

North Pacific Yearly Meeting - 2003 Epistle

To Friends Everywhere,

Greetings from Unprogrammed Friends of Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. We gathered for North Pacific Yearly Meeting's thirty-first annual session July 24-27 2003, on the campus of the University of Montana in Missoula. For three days we shared worship, business, meals, singing, contra dancing and the joy of being together. Saturday afternoon we scattered in groups for intergenerational service projects in the Missoula community. We learned that our yearly meeting continues to grow, both in numbers of Friends and in new worship groups.

The theme "Our Peace Testimony: Walking Our Talk In Our Communities" combined with epistles from many yearly meetings to turn our attention to peace.

Our Friend-In-Residence, Martin Garate of the AFSC's International Division spoke of the radicality of our historical Quaker experience of the presence of God in every person, that we focus not on behavior but on seeing where the love is. From a deep spiritual place, we encounter the poor, the oppressed, the excluded and victims of war as corporal beings with concrete needs—needs to which we must answer while we recognize that of God. There is a need to examine other social systems and ask ourselves, what is the best for human beings to live under? From the point of view of most of the world, we are both oppressors and wealthy; but by embracing a preferential option for the poor and oppressed, and living in the presence of God, we would become truly radical and not only true to our experience of God in every person, but also attractive to others - - especially young people.

Then we searched together about the appropriate level of independence for NPYM Friends younger than nineteen, how to assure that they are safe in our gatherings, and on bridging the perceived gap between the generations in our own yearly meeting. We considered what is the appropriate amount of adult control in contrast to the opportunities for Young Friends to try their own wings and make their own mistakes. We weighed how and when to recognize a transition to adulthood, and Young (adult) Friends have established a community among themselves, with leadership and a budget. We recognized, with gratitude, the work done both by Junior Friends and Young Friends in their business meetings and by the Intergenerational Communications Committee.

Kri Anderson, a volunteer with FGC spoke eloquently about high school age programs that are engineered for success. Adolescents (not unlike everyone else) have seven developmental needs: 1) positive interactions with peers and adults; 2) meaningful participation; 3) creative expression; 4) competence and achievement; 5) physical activities; 6) self-exploration and definition; 7) structure and clear limits. For many youth, the first experience connecting the divine comes in participation at meeting for business with their peer community. Seeking solutions through this sometimes long process can be part of a magical transform experience.

NPYM clerk Jon Prescott shared meaningful lessons from the Pendle Hill clerking workshop he attended. Bob Schultz of FCNL reminded us what a precious gift that FCNL is, providing leadership in Washington D.C. regarding peace and justice legislation. Susan Segal and Martin Garate of AFSC spoke of the work being done in many countries to build (or rebuild) relationships that make long-term peace possible.

We celebrated Saturday night with Community night, a mutual gift of performances of beauty and skits of humor that let us laugh at ourselves.

Meeting for worship concluded our gathering.
Jon Prescott, Presiding Clerk