



Annual Report 2017

2017 was a year of transition and growth for William Penn House. We entered our 2nd half-century of service in the midst of social and political turmoil as intense as it's been since the years of our founding in the mid-1960s. Our mission—supporting peace and justice activism and inspiring and equipping people from all walks of life to build peace and justice in their own lives—has never been timelier or more urgently needed.

Providing simple, community-based, and welcoming overnight hospitality for activists, educators, and students remains central to our activities, as it has been since our founding. Guests last year included many activists visiting Washington to lobby congress, to protest in and around the Capitol, and to participate in the many large marches. We hosted citizen-activists with (among others) FCNL, AFSC, Citizens' Climate Lobby, the Center for Popular Democracy, Young Evangelicals for Climate Action, United We Dream, the Student/Farmworker Alliance, and AIDS United, providing a base of operations and a space of nurture and refuge as they worked for health-care justice, immigrant rights, labor rights, climate justice, and other urgent peace and justice causes.

In addition to overnight accommodations, we extended our hospitality mission to support activists in new ways. We opened our doors as a “comfort station” for the Women’s March on Washington in January, the People’s Climate March in April, and the March for Racial Justice in September. Each day, hundreds of marchers stopped in for a bathroom, snack, and a place to relax and make connections with other marchers. We also supported FCNL’s Interfaith Vigil to Save Medicaid in late June, providing logistical support and hospitality for this important event of Quaker witness.

Our service-learning and social justice education programs expanded last year, as more educators and youth leaders have seen the need for powerful social justice education opportunities. Participants came from Quaker and other independent schools, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches, four colleges, and an international youth leadership program run by Indiana University. Through our service-learning programs, we supported 10 grassroots non-profits providing service and dignity for the marginalized and working to build a more just, caring, and healthy community. Key partners included DC Urban Greens (an urban agriculture / food justice program), Our Daily Bread (a community breakfast on Capitol Hill), DC Central Kitchen (a city-wide food justice program), and Capitol Hill Village (an aging-in-place support network).

We also continued longstanding relationships with communities in southern Louisiana and McDowell County, WV, with our annual week-long Quaker workcamps. In March, we led a group of high-schoolers to Louisiana for the 12th year, to serve and learn in New Orleans and with the Ile de Jean-Charles native community. In June, we led another group to West Virginia for our 17th annual workcamp with a community-based non-profit, providing simple home repairs for community members and building relationships across cultural and geographic divides.

We hosted five public events on peace & justice issues in 2017, giving activists an opportunity to share their work and facilitate important discussions. Presentations included Linda Rabben sharing her research and activism on asylum and immigrant rights, Quaker performer Peterson Toscano sharing stories and reflections on faith, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and climate change (yes, there are connections!), and Dyresha Harris sharing insights and reflections from the STRIDE program, which seeks to build and support truly diverse, inclusive communities in Baltimore Yearly Meeting's summer camps. Since the new year, we have expanded our public events program with a new Social Justice Movie Night series, with screenings of documentary films on important peace and justice issues followed by discussion.

Financially, 2017 was a year of resolving problems and building positive trends. Most importantly, we resolved our lawsuit with the DC government about our property tax assessment, reaching a satisfactory compromise agreement. Thanks to generous contributions from Friends, we paid the past-due balance and are moving forward with a manageable new annual expense. The lawsuit and staff transitions took a toll on our finances and program activities, but program revenues and contributions have increased, putting us on the path toward financial sustainability. For the fiscal year that ended in June 2017, we improved our bottom line by \$40,000 over the prior year, but that improvement was not adequate to cover all our expenses. Continued expansions in contributions and program revenues are needed to balance the budget, make key investments in facilities and programs, and build reserves for a strong, solid future for William Penn House.

William Penn House relies on generous contributions from F/friends to make these programs possible and widely accessible. In fiscal year 2017, 199 individuals and 47 Friends Meetings donated to our programs, accounting for 26% of our operating budget. Without this support, we would not be able to keep the fees for our lodging and educational programs affordable, host public events, and invest in improving our facilities and developing more powerful programs. Even more importantly, contributions from across the country remind us that our work is lifted up and held in the Light by a nationwide community of F/friends. Gifts from Friends Monthly and Yearly Meetings are especially important to us, representing as they do the corporate action of a worshipping community. Thirty-six monthly meetings (from 14 yearly meetings) and eleven yearly meetings contributed last year.

We are very grateful for the generous annual support from Southeastern Yearly Meeting and for contributions from two SEYM Monthly Meetings and several individual SEYM Friends. Your support makes our ministry possible—thank you!