Piedmont Friends-Yearly Meeting & Fellowship

Spiritual State of the Meeting Report

Annual Sessions, 2026

We received Spiritual Condition Reports from eleven monthly meetings: Abingdon, Chapel Hill, Charlotte, New Garden, Durham, Eno, Raleigh, Rockingham County, Salem Creek, Wilkes County. Swannanoa Valley also submitted their report as they discern whether to join Piedmont Friends. The individual meeting Spiritual Condition Reports are included in advance documents for annual sessions on the Piedmont Friends website.

The 2025–2026 reporting cycle highlights a Piedmont Friends community that is both **tenderly resilient** and **prophetically active**.

- **The Power of Presence:** From the small, rural gatherings in Rockingham to the 100+ worshipers in Durham, there is a shared sense that Quaker worship provides a vital "safety" and "nourishment" against the "uncareful speech" of the outside world.
- **Active Protection:** A defining spiritual leading this year is the **"Intent to Protect."** Whether through Charlotte's support for the trans community or the "Friends y Amigos" work in Eno, Meetings are centering the protection of the vulnerable as a core spiritual discipline.
- **Transitions:** The region is navigating the physical loss of space (Swannanoa Valley/Salem Creek) while celebrating the influx of "new energy" from young seekers and families in the larger urban Meetings.
- **Interdependence:** There is a strong call for the Yearly Meeting to help bridge the gap between Meetings through more frequent inter-visitation and shared youth programming.

Based on the reports from the various Monthly Meetings, here are some common themes that emerge:

1. Responding to the Immigration Crisis

A powerful, unified leading emerged across nearly every report regarding localized actions by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Meetings are actively moving beyond prayer into high-stakes, practical sanctuary work:

- **Direct Community Aid: Charlotte** organized grocery and supply deliveries to families too terrified to leave their homes during aggressive business and school raids.
- **Rapid Response Network: Wilkes** identified vulnerable community members to contact immediately if enforcement actions reach their rural area.
- **Structural Integration: Durham** partnered with SiembraNC to formally establish their meeting space as a "Fourth Amendment Workplace" and distributed emergency alert kits (whistles and "know your rights" cards). **Raleigh** signed onto a joint *Intent to Protect* minute to prepare for disruptive ICE activity at their meetinghouse.

- **Confidential Outreach: Eno's** *At-Risk Neighbors* working group ("Friends y Amigos") operates quietly out of the public eye to protect the undocumented.

2. Resilience Through Loss and Physical Disruption

Several communities spent the year adjusting to profound changes to their physical spaces:

- **Natural Disaster: Swannanoa Valley** suffered the complete destruction of their meetinghouse by Tropical Storm Helene, processing deep trauma while embracing the revelation that "the Meeting is about the people and not the building." **Charlotte** and other sister meetings stepped up with sustained funding for their Hurricane Relief Fund.
- **Space Transitions: Salem Creek** successfully relocated their worship space into a lower room of the Forsyth Friends Meetinghouse, using the move to build tighter communicative bonds with nearby meetings.
- **Sacred Hospitality and Boundaries: Raleigh** focused intensive spiritual discernment on maintaining healthy, respectful boundaries while extending compassion to unhoused individuals camping on their meetinghouse grounds.

3. Numerical Growth vs. Intergenerational Strain

The shifting demographics of the region created two distinct realities:

- **The Seekers' Surge: Durham**, **Charlotte**, **New Garden**, and **Raleigh** all report a post-pandemic renaissance in attendance, noting that political anxiety in the wider world is driving long-time Quakers and new seekers alike into the grounding safety of gathered silence.
- **Youth Ministry Gaps:** While **Durham** boasts a booming program of nearly 60 youth and **Raleigh** successfully codified formal policies to protect a newly revived bi-weekly childcare program, smaller or older meetings (**Eno**, **Swannanoa Valley**, **Abingdon**) struggle with a total absence of young families, requesting regional collaboration to solve the deficit.

4. Public Witness and Prophetic Activism

Meetings are increasingly choosing to "let their lives speak" on controversial contemporary issues, explicitly noting that their actions are extensions of their worship rather than simple political alignment:

- **Transgender Support: Charlotte** approved a formal *Minute of Support and Affirmation* for the trans community to push back against hostile state legislation.

