

# 2015 Baltimore Yearly Meeting Epistle

To Friends Everywhere,

As we gathered to work with our theme of *Living into Right Relationship*, our condition already reflected years of faithful progress in relationship with the creation, each other, and that Spirit that flows in and among us. Attention and labor have been abundantly given to healing relationships distorted by racism, overconsumption and exploitation of the earth and its inhabitants. We gathered in faith that we would discern together how to carry our work forward with new insight.

We were blessed with reminders of the opportunities we have to seek and be open to guidance from Spirit, which calls us into relationship. Our opening retreat raised up connectedness as the essence of relationship. We each bear responsibility for staying connected. The retreat sent us onward with the musical blessing, "Go Thou in Peace." One of our plenary speakers described worship as communion, wherein we experience the presence of God and discover afresh our kinship with everything. Another speaker described ours as a "difficult and painful time," requiring us to act now for the future. We acknowledge that suffering exists in the present. Right relationship lets us see that some have been sacrificed for the benefit of others. Those who suffer need justice rather than charity. Our speaker reminded us that in a troubled present and an uncertain future, "it always seems impossible until it is done." Our power comes from our relationships.

In Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business, reports and agenda items revealed our Yearly Meeting's work toward righting relationships distorted by racism. We acknowledge that we need to live in a way that honors and nourishes the created world. We acknowledge the rights of all species to their part in creation.

During our week together, we seasoned the issues before us. Our new clerk reminded us that Spirit will find the voice it needs for Truth that needs to be shared. Visiting Friends connected us to other Yearly Meetings and their work in the world.

The work before us now is not new. Friends are aware that we live in a society that hurts and exploits others. We see the need to match our actions with our declarations, as John Woolman urged. Our final plenary speaker called us to catalyze social change on a large scale. He urged Friends to see ourselves as members rather than masters of creation, and to work to maintain its complexity, which requires harmony and balance.

In some ways our present work is entirely new. Our actions will affect the future in ways that cannot be undone. Discerning way forward is the task before us.

In the Light,

Baltimore Yearly Meeting  
of the Religious Society of Friends