

An Epistle from Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns,
Midwinter Gathering 2013

To All Friends Everywhere,

We send you love and best wishes from Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns Midwinter Gathering, held from February 15-18th, 2013, at the Bryn Mawr Mountain Retreat and Conference Center in Honesdale, Pennsylvania.

We unpacked the theme – A Place at the Table – in a series of plenary sessions under the skillful facilitation of Niyonu Spann. This theme proved to be a provocative metaphor that led us to examine how our experiences of power, privilege, and inclusion inform our perception of how big the table is, how it is set, who gets to sit at it, and how they are to behave. We were encouraged to notice individual, group, and societal patterns and tensions around race, class, gender identity, and sexual orientation – and beyond.

The planning committee was determined that we would do more than discuss power, privilege, and inclusion; awareness of these dynamics would inform the process of creating an expanded and more inclusive Gathering. Our community was blessed by the extensive outreach done by the planning committee, which brought more children, young adults, people of color, allies, teenagers, racial justice workers, and non-Quakers to our Gathering, almost doubling our attendance over last year.

Spirit invites everyone to come to the Table of the Beloved Community. We are asked to participate as our authentic selves, with our wounds, and gifts, and imperfections. We were fed and challenged by the Spirit and each other as we wrestled with the reality that there are those who do not feel invited or feel they cannot bring their whole selves to the table. Many of us have had the experience in our religions of origin that to acknowledge our sexuality or gender identity would sever our relationship with the Spirit. We have found the opposite is true: that accepting and expressing our true selves only serves to strengthen our connection with the Divine.

We are determined to continue the struggle, knowing that we will be challenged by what it will take to be faithful to our vision of radical inclusion. As we continue our

commitment to realize what radical love demands of us, we ask that you hold us in the Light.

On behalf of Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns,

Wendy Sanford and Ted Heck, co-clerks