

REPORTED TO ANNUAL SESSION AT FREDERICK, MARYLAND 8TH MONTH 6TH DAY, 2017

To Friends Everywhere,

The theme of this 346th Annual Session was “Growing Towards Justice - Acting on Faith.” Growth, Justice, Action and Faith were each featured as we met. In particular, we noted our growth and growing pains as we sought racial and ethnic diversity, inclusivity, and leadership. Young Adult Friends were a constant presence in business meetings in light of their many committee positions. Young Friends and YAFs were Reading Clerks at every business session. Junior Yearly Meeting had the theme of “Courage to be Fair.” This year’s Annual Session was free of charge for children 8th grade and under, a new practice to allow more families to attend.

Our Spiritual State of the Meeting Report began with a section written by York Friends Meeting, emphasizing diversity and caring for one another:

We are all stewards of this garden of grace. In order to care for ourselves and the community, each of us at various times has shouldered a spade, a rake, a hoe, a watering can, or any tool necessary to keep us thriving. The evergreens of winter, the carpet of early spring flowers, the showy blooms of summer and the wispy asters and changing leaves of autumn, reminded us of the diversity and beauty amongst us and all of God’s creation.

Our Growing Diverse Leadership Initiative has moved us to consider who attends in our local meetings and the ways they are engaged. We have attracted to our camps more ethnic minorities, as both campers and counselors, by providing opportunities and the support needed to make their participation positive and satisfying. Many of them have begun to be represented in local and yearly meeting activities. For example, a group of campers hiked 14 miles and camped in the nearby yards of local Friends to attend yearly meeting sessions such as our intergenerational plenary on *Nonviolence and Social Action for All Ages*. Their leadership in that plenary enabled a dynamic, cross-age discussion defining what justice and nonviolence mean and the ways Quakers deal with injustice. They were instrumental in our creation of spiritually based — and highly creative and artistic — posters with messages to promote peace and justice. The energy and delight in the whole group was palpable!

As part of the Growing Diverse Leadership Initiative report, Lauren Brownlee, Dyresha Harris, and Marcy Baker Seitel described “sharing a vision and acting together on the path to the beloved community.” As we strive to become an anti-racist community, we must be willing to lean into our discomfort, which is where our learning zone is. As Friends considered approving this Epistle, we had a concern about the use of the term “anti-racist,” which was heard as negative; Friends were in agreement that the strongest possible language should be used, but not in agreement of what that language was. We heard a sense that the term “anti-racist” is appropriate; we heard that simply ‘addressing’ racism is too weak, while ‘seeking to end racism’ is too optimistic. We heard the sense that our response to racism might be to challenge it, to confront it, to correct it and to heal the disease of racism.

The overall intent of these Growing Diverse Leadership efforts is to increase and enhance diversity and inclusion is “Strengthening Transformative Relationships in

Diverse Environments” (STRIDE). Lauren spoke of noticing “a desire for deepening this work among local meetings.” We are working on taking away the barriers to participation of Friends of Color and of Young Adult Friends. We envision a Quaker community that is multicultural, multiracial, equitable, and inclusive.

We also focused on racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion through a panel on *Ending the School to Prison Pipeline*. Panelists were experts in juvenile law, conflict resolution, re-entry, public defense, and restorative justice. Friends acknowledged both the need for courage to take a stand (and to know where and how to take a stand) and the need for sustaining the spiritual basis for why we do this. Not all our outreach and inclusion efforts end happily. We heard the final Spiritual State of the Meeting report from South Mountain Friends Fellowship where Patapsco Friends have supported a very powerful prison ministry. Due to prison downsizing in Hagerstown, it has been laid down. Friends hold in the Light all those affected by this change.

And there is evidence of work still needed:

The report from our representative to Friends United Meeting noted that changes in FUM’s acceptance of gay and lesbian people - which may seem slow - might be compared with the many years BYM has been spending on the revision of our Faith and Practice and on efforts to increase the diversity of participation and membership in Baltimore Yearly Meeting. Friends in both arenas asked, “Can we give each other more time?”

On Saturday, the body approved a Minute urging our government to refrain from consideration of the use of force in regard to North Korea, an urgent and timely response to saber-rattling during this very week.

Friday evening’s Carey Lecture on *Race, Poverty and Privilege: Working for Justice in Divisive Times* was given by Shan Cretin, General Secretary, American Friends Service Committee. She traced some aspects of American history relating to racism and poverty and also her personal journey in becoming aware of racism and her own privilege. It’s hard to admit, she noted, but I am here on the backs of people who have been exploited. “What can we do now,” she asked, “to repair the damage done to those seen as ‘other’?” Shan had worked in minority communities until a Black Panther told her that if she wanted to make a difference, she needed to work in her community. “We black folks can take care of ourselves. Your white community needs to change.” The concept of *shared security*, embraced by both AFSC and the Friends Committee on National Legislation, provides a framework that leads to healthy, just relationships - at all levels. It means, “If we really feel secure, we don’t have to dominate.”

In this time of upheaval and distress in our country and the world, Friends found comfort and, indeed, joy in coming together to work on topics and issues of mutual concern with an ever-present spiritual underpinning. References to the distressing politics and political, economic and social divisions in the world were common during our week. Even so, Friends focused with energy on a great range of topics and experienced a sense of growth and learning, deepened understanding and access to the Light.

EPISTLE OF YOUNG ADULT FRIENDS ACCEPTED 8TH MONTH 6TH DAY, 2017 (AMENDMENTS ACCEPTED TENTH MONTH 14, 2017)

Disclaimer

It is not in the practice of Friends to send an Epistle out to the world with disclaimers, chapters or appendices. However, there are times when such add-ons become necessary. In this case, necessity stems from the 346th Annual Session of the Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (BYM), where Friends failed to unite behind the phrasing, “as we strive to become an anti-racist community,” within BYM’s General Epistle.

For those unaware, Young Adult Friends (YAF) is a youth group within BYM that serves its community members aged 18 – 35. This year our personal Epistle was written by the YAF community as a whole rather than a separate committee and we were quite proud of the work put in crafting a summation of our community. That Saturday night, when we approved this Epistle, the most traumatic occurrence of Annual Session was a failed workshop idea resulting in sixty individually wrapped eggs sitting in our fridge. By Sunday night, while our Epistle was undoubtedly still eggcellent, it was clear it was meant to serve as a vessel for a greater message.

Chapter One of this document is our epistle as approved by the YAF community and read to the Greater BYM community during Annual Session. Although it may seem frivolous in light of what follows, it stands as a record of a community built on unconditional caring, love and trust, who celebrate each other’s gifts, and who support each other fiercely. It is this community that gives our members strength to speak out. Which leads to Chapter Two, a letter written after much reflection, worship and care summarizing one Young Adult Friend’s personal view of Sunday’s Business Meeting.

Appendix One is a transcript of the message said Friend, Becca Bacon, originally gave to BYM that Sunday with closing comments by Jennifer Vekert, another Young Adult Friend. Becca is the current Co-Communication Coordinator for YAF while Jennifer is its Co-Clerk. These titles are not included as aggrandizements, but rather to illustrate that both are deeply committed to the Society of Friends. Appendix Two is the write up for this year’s Annual Session theme, Appendix Three is the General Epistle as originally presented with the relevant paragraph highlighted and underlined, and Appendix Four is the paragraph as it was revised. We present these as historical documents of what took place.

