

26 July, 2025

To all Friends everywhere,

Greetings from Friends of Wilmington Yearly Meeting, who gathered in Wilmington, Ohio, from July 24–27, 2025. From southwest Ohio we came, but also from East Tennessee, Indiana, Massachusetts, New York, and Kenya. We gathered in the theme of “God Created... and it was Very Good,” with an intention of celebrating the creation and considering our stewardship thereof. Thus it was fitting that, while we gathered at the Campus Friends’ meetinghouse for our Friday programming, we spent Saturday the 26th at our Quaker Knoll Campground for all activities. Granted, it was because Wilmington College was undergoing maintenance on that day and it made connecting a challenge for our virtual attenders - but nonetheless it was a joy to be at that beautiful site in the middle of God’s Creation. Likewise, we began our activities on Thursday evening at Great Council State Park, the site of a historic Shawnee village for three years near Xenia.

It seemed that Friday’s activities could best be summed up as a “Day of Caring.” We began with a report from Tanya Maus of the Peace Resource Center, a great concern for our Yearly Meeting reflecting our care for all people. Our budget discussion Friday became complex - but as we see it, not from a lack of care, but from a surfeit of concern, because Friends spoke of a desire to, among other things, increase the compensation for our Quaker Knoll caretaker Jay Schroeder to reflect our appreciation and care for his services. Likewise in this theme of caring, we were deeply impressed by Wilmington College President Corey Cockerill’s report. Both because of the impressive work that she is leading regarding retention and growth, but for two particular items. A Friend asked President Cockerill what the College would be doing regarding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives given the current environment in the country. To the delight of all, Corey responded - roughly quoting - “We are deeply grounded in our Quaker heritage, which says to be inclusive, to accept all persons, and to foster inclusivity.” Likewise we find ourselves deeply impressed by the reported gift from Wilmington College Coach Jerry Scheve, who upon his recent passing gave \$23 million to the College (the largest single gift ever), including a significant portion of that towards ongoing peace programming for students which Coach Scheve cared deeply for as a ministry of the college.

Continuing on the theme of acting from a place of deep caring, Friends express our deep appreciation to Clerk Patricia Thomas for her generous gifts to the Yearly Meeting and related ministries. By establishing a permanent endowment for the Wilmington College Campus Minister, the Living Faithfully Fund with an unrestricted balance of \$450,000, and a \$50,000 gift to the Aged Ministers Fund, Friend Patricia like Coach Scheve acts in generosity out of care for the future of our ministries. We encourage friends to consider how we can best demonstrate our care for our joint

ministries, whether a bequeathal at the end of life, or a gift of time, talent, or wealth while still among us. We recognize that showing care includes expressing our appreciation, and thus Friends saw fit to make a point of preparing and endorsing a Minute of Appreciation for Friend Mike Miller, for his long and excellent work as Treasurer. Our afternoon programs likewise demonstrated this emphasis on caring, as Karla Jay of Friends United Ministries sharing with us the work of FUM's Global Ministries and how, even in very difficult situations like Ramallah Friends School finds itself, or in times of transition that the Belize ministries are currently undergoing, FUM's concern extends to all. Our delicious USFW Banquet preceded a moving presentation by Katie and Jason Hollingsworth about their trip to Kenya for the Friends Bringing Hope ministry. Katie and Jason shared stories, pictures, and both laughter and touching moments as they shared about their experience helping women who had been widowed and found themselves in difficult life situations, and an overriding theme was a sense of Joy.

If Friday was the Day of Caring, Saturday was a day of Looking Ahead, and of Possibilities. We opened our activities at Quaker Knoll with a worship service led by the Young Friends - including reading a scriptures, sharing moments of peace, and seeing images of a double rainbow they had seen, and admiring the recently-completed mural in the basement of the Quaker Knoll House. We appreciate the vision (and boundless energy) of Lydia Donovan, and the joyful industry of the young friends in producing this delightful piece. After multiple songs and open worship, there was a transition into Ministry and Counsel. After spending time being led by the future leadership of the Yearly Meeting, we began to talk more in earnest about Looking Ahead. In particular, an ongoing theme that popped up in multiple programs was the possibility of future collaboration, interaction, and cooperation with the New Association of Friends and Western Yearly Meeting. We noted quite a bit of energy and potential each time this came up, with an invitation to a program on spiritual formation of young adults and - perhaps - some sort of joint seasonal gathering, along with an afternoon discussion led by Dave Goff, Tom Hamm (of the New Association) and Tom Rockwell (of Western Yearly Meeting and the New Association) and ongoing plans for joint ministerial retreats and some youth activities.

"Looking Ahead" also seems to apply to the theme that we settled on for 2026; "Called in Joy For These Times" with the scriptures Acts 10: 14-15 and Esther 4:14. Likewise the resolution of our budget discussion, as Friend Michael Anderson led us in a discussion and conclusion that seemed to be animated less by worry over what we don't have, than the potential of what we could have with clear eyes. Our Memorial Service was, as always, meaningful and touching to Friends, and included attendance by Friends who had not been around in some time from Massachusetts and New York. We find ourselves encouraged that we've come to a decision that committee membership will be more flexible as we Look Ahead, after some discussion and, dare

we say, wrangling. After this discussion one Friend shared that it felt familiar to be at a place where our focus is less on survival but rather hashing out specifics; another who recently arrived from another Yearly Meeting shared her perspective that that sort of lively discussion would not have been permitted and that, delightfully, our method felt more like family working matters out.

Our afternoon clerking workshop also struck friends as feeling like “Looking Ahead” - or perhaps rather “Going beyond.” Rather than seeking mechanical consensus, friend Dave Goff’s workshop focused on going beyond mechanics and reminding friends that leading a meeting should be emphasized as “worship with attention to business,” to seek the leading of God rather than consensus per se. Our Saturday lunch was provided by the young friends, and many friends partook for dinner as well. Not quite feeding the 5000, but the leftovers were enough to feed the disciples.

We found ourselves moved by Ursula McTaggart, whose Peace Lecture was focused on the Wilmington College Prison Education Program. She spoke first about how Quakers have been “seeing injustices and establishing a committee to deal with it” since the 1798 establishment of the Committee on Indian Affairs. We found ourselves strongly encouraged by Wilmington College’s commitment to the prison education program, established by Neil Snarr in 1967. It’s estimated there will be up to 140 students registered in this program for the fall between three different facilities. To quote Ursula, “Friends are the first to do something and the last to give up,” and this persistence and resilience was shown in the restart of the Wilmington College prison education program. We see this, likewise, as a case of Looking Ahead by providing these incarcerated people with tools and hope for a positive future. To quote Ursula again, “All long-term relationships involve conflict; the only people who don’t make mistakes are the ones who don’t try.”

After two and a half fulfilling days together, Friends gathered at Wilmington Friends Meeting for a brief closing business session, leading directly into joyful worship.

Prayerfully Submitted,  
Jonathan Goff  
Hannah Lutz  
Miriam Speaight