**EPISTLE 4/21/2025**

To Friends Everywhere:

The Baltimore Yearly Meeting Women’s Retreat was gathered in joyful reunion on Monday, April 21, 2025, at Heidelberg United Church of Christ 47 W Philadelphia St, York, PA 17401 on the theme of “Nurturing our Faith in Turbulent Times.” Approximately 21 women attended in person. Registrants came from 14 Friends Meetings and worship groups, representing Maryland, Virginia, Washington DC, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania.

We convened for coffee and socializing, and at 9:30 we greeted Rev. Carla Christopher, a local Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility/Belonging (DEIA/B) Trainer specializing in LGBTQIA2S+ Cultural Competency & Racial Justice, Trauma-informed Care & Mindfulness, Nonviolent Communication, & Peacebuilding. Rev. Christopher began with song, and then moved into her message about how individuals have the power, one person at a time, to contribute to the building of community. She shared four elements that need to be present in order to build belonging in a community: engagement, care, education/growth, and a process for healing. When we each provide one another with this care, we build a safe space in which anyone can belong.

At 10:30, we moved into our first workshop sessions:

* + *Poetry and Prosody for Healing and Loving* Madeline Mirasol, leader.
  + *Faith and Play Workshop* Laura McGuire, leader.
  + *Simple Swaps for Sustainable Living* Rosie Pinkerton, leader.

After our first set of workshops, we reconvened in the community room and sat for silent worship. The time in worship was centered and renewing.

Once we broke our meeting for worship, we paused for lunch and additional socialization. A group decided that, once we finished eating, we would walk over to York Friends Meeting for a tour of the historic building and grounds. Many thanks to Dorothy Shumway for her impromptu tour guiding.

We returned from the walk for our second set of workshops:

* + *Cultivating Compassion in Action* Theresa Robertson, leader.
  + *The Universal Sound: Using Music to Connect to the Light* Sophia Nicholson, leader.
  + *Moving into Ease - Into Embodied Prayer* Carol Cober, leader.

All the workshops were well-attended, with a nearly equal number of participants joining each session. After the workshops, we reconvened as a large group and we were honored to have Meg Meyer lead our worship sharing group with the following prompt: Living in the World in 2025. We meditated on the question of how our intellectual awareness of the world and our spiritual lives intersect -- with emphasis on bringing world affairs into our prayers and 'holding in the Light."

We finished with a very brief Plenary Session to establish the next host for the women’s retreat, and Stacy LaRoy from Herndon Friends volunteered. Many women stayed afterwards to clean up. We parted from each other having made new friends and cherishing the opportunity to reconnect with those we’d known.