



THE VIEW FROM PENDLE HILL

Francisco Burgos, Executive Director

Dear Friends,

February 2025

In my routinary walk on our campus trail, I developed the habit of stopping at Mama Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), a tree that holds a special place in our institution's history, silently witnessing the challenges, beauty, and transformations of our holy experiment. Friend La Verne Shelton recognized this about Mama in *Friends Journal*, where she described the tree as being "more alive than the last time I had passed her, standing there brooding over the centuries of her life."

As Mama Beech navigates each season with graciousness and generosity, we are reminded that our past and present experiences intertwine, much like the branches of the tree. Some narrow, while others widen, as we open ourselves to envisioning the future. Pendle Hill, too, has deep roots, stretching back 95 years to an experiment rooted in faith - a school for prophets and a laboratory of ideas - a concept as rare today as it was in 1930.

Pendle Hill, too, continues growing in relationship with our surroundings, following spirit-led explorations to meet modern, life-long learning needs. The opportunities and challenges we anticipate in our world and in our community are again leading our path forward. Gazing at the remnants of icy snow on the trail, I think about how Spring will return, bringing new life to our corner of the Earth, reminding us that change is both novel and constant. The resilient squirrels know this, crunching through the decomposed foliage in search of the nuts they saved, and I know that we, too, can store away resources during quieter times to help us through the leaner ones. **There is hope in winter, and I hold onto that hope for Pendle Hill - that even in the darkest, coldest days, rebirth is always on the horizon.**





Since I last wrote to you a year ago, Pendle Hill has continued putting out new branches and strengthening existing ones. I am struck again by the increasing number of nonprofit groups of change makers coming to Pendle Hill for renewal of their purpose and mission as they prepare to bring their important work into the world. I am energized by how Pendle Hill creates radical hospitality both for and in partnership with those who gather here. One such group that I have continued to carry in my heart is the **World Coalition Against the Death Penalty**. An intrinsic part of Pendle Hill programming provides the community with education on restorative justice. The Coalition seeks to inform that this theory of deterrence in the case of capital punishment simply does not justify the retention of this cruel punishment. Since their visit, I have been ruminating on the ways capital punishment disproportionately threatens marginalized groups and reinforces social and economic disparities. I believe it is important that restorative justice continue to be an animating theme within Pendle Hill's educational programming as it has been within Continuing Revolution, and I look forward to expanding this exploration in this summer's new faith-based reparative justice conference focused on racial healing.

Looking back on the past year's educational offerings at Pendle Hill and considering what lies ahead, I see two major strands that are becoming more vital in this social and ecological climate. The Quaker Institute provides training for emerging Quaker voices who will lead the Religious Society of Friends forward, and I am seeing more and more Friends come away with renewed energy, insight, experience, and skills that can deepen Quaker practice in their local communities. The queries we used to guide our 2024 conference were "how does our commitment to answering that of God in everyone guide our speech and our action in this moment of polarization?" And "how can we rededicate ourselves to the struggle for a new world while grounding in our faith and the life of the Spirit?" This coming year, Pendle Hill will expand this branch with a new partnership with the Earlham School of Religion's Quaker Leadership Conference as we explore how Friends witness and publish the truth with integrity in an age of fractured political realities, disinformation, and artificial intelligence with this year's conference, **Publishers of the Truth**.

A second strand that is rising in urgency is how faith communities provide spaces for refuge and conversation across marginalized communities. Last winter, Pendle Hill hosted an intergenerational LGBTQ+ gathering, called **Dreaming Sanctuary**, for renewal, rejuvenation, and relationship building in partnership with Friends General Conference. This retreat prioritized outreach across a range of ages



and brought together the experience and wisdom of elders with the energy and fresh perspectives of younger generations. I continue to be moved by the stories and experiences retreatants shared about their time at this gathering, and the need, now more than ever, for inclusivity and love. Pendle Hill is among the places and communities that are uniquely positioned to provide the much-needed refuge space for people who feel threatened, ignored, or isolated in the world taking shape right now. Perhaps this is also part of why we found ourselves hosting **Pendle Hill's largest number of sojourners** in their personal journey for spiritual growth, respite, creativity, and connection.

Another constant in life at Pendle Hill is **tending to our buildings.**

Without fail, no matter the preparation, something inevitably will need to be repaired. This past year, there were plenty of unexpected and costly projects, from building HVAC upgrades to the replumbing of the downstairs bathroom and sewer lines at Main House. Repairs in historic structures like those we have on campus consume the fragile



resources of time and money – and lead to many sleepless nights for me! Two investments that will make a big impact on the quality of life for guests were completed last year: the kitchen at Brinton House was repaired and is now fully functional, and the Upmeads building was renovated and opened to guests. This work is only possible with donations from individuals and granting foundations, and we continue the work of identifying funders who can help with repairs needed at Main House and other buildings.



A delight of mine in the last year was seeing many of you across the Pendle Hill community, especially during **my visits with Friends in North Carolina and Maryland.** What a joy it was to be so warmly welcomed into worship with Friends in Greensboro, NC, and in Cokesville and Frederick, MD. Living and working on the Pendle Hill campus doesn't always allow many opportunities for traveling ministry, so I rejoiced in the companionship and connections with our Friends to the south who love Pendle Hill. I am planning to travel to additional meetings this year and see more of you.

Included in my travel plans for this coming year is another Kairos pilgrimage, a program very dear to my heart. As a Lasallian Brother, I often lived in Kairos time, as opposed to Chronos time, as a way to become closer to Spirit. Sharing that experience with others is one of my life's great joys, and each year I lead a group to explore practices that sustain us in our spiritual journey, including *lectio divina*. We broke new ground this past year with the first Pendle Hill international program, **Kairos on the Mountain** in Monteverde, Costa Rica. I lived in the Cloud Forest there for many years, and consider it my home, so it was very special to bring 35 F/friends on that spiritual journey. It was a transformative time for us in many ways, and we are planning another pilgrimage this May.

Looking at the stretch of path ahead, I am energized by how we have reached this place and by the support we are receiving to keep going. Today, Pendle Hill is engaged in a thoughtful and creative process of **strategic planning**, which aims to guide us in how to stay faithful to the Spirit as we embrace our mission and continue serving F/friends with simplicity, courage, love, and hope. For me, this process begins by standing still for a moment, joining with Friends, colleagues, and Board Members to gather our thoughts and reflect, before we write our intentions for investing in institutional strengths and for developing new ones as circumstances will change over the next several years. Pausing under Mama Beech's limbs, both the majestic ones and those just getting started, leads me to reflect on the past, present, and future of Pendle Hill. This ancient tree has been a constant in so many lives and a place to revisit time and time again for peace, meditation, comfort, and inspiration. From here, I can see that Pendle Hill is also such a place; a sanctuary, a refuge, a home.

As we continue this year, I invite you to keep nurturing Pendle Hill with your love, time, and gifts. The world is looking for friendly hands outstretched in welcome to community building, rejuvenation, and spiritual nurturement. Pendle Hill remains ready to meet the moment with integrity, love, and hope.

In Peace and Love,



Francisco Burgos
Executive Director

“My eyes traced her capacious trunk, her upraised branches, and the low branches in her back that still stretch straight out toward the rising sun. I became conscious that I remained in awe, and, in spite of that consciousness, the awe did not leave me.” - L V Shelton



PENDLE HILL
A Quaker Study, Retreat, and Conference Center