

Iowa Yearly Meeting Conservative

07/27/2019

To Friends everywhere,

And Jesus said, "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, Go and do likewise." Luke 10:36-7

Greetings from Iowa Yearly Meeting Conservative as we gather for our 142nd annual sessions held at Scattergood School and Farm, near West Branch, Iowa. We have been blessed with unseasonably cool and gentle weather during this year's annual sessions.

As in past years, we have gathered for worship, tended to the business of Yearly Meeting, attended Bible studies and interest groups, browsed and perhaps spent more than we intended at the Yearly Meeting book table, and received of the Spirit from those offering evening Collection. Whether sitting on the deck beneath the giant maple in front of the entrance to the school's Main, taking long walks together on the campus grounds, or talking as we wash pots and pans, we have enjoyed the deep fellowship and *Opportunities*, as earlier Friends would say, "to know each other in that which is eternal."

Once again, we have felt in unity with Friends around the world (as we learned in epistles from other yearly meetings) and with Friends across the ages (as we have learned by reading materials and hearing about the lives of early Friends) in experiencing both the power of the Holy One's Love and the challenges bestowed on us as *Friends of Jesus*, to live more fully into that Love.

We ask, "What can we, as a small yearly meeting, as monthly meetings, or as individual Friends, do to even begin to make a difference in this hurting world?" In committee meetings, during business sessions, and through interest groups and Collection presenters, we began hearing and feeling the Spirit of God teach us via accompaniment with each other.

This year the theme of annual sessions has been *Accompaniment and Giving Voice*.

He hath shewed thee what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Micah 6:8 (KJV)

Evening Collection presenters shared how God and Spirit have accompanied them in various parts of their lives. Two former clerks of IYM(C) shared personal examples showing why they came to love the Religious Society of Friends and meeting for worship with attention to business. Each shared how their preceding clerk helped prepare them by sharing that the key to

good clerking is to trust the Body.

The work of the clerk is to help keep the Body centered so all have the best opportunity to recognize and hear *that still, small Voice of God*. (1 Kings 19:11-13 KJV) As we worship with attention to business and consider the business of the meeting, the Spirit accompanies us and we also accompany each other. The former clerks provided opportunity for others to share their profound experiences during meeting for business. It was good to remember how wonderful meeting for business can be when we remain intentional, and the clerks and body work together to discern God's will. They concluded with a reminder that no matter how good we get at holding meetings for worship with attention to business, it will be for naught if we do not approach all we do in the Spirit of Love.

When asked by an expert in the Law, "Who is my neighbor?" Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan. (*Luke 10:25-37*) In the parable, it was the Samaritan who aided the injured man, not the two religious leaders who passed him by. In another Collection, we were helped to examine the challenges of learning an anti-racist approach to bridging racial divides so prevalent in our society. We recognized that we are often comfortable with the current race-relations status quo. We were reminded of a quote by James Baldwin, "Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced." We learned that we need to develop an understanding and acceptance of our role in oppression. Working on ourselves, we might ask, "How am I colluding with oppression?" and "How are the words I choose and my personal choices furthering the oppression of other racial, economic, or ideologic groups?" We were encouraged to seek, follow our calling, and participate in and/or create community actions for justice and equality. We began learning about both accompanying and giving space for others to share voice.

Another Collection presenter pointed out that we are called not only to accompany and give voice to other people, but also the animals that share in our lives and planet. She shared about her life-long experience of finding spiritual connection in accompaniment, first with horses in her youth, next by learning an integrated training in healing massage for injured horses, and most recently how to accompany and give voice to those who are dying. She tenderly shared her very personal experience of being present and holding sacred space in accompanying her mother as she declined and passed. Though difficult at times, it was a tender, loving and enlightening experience, instructing her in a new appreciation of the Spirit-filled, life-death journey that we all walk.

The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul. Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I shall fear no evil for Thou art with me." Psalms 23: 1-4 (KJV)

Yet another Collection presenter helped us focus on being aware of Spirit in our lives both in joyous and difficult times. She courageously shared through song and stories how the Spirit has been present in her life and how that has led her to help others by studying and becoming a licensed acupuncturist.

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God... Psalms 100: 1-3 (KJV)

Spirit has moved among us and in us during the committee meetings and business sessions of IYMC. Of course, the reports of Scattergood Friends School and Farm Head of School, Farm manager, Yearly Meeting and Scattergood Trustees, and School Committee remain very important parts of Annual Sessions. We are gratified to learn the freshman and sophomore classes have been bigger than in the past several years. It continues to be our experience that by accompanying and giving voice in the manner of Friends practices, and in seeking to be present for staff, faculty, and students in Love, the work of the School, staff and students are our outreach to the wider world and will continue to be for years to come, beyond what we will ever know.

And finally, perhaps most precious to all of us, we found great joy in being accompanied in each of our times of worship by all members of our community from youngest to oldest. The accompaniment of our children gives us joy beyond joy; and giving them voice and the opportunity to recognize and listen to the voice of the Spirit in their hearts and recognize it in others as well, is our biggest responsibility.

