EPISTLE

Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns (FLGBTQC)
July 2018, at Friends General Conference Gathering, Toledo, Ohio, USA

Dear Friends everywhere,

We send you loving greetings from Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns, as we meet together for worship, play, and business during the 2018 Friends General Conference Gathering in Toledo, Ohio. FLGBTQC is a faith community within the Religious Society of Friends in North America that affirms that of God in all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

FLGBTQC has been a beloved and vital community for many years and through many changes. Begun in the 1970s as the “Committee of Concern” because it was not safe to name the group more explicitly, the group later became Friends for Gay Concerns, Friends for Lesbian and Gay Concerns, and eventually Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns, as our spirit-led understanding of ourselves grew.

Unfortunately, we have found in recent years that it has been increasingly difficult, sometimes impossible, to fill the many committee roles we had created over the years. In February 2018, at our Midwinter Gathering, out of a desire for our stated intentions to conform to the reality of our recent practice, we reduced the number of nominated positions from 39 to ten: presiding and recording clerks, a treasurer and finance committee, and a much-reduced nominating committee. Some additional positions will be filled on an ad-hoc basis, for the duration of a Gathering. Other work will grow from the leadings of members as they arise.

The struggle to maintain the commitments of a past version of our community left us distressed and aggrieved, and unburdening ourselves has been a tremendous relief. It has allowed us once again to see the living core of our community, and we hope and expect that our paring-back will make room for new growth. Today, our community includes Friends who came of age before Stonewall, and young Friends who have grown up in the transformed world of the 21st century, and Friends of many ages and experiences in between. We have much to learn from each other. We see intergenerational cooperation, and leadership of the young, as one of our growing edges.

FLGBTQC has long been a central part of our spiritual lives. It has been a place where the gifts of ministry possessed by gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, trans people, and queer people have been named, nurtured, and expressed. The number of FLGBTQC members who serve or have served important roles at the FGC Gathering, within FGC, at American Friends Service Committee, at Pendle Hill, in the School of the Spirit, at Way of the Spirit, in Friends United Meeting, in anti-racist work, and in yearly and monthly meetings is a testament to the spiritual power we have helped each other cultivate, and the courage we have found in ourselves and in each other. We have valued the reciprocity of support we have come to enjoy with these bodies, and with individuals within them, as our wider Quaker communities have come to accept—and more than to accept, to celebrate—our lives and work. We are grateful for these connections and for the affirmation of our truth.

We can't yet know the future of FLGBTQC, but we are heartened by the renewed spirit we find as we face honestly the changes in our circumstances. We come together in joy, in sorrow, in uncertainty, and in hope; in worship, in business, and in social companionship; in spiritual communion, in intimate friendship, and in love; and above all we come together in faith that God
will guide us to new truths, new ministries, and new joys. We hope to remain together as a refreshed and growing Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns, but if that is not possible, if God scatters us like the colors of light passing through a prism, we will take with us the truth we have learned from each other, and enrich, and be enriched by, the places we find ourselves. This will be our legacy: whether we are together or apart, neither we nor the individuals and communities we have touched and been touched by can ever forget the truth we have brought radiantly into the world.

Dear Friends, we pray for your well-being, for your faithfulness, for your growth in the Light. We welcome your prayers in return. We hope that in our service to the Spirit we worship, we can be of service to you as well.

On behalf of the FLGBTQC community,

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