

## July 1, 2006 Epistle

### GREETINGS TO FRIENDS EVERYWHERE:

With snowy Mt. Rainier as a backdrop, North Pacific Yearly Meeting met for its 34<sup>th</sup> annual session at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington from June 29 to July 1, 2006. The gathering's theme, "Friends Young and Old: Growing Our Community", was evident in plenary sessions and worship groups.

Because Friends General Conference's annual gathering was scheduled to begin on July 1 on the same campus, NPYM chose to meet for only two days. Abbreviating our session was designed to allow as much participation as possible in FGC's first meeting held on the west coast. Attendance was lower than usual, with 216 participating. Friends regretted that the Yearly Meeting was so brief. This, however, made the time spent together even more precious to us.

The three plenary sessions included: a look back at our history, dealing with abuse, and reports from the World Gathering of Young Friends. At the first plenary session a panel of elders reflected on their experience with the Yearly Meeting from its inception. Alice Miles, one of the early members, recalled the days leading up to the founding of North Pacific Yearly Meeting. Ann Stever recounted two examples of Friends' discernment: the lengthy and difficult process leading to our minute recognizing same sex marriage in 1992, and the swift, unified response to an Aryan Nations march that occurred nearby, during the 1998 annual session in Spokane. Joe Snyder told of his family's personal involvement with Friends which began in the mid '70s, including a deep commitment to our children's program, and support of Friends' actions through prayer. Although our original purpose was to provide opportunities for fellowship and spiritual enrichment, some of the most memorable times for all the presenters were those when the Yearly Meeting was called upon to conduct difficult business.

The Yearly Meeting embarked on new, challenging business as it considered a Minute from Montana Gathering of Friends regarding conflict and abuse in our meetings. We began the process of discerning how to respond with love to all involved, when allegations of abuse are made.

The third plenary brought the report from the 2005 World Gathering of Young Friends. Our young friends joined with a representative from Northwest Yearly Meeting in an inspiring report about their time spent discovering That of God in the diverse group of Quaker young people gathered in England and Kenya for the World Gathering.

Worship sharing turned our attention away from the historical and world view back to the work of our own yearly meeting. Worship groups considered how the original vision of this Yearly Meeting is evolving with our faith in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and struggled to define the beliefs that unify us all. The worshipful work begun here will serve to inform our ongoing Vision and Structure Committee's work during this coming year.

Our children's program was small but spirited. Their theme was "Courage Comes in All Sizes". Elementary and middle school Quakers interviewed their elders about times when they were courageous. The interviews became the basis for the children's program's community night offering "Snapshots in Courage".

As we close this year's brief annual session, we are filled with anticipation. Many of us anticipate the new experience of attending Friends General Conference. All of us are eager to continue our path together as the community of North Pacific Yearly Meeting.

Dorsey Green, Presiding Clerk  
North Pacific Yearly Meeting  
North Pacific Yearly Meeting Annual Session