

## **Epistle from Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting**

Greetings to Friends Everywhere!

Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting met for the 195th session at Earlham College campus in Richmond, Indiana, enjoying ideal sunny weather and graced by a “blue moon” from July 29 through August 2, 2015, with the theme “Transforming the World with Love.”

Our welcoming activity gave us an experience of abundance through playing musical chairs where there were always enough chairs for everyone! Our mornings began with worship sharing through queries about our experiences with transforming the world with love. This time created a place of deep reflection and personal sharing, where we were opened to one another and to the work of the Divine in our lives. Our goal of transforming the world can be an overwhelming undertaking; necessary first are continual personal transformations in humility and the testing we receive in community.

Our plenary speakers challenged us to ground our actions in love, but reminded us that love is not enough. Eileen Flanagan, clerk of the board of Earth Quaker Action Team (EQAT), presented “Love, Power, and the Work of Transforming the World.” She led us in understanding the application of nonviolent direct action and shared a powerful quote from Martin Luther King, Jr.: “Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic.” Love is the first motion, and when we act in community, connected to one another to confront injustice, we can be powerful. Ross Hennesy, Assistant Director for Quaker Voluntary Service, presented “Thou Preparest a Table Before Me: Cultivating Courage Through Community.” We are called to act out of the intersection of passion and wisdom. He reminded us that we can find strength to embrace our shortcomings and to hold the pain in the world through the “perfect love that casts out fear.”

During our business sessions, we were blessed by the presence of visitors and guests from many of the wider Quaker organizations such as Diane Randall of FCNL, Vanessa Julye of FGC and Erin Polley of AFSC, who shared with us about their work to transform the world with love.

Among the many reports of faithful work we highlight here: our Yearly Meeting’s largest ministry, Quaker Heights Care Community, whose work is love made visible; and a report from the Pfalzgraff-Carlson family, who traveled in the ministry to visit with Friends in Japan with the endorsement of the Yearly Meeting.

Our teens and young adults reported on their recent service trip to Monteverde, Costa Rica, which was inspiring, challenging, and opened their horizons to Quakers in another part of the world. A service trip such as this commits significant resources, but also provides unique opportunities to meet and learn from Quakers in other areas of the world, and engage in individual and community spiritual practices that will impact these youth all their lives.

In sessions we wrestled with questions and concerns about our budgeting process, listening and discerning how we are led to balance transformation of the world with caring for our own needs as a Yearly Meeting. We have the joy of receiving two bequests to the Yearly Meeting that will

support spiritual nurture and prison ministry. We came to heartfelt unity in approving a minute to divest our funds from corporations that profit from fossil fuel extraction. This action carries forward the vital work that we have corporately discerned must be done to protect creation for future generations. The committee revising our Faith and Practice brought forward several sections on our testimonies which were gratefully approved. Due to concerns about the slow pace of the revision, the committee will bring a recommendation to expedite this process in coming months.

Friends participated in a variety of workshops that related to our theme on topics of The Four Roles of Social Change, Restorative Justice, Quakers in Business, The Study of the Epistle of James as He Speaks to Friends, Spiritual but not Religious: Beyond the Catch Phrase, Radical Hospitality, Bible Study: Parables of Transforming Love, White Privilege, Charitable Work for Do-ers and Donors, and Transforming Ourselves through Yoga.

OBYM Friends JT Taylor and Evelyn Kellum shared as a Living Witness their long and rich history of working for social justice, transforming the world — and each other — with love. We held two special meetings for worship: a memorial meeting to gratefully remember the lives of those who are no longer with us, and a meeting for worship with concern for healing. Our teens again led a session called Simply Speaking, bringing queries to ask us to consider how compassion (defined as “suffering together”) might inform the way we think about our privilege.

During our traditional Variety Show on Saturday night we celebrated and cheered one another as Friends young and old shared creative skits, music, dance and laughter. This time binds us together as we shed our inhibitions and appreciate the Light shining with unexpected joy and delight.

In a world that cries out for transformation, God calls us to live and act with open hearts, empowered and changed by love. We are filled with gratitude for our tender time together as a spiritual community, which has nourished us, challenged us, and encouraged us on this journey.