At this time, Young Adult Friends would like to express thanks to the following Older Adult Friends for their roles throughout this incident. Ken Stockbridge, BYM Clerk, and a Quaker Process Geek who was able to make the best of a dumpster fire of a Business Meeting. Pierce Hammond, member of the BYM Epistle Committee who spoke calmly and forcefully in favor of the term “anti-racist.” Ned Stowe, who unobtrusively ensured sobbing YAFs were given needed privacy. Jeannette Smith, who provided indispensable refuge and pampering to a distraught YAF for 24 hours straight while they worked through some weighty matters. We are grateful to them and call on other Friends to look to them for examples of how to be a good ally.

Young Adult Friends also take great pride in the excellent comportsment and strength of message from the Young Friends Community and appreciate their support on this issue. We urge them to keep up the good work and want them to know we are here for them as well.

Lastly, Young Adult Friends would like to state that, while we are far from perfect, we resolutely declare ourselves to be anti-racist community. It is to our great sadness, confusion and rage, that we cannot unequivocally say the same of Baltimore Yearly Meeting at this time.

Chapter One: The 2017 Young Adult Friends Epistle

In the Beginning, there was Maggie.

Then the rest of us showed up.

Two Thousand Seventeen was a year of egg-clectic growth for Young Adult Friends. This Year YAFs: Graduated with degrees in psychology, computer science, and textiles; received a certification in massage therapy, got swole, started a business and a novel, began the process of becoming a sign language interpreter, became clerk of a Monthly Meeting, focused on personal health, joined the circus, rafted on an air mattress, became a horrifying mirror of my mother's life, and got better at knitting.

Young Adult Friends gathered in January of this year for an intimate winter conference, with games and food aplenty. Fibbage and one night ultimate werewolf encouraged hilarity and close community. Although our Friends came and went, Adelphi Monthly Meeting provided a nesting space where we could safely roost for the winter... conference, which facilitated close companionship.

In May Young Adult Friends gathered at Langley Hill for an active adventurous weekend. Friends attended the Pride march which included a brief stop at no justice no pride, a fancy dinner, sign making, and a test run of the Growing Diverse Leadership YAF survey. We talked about how to utilize our budget effectively, whether or not we should meet more than 3 times per year (eg. single-day workshops), and hatched a plan to keep better connected.

Annual Session included many egg-citing activities. It is no egg-ageration that YAF found themselves unable to conduct a Moment of Silence without cracking up. We whisked fire and rain to settle into Meeting for Business. We were unable to egg-nore the importance of the Plenary speaker's hard-boiled reporting on racial justice issues. We a-poached the rising seniors to take them out for ice cream and introduce them to the sunny side of YAF.

We started cracking on creating handbooks and guidelines to pass our wisdom on in a less scrambled way. YAF exists to provide support and community to Quakers in a turbulent time in our lives. We are far away from each other, and swamped with responsibilities, and maintaining community is difficult and scary and hard. We share concerns about being represented, while at the same time sharing concerns that we are asked to serve in roles simply because we check a box.

In the end, there was Maggie and 60 eggs.

Chapter Two:
More: A Letter to the YAF Community by Becca Bacon

Dear Friends,

Some of you may have heard or seen mention that something occurred at BYM's closing Business Meeting but are without the full picture, while others may have no prior knowledge of the event at all. For that reason, I am writing this letter so folks may have the chance to be properly filled in as things go public both in the BYM Yearly minutes and as an addendum to the YAF epistle. We as a community are spread far and wide but we are a community nonetheless. When something this monumental occurs, we must look to one another for support and understanding.

As many of you know, BYM recently gathered for their 346th Annual Session at Hood College in Frederick, Maryland. This year, the theme was "Growing Toward Justice – Acting on Faith." Keynotes for the week consisted of a panel discussion on "Ending the School to Prison Pipeline," a plenary on "Nonviolence and Social Action for All Ages," and a lecture titled "Race, Poverty and Privilege: Working for Justice in Divisive Times." Daily workshops and reports were also given around these themes, though there was opportunity lost in bringing focus to subjects such as substance abuse or the ever-important topic of mental health and the stigmas around it, with priority going to the other issues listed in this year's theme instead. I mention this not only as contextual background to the events that followed, but so that y'all can understand just how much time and attention was given solely to the discussion of racial dynamics in the United States throughout the week.

That Sunday's Business Meeting, debate cropped up due to personal semantic opinions regarding the Epistle. In particular, one Friend stalled on the phrasing, "As we strive to become an anti-racist community," asking that he be recorded as standing aside. As expected, this quickly became the hotbed issue, with opinions coming from all sides. Friends argued for a move away from this "negative phrasing" for more "positive" ones, such as "multicultural," "multiracial" and "inclusive." Suggestions were made to rather state we are a community who "challenges," "confronts" or "strives to heal the disease" racism. Debate and divisiveness were so great, Epistle Committee was asked to take some time to rewrite the offending section while the rest of the community waited in reflective worship for these compromising changes.

It is important to note that, at this point, the issue had dragged on for approximately an hour, with an Epistle Committee member—a Young Adult Friend—in tears. It's a reality difficult for me to write, knowing our Greater Community was so self-involved in the issue that no visible thought was given to a Friend in obvious distress over the subject matter, instead choosing to leave her in public throughout the argument's duration instead.

Folks should know that while the above paragraph was by no means easy to write, following it up has been infinitely harder. For a week, I have struggled to figure out the best way to share my involvement going forward in this story. This is not an experience

I relish having to relive, even just in writing, nor is it one I particularly want to publicly share far and wide. It is personal, and painful and mine.

And it's for that very reason I must. At that moment in time, in an auditorium full of people, my voice alone was the one The Spirit called upon to deliver some much-needed perspective on the subject. Perspective that only I and three other people in that room could even begin to give.

I wasn't ready at first. My usual default for these instances is to react sardonically, using a worn-down sense of humor to try and hide the twitch I develop every time the community turns its focus toward subjects such as equality, diversity, social justice, racial privilege and the like. When the argument persisted, I remained silent still, the twitch now as uncontainable as the knot of emotions being tugged to the forefront inside of me. Years of pent up frustration, pushed aside pain, held back words and tired resignation eventually came spilling out in the form of tears until I could stand to be in the room no longer.

I took up refuge under the door frame of the auditorium's main entrance at first; there I was close enough to hear the discussion but far enough away I couldn't see the faces of those speaking any more. I was found by another YAF who never left my side from that moment on, comforting me in my grief and shielding me from any stares I might have attracted. Without him there, I am unsure whether The Spirit would have had chance to reach me, so unsettled my heart was on its own. For that reason, I will never be able to thank him enough for holding me both in his arms and in his Light throughout the ordeal, giving me the strength and headspace to do what I needed to do, or for the protective, steady presence he provided in the aftermath as well.

When the room settled in worshipful wait, so did we, moving to sit against the back wall of the auditorium. It was there, when the outside world ceased to bluster, that I could finally hear within. Quiet at first, then louder and louder, fragments of sentences kept making their way into my thoughts until there were so many I had to write the words down just to keep them straight. Overcome by an urgency I couldn't explain when the revised Epistle was read, I was suddenly worried that the argument would wrap up before I was able to finish piecing together my statement. As a birthright Quaker, I realize now I should have known, unfortunately, there was no fear of a quick resolution by this community. By the time I was as ready as I was ever going to get, multiple Friends had since gone on recorded stating their displeasure with the rewrite. Several were now standing aside in light of the revised epistle. One of these older Friends went so far as to ask that he be removed from Epistle Committee altogether if the words "anti-racist" were removed.

Since then, I have recounted the event to a select few, each time likening the incident to a powder keg just waiting to explode. All it needed was a spark. All it needed, apparently, was me.

My words can be found attached though Friends will have to trust me when I say the current of emotions running through that room the day it was first read (with shaking hands and faltered speech) were what gave them true impact.

