



1216 Arch Street, 2B, Philadelphia, PA 19107  
office 215.561.1700 | bookstore 800.966.4556  
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To Friends Everywhere:

One hundred thirty seven Friends from fifteen yearly meetings gathered on a beautiful fall weekend at the Pearlstone Retreat Center near Reisterstown, Maryland for the 2013 annual meeting of the Friends General Conference Central Committee. Our worship and deliberations have been deeply blessed. We have been swept by an awareness of opportunity and new energy. As one Friend said: “There is a deep and powerful stream flowing here, and we are invited to plunge in.”

Two years ago, Friends General Conference defined three areas of focus to guide our work--Deep Worship, Loving Community, and Outreach. Focusing on these three priorities has already yielded good fruit and opened new doors as we consider how we are called to nurture Quaker faith and practice.

We heard from our General Secretary, Barry Crossno, a call for us to take up the challenge of reaching out to and accompanying the thousands of seekers who visit our meetings each year. We heard of new energy around our work in religious education, and how we are re-envisioning it as spiritual formation. We heard how eager Friends meetings are to take advantage of the online services offered by our new Quaker Cloud, which hosts monthly meeting websites and a meeting “minute manager,” and will soon be offering a meeting directory feature. We heard how the new approach to planned giving being pioneered by our Stewardship Services program liberates Friends to give more generously to all the charities they support. We heard of the new books coming out of our two publishing programs—FGC’s QuakerPress and QuakerBridge Media—and were encouraged to hear of renewed efforts to preserve and extend the ministry offered by our bookstore—QuakerBooks of FGC. We heard how our New Meetings project is reaching out to dozens of clusters of scattered Friends and seekers, and helping to establish new worship groups across the country. We heard of continued excitement about the outreach-inreach work of our Quaker Quest program.

This weekend, we dedicated a period of time each evening to diversity work, exploring together the challenge of how to be an ally to those experiencing discrimination and injustice. Dedicating this time has been very valuable. We encourage monthly and yearly meetings to consider engaging in this work. It has helped us to experience our own humanness, our weakness, and our common longing to do better. We still have much work to do, as individuals and in our Friends’ communities, to be truly welcoming and to live the Truth that we are all family. We are committed to carrying forward this work. We know that when we enter into the presence of the Divine together, experiencing and living out the love that binds us and opening our hearts to the world, way will open. We have experienced this weekend a taste of divine grace, and the way opening to new opportunities and new discoveries. We have been blessed.

In the Spirit,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sue Regen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sue Regen  
Presiding Clerk

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry Crossno". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Barry Crossno  
General Secretary

Approved October 28, 2013 at the Annual Meeting of Friends General Conference’s Central Committee