- **Middle East Discernment: Raleigh's** *Seeds of War, Seeds of Peace* group actively engaged with global networks to re-ground themselves in the Quaker peace testimony, especially the witness of John Woolman, as well as a broader study of the power of nonviolence in history. The specific focus of application was the crisis in Palestine-Israel. **Rockingham** and **Eno** focused heavily on maintaining a centered, non-partisan spiritual core amidst international heartaches.

- **Racial and Restorative Justice: New Garden** hosted extensive series on anti-racism and marched in MLK parades alongside Guilford College, while **Durham** formally minuted an 18-year-old's conscientious objection to war and funded a new *Legacy Grant Fund* utilizing community bequests.

Notable Items from Individual Meetings

Abingdon Friends Meeting

- **Clerkless Order:** A highly functional small meeting of 6 to 9 regular attenders with no formal clerk. Responsibilities are shared organically, a weekly "Quaker Reflections" digest is maintained, and a new Healing Circle was established this year.

Chapel Hill Friends Meeting

- **Deepened Relations:** Conducted virtual spiritual discernment via Zoom based on Yearly Meeting queries. Emphasized the "cozy" family feel of returning to post-pandemic, in-person worship, supported by a newly minted Peace and Justice Committee.

Charlotte Friends Meeting

- **Generational Renewal:** Celebrated a full circle of life as the passing of Elders paved the way for an influx of young seekers.
- **Green Testimony:** Successfully raised funds and secured national grants to install solar panels on the meetinghouse roof as a concrete response to climate change.

Durham Friends Meeting

- **Massive Vitality:** Averaging over 100 worshipers each First-day, the meeting successfully balanced its budget after four deficit years and utilized its *Legacy Grant Fund* to finance international agricultural aid for Bolivian Quakers.

Eno Friends Meeting

- **Internal Healing:** Formed a small *Committee for Clarity and Sharing* to address hurt feelings and tension during business meetings, practicing tenderness to lay the groundwork for community reconciliation.
- **Prison Ministry:** Maintained an active prison ministry, including welcoming incarcerated men into their worship space when possible.

Fayetteville Friends Meeting

- **Interconnected Roots:** A self-described "forest of individual trees" that values its tiny size for the closeness it engenders. They expanded their spiritual exploration this year through the *First Nations Bible*.

New Garden Friends Meeting

- **Prophetic Witness:** Sparked by their new pastoral minister, Brenda Esch, the meeting created specialized working groups addressing land stewardship, spiritual studies, and local homelessness.
- **SNAP Advocacy:** Convened area non-profits and social services to protect individuals left vulnerable by sudden cuts to SNAP benefits.

Raleigh Friends Meeting

- **The Underground Carrot:** Described as a community with deep hidden roots ("a carrot, not a vine"). Celebrated a successful multi-clerk experiment (utilizing three clerks to accommodate personal schedules) and prioritized careful, concise, Spirit-led speech over uncareful political noise.

Rockingham County Friends Meeting

- **Home-Based Service:** A tiny unprogrammed meeting of seven members who gather monthly in a private home for silence and a meal, allocating their limited resources to support the local homeless shelter and soup kitchens.

Salem Creek Friends Meeting

- **Relocation Success:** Grateful for a smooth transition from Fries Moravian Church into a downstairs room at Forsyth Friends Meetinghouse, boosting local collaboration.
- **Grief and Outreach:** Mourned the passing of former Clerk Dick Connell, while sustaining their hands-on service via Meals on Wheels and food donations to local ministries.

Swannanoa Valley Friends Meeting

- **Post-Helene Trauma:** Navigating life after losing their meetinghouse to the late-2024 storm. Swannanoa is grateful to be allowed to meet at Ransom Hall during a time on Sunday, when the space is not needed by the church.
- **Emerging Energies:** Despite grief over five major losses in their elder community, they hosted forums on 19th-century Indian Boarding Schools and hybrid tech tools to improve accessibility for the hard of hearing.

Wilkes County Friends Meeting

- **Rural Discernment:** Rooting their actions in standard silent worship followed by active discussion to counter toxic national rhetoric. Focus areas include fighting state restrictions on voting rights and monitoring local ICE enforcement.

Conclusion

These reports vividly illustrate Piedmont Friends' success in uniting its member meetings. This fellowship provides a valuable Quaker forum for addressing issues and sharing concerns across a diverse range of congregations. These meetings, whether un-programmed or semi-programmed, large or small, with firmly Christian roots or a more universal approach, and situated in rural or urban settings, are all bound by a shared dedication. They strive to embody a Spirit-led life characterized by love and compassion.

Piedmont Friends Spiritual Condition Committee
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