

It has been a busy and eventful seven months since my hiring was approved. It has truly been seven 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 been welcomed by meetings and members; and I have been invited to visit again.

My primary work of this past seven months has been to visit and 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. As I continue this work, I hope that programs and resources I develop will bring individuals of different Meetings together.

I know that, as Meetings and as individual Friends, we have many challenges. We deal with questions and concerns around conflict, lack of participation, lack of vocal ministry, sometimes a sense of divide between young Friends and older Friends, the illness and loss of many of our Elders, and a sense of disconnection between our lives as Friends and our Meetings and our faith in our Quaker tradition. Yet comments and questions I have heard in my visiting and travels reflect strong Meetings and positive and committed Friends.

What I have heard and experienced with Friends reflects a strong desire to find ways back to a traditional core, to being part of the community that is so evident when Friends are able to set aside the busy-ness of our lives and come together to worship and to play. During a program at the Oak Park Meeting in November a new attender said, "The Quaker tradition is one that is particularly attractive and needed at this time." Since that time, I have heard that comment repeated by others.

I think the comment reflects that Quaker openness and work in areas of non-violence, peace and justice, commitment to education, and commitment to sustainability, to name just a few, are ideas that are attractive and mightily needed in our world. How do we tap into those strengths of our Quaker tradition that are attractive to others in order to energize ourselves and make ourselves and our Meetings stronger? How can we grow in connection and community? I don't know the answer. As field secretary, I look forward to helping to strengthen the meetings and community that is ILYM.

Programs

I have talked to Meetings and Friends about programs that might be of use to them, and have spent time planning a number of programs for presentation to Meetings. One such program has a working title of *The Journey of the Seeker*, and would include a short discussion of historical Quaker seekers, as well as time for participants to share something about their own seeking journeys. It is my hope that this program would help members within or across meetings to get to know one another better, thus building community. This program could work well as a morning or afternoon retreat-type opportunity.

Another program I am working on with DGM and 57th Street Meeting is based on a spiritual genogram model that has been successfully used by churches to forge individual connections and build community. We have been discussing the possibilities for using this spiritual genogram model as a vehicle for discussion of the different spiritual/religious tradition backgrounds of our members and how that diversity impacts what we separately may expect from worship and from the Meeting. The program would include an introduction

to Spiritual Genograms, and would offer participants an opportunity to remember, trace and learn the spiritual history of their Meeting, identify and name those who have been the spiritual leaders of their Meeting as well as those who have had a spiritual impact on them individually. The goal of the program is to help Friends move to better understanding of one another's points of view (particularly those that come from our pasts), and help forge stronger and closer connections between us.

A third program I am working on would offer some conflict resolution possibilities. I hope to find others who would be willing to work on this program, which would be shaped around identifying and discussing systematic approaches to the kinds of challenging situations Meetings have faced in the past or may face in the future. The idea for this program began with a suggestion from DGM's M&W committee. At the Conflict Resolution Workshop in Kankakee facilitated by Fernando and Priscilla Freire, I recognized the broader possibilities for such a program during a conversation I had with a member of Northside meeting about how that Meeting had addressed an issue with an attendee who had mental health needs. The program includes hypothetical situations and a flowchart-type process for finding compassionate and effective responses when meetings are faced with challenging requests for help.

In the next year, I plan to continue the work begun by Paul Buckley to "nurture the nurturers," including a program to build to be offered to those nurturers who attended the original programs.

I have other programs and ideas for programs in my tool-kit, including one on Clearness Committees that offers participants an opportunity to explore using this historical process as a decision-making tool.

I look forward to learning more about Meetings' needs and developing programs that would be of help to them.

Travel and Visits

During the past seven months, I have concentrated on traveling and visiting meetings that would give me opportunities to meet and talk to the greatest number of Friends and Meetings that was possible. I think I have been fairly successful this year by attending many gatherings as well as individual meetings. I look forward to being able to visit many more individual meetings in the coming year.

In November, 2011, I visited St. Louis Meeting and Oak Park Meeting. I also attended the Site Envisioning Committee meeting in McNabb, where I met members of UFV, Clear Creek, Carbondale, Lake Forest, Evanston and Duneland. In December, I also had the privilege of attending 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 DGM's Ministry & Worship Committee to learn how I might serve them and to offer program possibilities and resources. In January I also attended the Site Envisioning 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, where I offered my services as a resource to a new committee charged with planning programs for MCGM's Chicago Friends Gathering concept. I look forward to working with CFG next year.

In February I also attended the WYM Youth Council presentation at DG's meetinghouse. It was good to hear about and see the enthusiasm for service that the young people expressed, and to meet the members of Indiana meetings, as well as members from other ILYM meetings. In February, my own 57th Street Meeting 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.

In early March, I reported on my first five months as FS at Continuing Committee in Lake Forest. This meeting provided me another opportunity to meet members I had not met before, and to get to know better those I had already met. The same day, a Friendly 8s dinner in Elmwood Park gave me an opportunity to observe the deep and diverse political, socioeconomic, and personal views of Friends, young and old. It was a delight! In March, I also attended the conflict resolution workshop offered by Fernando and Priscilla Freire, held at the Rorem's home in Kankakee. There were many attendees I had not yet met, and once again I had an opportunity to spend time with individual Friends, learning about meetings' needs and identifying programs and resources that might be helpful to Meetings.

In April I visited the Bloomington-Normal Meeting. A program for them is in the works, and I hope to visit them again soon. I also attended Duneland Meeting in April, and participated in a program on the FWCC gathering in Kenya. I participated in the Women's Weekend in McNabb at the end of April. The condensed version of a clearness committee process in which I participated at WW triggered my preparation of the program on Clearness Committees that I have presented to colleagues at Lutheran General Hospital, and that I hope to present for Friends in the near future.

In May, I met with 57th Street's M&C committee to begin work on a program to be offered this fall. I also attended Blue River Quarterly meeting in Springfield in May. This gave me the opportunity to meet more Friends from southern ILYM meetings. I also was able to be part of Work Weekend at the end of May, where I had an opportunity to spend time with many of the young Friends who came to work on the Bunkhouse, and generously spent time helping in the the dininng room and kitchen, cleaning, preparing food, whipping cream, and running the dishwasher. Their ability to have fun in the midst of working hard was contagious!

As I write this for the publication deadline of June 1st, I am hoping to visit the Urbana meeting this weekend, and am looking forward to annual sessions, from site prep to the final meeting. I particularly look forward to spending time with new and old F/friends. I know this will be a time of listening and learning about Meetings; I hope it will be a time when Friends and Meetings can get to know me better, and help me to find ways to serve you.

Respectfully submitted,
Judy Wolicki, Field Secretary