

Seventh Month 29, 2017

To Friends Everywhere:

There is that of God in everyone, but it lies dormant in us like a seed that has been trampled underfoot. As Quakers we try to become nurturers of the seed and not trampers of it. If nurtured, the seed will grow and give us new life. As we seek to follow the promptings of God, we will be called to live our lives in new ways.

Will Taber

We send you warm greetings from Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative), as we gather at Scattergood Friends School Seventh Month, 25-30 for the 140th annual sessions of our yearly meeting.

This week we have explored the theme, "Building Bridges." Peter Clay with guests, Christine Nobiss, Plains Cree-Salteaux of the George Gordon First Nation and founder of Indigenous Iowa, and Donnielle Wanatee Bi-we-ni-wa Thunder & Eagle clan from the Meskwaki Nation, an advocate for Iowa and its people, led a panel on building bridges with Native Americans. Tender listening and respect among the panel speakers allowed us to hear more deeply, to share their respect and care for each other. Decolonization of our minds and consideration of received history were presented to us with authenticity and care for nurturing relationships among us all.

On Fourth Day we were blessed with a concert and sing-along with Tom Rawson from Orcas Island, Washington. We found our spirits lifted and our hearts energized as we sang our way through the evening. Fifth Day afternoon gave us another opportunity to sing, laugh and open ourselves to the Spirit with Tom. He was a gift for us all.

José Woss of the Friends Committee on National Legislation brightened our days with his warmth, interest in us, and sharing his work with FCNL. He spoke with us about race and mass incarceration on Fifth Day. We much appreciated his invitation to have intimate conversations with one another, sharing experiences of our own racism or how we responded when we have witnessed the hurtful words or actions of another.

Linda Rabben attends Adelphi Friends Meeting in Maryland, is an anthropologist and human rights advocate. She shared her thoughts and experiences with the history of sanctuary and asylum. She encourages Quakers and other faith communities to discern how to respond to the present moment, when many vulnerable people are targets for detention and deportation.

Elizabeth O'Sullivan again led us in Bible study each morning after breakfast. Her approach is fresh, and her passion for her subject engaged and moved us, as she linked our theme of Building Bridges with her knowledge of the Bible.

We greatly appreciated Shirley Scritchfield's pre-meeting consideration of Moving Beyond Silence on First Day morning.

We are especially grateful for the depth and tenderness of our consideration of Scattergood Friends School. We heard the Head's report of the School, the Farm report, the report from the Academic Director, and the report of the School Committee. We stand with the school community in its fullness of heart and recognition of the challenges that lie ahead in increasing the number of students. We are delighted and impressed with the strength of community and education that the school is providing. We understand the importance of our own outreach, know that we need to share our knowledge with our communities. We are thankful for Thomas Weber and the entire staff for their good work. We do not take their commitment to the school lightly. Scattergood Friends School gives the Yearly Meeting purpose and direction.

Our final evening together culminated as always with a talent show planned by the Junior Yearly Meeting and Young Friends. Sharing and laughter brought us to a gathered sense of Light and Love.

We have been singing, visiting, washing dishes, setting tables in the dining room, sweeping floors, serving food, and even doing a little weeding one afternoon in a flower bed. We have found ourselves with open hearts and minds as we have worshiped and learned together. We are grateful that we continue to read and send epistles. We give thanks.

In love,

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