

EXERCISES

This has been a very productive 2003 Annual session for IYM.

We have had many changes in the ways we can use our facilities. This has been a challenge and a blessing. Our dormitory has been closed for overnight sleeping due to fire safety concerns. Participation and attendance did not diminish due to this hardship. We approved, however, a capital fund campaign to provide us with the buildings we require. This will entail seeking outside assistance with fund-raising and a goal of one million dollars.

A great storm occurred Friday afternoon serving to remind us of how small we are in God's earth. The men's sleeping tent blew down and the Women's Theological Meeting ended promptly due to this wind and rain. However, the Spirit prevailed and the evening dance on the lawn proceeded as scheduled despite slippery grass.

During the week, an ad hoc gathering of youth and adults was called to confront youth on a boundary issue. We were reminded that we expect our youth to confront those who they feel are disrespectful of them and that this be done respectfully. We also expect that adults in return will confront our youth with the same respect.

Special thanks to Friends in Clear Creek Meeting for the instant response bringing dry linens for the teens. We pull together under trying situations.

Our evening addresses challenged us to reexamine how we live our testimonies. Director of Quaker house in Fayetteville, North Carolina, Chuck Fager, reminded us of the need to be as disciplined as the people who challenge our peace testimony, the military. This includes long-range planning which Chuck framed in the vision of a hundred year's Lamb's war. In addition we must secure our spiritual base and establish clean priorities such as a Spirit-led training for peacemaking which includes teaching first-day school, attending meeting for business and other meeting activities not traditionally considered peacemaking.

Marshall Massey, who worships with Fort Collins Monthly Meeting and Iowa Conservative Yearly Meeting, opened our eyes to witnessing as a way of holding up and examining conflict. He used the story of Nathan and King David from the Old Testament as an example of effective witnessing. In response to King David's abuse of power, Nathan served as witness and drew King David in as a collaborative witness. We as Quaker Peacemakers are challenged to examine how we witness. When we ourselves become the witness, our witness is more powerful than strategizing power plays.

Elizabeth Duke, General Secretary of FWCC in London, England, spoke about Friends from around the world. She shared how Friends in different cultures and places engage in peace building.

Our annual Plummer lecture, named after Jonathan Plummer, first presiding clerk of our Yearly Meeting, was given by Chris Jocius and entitled *Friends and Strangers – a Time of Gifts*.

Our workshops were diverse and dynamic. Topics included war tax resistance, witnessing, building nonviolent communities, disarmament, AFSC programs, QUNO work, peacemaking in Burundi, and building a department of peace. Mary Ellen McNish, General Secretary of AFSC, held an open house on AFSC to help attendees better understand the workings and programs of the organization.

EPISTLES

2003 Epistle of Illinois Yearly Meeting

To Friends Everywhere:

Friends from the states of Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Wisconsin, and elsewhere met for our 129th annual yearly meeting sessions, July 30 to August 3, 2003, on the Illinois prairie, surrounded by fields of corn and soybeans. As we gathered in our meetinghouse, built in 1875, we were mindful of both the heritage and the vulnerability to time, other natural forces, and changing expectations of our buildings. We chose not to use our 40-year-old dormitory for safety and health reasons. Friends discovered the joys and challenges of expanded tent-camping or nearby motels.

In our meetings, we addressed “Answering that of God in Everyone: Quakers Responding to Conflict.” The 2003 Iraq war, the “War on Terrorism,” increasing threats to our civil liberties, and, in the United States and around the world, long existing social injustices all permeated our consciousness. We sought ways to respond. Several of our speakers pointed to the early Friends’ vision of “The Lamb’s War” to which they were called. Christ, as “The Lamb of God,” was the one who conquered by self-sacrifice rather than through violence.

Chuck Fager urged us to take up a century-long, well-developed struggle for peace. Earlier Quakers, such as, George Fox, John Woolman, Lucretia Mott, and others, spent their entire lives building Quakerism and struggling against slavery and for women’s equality. We were challenged to build our base as Quakers in the long effort for making peace, that is, in the “Lamb’s War.”

Marshall Massey called on us to develop our skills in “witnessing” to pursue this “Lamb’s War.” A tradition, spanning many millennia, starting with the Hebrews and Jesus, and followed by Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., witnessing goes beyond protesting by appealing directly to those in power with truth and integrity. Witnessing is a way we can respond to conflict by answering to God in others, by becoming empowered.

Elizabeth Duke invited Friends to weave networks for Friends throughout the world. Through these networks, Friends can be strengthened in their calling to address conflict and violence for many years ahead.

In small ways we have taken up these challenges to address conflict by supporting our yearly meeting members working with the Lakota Native Americans, dealing with civil violence in Burundi, or assisting the efforts of many Quaker organizations. Youth, from vigorous high-schoolers to recently-born, enlivened our sessions, but more importantly made us aware of our need to envision a long-term future for Quakers, as part of the “Lamb’s War.”

Thus, we addressed the strengthening of our Quakerism. For many of us, our meetinghouse represents a spiritual center in addition to serving as a physical center. We pledged to renovate and restore our historic meetinghouse and move forward on planning for a new year-round, environmentally-friendly dormitory and eating facility.

As another aspect of our center, we addressed who we were as a yearly meeting as we continued slowly to write an Illinois Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice, something we have not had for almost a half century. Symbolically, this represents the core of our being – our base. After considerable thought and prayer, we adopted the first two sections of this Faith and Practice: an introduction and a section on membership.

As we have looked back on our history, we stand ready to move forward to the next century. We invite Friends everywhere to join us in moving forward – focused, empowered, centered – for the next century.

In peace and with loving greetings to all.

- Illinois Yearly Meeting of Friends

Adult Young Friends' Epistle

After some years of nonexistence, the Adult Young Friends (AYF) program would like to announce its triumphant return. Many AYFers have conflicting schedules in the morning that prevent an organized program at the normal time. However, our goal is to create an AYF program to encourage the high school folk to come back after they finish high school. Even with the lack of numbers, we had a blast playing cards, taking pictures, throwing Frisbees, and socializing with Friends of all ages.

After dusk we fight crime, but don't tell anyone. We have secret identities to maintain.

High School Young Friends Epistle

Dear Friends,

As always this year at IYM has been an enjoyable experience for new friends and old. High schoolers began trickling in on Wednesday and Thursday, convening in the shade to briefly enjoy Will's new chair and catch up on the past year. We continued many of the wonderful traditions of past years including walks to the railroad tracks, dinner at Edgewood, watching movies and playing tag in the graveyard. Some of us also enjoyed a day at the pool with some of the younger members of the community. We enjoyed a workshop led by J.E. McNeil on conscientious objection.

This year we've had the largest snack budget we can remember. It even bought enough junk food and drinks to curb our disappointment at being beaten by Will and Casey at spades each passing night. While that tradition may stand for years, there were several new surprises as well. This was the first year that the dorms were inaccessible due to fire hazard. Instead two tents were erected behind the dorms. However, in the middle of the week a particularly severe storm leveled the boy's tent and drenched everyone's belongings. Clear Creek Meeting was kind enough to provide us with blankets and pillows and sleeping accommodations were moved to the Junior Yearly Meetinghouse. Our out-trip didn't go as planned, but we worked out all the issues and spent the afternoon socializing.

This year was the first that several adult Young Friends have returned to IYM after leaving the high school group. While a program was not provided this year, we are working on organizing one for next year.

The trials and tribulations of this year have worked to bring us together, not just within the High School Program, but among the greater community. It is our hope that mistakes made this year will help things to go more smoothly in years to come.

Junior High Friends Epistle

Dear Friends Everywhere,

When we first met on Thursday we found out that we were going to make a mural for the Jr. High meeting house. We first brainstormed on what we were going to put in the mural. We included the most important component which was the name among other things, which was The Penn House (named after William Penn.) The next thing that we did was we painted the mural which will stand outside the Penn House for many years. We feel that having a place where the Jr. High group meets is really nice especially since some of us helped build it. Now the mural will be another addition in our environment.

Friday we went on a field trip to a wildlife conservation area because we know that IYM is looking to restore our own prairie. We also did this because we wanted to know what our meeting grounds looked like a long time ago. We saw big blue-stem grass, also known as turkey feet, and we saw yellow cone flower. We also visited wet lands where we saw that in just 3 years we could restore our own wet lands.

There was also an observation deck which had 49 steps. From the deck we could look out on all the wildlife and plants. We hope that when our meeting restores the land that there is also an observation deck or porch where we can look out over the prairie. We also hope that the future Jr. High groups enjoy the new mural.

- Ashlee, Meg, Trent, Emily, Brian, Rose, Caryn, Lucas,
Christina, Maria, Steve, Martin

6 – 8 Year Old Friends Epistle

Theme: “Who Are the Quakers?”

Peter Idwasi came to our group and talked about how Quakers were in Africa and about the United Nations. (We learned that a nation is the same as a country and that “united” comes from “unity.”)

Elizabeth Duke answered our questions. One was about if she knew any Jews and she did – in New Zealand. She talked about traveling and showed us cloth and a mitt you put money in.

We made leaf rubbings. Also, Alice Howenstine showed us how to make stationary out of envelopes and shared stories. David Wixom showed us things we could make with wood and talked with us.

- Delia, Annie, Gabe, Laure, Claire, Lindsay, and Billy