

Epistle to Friends Everywhere

Seventh Month, 28, 2018

To Friends Everywhere,

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”-- John 1:1-5

"When we pause, allow a gap and breathe deeply, we can experience instant refreshment. Suddenly, we slow down, look out and there's the world." -- Pema Chodron (Buddhist teacher, author, nun and mother)

We send you warm greetings from Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) as we gather at Scattergood Friends School Seventh Month 24-29 for the 141st annual session of our yearly meeting.

This week, we have explored our theme, "Being Centered in an Uncentered World." We were reminded that God is the constant in our fast changing world. The love and care of God is at the center of our being and all of Creation. By staying open and responsive to this Light Within, we find the path and hope needed to navigate these changing times.

During our time together, we practiced many ways of staying centered. A slide show of one of our member's photographs taught us the importance of paying deep attention to the beauty of the natural world and people around us. We gathered for Bible study, reading a selected passage then sharing out of worship as the Spirit moved us. We learned how to stay grounded as we interrupt situations of interpersonal and state violence around us. We also examined ways to avoid or overcome burnout, and we listened carefully as members shared insights about how to practice discernment. As always, our members' diverse and sometimes humorous gifts made us laugh and uplifted us during our annual talent show.

As we look toward the future of Scattergood School and Farm, we want to build on our strengths. The school has been such a vital and precious part of who we are as a yearly meeting. Its influence extends across many generations and continents. This year we have been blessed by the gifts of Scattergood students and staff who fed, housed and nurtured us once more. During the week we considered and then approved a proposal from our School Committee to expand the mission of Scattergood School and Farm that included a major financial commitment that we accept on faith.

Considering change is unsettling. Change can bring angst to our hearts as we worry if we have anticipated all of risks we have to face. Change can be exciting as we consider new ways to undertake our work and our mission, and as we are invited to consider which parts of our mission hold the most Life. We struggled as we wondered if we are truly being led by the Light Within or by emotions around fear of loss many of us feel because of our deep connections with Scattergood school.

We are grateful for the development and seasoning of this proposal by the Scattergood School Committee and staff, for our process of discernment and our practice of doing business in meeting for worship as we attempt to be guided by the Inward Light. The path to the future is often uncertain. We ask our friends everywhere to hold our yearly meeting and Scattergood staff in the Light.

Another change we face every year is the loss of beloved, long-time members. Each year, this change touches us in a unique way, because each person brought different gifts to the life of the yearly meeting, and each of them leaves behind a different pattern of grief among us.

Our time together has been blessed by the presence of a small group of young people this year who attended worship daily and also made a video, flew kites, played capture the flag, went swimming, and ate s'mores by the Scattergood pond among other things. Two beloved young adults who grew up in the meeting have been leading all these energetic activities.

As we draw to the end of our yearly session, we send to you the love that we were able to experience together, and we look forward to hearing how the Spirit has been moving among you.

Our sessions next year will be held 7/23-28, 2019 at Scattergood School and Farm near West Branch, Iowa. Please join us!

In love,

Deborah Dakin, clerk
On behalf of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative)