

An Urgent Call to the Religious Society of Friends

Update, July 2023

The Steering Committee of the Urgent Call has continued prayerfully to discern whether and how we are called to further action in anticipation of the 2024 elections and the continuing threats to our democracy.

In light of the events since the mid-term elections, we believe that our original Urgent Call to the Religious Society of Friends, endorsed by more than 720 individuals and 80 Quaker Meetings and organizations nationwide, is as relevant and urgent now as when it was first issued.

Many Friends worked hard during the 2022 mid-terms to protect our elections and rebuild democracy by registering voters and serving as canvassers, poll workers, poll watchers, and election officials. To our great relief, the elections were conducted safely and without major problems. Many voters overcame partisan efforts to restrict their access to the polls and rejected election deniers and extremist candidates in key races.

Regrettably, we see that truth, democracy, equality, and civility continue to be under unprecedented attack by authoritarian movements in our society. These extremist movements, many anchored in the tenants of white supremacy, are aggressively pursuing an agenda that counters equality, integrity, community, peace and justice. Their actions include racist attacks on people and communities of color, restricting voter access to the ballot, denying health care choices for women and LGBTQI+ people, and refusing to address the scourge of gun violence. Meanwhile, the existential threats of the climate crisis are growing dramatically, requiring urgent action to transition rapidly from an economy based almost entirely on fossil fuels to one based totally on clean energy.

We believe Friends are called to persevere in seeking and speaking truth, followed by right action.



We urge Friends to consider taking the following actions, both individually and corporately through our Quaker monthly and yearly meetings, wherever possible working with allied groups to increase the impact of our witness:

1. Publicly affirm our core belief that God gives every human being a measure of Divine Light and encourage every person to act in accordance with that holy witness within them.
2. Publicly denounce all efforts to subvert free and fair elections through voting restrictions, gerrymandering, and other undemocratic means; work to protect and promote free and fair elections by volunteering as poll-workers and election officials; actively support conscientious election officials and state attorneys general.
3. Publicly affirm our historical and religious commitment to the radical equality of all human beings under God. Take up the work of recognizing and repairing the racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and other oppressions in our midst, even as we counter intolerant and vindictive forces at work in the broader society.
4. Publicly denounce the MAGA and related authoritarian movements, including their continued lies, distortions, support for autocratic leaders, and attacks on individual liberties and democratic institutions. We are called to counter the use of hate, threats, and violence whenever and wherever we see them.
5. Act locally to support good candidates running for office. Working together as allies of and in coalition with other faith communities and

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community-based organizations, particularly those led by Black, Indigenous, People of Color and LGBTQI+ people, can help build community and strengthen the impact of our actions.

6. Circulate the Urgent Call within our meetings, churches, and Quaker organizations for individual and organizational endorsements.

The Urgent Call Steering Committee pledges to serve as a hub for communication, conversation, learning, and support as Friends act for truth and democracy over the next 16 months. We will organize periodic national Zoom calls and training sessions to support and facilitate our witness together.

The first national Zoom call is scheduled for September 28, 2023 from 7–9 pm EDT. We are delighted that Parker Palmer, noted Quaker author and teacher, will be providing an opening message on “The Better Angels of Our Nature: Love, Truth, Justice & the Work of We the People.” Please print, post, and distribute the attached flyer in your meeting and elsewhere.

Our second call this fall (to be scheduled) will be a learning opportunity to understand the bi-partisan **American Anti-Corruption Act**, and how your endorsement and work with allied organizations for its passage locally and nationally could lead to major reforms needed to protect truly democratic, free and fair elections.

These national Zoom calls provide opportunities for us to gather in community, affirm our commitment to worship, learn together, and prepare to act locally. Register for these National Calls and future trainings at www.quakercall.net.

We have felt the immense value of listening and acting together as Friends around these urgent issues of our time. We look forward to being with you in the coming months.

The Urgent Call Steering Committee:

MARIAN BEANE

Charlotte Friends Meeting, Piedmont Friends - Yearly Meeting and Fellowship

BRUCE BIRCHARD

Central Philadelphia Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Former General Secretary, Friends General Conference

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MARY ELLEN MCNISH

Byberry Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Former General Secretary, American Friends Service Committee

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JIM WADDINGTON

Salem Monthly Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

MICHAEL WAJDA, CLERK

Goshen Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Sojourning Bennington Friends Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting, Former Associate Secretary, Friends General Conference

Meeting and Organization Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only.



You can endorse the Urgent Call, find additional resources, register for national conversations on these issues, report on specific actions that you, your meeting, or your organization has undertaken, and sign up for continued updates at www.quakercall.net.

We also welcome your questions, suggestions, and resources at info@quakercall.net.