

North Pacific Yearly Meeting

Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

2016 Annual Session Epistle

To Friends Everywhere:

The North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends gathered July 13-17, 2016, for its 44th annual session on the beautiful campus of Whitworth University in Spokane, Washington. In attendance were people from our four-state region of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana, as well as from more distant areas.

Friend in Residence, Diane Randall, Executive Secretary of Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), spoke on this year's theme, which was "From Despair to Strength and Joy." FCNL, based in Washington, D.C., lobbies on behalf of multiple policy goals set every two years by Quakers through a nationwide survey. The staff of FCNL includes both Quakers and non-Quakers. The strength of FCNL arises from respectful relationship. FCNL advocates listen to the viewpoints of those whose support they seek, fostering genuine dialogue and leaving the door open to future collaboration. Another source of FCNL's strength is its facilitation of communication by members of Congress with their constituents. An engaged citizenry brings integrity to politics.

Diane asked, "How do we respond to fear, both as people and as nations?" When we respond through a show of force, we may feel comforted, but our comfort is temporary, we may need to escalate our show of force, and we dehumanize the other. We need to come to terms with fear at a deep integrative level. For this reason there is a direct link between our spiritual lives and our political lives. Quakers have a historical legacy of engaging the world from a prayerful center. Consistent with our legacy, Quakers today must speak boldly, engage in the political system, and trust that we will have an impact, even if the impact may not come in our lifetime. We are not alone. Humanity longs for a world of peace and justice.