

**Epistle from the 198th Session of
Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
held at Earlham College, Richmond, Indiana
June 13-17, 2018**

Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting lovingly greets Friends everywhere from its 2018 sessions,

Our theme this year has been “Sharing the Light: Radical Love for the World.” Our plenary speakers, Dwight Wilson of Ann Arbor Meeting and Vanessa Julye of Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting, challenged us to consider and mend our habitual ways. Dwight asked, “How do we construct the beloved community?” and answered, “If we don’t know how to love all the time, there is no hope for the blessed community.”

Vanessa asked “What does radical love for the world look like?” She urged us to acknowledge the ways in which we unthinkingly benefit from a culture of white supremacy and to cast off the unearned privileges that seek to seduce us. This theme of unexamined privilege was unexpectedly echoed in our next-to-last business session, when scheduled agenda items were pushed aside to address a charge of sexual assault in one of our constituent monthly meetings. We were forced to acknowledge the existence of male privilege in our midst. These evidences of unconscious racial and gender biases reveal that we have fallen short of our calling to model Spirit-filled ways of relating to God, to one another, and to all of creation.

These challenges raised difficult questions: Are we still a covenanted people of God? What changes are needed to bring us into new lives of faithfulness? What would empower us to witness to others how to live in right relationships?

We are more than a community of Friends, by Friends, and for Friends. If we are to build the beloved community, we must be of God, by God, and for God.

We hear the call to return to a closer walk with God, and to be valiant for the truth. Friends everywhere, help us follow the guidance of the Inward Light to make our hearts right in the sight of God and unite us for the work we need to do.

Epistle from Young Adult Friends of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting

Greetings to Friends everywhere from the young adults of the Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting. During this session we have revived the Young Adult Friends committee. This includes Kaitlyn and Adam Funck, Chie Togami, Kaia Jackson, Dylan Cahalan, Uta Goheen-Brewington, and Shannon Isaacs. Young Adult Friends attended the annual rafting trip and have begun to make plans for the future of the YAF committee and the members of the YAF group as a whole. We look forward to planning and meeting at joint quarterly meeting this year at Happy Hollow.

We would like to include the following statement composed by a smaller group of our Young Adult Friends including Kaitlyn and Adam Funck, Chie Togami, and Kaia Jackson who have felt lead to share this. Other Friends felt that they had not had time to season this statement but did not want to stand in our way.

We write to Friends everywhere with a great sense of urgency regarding the issue of sexual violence. We as young adult friends have felt a lack of support from the OVYM community on this issue. This year's session has been fraught with a painful and drawn out discussion regarding our community's response to a documented case of sexual violence against a young adult friend. Unfortunately, we know that such a case is all too common, and that is why we choose to share our experience in this statement. One of the most difficult issues we have faced over the past couple of days is deep disunity over whether to name the perpetrator and survivor in our session's minutes. We are upset with the yearly meetings indecision on this topic. After attending a discussion where survivors of sexual violence shared their incredibly moving stories and experiences we felt they were not deeply listened to and that requests were ignored by the greater community. Many young adult friends feel clear that naming perpetrators is essential to ensuring the safety of the community, and is in fact, an act of love as we strive to hold all members of our community accountable for their actions. Many YAF's feel that all members of our community need to be further educated on the topic of sexual violence. YAF's realize that continued questioning of whether or not all forms of sexual assault and violence is illegal or immoral shows a lack of complete understanding in regard to the support needs of survivors of sexual violence that is reflective of our larger society (United States).

Through our discussions with each other and with older friends, we have noticed a deep (although not insurmountable) intergenerational divide over the issue of sexual violence and how it is dealt with. We feel there needs to be greater education on this issue, and that this education needs to emphasize our moral obligation to stand with and for survivors of sexual violence. This entails centering the voices and perspectives of survivors of sexual violence when an incident of violence has occurred in our community. We also feel strongly that perpetrators are not beyond redemption, and that our community can play a role in supporting healing.

We as young adult friends would like to use this statement to show our support of and solidarity with survivors of sexual assault in the past, present, and to any other victim whose chooses to come forward and share their stories in the future. Many YAFs feel strongly that they would not be supported by the whole of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting if they were to come out as a survivor of sexual violence because of the discussions in our sessions. Until a policy is in place that YAFs feel protected by, we feel a great level of fear and emotional unsafety in continuing to be a part of this community. We would like to be a part of the process in every step of creating this policy. If our community chooses to question and ignore our concerns, we feel strongly that this is a step in the wrong direction.

Youth Epistle for Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting, 2018

This year in the youth program we had eleven youth members. They were Reid, Bing, Toby, Max (Charlotte), Theo, Cecilia, Elana, Miriam, Joy, Grace, and Nora. This year, some of our highlights included swimming at the Earlham College pool, rafting on the Whitewater River, attending several speakers and workshops, watching A Wrinkle in Time for Movie Night, creating a skit for the Variety Show, hanging out with our friends in the dorm, and eating many different snacks. The youth also enjoyed activities like playing ping pong and foosball, meeting an extremely friendly dog named Apollo, owned by our new Youth Secretary Kaia, and playing Ultimate Frisbee with our youth staff.

On Thursday we listened to Faith Morgan talk about her work for conserving energy and promoting urban, organic gardens. We also heard Dwight Wilson speak about promoting community and getting rid of racism. On Saturday morning, we were spoken to by Anne Hutchinson. She told us about her work for peace in Africa, such as starting public libraries and alternatives to violence programs with a Friends Peace Team.

The youth this year had such a good time that we are hoping to get together at the Happy Hollow Joint Quarterly Meeting in October. The youth offers their thanks to the staff for their hard work and planning, and we would like to give our yearly meeting and others the message that we learned the importance of peace, love, and community.

The youth of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting

Children's Epistle for Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting

Greetings to Young Friends everywhere,

The Children's Program of OVYM met June 13-17, 2018 at Earlham College in Richmond Indiana. We focused on the theme of Radical Love. We learned about ways other children have gone out on a limb and performed random acts of kindness to change the world. We talked about how to react in a positive way to bullying. We read many enlightening books and we shared in worship.

We shared our concerns for animals and children in the world who have no families. We visited the animal shelter and donated toys to them and we made crafts to donate for the Heifer Project.

We send a message to all to go out into the world to pay it forward, to react positively and to be radical.

In peace and in the Light
The children of OVYM