

Presiding Clerk's Report to 2018 Annual Sessions of Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting (PFYM)

Greetings, Dear Friends,

This report includes a summary of our experience at the 2017 PFYM Annual Sessions and a review of the work of Interim Meeting (IM) in the past year. (Interim Meeting is the representative body tasked with carrying forward the work of the yearly meeting between annual sessions.) At the 2017 Annual Sessions, our second as a yearly meeting, we joyfully welcomed Eno Friends of Hillsborough and Abingdon Friends (Virginia) into affiliation, acknowledging that we had already been enriched by their presence among us. We approved our first PFYM Handbook as guidance for the yearly meeting and affiliating meetings, and we received our first meeting status and demographics report. (Copies of the Handbook were subsequently sent to all meetings and the individual meeting status reports will be archived at Guilford College Friends Historical Collection, the repository for all PFYM records.) We approved a minute of concern forwarded from Raleigh Meeting in support of the *Every Campus a Refuge* initiative at Guilford College, and referred a minute of concern from Charlotte Friends on the NC Commission of Inquiry on Torture to Interim Meeting for further seasoning. We were moved by the messages prepared by meetings in response to the query: "What has been most on the hearts of your meeting this year?" (These responses are appended to the minutes of 2017 Annual Sessions.) The Peace & Social Concerns working group spoke of efforts to strengthen the yearly meeting's collective social witness, and we received reports from our representatives to Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) and American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). The Naming and Nominating Committees reported on Friends who had agreed to step into service for the yearly meeting and where Friends' service was still needed. In our closing time together, we reflected on the joy of our experience when we come together and the warmth and care that we feel from Friends when we worship, fellowship and break bread with one another. We asked Interim Meeting to work with the epistle committee in preparing the message of our experience for distribution to "Friends Everywhere."

In this third year as a yearly meeting we have continued our efforts to be faithful to our vision of *fostering a loving community, supporting spiritual growth and witnessing to our collective truth in the wider world*. Interim Meeting continued the practice of meeting quarterly for worship and fellowship and giving attention to matters referred to it by Annual Sessions. (Following each meeting, the presiding clerk prepared a summary of highlights and concerns for meeting clerks and communicated with meeting clerks on yearly meeting matters throughout the year.) At its quarterly meetings IM approved the *2017 PFYM Epistle to "Friends Everywhere,"* reviewed the first Yearly Meeting Leadership Directory and Yearly Meeting Annual Calendar for use among affiliated meetings, laid down the *PFYM Handbook* working group with the understanding that guidance for future changes is included in the Handbook, and approved a minute on Torture. IM provided guidance to the Peace & Social Witness working group on its preparation of the survey for distribution to PFF/YM meetings toward the formation of google groups around common social witness concerns. Out of a concern brought

by FCNL Representative Jan Schmidt, IM approved the formation of a working group to explore interest and feasibility for a state-based advocacy effort for strengthening Friends collective voice on legislation impacting North Carolinians. Friends serving on the working group are: Dorothy Mason (New Garden), Vernie Davis (Raleigh), Dylan Buffum (Durham), Helene Hilger (Charlotte), and Jan Schmidt, clerk. In reaching out to other Friends IM sent messages of love and concern to Barcelona Friends, Charlottesville Friends and the Charlottesville mosque; and the Presiding Clerk carried greetings to the RSWR (Right Sharing of World Resources) field representatives in India. Interim Committee continues to hold the concerns that were lifted in the meetings' 2016 status reports, including a desire for more youth programming in conjunction with PFF, opportunities to connect with other Friends on common concerns, and guidance for meetings on use of the PFYM Handbook with possible inclusion of advices on marriage, membership and clearness committees. Interim Meeting is also holding a concern for integrating some of its activity, particularly around record keeping and data collection. At its February meeting IM began a conversation on how the yearly meeting might extend fellowship to other Friends in North Carolina who have been separated from their yearly meeting.

The work and witness of PFYM continues to be enriched through its relationship with Piedmont Friends Fellowship (PFF), the wider body of FGC meetings in the greater piedmont that includes North and South Carolina and Virginia. We continue to be grateful to the PFF Representative Body that provided spiritual grounding during the birthing of PFYM and for its ongoing financial support and programming activity. Interim Meeting and PFF Representative Body met in August for worship, for sharing of goals and directions, and considering common concerns. The PFF/YM bodies appointed a joint working group to explore the Friends General Conference (FGC) Quaker Cloud as a platform for the PFF/YM website. In February, following receipt of the working group's report, Interim Meeting minuted its support for moving to the Quaker Cloud platform as we are able, for the benefits and advantages to PFF/PFYM, and to support FGC. IM recommends that the PFF budget be adjusted to meet the related financial cost. Separately both bodies agreed to invite Five Rivers Monthly Meeting, located in the Conway-Myrtle Beach area of South Carolina, to appoint an observer to PFF/PFYM representative meetings.

In concluding this report, I want to speak to the joy and blessing of serving as Piedmont Friends Yearly Meeting's presiding clerk in its nascent and now blooming years. As we have sought to be faithful to spirit's guidance on this journey I am encouraged by Friends' individual and collective spirit of enthusiastic commitment to the Yearly Meeting and the openness to serve and lead. I look forward to serving as Assisting Clerk this next year and supporting Gary Hornsby as he steps into service as PFYM presiding clerk at the rise of these 2018 Annual Sessions.

Faithfully yours,

Marian Beane, clerk