In Loving Friendship and on behalf of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative),

Deborah Dakin, clerk

*Our Representatives Committee recommended as a first step in seeking to make Annual Sessions more accessible to a wider number of Friends, that we shorten annual sessions by one day. Next year's sessions will be held, God willing, at Scattergood School & Farm near West Branch, Iowa from **Seventh Month 22 to 26, 2020.***

Iowa Yearly Meeting Conservative Young Friends Epistle 2019

July 27, 2019

Dear Friends Everywhere,

The Young Friends gathered again for Iowa Yearly Meeting Conservative annual sessions at Scattergood Friends School in West Branch, Iowa. It was a fun, exiting, and tiring week. Many memories were made as we spent the week together in friendship, worship, and the occasional pillow fight.

We started the week talking about the theme of this year's annual sessions, Accompaniment and Giving Voice, and wrote an epistle to the greater Yearly Meeting expressing our concerns and hopes with the world from our perspective as young people. We also went swimming at the Scattergood Pond that same afternoon. Our plastic swan friends from last year were still present, so we temporarily removed their heads once again. We also gave them nicknames, Bill and Billie Eyelash. That evening we played Capture the Flag with Junior Yearly Meeting and IYMC Staff Members, which was a blast.

On fifth day, we started the day with a walk to the Scattergood Prairie with our Friend Bill Deutsch. Then came our annual out trip. Due to heavy rains and flooding in Iowa earlier in the year, we were unable to take our canoe trip on a river like we usually do, so we went to Terry Trueblood Recreation Area for canoeing and kayaking on Sand Lake instead. Afterwards, we stopped in Iowa City for ice cream. We would like to specifically mention how delicious this stop was. We finished the day with a movie night with JYM, complete with popcorn.

On sixth day, we went to Scattergood Farm for our annual service project. We had a great time helping harvest potatoes and picking a variety of flowers and prairie plants to make bouquets for the cafeteria that could be enjoyed by everyone. In the evening we had a "pondfire" where we made s'mores by the Scattergood Pond, after another swim of course. We roasted marshmallows for Bill and Billie Eyelash, but they didn't want them, so we ate them instead.

On our last day, we finally finished the puzzle we had been working on all week. In the afternoon, we went to the Tipton Swimming Pool with JYM. We had a lot of fun there, although we were sad that our swan friends were not with us. We also went to Dairy Queen and ate even more ice cream, with few regrets. We wrapped up the week emceeing the IYMC Talent Show.

It was a blessed week, and we are excited to meet again next year!

In Friendship,

Rhyla, Chris, David, Gillie, Thomas, Bill, and Billie

IYMC Young Friends 2019



Young Friends: Giving Voice

Dear Friends of Iowa Yearly Meeting Conservative and beyond,

We began our Young Friends program talking about the theme of this year's annual sessions, Accompaniment and Giving Voice. In the spirit of this theme, we have decided to "give voice" ourselves, and share more deeply with the greater Yearly Meeting through an epistle expressing our perspective as Young Friends. We spent almost an hour and a half in a worshipful discussion on Fourth Day morning, sharing deeply about our concerns for the world, what gives us hope, and what it means to accompany someone.

Accompaniment is, to us, a type of listening, and being there for those in need of care. We shared who we feel compelled to accompany, including racial and religious minorities, refugees, undocumented immigrants, victims of sexual assault and child abuse, people who choose to get abortions, LGBTQ people, and even people who may share different beliefs than us. We noted that it is still possible to listen and accompany people, while actively disagreeing with what they believe.

We spoke about many of our concerns with the modern world. The two that we kept returning to throughout the discussion was polarization in our society, and our clear concern on the changing climate and how it will affect our lives. We see the polarization in our society furthering a pattern of not listening to one another and encouraging a culture of hatred. We noted that by listening, we can often understand the struggles behind an opinion with which we disagree. We are also very concerned with the changing climate, and the displacement of people and wildlife that comes consequently. We recognize that a lot of the issues we care about are related to the environment, and that there will be an increase in poverty and war worldwide if we don't actively try and reverse climate change.

We also have a lot of hope for the future. We understand that we are living in an age of technological advancement, and while there are some negatives to this, we also see a lot of hope in what that might bring. We see that technology can be used as a tool to share ideas, connect with people across the globe, and find helpful information. We see that more medical advancements can be made, and that innovations could improve access to food, clean water, and quality of life for many worldwide. We find hope, often with the help of the internet and social media, in seeing people speaking their truth to power all over the world. This includes people speaking out for women's rights, resisting ICE raids, being stewards to our planet, and our fellow young people leading the movement on gun reform.

We appreciate the space IYMC gives us, to accompany and give our own voice.

Love and light to all,

IYMC Young Friends 2019

July 27, 2019

Dear Friends everywhere,

Hello from Junior Yearly Meeting of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative), meeting at Scattergood Friends School!

We have been doing a lot of things together. Every morning we went to meeting for worship and then checked on Ned, the donkey. We fed apple cores and grass to Ned and checked on his sore eye. He would come trotting over whenever he saw us coming, even when we didn't have treats.

We made crafts out of recycling, including boats that we floated on the pond. We jumped and ran on the hay bales at the farm, and played Capture the Flag with Young Friends. Water balloons were a blast. It was fun making giant explosions of water and having the water spray in our faces.

We listened to a story about how we are born with Light within us. We each had a candle to show that. We were missing Lucy and her light because she wasn't there that morning, but just as we were thinking that, she walked in! We listened to the story again so we could see her candle lit.

Some of us lived in the dorms with our families, all of us in one room. That was interesting! We are looking forward to coming back to yearly meeting next year.

In friendship,

Asher, Liam and Lucy