

## Epistle of First Northwest Quaker Men's Gathering

Ocean Park Retreat Center  
Ocean Park, Washington  
April 13 -15, 2018

Greetings to Friends [in the Pacific Northwest]:

Seventeen men gathered from across the Pacific Northwest and across the traditions of the Religious Society of Friends of Truth in the rain and wind of the Long Beach peninsula to listen to one another and to the Source, the Seed of Christ, the in-dwelling spirit among us. We came to Find Our Way as Quakers who identify as men. We were greeted by a video from Nancy Irving, who was involved in the first women's gathering and who welcomed us to this work. We shared prayers, poems and reflections in our opening spiritual potluck.

We were grateful to our presenters:

- Jim Hall, who encouraged us to explore the clutter of ideas, things and beliefs we each carry with us and which keep us from the life of Spirit.
- Fred Gregory who shared his experience of being called to his ministry in the world and his joy at seeing others around find their voice and their work. We shared our own stories of the spirit working with and through us.
- We held Eric Muhr in prayer as he was not able to attend and share his experience of using his gifts because of family concerns. We missed his presence.
- Pablo Stanfield led closing worship and an exercise to reflect on our time together and what we need to take our work together as Quakers who identify as men, forward.

We improvised around changed meal times, presenters, and lack of details the core planning group did not have time to work out. We trusted each other and trusted in God/Christ/Spirit and it worked out. Many of those who came found the informal and more open-ended structure with periods of worship and worship-sharing and personal reflection helpful. Some had hopes and expectations of a more structured process.

Our true and most blessed work was the time we spent getting to know each other as humans, partners, husbands, elders, struggling and faithful members of our faith communities at meals, on walks, and just hanging around. We shared how we came to be Quakers and what sustains us, and how we can come to know what we are called to do and to be in these uncertain times. Many of us felt our time together (Friday – Sunday) went too quickly and there was not time enough to go or get as deep with each other as some would have wished. Our experience and the opportunity to establish new connections and friendships and our wish to deepen and strengthen them was more than enough to call us back into community in the next year.

We are not the same in experience, beliefs and backgrounds – and that is good. Our written reflections revealed the many ways in which we were “like-hearted.” A clear sense of our gathering was that our

work going forward is to nurture our “like-heartedness” in the spirit and to avoid the temptation of seeking a closed gathering of the “like-minded.”

Among concerns and topics which arose for further work at our next gathering and upcoming planning meetings(s).

- What is our right role and relationship with NPYM, NWYM and SCYMF? Are there important work and opportunities in recent divisions? Is it too soon to know?
- Are we ready and willing to do the work of creating “Beloved Community”?
- How do we engage and what do we offer to young adult Friends (20-, 30- and 40-year-olds – most in attendance were over 50)?
- How do we understand and respond to patriarchy? To what degree are Friends complicit in the issues that have been in recent news?
- Why do unprogrammed worshipers do what they do? Why do programmed worshipers do what they do?
- What is our Good News? Are there different messages for different men in our different YMs?

As we closed singing “hallelú-Yah” we were clear we wanted more time to listen together and share our joys and challenges. And we were clear that we are still intent on Finding Our Way – and that we would like to gather again. We each committed to taking action, some small – some larger over the next year to build on this first experiment by

- Speaking to our Meetings and Churches about our experiences
- Travel and visitation to other Meetings and Churches in pairs over the coming year
- Helping plan the next gathering

We were grateful for our time together.

On behalf of the gathered Quaker Men, s/