

**North Pacific Yearly Meeting
of the Religious Society of Friends
Annual Session 2014
Epistle**

To Friends everywhere,

Throughout this annual session at Pacific University in Forest Grove, OR, we sat in silence with each other, spoke honestly, and allowed ourselves to be open and vulnerable. Our Friends in Residence, Ken and Katharine Jacobsen, presented the theme, "Transformative Power of Spirit in Community: Finding Light in the Yearly Meeting." They shared their fears that illness would prevent them from serving us in the way they had originally intended. Accepting the disappointments of life teaches us humility. After speaking about trusting the two-way motion of love, Katharine asked us to release our expectations for Annual Session. We were reminded that we gather to re-consecrate ourselves so that nothing gets left out of the healing work of the Divine.

We put effort into making sure our business was spirit-led by pausing frequently for worship. The high-school age and young adult Friends led a plenary session in which they demonstrated comfort with a measured pace of speaking and silence when responding to the query: What is the Spirit asking us to do? Some spoke of treasuring their community and feeling safe to speak about their faith. Others shared concerns about the health and future of the Yearly Meeting. They invited older Friends to join them in deep conversation. Many of us were inspired by FCNL's example of how the Spirit leads people to action. Rather than feeling helpless in the world, we were called to find our voice as part of our witness. We approved a minute urging repeal of the Authorization for Use of Military Force.

During our last annual session, we made a commitment to the children of the Yearly Meeting to hire a paid children's program coordinator for Annual Session. Having the coordinator has allowed the children's leaders to focus on the children and activities rather than administration. He has also been reaching out to the monthly meetings to find children's program leaders and nurturing the connection between Annual Session and the children. Youth committee is now freer to work with the monthly meetings on developing children's programs and sharing information.

We have struggled the last few years in engaging all of the monthly meetings, preparative meetings, and worship groups in the business of the Yearly Meeting. Some of these meetings have reported being overwhelmed by the amount of input requested from Yearly Meeting. This had become a burden. However, at a recent gathering of the committee that coordinates the work of Yearly Meeting, there was an unexpected rise in energy. We made a change in structure that invites participation rather than requiring it, hoping that more voices will be heard. At the same time, all of us are exploring ways to keep connections open. We are still wrestling with the tension between approaching our business worshipfully and having enough time for all of our business. We approved a minute urging repeal of the Authorization for Use of Military Force.

At the heart of our annual session is our worship. Ken Jacobsen asked that we come together to remember that we are a part of something greater than ourselves. We are to release ourselves from our words and stories. Then we can return home to the wordless mystery of God. This is followed by receiving messages, invitations to participate in creation. Finally, we are called to respond fully to the motion of love. What is love asking of us today?

On behalf of North Pacific Friends,
Tom Rawson
Presiding Clerk