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Dear Friends everywhere,

24 Young Adult Friends gathered on Earlham College campus in August 2015.

A contingent of Adult Young Friends went to Monteverde Meetinghouse and school for the summer service trip.

As a group we're still exploring how we function and where the balance is between Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting and Adult Young Friends programs considering Adult Young Friends are involved with Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting youth programming.

We welcome eldership to help deepen our exploration of individual and corporate spiritualities as well as the ways in which our spirituality manifests in our lives. This is especially true for those new to Quakerism. There has been an influx of new Young Adult members across the yearly meeting. We are hopeful for the future of our group and Quakers in general.

The committee wants to be more active by meeting more often and providing a schedule for next year's Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting.

Love and light,  
The Epistle Committee, Young Adult Friends, Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting

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### **Epistle from the Teens**

At the 195th Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting Annual Sessions, eight teenagers assembled at Earlham College. Our purposes and paths were varied, but we had a common goal of building community and deepening our spiritual practice with the theme of “Transforming our World with Love” at the forefront.

Our tradition of worship sharing and personal spiritual time continued this year. We appreciate this practice not only for its ability to foster deep personal and spiritual growth, but also for its ability to create such centered relations throughout our time together. This space allowed for the continuation of discussions on socio-political and spiritual issues we'd begun on the service trip. It was not uncommon for a conversation during the week to flow from college plans to silence to scatological humor to neocolonialist trends in the middle east.

We engaged in several intergenerational activities with the Young Adult Friends and Middle Youth groups as our perception of community widened. These activities ranged from ultimate frisbee and a rafting trip to exploring the Cope Ecological Station and traversing its labyrinth. As the community coagulated into a cohesive entity, our intergenerational camaraderie bestowed upon us innumerable benefits.

As many of our body grows older and leaves the official teen group, we look forward to retaining the strong bonds we've developed over the years while also developing connections with the larger Yearly Meeting and general Quaker world. We would like to take this time to express our eternal gratitude towards the Yearly Meeting for their financial and spiritual support in allowing us to grow as individuals and a community.

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### **Epistle from the Middle Youth Program**

Greetings from the Middle Youth who attended the 195th session of the Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting held at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana from the 29<sup>th</sup> day of the Seventh Month to the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of the Eighth Month 2015.

Seven Middle Youth Friends from Community Friends, Oxford, Louisville, and Yellow Springs monthly meetings were present.

We enjoyed doing many things in and around the Earlham campus. Our first stop was a visit to the COPE ecological center. One of the highlights of our tour was seeing the garage where the center converts used vegetable oil into biodiesel for their cars and motorized equipment. It was wonderful to see a fuel source that isn't hurting the planet! Another fun activity was the labyrinth where the middle youth boys foot-raced to see who could make it through first.

Upon our return, we learned circus skills with Adam such as juggling balls and rings and also Chinese yoyos. Deborah visited us and led us in yoga which left us relaxed, peaceful, and ready for a nap.

This year we had privilege of taking part in an intergenerational rafting trip. All combined there were 27 people composed of middle youth, teens, young adults, and adults. We rafted five miles on the Whitewater River and had fun jumping overboard when it got too hot. Last but not least, we enjoyed writing and rehearsing our talent show skit which took popular fairy tales and imagined different endings if the main characters had had a "Sassy Friend." We want to thank all of our Middle Youth Program visitors Eileen, Ben, Nikki, Deborah, and Ken. Overall, we had a busy but meaningful week.

Middle Youth of the Eighth Month, 2015.

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### **Epistle from the Children's Program**

Greetings,

Six children between the ages of 6 and 10 met at the 195th Annual Session of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting at Earlham College in Richmond Indiana from July 29 to August 2nd 2015 to consider the theme "Transforming the World with Love."

We delved into the theme with discussions of John Woolman and Barbara Reynolds. We are concerned about slavery and atomic bombs. We learned about "feeding our enemies" so we can be friends.

We enjoyed fellowship with each other as we went to the animal shelter and played games. We feel a deep concern for animals in the circus and in the shelters. We participated in teachings of how to communicate our feelings so we are not bossy and we listen to others. We make friendships at yearly meeting that last forever. We love coming to yearly meeting to make new friends and solidify friendships.

Thank you,  
The Children's Program