

Greetings To Friends Everywhere:

July 22, 2007

Friends from Oregon, Washington, Montana and Idaho, gathered for the 35<sup>th</sup> annual session of North Pacific Yearly Meeting, July 18 - 22 at the Reed College campus in Portland Oregon, with the theme: "Lives that Speak: Leading and Being Led." It was a refreshing setting, under cool somewhat rainy skies, with a salmon creek and abundance of bird and other animal life to enjoy.

On the day before the session began, our Friend-in-Residence, Arthur Larrabee, led an Advanced Clerking Workshop, which helped 32 of our experienced clerks deepen their clerking skills.

At the opening Plenary, visitors from several other Yearly Meetings and Quaker organizations were introduced and welcomed. Excerpts from Epistles from other Yearly Meetings were read, which drew us closer to "Friends Everywhere."

On Friday morning, Arthur Larrabee addressed us on the question of "Quaker Leadership." He started off by quoting a front page headline in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* from August 2006: "Friends Frustrate some of their Flock; Quakers bogged down by Process, say two Quaker leaders." This headline led him into some reflections on the unique characteristics of Quaker leadership, as compared to power-based secular leadership styles. He concluded that Quakers need a fresh perspective, where religious understanding is not compromised. "The practice of leadership is not the same as the exercise of power." Key to the Quaker model is a balance between individual spiritual authority, and corporate or community spiritual authority. A Quaker leader is spiritually grounded, thinks globally, shares ideas, takes risks and finds satisfaction in the success of the community, rather than personal influence or success.

Thoughts about leadership stayed with us throughout our sessions as we considered major changes being proposed to our Yearly Meeting structure, and to our *Faith and Practice*. There was much interest in the Vision and Structure Committee proposals, especially for establishing three new standing committees: Ministry and Oversight, Peace and Social Concerns, and Focus on Youth. The prospect of changes generated much energy, with groups of Friends gathering over meals and elsewhere to discuss these ideas. After much discussion and prayerful reflection, the decision was made to move forward with establishing the new committees and other changes. A Structure Implementation Committee was appointed to work with Steering Committee to begin the transition process.

Friends were touched by the vivid visual and verbal presentation by a Young Friend about her experiences in the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage of 2006. Getting acquainted with young people from the various branches of Quakerism was challenging and rewarding. After visiting numerous churches in the Midwest, she concluded "Churches are empty shells until hearts come together."

There were opportunities in interest groups to address a wide variety of subjects, including: Quaker Earthcare Witness, Gender Healing around Sexuality, Ending the War on Drugs, Friends Peace Teams, Immigration Rights are Human Rights, Non-theistic Quakerism, Interfaith Peace Movement and Friends. It was good to learn about current AFSC work, especially the impact the *Eyes Wide Open* tour is having in rural Oregon.

Consideration of a Minute on Harassment, continued from last year, generated a deep level of concern. There was recognition of our shortcomings when we try to deal with issues of sexual abuse and harassment. We were reminded that it is especially important to be aware of the needs of the victim.

The large Junior Friends group added vitality and enthusiasm to the gathering. Central Friends organized an intergenerational service project for Saturday afternoon, and there was a lively program for young children. Community night was filled with talent and laughter, as we celebrated the joy of being together.

We return to our homes with a renewed sense of purpose and direction, ready to take up new challenges, as we are led.

Dorsey Green, Presiding Clerk  
North Pacific Yearly Meeting