and to help them discover what it means to be a Quaker. Ministry & Worship offered its four-week

Quakerism 101 class in two sections, making it possible for up to 60 members and attenders to participate. M&W offers pamphlets for distribution to newcomers at the rise of meetings for worship and has revised our welcoming brochure. But we have discovered that welcoming newcomers is a two-way street. In particular, we have marveled at the contributions to our worship that our guests from the Orange Correctional Center have shared with us, from their messages to their music. We have seen our ministry grow and flourish among those currently and previously incarcerated at Orange Correctional Center. Many current and former residents of that facility regularly attend our meeting for worship, and the Meeting is now supporting several men returning to our community from that facility.

Our Meeting continues to provide meaningful educational opportunities for children and adolescents through engaging lessons in the First Day School Program and field trips focusing on Quaker history and multi-cultural faith experiences, as well as overnight and weekend retreats for the teens. Families are encouraged to share the joys and concerns of parenting through family potlucks and informal conversations with their children's teachers and each other.

The celebration in late 2014 of the life of the son of one our members, a son who suffered from mental illness and died from suicide, was a catalyst for the increased concern and action of our meeting. Our Mental Health Group has sought to provide mental health resources, and our ad hoc Committee for Mental Health Initiatives developed a white paper to serve as a basis for lobbying for mental health within North Carolina Prisons.

We offered several opportunities for focused worship this year, including our beloved Christmas Eve Meeting for Worship, a celebration of the Winter Solstice, a Meeting for Healing, celebrations of the lives of deceased Friends, and our first outdoor Meeting for Worship with Attention to Animals. We have been enriched by a wondrous variety of weekly Forums sponsored by our Adult Religious Education Committee, and many of us were blessed by attendance at the Annual FGC Gathering in our own homestate.

We experienced the joy of supporting our teen group on a service trip to Haiti. We have welcomed Eloise Grathwohl, Joanna Selim, and Ric Shepherd into membership and celebrated the weddings of Judy Purvis to John Schoonover and Alice Carlton to Dave Curtin. We mourned the deaths of Friends Bob Cooper, Bill Flash, Susanne Gomolski, Alice Woodbury, and Betsy Hewitt. We were also blessed in coming to unity on a plan for improvements to our building, and heartened by the increased level of cooperation among committees of the Meeting.

2015 has left us with much for which we can be thankful.

## **Charlotte Friends Meeting**

**“What has been most on the hearts of your meeting this year?”**

- A need to deepen our spiritual lives
- The joy we take in our communal worship, listening for spirit.
- How do those of us moving away from Charlotte pass on the torch?
- How do we reach others who may be interested in our (Quaker) practices?
- Can we communicate in loving, caring ways, even when it’s difficult?
- How can we stay connected to each other during the week?
- Can we make human connection in a technological culture?
- Do we have a Quaker witness to offer, today, in this world, to the problems of this world?
- Can we bring the support of our meeting to bear in our concerns for racial justice, and for other leadings?

## **Fancy Gap Friends Meeting**

**“What has been most on the hearts of your meeting this year?”**

Those we serve in our transportation ministry and our food ministry have been at the heart of our concern, our focus, and our energies this past year. However, with equal passion have members of the meeting related with each other as family that we might move forward with unity, having first welcomed and celebrated our uniqueness as diverse individuals; yet such work is enabled only through our meeting’s love for one another.

Fancy Gap Friends Meeting (approved 03-06-16)

## **New Garden Friends Meeting**

### **New Garden Friends Meeting**

A Religious Society of Friends | Established in  
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**“What has been most on the hearts of your meeting this year?”**

This past year at New Garden Friends Meeting our hearts have been most

attentive to themes of welcome. As a community we have been invigorated with a joyous new energy as we have welcomed our new pastoral minister, Margaret Webb to our community in September. We have sought to make her and her family welcome through means both physical and spiritual. Our meeting raised funds to renovate our onsite parsonage, and various members helped in that process, including our Young Friends group, who had been making use of that space while there was not a minister in residence. Our interim pastoral minister, Bill Hamilton, who had served us very well after the retirement of David Bills, helped prepare our community spiritually for the openness needed to extend a welcome.

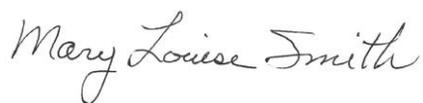
We have watched as Margaret has made it a focus of her ministry to extend welcome to all in our community who have interest in worship in the manner of Friends.