The explosions they created were swift to follow. I had barely retreated back to my place of refuge when the YAF on Epistle spoke. Those of you who have spent even a modicum of time with her know that she holds back no punches, so it should come as no surprise just how raw and passionate the words of one Jenny Vekert were. In a message only lacking in a mic drop at the end of it, she informed the meeting that, along with other things, she had never been more ashamed of the Greater BYM community in her life and promptly walked off stage.

The body was just beginning to sort through this one-two punch when the Young Friends community delivered a final blow. While most of the YFs in attendance had already departed as one from Business Meeting, needing time to prepare for their own closing worship, their two Reading Clerks for the day remained. Removing themselves from the Clerk's Table, they joined the rest of the body to deliver their eldering. They chastised the Greater BYM community, denouncing them as a positive role model for Quaker process and practice in light of continuing negative patterns over the years regarding how it as a body conducts itself. Stating their support for YAF, they too revealed their disappointment in the community on this day. Over the past week, they have continued to lend voice to the issue, sharing their thoughts through social media.

The rest of Business Meeting—as is most of the two hours spent on the topic—is still a blur for me. I admit to not remembering the resolution reached, or whether there was any at all. In giving my message, I had stood up in front of my community and accused it of racism, no matter how casual or accidental, citing my own experiences as an example. And in doing so, I had shattered not only the feeling of unconditional love and safety I had always claimed to have within the Greater BYM Community, but I had shattered myself as well.

There are many things I could say about how I felt that day, and the next, and the next. I could admit that I have yet to go one day since without bawling my eyes out or wishing The Spirit could find someone else on whom to call. That I feel so broken inside I don't even know where to start in picking up all of the pieces or whether they'll ever fit back together properly again. That I don't recognize the visibly haunted girl I and others see right now or know the woman she might become throughout all of this.

Instead, I will focus on what's most important – what to do going forward. And what exactly is that, you might ask? My answer is the one word The Spirit has been burning into my head for the last seven days: more.

Do more, say more, divulge more, push for more, teach more, change more, give more, expect more, reach out to more, more, more, more, more. If some of y'all are already sick of my usage of that word, just imagine how I must feel by now. Unfortunately for me, since last Sunday, there have been no other words quite as able to temporarily lessen the turmoil I currently feel inside either.

So, more it is. I have yet to figure out what exactly that all entails, but this letter—divulge more, reach out to more—seems like a good place to start. If I keep moving forward in the way I think The Spirit is calling for me to do, I'm gonna need some backup. I'm gonna need folk to hold me and all of my many pieces together as I purposefully decimate them further. To help reach into the mindsets of many for the possible payout of maybe only changing the views of few. To metaphorically roll up

their sleeves and prepare to get elbow deep messy in an issue far greater than any one of us alone. To act upon more as we are each led. Because the truth of the matter is, I may be the spark, but we are the flame.

Author's Note: It has been confirmed by Ken Stockbridge that the General Epistle with its revised paragraph was approved at Annual Session. For more, his summarization of the issue and Annual Session can be found in his BYM Fall 2017 Interchange article "Listening, Ready to Be Changed."

Appendix One
Transcript from Sunday Business Meeting

Becca Bacon:

I love this community. Which is why it is all the more painful to have been hurt by it, not only today, but in the past as well. For a community that often totes the importance of change, diversity and inclusion, argument drags on over the semantics of a word when we still have so far to come regarding the greater challenge of practicing what we preach.

Just this week, I had the privilege of being greeted by a Friend in passing with the phrase "hola," the only word spoken by them in our exchange. Innocuous enough, but just damaging enough all the same, especially when added up time and time again over the years. More disheartening was my experience during a speaker event on racial privilege several years ago when one of the leaders of the discussion approached me during the small group discussion time to make sure "I was understanding the English okay." She had confused me for a visiting Friend, whose only similarity to me was a matching skin tone.

