

To Friends Everywhere:

Greetings from Intermountain Yearly Meeting Friends. IMYM gathered once again, around 300 strong, June 6-12, 2016 at Ghost Ranch, New Mexico. The vast geographic scope of IMYM means that connections and fellowship among Friends of the intermountain west has enormous significance. One Friend observed that when Young Friends arrive and see each other for the first time in a year, they literally leap into one another's arms. Most adult Friends are somewhat less demonstrative but that does not mean they are less enthusiastic about renewing bonds with one another. We had visitors from FGC, AFSC, FCNL, Right Sharing of World Resources and Earlham School of Religion, as well as Mexico, El Salvador and a variety of Monthly Meetings from other parts of the country.

In attendance were both young and old; the youngest being one year old and among our elders, 91-year-old Marian Hoge, an early founder of our Yearly Meeting. And yet our love and regard for one another go beyond our individual ties. We are a true Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends in our attention to the important business that comes before us each year and to the theme we have chosen and the Keynote presentation we receive about that theme.

Callid Keefe-Perry, Quaker minister from Fresh Pond Monthly Meeting in Massachusetts spoke to us on Nurturing Spiritual Gifts and Ministry in our Meetings. "SIPAGA" was his acronym for the definition of Ministry. SI-PA-GA means;

Sustained-Intention  
Prayerful-Attention  
Guided-Action

He suggested that in our spiritual endeavors we "live in the dashes." He came before us with immense creativity and originality, presenting his message with humor and startling metaphors. He engaged us with his words, moving us toward one another with participatory exercises, and sending us back to our Monthly Meetings with an inspired definition of our purpose in community and in worship for the conduct of our business: a meeting is "a community gathering of individuals willing to enter into a committed relationship with one another and with God."

Early days programming reflected the ways in which that commitment becomes manifest in our locales and in our world. Programs included stewardship in finance, Upcycling, Peru (site of this year's FWCC Section of the Americas Conference), a play using historic Quaker figures in dialogue with one another, immigration, the creation of Soul-collages and their interpretation, and other topics. Of particular interest was the Pay as Led program of New England Yearly Meeting presented in a workshop. These programs added to our commitment to action and witness, as did the many informal conversations during meals and the quiet, reflective time in worship sharing on the vast Ghost Ranch landscape.

As part of our business, we considered several Minutes, one supporting a U.N. resolution proposing a Humanitarian Pledge for the Prohibition and Elimination of Nuclear Weapons. The economies of the four states that compose IMYM – Colorado, Utah, New Mexico and Arizona – are dependent to an alarming extent on the nuclear weapons industry. Another Minute was proposed on supporting continued federal funding for Planned Parenthood health care services. We heard an inspiring report on Mountain Friends Camp, presented by several of the young Friends who have experienced the camp. Mountain Friends Camp is a Yearly Meeting initiative with growing significance to our youth and future growth. We had some heavy decisions to undertake for future yearly meetings, that we addressed as part of "our committed relationship with one another" and to witness in the world.

Our Senior Young Friends have been deeply concerned about today's issues of gender and sexual equality. They were led to organize an educational listening session called "Sharing Our Truth." Friends of all ages attended as Young Friends found a safe place to share their experiences about and within the LGBTQ

community. Friends spoke as led across a wide spectrum of identities and ages providing a powerful witness that we hope will be continued in Monthly Meetings and beyond.

Singing introduced several of our business sessions, and one evening there was a well-attended sing-along and campfire with marshmallows! Although Ghost Ranch cut staffing for the cantina, Friends showed entrepreneurial initiative and brought ice cream and snacks to sell at the cantina to support Mountain Friends Camp. The ages didn't matter, as the enthusiastic community formed as naturally as breathing. And, of course, the Friday night dance powered by our own IMYM contra dance band. As always, Yearly Meeting social time was capped off by the annual Creativity Night on Saturday night. Skits, poetry reading, musical offerings and much more demonstrated our abundance of creativity and brought us together in laughter and applause.

Worship sharing groups met for four mornings as well as Senior Young Friends-led intergenerational worship sharing groups after lunch daily. Friends reported these to create meaningful connections among the IMYM community. Departed Friends were remembered and celebrated in a Meeting for the reading of Memorial Minutes.

Emotions are running high concerning the possibility of leaving Ghost Ranch due to a variety of considerations. Many of us have become very attached to the beautiful natural landscape, but we recognize that a yearly meeting is much more than it's setting. We recognized that our Meetings for Worship for Business and our spiritual fellowship and mutual care are our reality as a Yearly Meeting and we trust the Spirit to lead us through these decisions to "come down in the place just right," in the words of a favorite old song.

With love and Light,

Sarah Keeney, Presiding Clerk  
Intermountain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends