

A Non-Traditional Epistle for Alaska Friends Conference, Annual Sessions 2026

To Friends everywhere,

The Alaska Friends Conference gathered for our 2026 Annual Sessions at Dickerson Friends Center near Big Lake, Alaska. We were delighted to welcome about 10 attendees online and 30 attendees in person, including 8 friends under age 18. While we didn't have volunteers for an epistle committee, Friends shared in worship that these were some of their important moments and highlights of our gathering:

- A likely first ever heat advisory issued during our August session – a high of 78 degrees Fahrenheit!
- Joy & fun of our young attendees: hula hooping, swimming, and boating
- The joyful sound of adult laughter echoing out from our Meetinghouse
- Singing voices around our campfire
- Including Friends from hundreds and thousands of miles away using our Zoom and Meeting Owl technology to join our community remotely
- Our theme was “What are the actions Quakers can take in these unprecedented times?” and we relished hearing how individual meetings were rising to that call
- Larry Michael presenting a very clear and thoughtful explanation of the rise of Christian Nationalism
- Many willing and able volunteers to step into needed roles for our gathering – food purchasing, prep and clean up, recording clerk, and a full nomination slate
- An appreciation of our value of equality amongst us – all participants are asked to help with cooking and cleaning our food
- Joy of getting to know some friends, who are distant from us, a little better
- Gratitude to those who maintained our outhouse, brought water from the lake for handwashing, kept our drinking water full
- Gratitude to all the ways Laura Herman contributed to our gathering, including tech and zoom wrangling, time reminders, enduring one wasp sting, and persistence in removal of our wasp nest in the outhouse
- The kindness of our tenants in providing beautiful flower displays, setting up our systems, mowing, and bringing a freshly picked red currant dessert to share with us
- A tour of the property including the cemetery, the upgrades to the main house, and an almost complete greenhouse
- Committee reports that had a sense of vitality and commitment

- Appreciation of the clearing of some dead trees from the forest around our meetinghouse, allowing for sun to filter into our space, and sweet ferns and red currant bushes to grow underneath
- Welcoming special online visitors from American Friends Service Committee and Friends General Conference, including Ashlynn Sylvain who participated throughout all of our sessions even with a 4-hour time difference from the East Coast
- Deep gratitude to the humor and lightness that the body had in considering our work this weekend
- Hearing some of the hardest laughter (at ourselves) we've heard at Dickerson Friends Center as some friends played the satirical British Quaker game "Unable and Unwilling," a game where you try to nominate others for 40+ committee appointments and avoid appointments yourself
- Delighting in improv & theatre intergenerational games together led by Tom Baring and young participant Brennan Keck
- A very meaningful memorial session for our beloved members and attendees who passed away this past year: Bill Herman, Grant Klotz, Mark "Diz" Kistler, Lynn Basham, and Jan O'Meara. Grief shared was grief eased.
- 5 hammocks were hanging in our forest spaces, and each one was enjoyed with reading, relaxing, napping, etc.
- A precious stretch of 3 hours of free time, where dozens of attendees were able to enjoy Ashley Lake on our premises
- The kids have been enjoying our outdoor based program – building shelters for animals; crafts to furnish said shelters; collecting fire burning materials, floating, boating and diving in the lake; and caring for Thorn the dog throughout our gathering
- Much appreciation to Niiki Rath, who provided paid child programming with very little notice during our gathering
- Our clerking team, including our clerk, recording clerk, and treasurer/IT wranglers who diligently led our gathering with flexibility and persistence
- An enduring and endless gratitude to Mahala Ashley Dickerson who stewarded Quakers in Alaska for decades and has ensured Alaska Quakers have a place to gather for decades to come.

Adopted on Sunday, August 2, 2026