It is easy to laugh or brush these interactions off in the moment, but they add up and, over time, they fester. The issue at hand is difficult. Messy. It is more than talk, and to quibble so fiercely over how to define this phenomenon shows just how much work we still have to do within first.

I beseech Friends not to lose sight of the bigger picture for the sake of pushing personal opinions on a topic many will never fully be able to understand.

Rather, I ask that they recognize there are many ways to approach and define the matter and strive to find the middle ground in between this argument instead, so as not to lose the raw state of our community that is hidden there.

Jennifer Vekert:

Young Adult Friends would like to append Rebecca Bacon's comments to our Epistle.

We had no problem being "anti-slavery" but there are more people enslaved now than there were in 1860.

We had no problem being "anti-war" but not when it is within our own communities.

I have never been so ashamed of this community.

Appendix Two
Original 2017 Greater BYM Epistle

To Friends Everywhere,

The theme of this 346th Annual Session was “Growing Towards Justice - Acting on Faith.” Growth, Justice, Action and Faith were each featured as we met. In particular we noted our growth and growing pains as we sought racial and ethnic diversity, inclusivity, and leadership.

Our Spiritual State of the Meeting Report began with a section written by York Friends Meeting, emphasizing diversity and caring for one another:

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In this time of tremendous upheaval and distress in our country and the world, Friends found comfort and, indeed, joy in coming together to work on topics and issues of mutual concern with an ever-present spiritual underpinning. References to the distressing politics and political, economic and social divisions in the world were common during our week. Even so, Friends focused with energy on a great range of topics and experienced a sense of growth and learning, deepened understanding and access to the Light.

Appendix Three 2017 Greater BYM Epistle: Revised Paragraph

As part of the Growing Diverse Leadership Initiative report, Lauren Brownlee, Dyresha Harris, and Marcy Baker Seitel described "sharing a vision and acting together on the path to the beloved community." As we strive to become an anti-racist community, we must be willing to lean into our discomfort, which is where our learning zone is. As Friends considered approving this Epistle, we had a concern about the use of the term "anti-racist," which was heard as negative; Friends were in agreement that the strongest possible language should be used, but not in agreement of what that language was. We heard a sense that the term "anti-racist" is appropriate; we heard that simply 'addressing' racism is too weak, while 'seeking to end racism' is too

optimistic. We heard the sense that our response to racism might be challenging it, confronting it, correcting it and to heal the disease of racism. We envision a Quaker community that is multicultural, multiracial, equitable, and inclusive.

EPISTLE OF YOUNG FRIENDS ACCEPTED 8TH MONTH 6TH DAY, 2017

At our first conference of the year, where we welcomed new friends, Charlottesville Friends Meeting hosted us. For a workshop, a Friend lead us in improvisation activities. Then, we went to a local playground and played games with our community. We split into small groups and held a Meeting for Worship with a Concern for Substance Abuse, talking about how alcohol affects the integrity of our community. Later we introduced our new members to the tradition of Coffeehouse, an open mic where people can show off talents. After that we had a dance party and went to bed. On Sunday, we gathered for worship with Charlottesville Friends Meeting.

When Friends gathered again at Friends Meeting of Washington, American Indians protesting the Dakota Access Pipeline bill led an activity about how to protest and the different roles involved. We then went to a park and participated in Twinlympics, a partner-based competition game. After that, Young Friends had a short and refreshing dance party. In the morning, we worshiped with Friends Meeting of Washington.

Friends gathered for our third conference of the year at Sandy Springs Friends School. There we had a workshop on gender and sexuality, which ended with a fishbowl activity, a question-answer group-based discussion. Our Nominating Committee met for the first time to discuss nominations for the next year's Nuts and Bolts Committee. On Saturday night, we had a movie viewing of Pirates of the Caribbean, and our annual Love Feast. We then joined Sandy Spring Friends Meeting for worship.