We have felt a great outpouring of sentiment among the members and attenders of our meeting to show welcome to refugees as world conditions have created great need for places of welcome to people fleeing violence. On January 9, 2016, our meeting was the location of a gathering sponsored by several local faith communities to explore the practical means of supporting refugees in our community.

We have been exploring how our Meeting is welcomed within the larger community of Friends, and how our affiliation with larger associations of Friends can serve to make others more welcome within those gatherings.

The hearts of the Friends at New Garden meeting have been led to extend welcome in many ways, and feel ready to be led by the light to experience and share even more and deeper meanings of welcome.

Approved by New Garden Friends Monthly  
Meeting 02.07.2016



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Presiding Clerk

## **Raleigh Friends Meeting**

### **“What has been most on the hearts of your meeting this year?”**

Upmost on the hearts of Raleigh Friends Meeting during the past year has been a desire to strengthen and enliven our shared worship experience and the spiritual, personal, and social connections that flow from that experience. We have been reminded of our desire for unity as a spiritual community and our diversity in interpretation, emphasis, energy, and interests as we sought to bring our faith into daily life. We've understood that a strong spiritual foundation is basic and necessary for our community as we have addressed challenges within the meeting and the world at large. As a result, peace and social concerns issues have been addressed in a more vigorous and effective manner in the past year than in recent years. This has given the meeting a greater sense of engagement and presence in the wider community of our state and nation.

As we enter 2016, we are aware of our need to continually enhance our shared and essential spiritual foundation while broadening our capacity as a community to “stretch our arms wide” and attend to the cares and injustices of the world around us. We acknowledge that our capacity to hold and nurture each other in the Light in all our diversity, in our often meandering search for deeper meaning and fulfillment in life, is strong. We seek to speak and live our faith while knowing we can be comforted, alarmed, amused, and puzzled by the deep humanity of our little band of seekers- all the while accepting this as part of what it means to be Friends. We seek, through our abiding relationship with spirit and support from within our Quaker community, to find clarity, courage, and guidance for our personal and collective callings in the year ahead.

## **Salem Creek Friends Meeting**

### **“What has been most on the hearts of your meeting this year?”**

Salem Creek Friends have had very much in our hearts the illness and eventual passing of two dear friends (both members of SCFM) and preparation and participation in Quaker memorial services for each. Two deaths within the year was particularly profound because we are a very small meeting. These losses were deeply felt; first Aaron Poller, then Bobbie Torbert. We have grown together with the experience of support for these individuals, their families, and each other. The passing of a cherished Friend, David Martin, who was an occasional attendee at our worship group for a number of years is also on the heart of a member in our Meeting.

We deeply appreciate our small meeting community and nurture of each other, for

those in the Winston-Salem area, and the wider world. Spiritual and financial support look both inward and outward. It is becoming important to consider making contributions quarterly, not just at the end of the year. Another goal is to ensure that our committees function well. The past year has also been one of new growth: a newly joined yearly meeting and a newly born baby who attended his first meeting for business on Valentine's Day. Energy also came from the effort individuals in SCFM put into the formation of Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting.

Way has opened in living our lives as we believe we are supposed to. Opportunity presents itself: here, to some amazement, is a new Friends General Conference Yearly Meeting in North Carolina. The song "How Can I Keep From Singing" was requested for the memorial services for both Aaron and Bobbie, a tribute to their resilient spirits and the resilience of our Meeting.

We observe increased enthusiasm and commitment to the growth and health of Salem Creek Friends Meeting.

### **Upstate Friends Worship Group**

#### **“What has been most on the hearts of your meeting this year?”**

Upstate Friends Worship Group has had a “mixed year” in many respects. Several of our attenders have struggled with health issues, either theirs or in the family. Several core members continue to have ongoing concerns, so getting through our difficulties and keeping our Meeting going through a difficult time has been the primary thing on our hearts and minds.

Despite our difficulties, we have had a successful book discussion group and recently held a very productive Quaker House presentation on Moral Injury.

We face 2016 with a guarded optimism and a determination to persevere. We appreciate being held in the Light at this time, and the support and visitation from our liaisons in Charlotte Friends has been invaluable.

Doris Wilson, clerk