

2020 Epistle of Alaska Friends Conference to Friends Everywhere:

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Quakers of Alaska Friends Conference held our annual meeting through Zoom. It was both a comforting ritual and a brand-new experience; we were together in Spirit and physically separated. We missed seeing each other in-person but were pleased to have people attending who would not have been able to if yearly meeting had been an in-person event. There were Quakers from around Alaska, Hawaii, the Lower 48 states, Mexico and Canada!

We wove together our spirits through shared meals, sharing our creative endeavors, music performances, workshops, general socializing, and children's story & sharing time (adults were welcome, too!). All woven together through Zoom.

We had a variety of presentations and workshops around leaning-in to the powerful social, environmental and political movements occurring across our state and nation and intertwined: Black Lives Matter, the COVID-19 pandemic, economic inequality and the accelerating effects of climate change.

- Ayyu Qassataq from First Alaskans Institute spoke about its Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation initiative, and how Alaska Quakers can help heal the wounds from Friends' missionary activity amongst Alaska Natives beginning in the late 1800s.
- Lucy Duncan of American Friends Service Committee led us in group exercises exploring the spiritual practices of accompaniment as an anti-racist practice for social change.
- Matt Leber of AFSC led an interactive session around the query, "What is your Meeting up to in the realm of social justice?"
- Ursala Knudsen-Latta of FCNL presented "Progress toward Peace - You Can Help Advance Peacebuilding with Friends Committee on National Legislation"
- Jaya Karsemeyer Bone and Regina Renee Ward, Friends General Conference's Institutional Assessment Implementation Committee, led two related interactive workshops, "Moving Past White Fragility" and "Interrupting Racism." Both were scenario-based workshops designed to elicit physical and emotional responses from participants. Ways in which our responses might affect our actions in the scenarios were then discussed.

These events give us tools and inspiration to guide us as we intentionally and spiritually engage in the wide-spread social and environmental movements of our time. We are thankful for the many people engaged in making positive changes in the world and for the workshop presenters sharing with us their knowledge and experience.

Also weaving us together was the purchase this year of Mahala Ashley Dickerson's home and property from her son, John Dickerson's estate. Adjacent to the Alaska Friends Conference property Ms. Dickerson donated to AFC many years ago, we felt Way opening in this process of developing both properties, potentially into the Quaker retreat center she envisioned. Friends continue to hold this project in Light and joy, and look forward to how we will be led to honor her and put her generous legacy to good service.

Quakers of Alaska Friends Conference ask all people of good will to join with us in countering racist and divisive words and actions. We have asked ourselves how our own Quaker history has contributed to divisions, intolerance, and white supremacy. We discern a need for healing work that confronts past actions including those of Friends that devalued and damaged Black lives and indigenous cultures.