

Epistle of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) August, 2013.

To Friends Everywhere:

*Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands,
Serve the Lord with gladness; come before his presence with singing.
-Psalm 100: 1-2, KJV*

Friends from nearly a dozen states representing more than 20 monthly meetings in the US and Canada, gathered for a week in late July and early August to consider the theme "Make a Joyful Noise". Amidst lush green cornfields surrounding the campus of Scattergood Friends School, we met to seek God's will in attending to the business of the Yearly Meeting. We continued in this joyful practice, which we have observed previously for 135 years.

Our first evening gathering titled "Expressing our joy", featured a panel of Friends who shared elements of their lives that bring them joy. These joy experiences included awareness of connection with nature, of the joy of parenting, of the satisfaction of doing work that enhances children's lives, and of the joy of a new found relationship with Jesus. One panel member noted that when she experiences authentic joy, she really needs to share it somehow. In the discussion that followed, and in many experiences of the week, we came to understand that that the seeds of joy are intertwined with gratitude, awe, beauty wonder and connection.

There were many opportunities for Friends to connect and share their joy throughout the week. Programs and interests ranged broadly from sessions that included how to build a library in Kenya, to how to remain faithful, to how to support and encourage vocal ministry, to how to do something about environmental justice concerns. A folk concert by a Young Friend gave a different voice to the issues of our various concerns. Most days began with quiet worship and bible study and concluded with group singing. Much of the joy of Iowa Yearly Meeting in session is in shared effort as we labor with each other, and as we are served and serve one another. Much joy is experienced in small circles and quiet conversations. One friend described the spiritual refreshment and change that she experiences as a weeklong embrace; another stated that our joy comes from the "Source". This was affirmed in the presentation by visiting Friend Deborah Shaw, who spoke to the passage from John 15:11, that our joy is complete in our reciprocal relationship with the Spirit.

As a Yearly Meeting, we are especially grateful for the presence, energy and vitality of a larger group of junior yearly meeting youth and young friends than have been able to participate in past years. Once again their management of and participation in the talent show closed our week with great joyfulness.

Through the week, we were graced with much joyful noise, much joyful quiet, and serving each other with gladness. And we go forth to do the same.

In God's love,

Deborah Dakin, clerk
Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative)

Our our yearly meeting next year will be held 7th month 22 to 7th month 27, 2014. Please consider joining us!