

Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends (Conservative)

61830 Sandy Ridge Road, Barnesville OH 43713 USA

“He who gives life was shown to us. We saw him and can give proof about it. And now we announce to you that he has life that continues forever. He was with God the Father and was shown to us.” I John 1:2

To Friends Everywhere:

It is with much love that we greet you in the fellowship of Ohio Yearly Meeting and in the body of Christ Jesus.

Our 205th session began this week in midsummer with the sound of gentle rain watering the hill country around Barnesville, Ohio. A meeting for worship the first evening was deeply covered in a pulsating silence, punctuated with a few anointed words of ministry. Feeling His presence, we sought His guidance. His love moved among us and for this we are grateful. We are a small gathering this year but still feel God among us in mighty ways providing us with strength, wisdom, and love to be about Christ’s business.

It is a joy to have visitors among us again this year. We are strengthened and encouraged by their presence. Likewise, we are glad for some of our members to be about the Lord’s work visiting, living, and sojourning with Friends across the Religious Society of Friends. We have much to learn from each other and are glad for each one’s witness to the Light.

Ohio Yearly Meeting has been glad for the advances in technology that simplify interactions between Friends. We rejoice when connections are made in this or any other way. However, the Yearly Meeting as a body decided that we would rely on traditional techniques that (for us) accentuate direct communications. We hope you will be patient with us as we continue to use the postal system to deliver our epistles.

Our mornings begin in a circle of Friends with Bibles on their laps. One or the other person, as feels impressed to do so, reads a passage from the Bible. In the following hour we are immersed in interaction with a member who is well versed in the Greek writings of Scripture. He patiently explains some key passages that help us to understand the unique Friends perspective of the Christian religion.

We are here for the purpose of executing our business. We do not rush our decision making as we contemplate the query responses and committee reports, seeking to keep our thoughts in tune with our Holy Guide. Interacting throughout the day with our Friends seems to expand the brotherly love felt toward one another. This process seems to bind us together, when each of us share in our own unique way, as listeners try to piece together concerns of members of the body.

God spoke to us through his servants. He has invested in us as a miracle. If we are faithful, we can see ourselves that way. God warned us that the enemy uses deception, distraction, discouragement and division. Of these, the most dangerous is division. We were also cautioned about pride, arrogance and self-centeredness. But all these dangers are dissolved when we look *inward*. It is through the inward search that we will find Him and His cross. Inwardly, we find the strength to pick up that cross and carry it.

We were heartened by an encouraging report from the Walton Retirement Home. Recent years were challenging and straining but we now sense a positive future. This future was reflected in the blossoming flowers that greeted Friends collecting for the annual corporation meeting.

Given the contentious climate in our country, Ministry and Oversight agreed to write a letter encouraging our nation to return to the ways of Christ. It was difficult to find wording that did not add to the country’s divisiveness but instead promote the loving care of all humankind. When hope seemed to totally escape them, a Friend rose to propose language that united them and our Lord’s hand became evident. The resulting communication was forwarded to the Yearly meeting. The Yearly Meeting endorsed the letter and set about the work of its distribution. A copy is attached to this epistle and Friends are encourage to share as way opens.

Evening presentations were refreshing and enlightening as we sought to grow in the knowledge of the Lord. We continue to be blessed by children and youth in our midst. Those who work with them are appreciated so very much.

As we were about the Lord's work each day we found purpose and unity. In this unity we fervently pray that the Lord blesses you as He has blessed us.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. 2 Thessalonians 2:15

In Christ,

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A Christian Call from Ohio Yearly Meeting of Friends (Conservative)

We are Christian Friends (Quakers) from various walks of life, political persuasions, ages, and backgrounds. We share both a desire to obey the Lord and a growing concern that our nation bring itself to the path of righteousness and mercy that Jesus taught.

Again and again, Christ calls us to love. We are to love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our strength and with all our mind, and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Deuteronomy 6:5, Luke 10:27, Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30-31). When we are Christians, this is not optional. If our hearts are full of love, there is no room for fear, because "perfect love casts out fear." (I John 4:18) Being blessed with God's abundant love, we should be keeping families together, be welcoming to the strangers, and show compassion to those in need. We should see the best in each other regardless of political affiliation.

We know that "the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Galatians 5:14) And who is our neighbor? Jesus' answer is the parable of the good Samaritan. Only the Samaritan shows mercy to the beaten man. Only the Samaritan is a true neighbor in the eyes of the Lord (Luke 10:35-37). Today, are we acting the part of the priest and the Levite, or of the Samaritan? Is each of us willing to be a good Samaritan only to those who are like us, or who like us, or whom we like?

We are to follow Him who is the Truth (John 14:6). In an era of confusion between falsehood and truth, we risk leaving Christ's side when we listen to only what pleases us. (2 Timothy 4:3-4) For the sake of Christ, it is worth investigating the truth, wherever it may lead. In the words of Isaac Pennington (a 17th century Friend). "truth will not lose ground by being tried."

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Is that what we are showing the world? As Christians, we are called to live exemplary lives that glorify God (I Peter 2:13) Standing on the True Foundation, the Rock of Christ, let us return to His path, stand in the Light of Christ Jesus that reveals all things, and bears witness to our Lord above all – above party, above friends, above media, and above ourselves.

In Christ,
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