At our fourth conference of the year, which was hosted by Homewood Meeting House, we had a workshop on canvassing with Jamie DeMarco and Nicki Richards, who are representatives from Maryland's Clean Energy Jobs Initiative. During the workshop, Friends also had the option to write letters to our members of Congress. We then practiced protesting on the front steps of Homewood and were led in song by a passerby dressed in full cosplay. Later, we had a mini Coffeehouse. We then ended our conference with Meeting for Worship with Homewood.

At our last conference of the year, we met at Adelphi Friends Meeting. We had two workshops; one about the moral spectrum, and a second one coming at the end of the conference, which was about standing up straight and saying "no." We then approved the nominations for Nuts and Bolts Committee. We shared joy on Saturday by dressing up, with some YFs trading identities for the day. We then had grad circles for seniors and we ended the night with a dance party. For our last activity of the year, we met with Adelphi Friends Meeting for worship. As seniors left, they took with them their senior books, filled with positive messages and memories for the seniors from the wider community.

The sense of Young Friends was that we struggled with connectedness. This was primarily due to problems -- old and new -- as well as ongoing business throughout the year. Our community has made several decisions on positive ways to move forward and improve the state of Young Friends.

At Annual Session, we introduced a new group of rising freshmen into the Young Friends community. Throughout the week we played many games, including capture the flag with Junior Yearly Meeting and Junior Young Friends. We introduced committees, and formed two ad hoc committees. We then held two workshops, one on protesting and how to express information to your representatives in government, and a second on nonviolence and the Bystander Effect. Throughout the week, Young Friends connected with the wider community with Produce Department, a Plenary Session, the Carey Lecture, and the All-Age Celebration. We also held two "date" meals where people could connect on a one-on-one level with another Friend. Young Friends had a spa day on Saturday with the Young Adult Friends. We also held a Coffeehouse for the entire community, where Friends showed off talent. We had a dance party on the last night.

Young Friends would like to thank all the Friends and Meetings who have supported and hosted us throughout the year.

Love and Light,

Young Friends

EPISTLE OF JUNIOR YOUNG FRIENDS ACCEPTED 8TH MONTH 6TH DAY, 2017

To Friends Everywhere -

The Junior Young Friends (JYF) week started out strangely. It was mellow...too mellow. We greeted the new JYFs, played some cards - and then it was time for the first dinner of Baltimore Yearly Meeting (BYM) Annual Session 2017. Evening Program came along: we played Apples to Apples, ran around outside, the usual for JYFs. Then the horror began.

By the time the next afternoon rolled around, a fort had been made with ottomans, chairs, a table and a window. Chairs were flying through the halls, with crazy children (including myself) riding them. Swimming was underwhelming, but then it was time to set up for the labyrinth, which we finished just as it started to thunder (again!). The overnight was pretty mellow and so was the water balloon fight that followed it. So we sent off our eighth-grader and ended the year.

Until next time,

Clerk, Jake Regal, on behalf of JYF 2017

EPISTLE OF JUNIOR YEARLY MEETING ACCEPTED EIGHTH MONTH 6TH DAY, 2017

Dear Friends All over the World,

At this years Annual Session, we loved being able to run around and play outside on the Hood Campus. Eating their dining hall donuts every day was very good.

The All Age Celebration was a great way for us to get to know each other and a lot of adults. We all probably loved eating the ice cream the most. We had fun gathering around the parachute to bounce then run in and out underneath. We showed the grown-ups how to make pom-poms which you can squeeze when you are stressed and we found out that we have a professional pom-pom maker in BYM!

Afternoon and Evening Program is always fun with Legos, playdoh, more pom-poms, and especially the Thursday afternoon swimming trip.

The Kindergarten class read lots of books. A favorite was the Curious Garden about spreading pretty garden around a dull, ugly city to make the city beautiful. Sharing is fair. They loved playing with the playdoh and Legos

In the second and third grade class we heard Friendly Play stories about George Fox and John Woolman and read a chapter book about the Underground Railroad. These stories told us about people who were brave and helped others who weren't treated fairly. We played fairness games to learn that equal is not always fair. But most of all we enjoyed playing in the forts that we made.

