



Yearly Meetinghouse, McNabb, Illinois

ILLINOIS YEARLY MEETING

of the Religious Society of Friends
(Quakers)

Consisting of 20 Quaker Meetings and Worship Groups
in Illinois, Indiana, Missouri and Wisconsin

2011 Illinois Yearly Meeting Epistle

Dear Friends everywhere,

Illinois Yearly Meeting gathered as the full moon's light shone on the Midwest cornfields, symbolizing the divine illumination from which we seek guidance and sustenance. During Sixth month, the 137th annual session met near McNabb, Illinois, with the theme "As Way Opens: Discerning Our Path Forward in the Light".

We welcomed Mary Garman, Professor of Religion at Earlham College, whose lecture "If it brings you into trouble, it will bring you out again": The paradoxes of a Quietly rambunctious Quaker" showed us examples of earlier Friends who followed their spiritual leadings even into difficult, dangerous situations. In their deepest despair, they experienced their most powerful leadings that brought them beyond their troubles. We were inspired by their courage and faith.

We sought a path forward on addressing the issue of racism, with the help of Vanessa Juley, a Friend from Central Philadelphia Monthly Meeting and coordinator for the Friends General Conference Committee on Nurturing Ministries, Ministry on Racism. In her workshops, Friends listened to the Light of other Friends' experiences on how to engage Monthly Meetings with the book, *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship: Quakers, African Americans and the Myth of Racial Justice*, and its accompanying study guide. Many generations combined to make a large workshop entitled "Engaging in a Conversation on Racism." Friend Vanessa facilitated our loving listening on this often awkward, but important topic.

In her evening address, Vanessa shared her spiritual journey and led us in exercises on the subject of barriers to welcoming people of color and other issues of diversity. Her elegant story about the giraffe trying to welcome the elephant into his home was deeply moving to Friends. It illustrated the structures that we take for granted and the need to overcome them with love and welcome for our neighbors. The Spirit led us as we considered ways to take action in our Monthly Meetings.

At our previous yearly meeting, we rejoiced in the new property that we had acquired adjacent to our yearly meeting campus. We seek to make this place a refuge for wildlife and for our spirits. Although the management of our property can be complicated, and, at times, frustrating, we conducted our business in a spirit of gratitude for this new property. We waited in silence in Meeting for Business to discern the way forward in love.

Through worship sharing we learned about each other's personal experiences of the nature of the Divine and of the way opening. In an evening program, Friends shared their Light through the creativity of original poetry read aloud at a worshipful pace, music, and dramatization. We welcomed this different kind of opportunity to hear Friends and what inspires them.

These sessions remind us that we can trust our Quaker process to find divine guidance and our community to give us support. We pray you can remove any barriers in finding your way forward.

In Light and love,

Illinois Yearly Meeting

Epistle of the Illinois Yearly Meeting Adult Young Friends

Dear Friends Everywhere,

How are you? Really, what have you been thinking about lately? This year at ILYM our theme was “As Way Opens: Discerning Our Path Forward in the Light”. At our retreat in January we discerned that we want to better integrate with the wider community of Friends. With this in mind, we decided to stay on campus, sign up for more ILYM volunteer jobs, give a greater showing in business meeting, participate in more ILYM workshops, and attend more lectures.

At times we had difficulty conversing with older Friends. We overcame this thanks to meals and overtures from individual Friends.

We participated in many of the workshops, including; “Support for the Journey: An Aging and Saging Group at Downers Grove,” “‘To ponder well the paths of my feet’: Journaling and life in the Spirit,” “Grief and Grieving,” “Emily Greene Balch: Bridge Builder to Peace, Women, and Internationalism,” “Engaging in Conversation on Racism,” and “Getting our Final Wishes on Paper.” We also enjoyed speakers Mary Garman, a Quiet rambunctious Friend, and Vanessa Julye, who shared some of her spiritual journey and experiences as a woman of color in Friends Meetings and urged Friends to bring awareness of this difference of experience back to their monthly meetings.

We made connections during worship sharing and the celebration of the purchase of a new building.

Amongst ourselves our fellowship was nurtured by walks up and down Quaker Lane. On one walk we saw a “moon-bow” (like a rainbow, except at night) and on another we made a cuddle puddle at the Friends cemetery.

At our Saturday business Meeting we approved Stephen Kuhn as co-clerk of the Adult Young Friends (AYF) and approved Christopher Earp continuing as co-clerk. We also approved Alethea Tschetterwood as recording clerk.

As we reflected on the growth of our group, we were reminded how four years ago many AYF simply sat on the Meeting House porch together and we are now much more involved with the rest of ILYM. We intend to work on further integrating ourselves with ILYM.

We look forward to our August and January tsunamis. We also would enjoy hearing from you.

In the Light,
ILYM AYF

Epistle of the Illinois Yearly Meeting High School Friends

Dear Friends,

To begin our Quaker adventure, we gathered on Wednesday with hugs and happiness. We met for a brief rules meeting on the lawn where we were told that we have to abstain from sex and drugs, but rock and roll is a-okay.

