

## FIELD SECRETARY'S REPORT FOR CONTINUING COMMITTEE MEETING 3.3.12

It has been a busy and eventful four months since my hiring was approved. It has truly been four months of learning and getting to know more about ILYM, the wonderful, spiritual property in McNabb, and the diverse and committed members of the Meetings that make up the Yearly Meeting. I have much more to learn. Nevertheless, I have been welcomed; and I have been invited to visit again.

In November I visited St. Louis Meeting (when my appointment was approved), and Oak Park Meeting (with Joan Pine). I also attended the Site Visioning Committee meeting in McNabb, where I met members of UFV, Clear Creek, Carbondale, Lake Forest, Evanston and Duneland. In December I had the privilege of being at Roxy Jacob's home for Duneland's intergenerational worship and holiday meal.

I have visited Downers Grove Meeting often, and in January I attended one of their Saturday afternoon sessions on the testimony of Peace and Non-Violence. I also met with their Ministry & Worship Committee to learn how I might serve them and to offer program possibilities and resources. I will be meeting with them again tomorrow.

In January I also attended the Site Visioning Committee meeting in Normal, where I met members of Bloomington-Normal Meeting, as well as others I had not yet met from Clear Creek, and Evanston. In February, I visited Evanston for the MCGM Meeting, and the WYM Youth Council presentation at DG Meeting. It was good to hear about and see the enthusiasm for service that the young people expressed.

I hope to be able to offer help and resources to Bonnie McKeown and Margaret Nelson in their work as the Planning Committee for MCGM's Chicago Friends Gathering project. In addition, my own 57<sup>th</sup> Street Meeting has invited me to make a proposal for a program to be offered there.

I visited Oak Park Meeting a second time in February, and was heartened by the number of new attenders that continue there. The Meeting offered a program called, "What Happens in the Silence" which was attended by about 15-16 people. A lively and positive discussion was led by Adrian Fisher and Helen Dickinson, which included much sharing of our stories.

My work of this first four months has been to listen. I have asked Meeting members what they see as their Meetings' needs, and I have asked them to help me to find ways to serve their Meetings as ILYM field secretary. Eventually, I hope to develop programs and resources that will bring individuals of different Meetings together, and to continue the work begun by Paul Buckley to "nurture the nurturers."

There is much to be positive about in the Meetings of ILYM. The following are some of the comments and questions I have heard in my visiting and travels. They reflect strong Meetings and positive and committed Friends:

- The property in McNabb has history. It is a connection between future and past. It has a sense of Spirit and place that fosters community.

- There are spiritual connections between us and what's on this property. This is a spiritual place that nurtures all of us. Even if a Friend is not at annual sessions, the Friend is still part of this place.
- Vision: Nurture the land, encourage native plants to help native wildlife. The prairie and plantings on the McNabb property are an oasis for butterflies, birds, bees and other wildlife.
- Memories of ILYM annual sessions for many young parents included the sense of their own freedom and ability to meet and be with other young Friends when they were children. They want this for their children, and see the Clear Creek property as a safe and caring place where old and young can be together.
- "Annual sessions are great for children of small meetings." The opportunity for the children to be together (without too much parental supervision) makes this a place of special memories and relationships.
- Another young parent remembers this opportunity as being "not just Friends of your own age, but kids together of all ages."
- Another parent remembers the communal sharing of the task of "raising the children" that was a blessing to her during annual sessions.
- Another parent, remembering her own experiences, said: "How do we teach skills and habits to the next generation? Nurture their relationship to the land? This property is a space that is somewhere where children can be infused with how work can be fun."
- "We have connections to one another. Each part has its own value; the parts have even more value in connection to each other."
- One young adult Friend remembered being a 12yo at annual sessions. She said it was "the first place people treated me like I was a real person" when she was given responsibility for some of the work.
- "I'm aware of both the conflicts that have previously troubled the Meeting, and the vibrancy of the Meeting's focus on education and community building. Can members build on commonalities and also accept each other's differences? We're working on it."
- "Since we are so diverse, do we have only individual journeys? Or do we have a common journey? How can we nurture ourselves as community on a communal spiritual journey?"

I'm looking forward to what I will learn in the next four months.

Respectfully submitted,  
Judith S. Wolicki, Field Secretary