

Camas Friends Church
1004 NE 4th Ave
Camas, WA, 98607

May 19, 2024

Emily Riley, Presiding Clerk
First Friends Meeting
2100 W Friendly Ave
Greensboro, NC 27403

Dear Emily Riley and First Friends Meeting,

Greetings from Camas Friends Church (CFC), a member meeting of the Sierra-Cascades Yearly Meeting of Friends (SCYMF). Wess was our pastor for six years (2009-2015). We continued to hold his membership until 2022, at which point he transferred that membership to First Friends Meeting.

When members of Camas Friends who know Wess, who were the beneficiaries of his ministry at CFC, and who continue to benefit from his wide-ranging, present public ministry and/or ongoing friendship, heard that his recording was being recommended there was a consistent theme in our responses: *relief*. “This is long overdue,” many expressed. This response reflects a degree of lament about our then-yearly-meeting’s unwillingness to record Wess’s obvious and impactful ministry due to its own internal turmoil and impending fracturing. But more importantly, it captures our collective enthusiasm and gratitude toward Wess as a pastor, educator, writer, and friend.

Are we convinced that Wess has “a public ministry that is empowered and congruent with the spirit of Friends?”¹ Absolutely! Camas Friends community witnessed the power, humor, wisdom, and love of his ministry during the six years he was our pastor. We became a more truly *Quaker* meeting as a result of his sojourn with us. We loved his deep and original thinking. He asked questions for which we had no ready, easy answers, causing us to search deeper into our own spiritual beliefs. His lasting contribution to Camas Friends was his leadership setting us on the beginning of the path that we continue on today—all of this with such a humble, friendly manner! We were an incubator for the ministry he has grown into today.

One of the enduring traditions or practices Wess started was having a ‘word of the year’. It brings focus on an aspect of our communal life, providing rich queries and conversations. This year’s word is repair** First Friends’ recognition and recording of Wess’s ministry repairs the attempt at silencing Wess’s radical message about what is required of us to follow Jesus and reject Empire. This query *Where is the loving work of repair most needed right now?* applies to the journey we are on in our times, and can guide Wess in his work ahead.

¹ <https://www.scymfriends.org/recording-process>

** <https://www.camasfriends.org/>

At our meeting for business on May 19th, 2024, we took some space to express our enthusiastic support of Wess's recording. This letter of reflection was read. We wish we could be there to celebrate with you all in person! We will be holding Wess and First Friends Meeting in the light as you affirm and celebrate Wess and his ministry in the coming days and years. We, for our part, affirm and celebrate Wess along with you.

Lovingly,

Dor Deasy, Clerk of the Meeting, on behalf of Camas Friends Church

Photo from June 2015. Wess, Emily, Lily, Mae and Clem, next to the apple tree they planted in our courtyard that still provides red apples for Friends today in their memory.

