

NORTH PACIFIC YEARLY MEETING
2005 EPISTLE

To Friends Everywhere:

North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends gathered in annual session July 14-17th, 2005 on the campus of Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington, U.S.A. Even as aircraft roared overhead from a military base, we focused on the theme "Using Our Light in Practical Peacemaking". A letter was read from Margery Post Abbot to Friends of high school age inquiring about the spiritual health of the Jr. Friends Program. They responded with a very thoughtful, inspiring epistle. They told us that their experience of The Spirit included their search for the meaning of God, and that:

1. Spiritual Growth is a process,
2. Each Jr. Friend's Spiritual Experience is uniquely individual,
3. We experience trust and love,
4. We experience Honest and real relationships and
5. We go home [after gatherings of Junior Friends] feeling so much more whole inside

Our Friend in Residence, Mary Lord of the American Friends Service Committee talked about the life cycle of conflict, how attention is only drawn to conflicts after a certain threshold of violence has been reached. Her premise is that we begin our peacemaking too late, when the opportunities are few. Once a cease-fire is negotiated in a war zone, the work of peacemakers is diverted to the next "hot spot", leaving the core issues unresolved. She recommends, "Getting in early and staying late" In that vein she suggests "we need to work to prevent the next war now.

Mary spoke about the meaning of each of our testimonies in our lives today. She talked about our culture of materialism in relation to the Quaker testimony of simplicity. She described the process of mining minerals from the Earth to make needless "stuff" which then ends up as polluted waste in a landfill. She calls this a "cycle of death sowing the seeds of war". Mary called us to consider how we are each, in our own lives, called to speak our Truth.

We struggled in trying to create a Minute regarding the U.S. military withdrawal from Iraq. It reads as follows:

The North Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), standing in the 350-year tradition of Friends' opposition to war, calls for the immediate, orderly termination of the military occupation of Iraq by the United States. We believe we are called to live in that love and power that takes away the occasion of all war. We are anguished by the deaths of over 100,000 Iraqis and by the deaths and lasting scars inflicted on another generation of soldiers and their families. We accept the moral and legal obligations of our country to help reconstruct Iraq, in concert with the international

community and the people of Iraq. We acknowledge our own obligations to remove the seeds of war that are embedded in the ways we live our daily lives. We call for renewed efforts to prevent our troops of the United States as well as those from other nations, the humanitarian workers in Iraq, the families of all in harm's way, the leaders of Iraq and of the United States and all others affected by this war

A kaleidoscope of worship through movement, words, song and silence united us with the Divine Spirit and each other.

A committee on the Discipline met for the first time to update our book of Faith and Practice. We also named a Vision and Structure Committee to gather a sense of how this Yearly Meeting is called to work in the future, and what structures would best serve that work.

North Pacific Yearly Meeting along with our historic siblings, Pacific and Intermountain Yearly Meetings is independent and unaffiliated. These three Meetings of Western North America, however, are working with Canadian Yearly Meeting and Alaska Friends Conference to host the 2006 Gathering of Friends General Conference, which will meet at Pacific Lutheran University, where we are this week. To those in Friends General Conference we extend a warm welcome and to Friends of all persuasions we send heartfelt greetings, as we all seek to follow The Guide.

For North Pacific Yearly Meeting,

Dorsey Green

Presiding Clerk