

Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting 185th Session July 27th-31st, 2005

Beyond Tolerance: Seeking Spiritual Common Ground

The Sessions open Wednesday with registration at 12 noon in the Kelly Business Center. The Business session begins at 2:30 p.m., along with activities for the teens, the middle youth and the children, and is followed by a getting acquainted session, and our opening worship on Wednesday evening. The five days of yearly meeting feature multiple opportunities for worship, including our opening worship session on Wednesday, worship sharing on the Yearly Meeting theme of "Telling Our Stories of Faith" each day, early morning worship each day, our closing worship on Sunday morning. There are interesting plenary sessions and workshops (see details below), Quaker interest groups, and time for relaxing with Friends.

We will continue our tradition of listening to an older Friend with the "Living Witness" time on Saturday afternoon; this year the speakers are Bill and Janette Shetter of Bloomington.

The Wilmington area is of great historic interest to Friends, and we've included a guide to interesting sites below.

The **Children's** program is led again by Hannah Branson, with the able assistance of Catie Reynolds of Bloomington, and Lupe Witt, who worked with us last year. The field trips will include going to the Cowan Lake beach to swim. We hope to go to Fort Ancient and a nature center. We will do a service project at a nearby nursing home.

The **Middle Youth** program will include a day-long canoe trip, meeting with the Plenary speakers, and the Middle Youth committee is planning some additional activities. The **Teens** will also be doing their traditional canoe trip, the popular Simply Speaking session where they have a chance to discuss things with adults. They will have a chance to meet with the Plenary Speakers, and they have opportunities to participate in some of the adult activities. JT is also working on some surprises.

Plenary Sessions

Thursday



Michael Birkel, a member of Clear Creek Monthly Meeting (OVYM), teaches in the Religion Department at Earlham College. His specialties are Quakerism, history of spirituality in the Abrahamic faiths, interfaith dialogue, monasticism, Hebrew Scriptures. He has written on Quaker spirituality and John Woolman; his current theme is early Friends and meditative reading of Scripture. His most recent book is [A Near Sympathy - Timeless Quaker Wisdom of John Woolman](#). He is well-known to Ohio Valley friends for his workshops on Biblical texts, and will be bringing us one again this year.

Friday

Cecile Nyiramana works in the Women's Department and as the Secretary for Rwanda Yearly Meeting. Drawing from her own personal experiences during and after the genocide, she initiated a ground-breaking women's dialogue group for the Rwanda Friends Peace House.

With a careful and persistent commitment to reconciliation, she succeeded in bringing together widows from the genocide with the wives of men who have been imprisoned for perpetrating acts of genocide. This dialogue group built trust and cohesion over time, and now the model is being replicated in three provinces in Rwanda.

With Cecile's facilitation, one of these groups has initiated a prison visitation program where widows work with prisoners' wives to help prepare and bring food to the prisoners who killed their husbands. Cecile has two children and lives in Kigali, Rwanda.

Workshops

We have a wonderful set of workshop leaders drawn from our own meetings.

Jim Boland. ProjectTRUST.

This is a program designed to break down the barriers between clique groups in school communities by bringing opinion leaders together in family groups during a two and one half day retreat where they study team building, problem solving and the effects of put downs. Participants will be introduced to the program and will have the opportunity to engage in one of the activities.

Patricia Thomas. Now we see in a mirror, darkly (I Corinthians 13:12). How do we listen and how do we speak as participants in a search for spiritual common ground? We will explore the challenges and delights of putting our own experienced truths into words and to the receiving of another's understanding.

Margaret Lechner. Conflict Transformation -- Embrace the Tiger
Drawing on insights from mediation, AVP, and martial arts, we will engage the question, "How can embracing conflict produce transformation?"

Peace and Social Concerns Workshop: "How do we speak powerful truth?"
Centering on more than one Friends Testimony the workshop will have several leaders but will largely be held in a worship sharing manner. A worksheet of quotations will be prepared in advanced for the workshop but distributed to all.

Michael Birkel. Bible Workshop.
Our Plenary speaker, Michael will also lead one of his popular, informative and thought-provoking discussions of the Bible.

Friday

Margaret Lechner. Conflict Transformation - Love Thy Enemy
Knowing that loving our enemies can transform conflict, we will explore way in which to forgive and love those who have done wrong.

Steve Angell. Beyond the Quaker Schisms: Common Ground in Quaker Beliefs.
Use group role playing to become members of meetings of different branches of American Friends. The group will be divided in thirds. I will then give them instructions. They will have time to confer to discuss their approach to this meeting. Then we will reconvene and look for ways to establish common ground between us.

Cindi Goslee. Clerking. This workshop will explore the spiritual ground of Friend's business practices and the spiritual opportunity and practice of clerking.

Susan Stark. Breathing Together.

Queries for Worship Sharing (draft)

What do you find hard to tolerate? How do you come to terms with positions or practices that are hard for you to tolerate? Have you found alternatives to opposing those things you find it hard to tolerate? Are there some things that *must* be opposed?

What is your experience of confronting difficult differences among or within groups of which you are a part? How were “sides” taken, and how did you find yourself drawn to a side? Did people become adversaries? Was there a search for common ground? How did the parties act to avoid conflict?

Have you ever experienced conflict as a positive and creative opportunity, either as an individual or as a group? What lessons did you learn from your experience with conflict? What helps make conflict a positive opportunity rather than a divisive threat?

Quaker Heritage Sites near Wilmington

These suggestions for a car tour on the way to or from Yearly Meeting come from Friend David Wood. All are near highway 73 between Wilmington and Waynesboro. They are listed in order driving west from Wilmington.

1. Historic Springfield Meetinghouse. Just east of interstate 71, turn south on 380. Where it jogs left, then right you will see the Springfield Meeting House and Cemetery. Meeting of the Harveys who met with Lincoln, but that’s a long story.
2. First Free School for Blacks in Ohio. Continuing on 73 just before reaching Harveysburg, turn right on Harveysburg road, then immediately left on Old 73. Just before it starts downhill jog right onto North Street. You will see the white brick school house on your right. There is a brass plaque on a boulder stating its founding by Elizabeth Harvey.
3. Pioneer Village. A short distance further west on 73 you will see the first of the sign directing you to the “Pioneer Village”. Composed mostly of log houses revealed when land was cleared for Caesar Creek Lake, it includes Caesar Creek Friends Meetinghouse, which was moved there before its site was covered with water.
4. Waynesville and Miami Meetinghouse. Waynesville is a village of antique dealers, but if you go up the hill from the center of town you will see the Miami “White Brick” and “Red Brick” meetinghouses, as well as the old Friends Boarding Home and the recently expanded Friends Home. The White Brick Meetinghouse, built in 1811 is the oldest meetinghouse in continued use west of the Allegheny Mountains. It was the parent or grandparent of most of the meetings in Ohio and Indiana. The Red Brick was built after the separation for the orthodox meeting.