

Introduction:

Warm Greetings from Friends who gathered in Portland, Oregon - as you'll read elsewhere in this newsletter - for Midwinter Gathering in February. Among other things discerned during Meeting for Business, we agreed to shift from a completely ad hoc, event-based fundraising strategy to a more systematic one that asks each of us to consider more reflectively and periodically the underlying ministry embodied in FLGBTQC's existence, and to take a deliberate decision about the ways and the extent to which we are led to support it. To that end, we'd ask that you take the time to read through the letter below, and to follow through with whatever actions you're led to. A tear-off donation coupon is elsewhere in the newsletter ... and materials to help you approach your Meeting if led are available on the FLGBTQC website: www.quaker.org/flgbtqc. Whatever you decide, please do it now before good intentions fade. Then come join us next Gathering for some of the good, old-fashioned fun we've always associated with fundraising.

To Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns Everywhere:

Friends for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Concerns offers a community that deeply honors, affirms, and upholds that of God in all people. We are learning that radical inclusion and radical love bring further light to Quaker testimony and life. We learn from and educate each other about how Spirit is moving in the intersections between our spirituality, gender, and sexuality. We find these discussions enrich not only ourselves, but even those who participate in these discussions from a distance when we carry back to our Meetings a renewed commitment to justice and equality and an enriched spiritual life.

As we continue to listen in faithful expectation of continuous revelation, we have watched our leadings evolve into ministries such as these:

- In the same way that once our gatherings provided sanctuary and respite and places to mourn as our community was ravaged by AIDS-related deaths, so today we find ourselves making safe and nourishing **space for families** beleaguered by a vicious public discourse that officially denies their existence and legitimacy.
- In ways reminiscent of how early feminist consciousness-raising helped sustain identities and open new ways of seeing everyday life, so today **bisexual and transgender** Friends are sparking new dialogues about gender and sexual identity that challenge assumptions and suggest new possibilities for integrity and wholeness.
- In the same way that the Religious Society of Friends' understanding of marriage has been enriched by the decades-long, hard work of Meetings that have taken our relationships under their care without regard to gender or sexual orientation, so today we find that the richness born of this radical inclusion can shape **a unique Quaker voice to join the public discourse about marriage equality**, in the absence of which the vacuum would be filled with divisive and judgmental messages from faith communities whose experience is wholly different.
- As beloved Quaker role models once schooled older ones of us in Quaker history and in the discipline of rigorous attention to "right order" of Quaker process, so today yesterday's learners take their turn at hearing into speech new voices as they assume **leadership roles outside as well as inside our community**.

We understand this path to be a calling, and we recognize that we can continue to pursue it only insofar as resources are available. Unless we gather our collective resources and put them at the service of this leading, we risk that our current economic crisis will diminish us to becoming an exclusive club of those who can afford to travel to enjoy each other's company. We invite you to take a quiet moment to ask yourself if you too are led to help us continue the boldness of our leading. If you are, please consider these ways to join us:

- 1) **Plan to gather** with us in Blacksburg, Virginia (in July) or at Midwinter Gathering (next February). Friends identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer (LGBTQ), those exploring LGBTQ identities and LGBTQ-friendly allies all find that physical time together in community is essential to the long-term process of surrendering to what God has to teach us. If money is a problem, please enquire of our clerks about the availability of travel subsidies. Our funds are not unlimited, but part of our leading is that money alone should never be a reason for someone who needs us to stay away, and as we are able, we set aside some money to help. If time or energy is the limiting factor that keeps you away, please consult your Guide; priorities will become clear, and if they include us, we'll be richer.
- 2) **Encourage someone else to join us.** Look around your meeting with eyes attuned to our leading, and see if there is someone (claiming any of our many initials, or perhaps a potential ally) who you think could be enlivened by connecting with us, or helpful to the faithfulness and creativity of our journey. Think about inviting that person--and about asking your Meeting to help that person join us.
- 3) **Help us stay vibrant and faithful by making a financial contribution to FLGBTQC.** By this letter we are asking you to consider the extent to which you can contribute to the continuation of the ministry we describe above ... and to send any funds you're led to donate now. It will help us know next Gathering the extent to which we can act to carry out our intentions.
- 4) **Connect your Meeting to our leading.** If our evolving calling is part of your own life leading, let your Meeting know that. Ask your Meeting to send a travel minute with you next time you gather with us; recognizing this community as a partner in your spiritual nurture is an important statement from the Meeting that holds you in its care. Consider downloading from the FLGBTQC website documents that explain who we are and how we understand our ministry, adding a cover note of your own, and asking your Meeting for a financial contribution to FLGBTQC's continuing presence among the Religious Society of Friends. Meetings so approached are often touched to be able to have a concrete way to support the spiritual growth of a member, knowing that we return to them richer and more awake.

Thank you for your thoughtful and honest attention to our invitation. Your authentic response will help us collectively to be realistic as well as ambitious as we listen for divine guidance about what we are called to do in the world.

Sincerely,
Karen Lightner and Neil Fullagar
Co-clerks
Friends for Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender and Queer Concerns.

TEAR-OFF "COUPON"

Mail to: FLGBTQC
c/o Su Penn
2206 Iroquois Rd.
Okemos, MI 28864

Make check payable to: FLGBTQC

My enclosed donation is for: \$ _____

Date:

Name:

Address: