

2018 Illinois Yearly Meeting Epistle

To Friends Around the World,

We send you Friendly greetings from the muddy yet vibrant campus of our McNabb, Illinois meetinghouse. The abundant rainfall we have received these four days mirrors the blessings showered upon our meeting as we reflect on the theme of this year's annual sessions, "Witness and Renewal." The workshops, a performance honoring the tireless work of Mother Jones (an influential American labor and child rights advocate of the early 20th century) and the near completion of our *Faith and Practice* all speak to the yearly meeting's dedication to honor the foundational witness of activists in the past as well as cultivate the seeds of action to address contemporary concerns.

Our workshops and evening discussions consisted of recreational and rejuvenating activities such as bicycle riding and blues singing as well as informational sessions on the work of Friends in the Friends World Committee for Consultation, the history of Friends' participation in the Poor People's Campaign, antitorture activism, solar energy, and social justice concerns. After 27 years, our *Faith and Practice* is nearing completion. This has been a spiritual labor of love and many sections within our *Faith and Practice* speak to contemporary concerns such as harassment and substance abuse while also educating about Quaker history in Illinois. It has been 91 years since we have had our own *Faith and Practice*!

As fruitful as our time together has been, we have also honored the grief that many of us are tenderly holding. There were many tears shed as we read memorial minutes for the much-beloved Friends who had died since our last gathering. We also grieved over the sad state of affairs taking place within the United States and impacting international affairs. There is much that we can no longer take for granted. Nevertheless, we take the words of Civil Rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr to heart as we invest in continued work of our meeting and remain vigilant in the face of distressing social changes. We leave you with his words.

One of the great liabilities of history is that all too many people fail to remain awake through the great periods of social change...[T]oday our very survival depends on our ability to stay awake, to adjust to new ideas, to remain vigilant and to face the challenge of change (Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, "Where do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?")

Illinois Yearly Meeting, McNabb, Illinois, Sixth Month, 24, 2018

Epistle from Adult Young Friends

(Adult Young Friends did an improv-inspired performance epistle. Before reading the epistle they solicited different type of words (animal, number, food, noise, adjectives, etc.) from the gathered body. They then plugged in those words into their epistle. Those words appear as underlined.)

Greetings to all Frogs,

The Yearly Meeting of Friends in Illinois comes together for the 312th year, to focus on the theme of Witness and Renewal.

In the quiet of hairy McNabb, Illinois, we gathered at our historic meeting house surrounded by fields of corn and soy. We welcomed the opportunity to work with the high school group and their service project, sewing elephants for children's advocacy centers. We strengthened our community through 12 activities and social get-togethers such as a joint out trip to nearby Buffalo Rock State Park for quacking, collecting by a campfire for chicken nuggets, and a midnight stroll to the Quaker cemetery down the road. AYF found inspiration this week in sharing hair with alligators through leadership and teaching opportunities, a yoga workshop, a pollinator house at fellow friend Dick Ashdown's nearby farm, and volunteering throughout the week with childcare. We helped with a safety demonstration from the horse marshal and learned not to playfully run people with fire extinguishers.

This week was full of pink times sharing snacks, partaking in the meeting's all ages wet dancing evening, and trouncing the high schoolers in a game of wink and in overall attendance numbers. We are growing!

The rain storms, slimy winds, cloudy skies, and flash flood warnings could not dampen our spirits and neither could the time we spent in long squishy meetings. We leave this meeting refreshed and reminded that kindness is everything.

With love and silliness, the AYF group: Rose, Quinn, Brittany, Amal, Laure, Ava, Choz, Raffi, Casey, Claire, Jason, Nicole, Steve, Caryn, Gabe, Jose, Zackery, and Christina.

Epistle from High School Friends

(High School Friends did a prop-based performance epistle. Following is the narration with performance descriptors)

Dramatic entrance with luggage. Nathan says "We gotta put the stuff in the thing." We played Crazy 8s in the basement and Jasmine ended up with 31 cards. Jasmine throws cards. We wanted to start off our first night with a tradition that we have enjoyed every year so far, the hayrack ride. People get on the ground to pick grass. We spent entire seconds of our free time picking grass to pay for our tickets. When we went up to the desk they denied us entrance and laughed at us. A person acts as Nathan's aunt laughing. Everyone says, "We demand respect!" Jasmine throws chair. We also demand our own hayrack ride with ACTUAL hay. A pause for laughter. But we are demanding this in a respectful manner.

Later that night, we went over the rules with Britany and she told us she would "always have the magic red binder with her." Camile says, "Right after our meeting she left it in the room."

We did a sewing workshop with donated shirts and fabrics from Friends. We are very grateful for all of the donations and glad we can help children in need. Nobody knew how to fold or pin our projects so we had to do a bit of learning. *People struggling with fabric on the floor.* We made benches with Mike and Noel. It started raining out. Jasmine ran outside anyway. *Pour water on Jasmine.*

We learned how to drill and sand and saw, but we inhaled a lot of sawdust. Later that night, we played wink and...*People playing wink. Jasmine says, "And I beat Rose!!!" Everyone says, "Twice."* The no siblings rule was broken by Laure and Claire.

Playing cards on table or floor. We played Crazy 8s with 12 decks of cards and Kiva won. After that, we played a game called heart attack that our Scattergood friend Tom taught us. After lunch and workshops, we did pudding. *People pretending to pudding (playing on a tarp of*

pudding). We also tried to play wink in the pudding but it did not last long because we were all so slippery. We put too much water in the pudding and it was chunky until we started playing in it and throwing it. Jasmine and Camille got the most pudding on them and it was hard to get it off when Brittany and Claire hosed us down. We were all very cold and ended up getting pudding all over the bathhouse when we showered. Jasmine break danced on the slippery floor. *Jasmine dancing.*

After we showered it was time for lawn dancing, but before the music started a child yelled an expletive at Quinn. *Kiva gets on knees and says, "Quinn, you're a BEEP."* When the dancing started, Rose's daughter, Poppy, ran around and almost got stepped on, despite her squeaky shoes. *Release Poppy or someone with her shoes.*

We had a meeting for business and nominated Jad as co-clerk and Nathan as recording clerk. *Jad and Nathan wave.*

We rode to Dick's and built a pollinator house with various natural materials. Everything was a little moist and there were a lot of bugs crawling on everything. Kiva even found a possum in the toilet there! *Liam as possum, Kiva opens blanket and screams.* Some of us got to ride back to the meetinghouse in the back of Dick's truck.

We had our out trip at Buffalo Rock with the Adult Young Friends and climbed a mound, slipping back down after. We got back from the trail and played Marco Polo on the playground until it was time to leave. *People play Marco Polo.*

We did yoga with Quinn which was very relaxing. *Everyone poses, some fall.*

To put an end to our amazing adventure we went on the annual graveyard walk. *Everyone walks down the middle.* We made loud noises, *ugh*, then we thought we heard voices, so we came back. *Line up and leave.*

Epistle from Middle School Friends

(Middle School Friends did a performance epistle, doing a satire skit of a business meeting)

Riana: Minute 1: Clerk is Ob. He left, so now its Tiegan. Minute 2: Recording Clerk is Lorelei.

She's here. Minute 3: I'm the reading clerk.

Tiegan: Friends, we have \$250 to distribute between ourselves. As things stand, the winners of the Sudoku competition have it all.

Lorelei: We should split it equally.

Zara: But some people weren't involved.

Libby: Maybe we should give it to charity.

Zara: How about we give it to Bo---rry?

Tiegan: Can I remind you about Minute 11? Silence before and after each speaker.

Everyone: What?

Tiegan: Okay, guys. We have a solution.

Riana: Minute 21: All members of the middle group get \$25.

Gaby: So I get paid for showing up?

Tiegan: Yes, because equality.

Riana: \$20 will be given to the high school group because someone from their group...cough cough Daniel...got left behind and became an ambassador to our group.

Lorelei: Not an ambassador, a refugee.

Lilly: We'll buy soap for the meetinghouse bathrooms.

Tiegan: It's a better soap.

Zara: What scent?

Everyone: Oh! What scent! What scent!

Tiegan: Any objections? Meeting adjourned.

Gaby: What about faith and play?

Tiegan: Fine. What did you guys think about the faith and play?

Zara: Oh me? I thought it was pretty awesome, man. But John Woolman was crazy going to see the Native Americans like that.

Gaby: No, that was brave.

Zara: But crazy.

Gaby: No

Tiegan: Minute 11! Silence friends!

Lorelei: Moving on.

Anya: (arrives) I'm only ten hours late.

Tiegan: That is all, Friends. Meeting adjourned. For real!

Lilly: Thanks for watching.

Epistle from Kindergarten to 5th Grade Friends

Greetings from the elementary school-aged class located in the tent northwest from the meetinghouse, on the ILYM campus near McNabb Illinois, on the fifth and final day of the 2018 Annual Sessions.

Our attendance was down this year, so the kindergarten through grade 2 class was combined with the grades 3 through 5 class. Even so, we only had 4-6 students each day.

This year's theme, "Witness and Renewal," led us to study 3 different stories of famous Quakers. Thursday we learned of the impact of French Quaker Stephen Grellet even though he preached in an EMPTY (or so he thought) logging camp. Friday we followed John Woolman as he traveled through the wilderness to meet with Native Americans and found that Spirit brought them together despite the language and cultural differences. Saturday we followed John Woolman's personal journey as he became convinced that slavery is wrong, and in his efforts to gently persuade Friends to free their slaves.

We also had lots of fun. Our favorite game was Capture the Flag on the front lawn. Before and after the first John Woolman story, we re-enacted his difficult and dangerous 10-day journey through the wilderness: The plentiful and unwelcome rains set the stage nicely for us to slog through swamps, cross uncharted rivers and lakes, and muck through the sticky mud of the wild soybean fields (we had to amend the story a bit here). The highlight of our week was tie-dyeing pillow cases. We used Indigo dye, the same dye that John Woolman refused to use and sell because the plants were grown and harvested using slave labor. It was very cool how the white pillow cases came out of the bucket of dye looking bright green, but then slowly turned to deep blue as we exposed them to air.

Epistle from Pre-K Friends

"How are we Friends of one another?" That is the query Kevin, Mako, and Bruce brought to our beloved Pre-K children, a query that followed them throughout their drawing and finger

painting art projects, snack and storytelling times, nature walks and the making of cards they planned to give to other Friends.

The age of each child informed their understanding. A not-yet 3 year old responded, “I love you!” then sought someone's fingertip to kiss. A 4 year old mentioned, “Someone in my school is my friend even if she doesn't want to spend time with me.”

We pondered, “Do Friends draw on other Friends' drawing paper without permission?” And, “Does the chair lain on its side need a hug because it might be hurt, even if it is doing a good job covering a trip/fall area?”

Noel and Sarah took the children on a nature walk and they learned that slowing down helped them better notice the world around them—they closely observed a daddy long-legs, a fire-fly and a worm. Margaret brought her auto-harp and graciously played sprightly tunes. Bobbi enacted the *Journey of Stephen Gerrlet: Sermon in the Woods*, then generously joined the group yet again, to sing a few songs.

The children discovered that mixing green and yellow finger paint, did, in fact, produce green, which could be, and was, applied topically, all the way from the tips of the fingers to the shoulders—on both arms!

They also discovered that our children immediately adopted the same bio-break rhythm – conveniently leading to everyone toileting at the same time—5 children and 2 teachers in one bathroom required us to all be mindful of our Quaker testimonies of community and equality.

In all, our young Friends agreed they were happy to have spent time with one another, practicing being ever-better Friends of one another.