In the fourth and fifth grade class we enjoyed planning our day and telling how we felt about what happened the day before in a "roses and thorn" session. Our teachers changed what we did so we had more roses and fewer thorns . We named ourselves The fearless Fourth and Fifth Graders (FFFG) and loved playing cooperative games and making bunk beds into forts. We took water bottles and snacks into our forts. We read Felix Stands Tall and the School Showdown as part of our discussion about bullying and the JYM theme "The Courage to be Fair."

The Junior Yearly Meeting

2017

EPISTLE OF WOMEN'S RETREAT APPROVED JANUARY 27, 2017

29 January 2017

Dear Friends near and far,

The weekend of January 27-29 2017, 175 Friends representing 28 meetings gathered at the Pearlstone Center to reflect on the theme of "Quaker Wisdom: Echoes In Our Souls."

Out of gathered silence on Saturday morning, our plenary singer Paulette Meier shared the words of Quaker thinkers, set to music. Paulette reminded us that a deep and thoughtful exploration of Quaker spiritual roots can strengthen us collectively and individually. Particularly resonant this weekend in light of political developments were these words from James Naylor:

"Art thou in darkness?
Mind it not, for if thou dost it will feed thee more.
But stand still, and act not, and wait in patience
Till Light arises out of Darkness and leads thee."

We were grateful for Paulette's strong voice-- and for the chance to add ours when we joined her in song.

As morning workshops began, we gathered to write, celebrate, knit, heal, and process the election. How warm it is to hold the Light to each other when we all need it. We reflected on radical simplicity and how to heal in a post-truth world.

In small groups, in worship sharing, we felt wisdom transfer between the old and the young. It is powerful to be near the deep anchors of our elders, and inspiring to hear wisdom come from the younger members of our body. Many of us turned to the Light and waited faithfully in it. This Experiment with Light drew 90 of us together in a new way.

In the afternoon, workshops continue as a source of thought and reflection. Many Friends joined in worship sharing and discussions about the Women's March on Washington earlier this month, and how Quakers are led to respond and act. Some of us participated in chanting, welcoming the mysteries that opened in our hearts. For those who needed a chance to stretch, walks on the Pearlstone grounds past the pond and signs noting flora and fauna were rejuvenating.

At dinner on Saturday, Young Friends and Young Adult Friends discussed how we can carry these communities with us to our adult years. We marveled at how Friends can learn from each other across age lines, and planted seeds of thought on how to do so more intentionally in the future. our conversation sparked many ideas, including walking worship sharing groups, and Young Friends announced interest in helping plan the next retreat alongside whichever meeting(s) take on planning for next year.

Other groups gathered in the lounges and in front of the fireplace to read books from the book swap and knit pink pussyhats. We were reminded how joyful it can be to gather for the purpose of action when times are uncertain.

After dinner, over 100 women gathered in three circles for Sacred Circle Dancing led by Maggie moon. We danced to great spiritual traditions from around the world and ended with a chant, created by Marcelle Martin and Besty Krome at Pendle Hill: "Abide In Me."

The joy continued in an evening talent show, now called "meeting for Worship with a Concern for Performance." We started laughing and guffawing as the show began. We basked in original song and stories. Friends noted a strong presence of...ukuleles! And as Mary Campbell noted, "You will all be able to get to bed by Quaker midnight."

Amid the levity, we feel a somber tone weigh in on our conversations as a new Administration takes office in D.C. Fatigue and grief mix in with the joy of seeing one another. We are troubled to hear that the "Muslim ban" has become a reality. We each struggle to balance the need for outward action with the need for inward renewal. And we take heart in our unity together as we return to homes and actions led by the Spirit.

In Love and Light,
Baltimore Yearly Meeting Women's Retreat