On Thursday, though we woke up late for breakfast due to an unfortunate miscommunication, we participated in a clerking workshop led by Javaughn Fernanders where we learned of the intricacies and subtleties of clerking. That afternoon, we inadvertently missed our afternoon business meeting because we all fell asleep for a wonderful two and a half hour nap after we had facials that were an attempt to raise money to send five of us to FGC. We awoke for dinner. As a group, we volunteered our services to the kitchen and dining room, and spent many hours washing dishes. After the chores were done, we conducted a business meeting where we discussed the fall quake that will take place in St. Louis, a public display of affection minute, and discerned that Liz Anderson will be the new senior clerk, Marguerite Daw will be the recording clerk, and Claire Goode will be the treasurer.

The next day, we had a query workshop led by Javaughn where we each wrote a query based on the testimonies and we responded during worship sharing. A wonderful sheep metaphor was brought up and applied itself for many jokes later. In the afternoon, we joined older Friends in the enjoyment of a workshop on a discussion of racism led by Vanessa Julye. That night, we put our dancing shoes on, and promptly took them off, to square dance with everyone and enjoy watermelon on the lawn.

Early on Saturday, we stumbled out of bed to make it to breakfast on time and be ready to leave on our out-trip. We went to Camp Menno Haven where we participated in team-building activities in which we had to work on communication, teamwork, growth, and safety. We also completed the high ropes course which involved a zip line, tight ropes, and a telephone pole called the Leap of Faith. We climbed the pole, stood and turned around, and then ultimately jumped for a rope with a bell. Facing fears, personal growth, and swatting bugs were common activities throughout the day. We came back exhausted and devoured by insects, but satisfied with ourselves and our positive group dynamic. Late night on Saturday, we went for a walk, ate pizza, played Wink, and wrote this epistle.

This year we say good-bye to Mason George, Sara Raffensperger, and Emily Wills as they move on to another chapter of their lives and prepare themselves for the adventure of college.

Peace and love,

ILYM High School Friends

Mason George, Sara Raffensperger, Delia Amos, Sean Robey, Nate Howenstine,
Claire Goode, Murphy Beattie, Gabe Meyer-Lee, Liz Anderson

Epistle of the Illinois Yearly Meeting Middle School Young Friends

To Friends Everywhere,

The theme of Illinois Yearly Meeting for 2011 was “As Way Opens: Discerning Our Path Forward in the Light.” We worked together to build a labyrinth that looked like a simple design. We learned how complex the labyrinth was and how much work it took for the outside to look simpler.

We had heard the story of Theseus and Ariadne, and we liked how Ariadne was a hero. We noticed that spiders were in our labyrinth and that the labyrinth took on a spider-web shape. It was interesting how the labyrinth seemed to choose its own shape, even though we were working from a traditional design. Maybe God shapes our pathways for us, too.

We invited the younger kids to walk the labyrinth. Many of them did not fully appreciate the labyrinth, but two of the youngest kids especially seemed to enjoy the center. From the outside, it looked like a spiral and you would never change direction. But on the inside, it veered in twists and turns, and just when you were near the center, your path would take you toward the outside again.

We weren't really sure it would lead us to the middle. It was like doing a Trust Walk with our labyrinth. When you did get to the center, you could feel a sense of peace and accomplishment, being closer to God. It was like you could feel the Light shining within you.

From the Illinois Yearly Meeting Junior High Class: Kaleigh, Amal, Marlena & Laure

Epistle of the Illinois Yearly Meeting 8-9 Year Olds

Dear Young Friends,

We hope you are having a good meeting.

We are eight young Friends, age eight to eleven, and four grown-ups. Some of us have been friends for years. We love dynamite, video games, action, bowling, giving people nicknames, dance, playing in the sandbox, the Cubs and Bears, going barefoot, being dirty, acting like a monkey, and going down slides.

Our theme was Finding Our Path and Walking It.

We made guidelines about being responsible, being caring, being respectful, helping each other when we have problems, and not making people feel bad.

We found that some of us don't like to stick together; we had a treasure hunt – following clues – and some of us wanted to run ahead.

We learned that we can find our path by listening to our hearts.

We traced our bodies on paper.

We played the Blob Game, to get unity. We played Red Light, Green Light.

We heard from Bill, Alice and Zoe.

In the Light,

Henry, Kiran, Kiva, Liam, Nathan, Quinn, and Ryan

Epistle of the Illinois Yearly Meeting 6-7 Year Olds

Greetings from the ILYM 6-7 year olds.

Each day we met with all the F.U.N. (Friends Under Nineteen) kids for songs near the playground. Then our group went to our tent and played games and read stories.

Our theme “As Way Opens: Our Path Forward in the Light” appeared in all nine books we read. Our favorite books include *Let's Go Camping With Mr. Sillypants*, *Heckedy Peg*, *Cinderella's Rat*, and *Little Red Riding Hood*.

Our first day, we discussed being oneself and different ways we get help making decisions. We learned how to make paper fortune-tellers and started a collaborative drawing of what we do when we have difficult choices.

Our second day concentrated on choosing to do “the next right thing” and our path forward. We read more stories and walked the labyrinth the middle school Young Friends constructed from rope. We also made fans to blow away the pesky gnats and worked on our collaborative drawing.

Our third day we discussed what is meant by “in the Light.” We gathered with all the F.U.N. kids to be captivated by a story-teller and musician duo who told wonderful stories that shed light on our inner Light. At our tent we read more stories and played more tag. We discovered that Little Red Riding Hood could have followed her inner Light rather than obeying either her mother or the wolf, that sometimes we just need to make our own decisions regardless of pressures from those around us.

We are Anya, Ethan, Faith, Heidi, Jasmine, and Priya.