

## **Cherry Grove Friends Church Statement on future Yearly Meeting affiliation**

### **Who We Are:**

We recognize that as a congregation we never have been and never will be anything more than a group of imperfect humans lovingly seeking God together. This means we have received grace and know we need to grant grace to others. With a sense of expansive love, we welcome all to worship, experience Christ, and grow with us. We will not assume that people who worship with us are, or will be, behaviorally pristine, Biblically literate followers of Christ. This means we will be patient, gracious, and forgiving in person-to-person ministry, both inside and outside the congregation. We do this trusting that the Holy Spirit will make apparent those changes of thought, word, and behavior needed for our spiritual condition, capacities, and maturity, in His perfect timing.

We want to be known as Jesus was, a loving friend to sinners, because that is what He has been to us. We invite people to join us in our life together: to know and be known; to learn with us; to understand Christ's call to follow as disciples; to gather for worship of our Savior and Creator; as well as attending to how the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives for our spiritual growth. It is our great hope as a compassionate, loving group, that persons will be drawn deeper into a personal relationship with Christ and experience His life transforming power.

We stand behind the belief that the Holy Spirit must speak in correlation with Scripture, as both are from the same unchanging source. While we delight when the Spirit breaks through and calls us either individually or as a community towards something new, we know that it cannot be distinct from the rest of God's revelation to humanity.

### **Our Process:**

We are pained by the years of events at the Yearly Meeting level that have led to this point of division for the Yearly Meeting. These events have led the Administrative Counsel of Northwest Yearly Meeting to offer three options to local churches in its plan to reorganize - a church may remain within NWYM, become an independent congregation, or join a new yearly meeting. If a church makes no declaration, it will remain within NWYM.

In light of the AC's offer, over the past year or so Cherry Grove has gone through the following process in examining its future affiliation:

- A presentation was made to the congregation of the AC decision to form two yearly meetings, the background and issues leading up to the decision, along with a review of Cherry Grove's early approval and support of more grace filled language in our Faith and Practice section on Human sexuality.
- We gathered in a listening meeting to express our thoughts, questions, concerns, and even pain.
- We provided ongoing pastoral and/or elder contact with concerned persons, couples and/or families regarding the decision, listening closely to the issues involved
- We engaged in ongoing discussion and prayer concerning this proposal along with feedback we received.

- After a months-long period of reflection and prayer, we again gathered, this time to discuss affiliation, as recommended by Cherry Grove's Elders.
- This discussion again raised questions, concerns, and emotions, mostly around what our decision may say about who we are as a body.

### **Our Decision**

- As a body we recognize the benefit we receive in our connection to a larger communion of believers such as NWYM, as opposed to becoming an independent congregation.
- We have affirmed throughout the years our responsibility as followers of Christ to make disciples of all people, loving them as God has loved us, in ways consistent with the clear teachings of Scripture and as practiced by Friends in NWYM. While imperfect, we currently see no larger communion of believers to join that correlates as well with what we affirm as NWYM.
- Through careful consideration of the above, and with our own prayer and discernment toward where God seems to be calling Chery Grove, **Cherry Grove Friends Church will remain part of Northwest Yearly Meeting.**

### **Who we will be**

It is our intent to recognize this decision as a "no-change" decision with respect to how Cherry Grove lives out its calling. We will be the same group of imperfect humans lovingly seeking God together, and we will continue this mission no matter our affiliation. It is with this vision that we call on all those who attend Cherry Grove Friends Church and especially its members, to offer grace, love, and patience with all who join us as we seek to be faithful followers of Christ, now and into the future.

Because we are all works in progress, we intend to continue to worship together, serve together, learn together, respect and listen to each other, without rancor or malice. We call upon NWYM congregations and leaders to reflect with us on this, as we have concern that this intention may have been lost sight of at times during this great upheaval. It is also our hope that we hold this vision in common with all the churches and leadership which have and will make up NWYM.