

Epistle from the Overall Gathering

Dear Friends,

Greetings from the hills of Northern California, the ancestral land of the Coast Miwok People, cool and cloudy by morning, warm and sunny by afternoon, quiet by night.

Our session's theme, "Faithfulness: A Call to Practice Radical Vulnerability and Love," infused the year's keynote addresses. The first address told a story of taking care of those in need, even when the storyteller, Elena Anderson-Williams, felt unqualified for the task. She invited us to "be faithful to the dictates of love, even when it seems ridiculous." In the second keynote, Carin Anderson placed the meeting in the role of the unqualified caretaker: we have inherited socioeconomic systems that facilitate evil behaviors. "We have made acceptable the reliance on the suffering of others to support our comfort and convenience," she said. Spirit now calls each of us to find ways to transform our roles in these systems.

The context of our gathering is that of a world on fire: a global refugee crisis, ecological crisis, increasing economic disparity, militarization of police, and an ongoing opioid crisis. How do we embody our Quaker witness during these troubled times? We are increasingly aware of our obligation to do what we can to end poverty and the war system. We seek to work together, allowing our hearts to be broken open by the Spirit, to respond to these social injustices in our deeply wounded nation.

During a plenary session, five Friends shared different perspectives on how our Yearly Meeting could publicly express our social justice concerns effectively and with integrity, guided by Spirit and grounded in love. Interest groups challenged people to go deeper into these issues, preparing for actions. Friends shared what their meetings are doing to address this growing crisis. Two Claremont Friends described how their Meeting is housing otherwise-unsheltered guests in their meetinghouse every night of the year and providing them with supportive services. This kind of work transforms those who make themselves available to do it, enlivening our spiritual core.

Many Meetings have expressed concern for our undocumented neighbors and for families separated at the border, through minutes of concern and actions. The Clerk of Latin American Concerns Committee offered recommendations on what Friends can do:

1. Visit detention centers.
2. Be a witness in immigration hearings.
3. Accompany an asylum seeker through the court process.
4. Become a sanctuary or support sanctuaries in your area.
5. Sponsor an immigrant or support sponsors in your area.

We have more to do and more to learn. What can love do? What can we do? Are we open to the leadings of the Spirit? Each action we take is an experiment in an experimental religion, building upon lessons learned through practice. We wait expectantly on what Spirit will do next, listening to hear ways that, even now, it is already moving.

Diego Navarro, Clerk

On behalf of Pacific Yearly Meeting, July 13-18, 2018

Epistle from the Junior Yearly Meeting (Teen Group)

JYM Epistle

Service Project Blues

Verse 1:

Our dreams of pulling weeds were crushed like grapes
When the gardener turned out to be a flake
So we sat down on a bench to collect ourselves
Noticed that the paint, too, was in flakes,
Just like our aspirations to be good Quakes.
“Dude, I’m fine with that,” a JYMer said
“But I still wanna make a rhyme with that.”
So we came together and sang

Chorus:

Let us do some service—please, please, please—
Our schedule’s now in pieces, can’t you see, can’t you see?
Let us paint your benches, harvest lettuce, pick your peas—
This is unrelated, but we need more sleep, we need more sleep.

Bridge:

Sitting in the Buckeye room,
Using our brains instead of our hands—
This can’t really be God’s plan.

Verse 2:

If AVP taught us anything, it’s that we should acknowledge how we’re feeling
And there’s no good way to feel bitter
But there is this one way to feel like a winner—
Is it to worship until dinner? Please, no, please, no—
Is it to walk in the light? No, but that’s pretty close...
I know, let’s take a hike!

(Disclaimer: the song “Service Project Blues” only captures a single moment of frustration in JYM. And while it leaves out most of the activities that allowed for us to build a strong community such as AVP, Respectful Relationships, and worship-sharing, we hope that our creative spirit shines through, even if only slightly in tune.)

Epistle from the Middle School Group

July 18, 2018

To Friends everywhere:

This is a report about the Middle School program (not our personal experience). We met in the Museum, and we liked looking at the bones and other exhibits.

We had fun going on a hike to the pond, swimming and playing with the little kids. We went on boats and found cattails to make pretend spears. Some of us went fishing; we caught 2 fish, and let them go. It was funny when Kori got bit by a fish.

It was great playing gaga ball and soccer. Everyone could play (it got a little rough for some of us; little kids who wanted to play couldn't play at the same time as our group).

We made Beady Animals. Some were easy and some were hard. Every day began with singing with the little kids. Aurora's hangman game was popular.

We went to the keynote by Elena and Carin, the campfire (where we sang the banana slug song), the barn dance and community night.

We went to meeting for worship and meeting for memorials.

Some of us like to talk, and some would rather listen. And some like to do both.

We took turns being "clerk of the day." Sometimes it was hard, but we learned from it.

There were not many things we didn't like.

Aurora says: "I don't want to go home!" Most of us agreed (and some are ready to go because we miss our families).

Approved in unity!

Epistles from the 2018 Annual Session of
Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Epistle from the Elementary Group

July 18, 2018

Dear Yearly Meeting Friends:

We had fun at Yearly Meeting because ...

- We went to the pond every day where we swam and went boating.
- We played soccer and GaGa ball.
- We had a pet snake in our classroom and frozen mice for her to eat (but we weren't the ones to feed her).
- We did art involving tape and paint.
- We played with bubbles and made a bubble mountain.
- We went to the dance.
- We learned a song for community night.
- Every morning we sang songs.
- We had snacks every day.
- We planted peppers in the garden.
- And, of course, we wrote this epistle for you !

Goodbye until next year,
PYM Elementary Program

Epistle from the Preschool Group

July 18, 2018

Dear Friends all over the world,

We played. We read books. We walked with no shoes on. We played with toys. We played with Play-Doh. We like blocks. We are all friends.

-Preschool