

To Friends Everywhere:


Friends from Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana, USA, gathered from July 13 – July 17, 2022, at Western Oregon University in Monmouth, Oregon, for the 50th Annual Session of the North Pacific Yearly Meeting. We gathered in person for the first time since 2019 (using masks and other COVID precautions), and were joined by Friends virtually in hybrid sessions. While we rejoiced in each other's company, we also felt the struggle to establish new balances: with technology, lower numbers, re-learning how to be together, and the absence of Friends we dearly miss.

Our spiritual state of rebuilding and rebalancing was ideal for the theme of our gathering, Deep Hope in Optimystical Times. Our Friend in Residence, Carl Magruder, brought prophetic witness that we are living through apocalypse: not "the end times", but in the New Testament Greek meaning: an uncovering or unveiling. Friend Carl calls this "The Crumbles". We are traveling through ongoing chaos, in a transition away from extractive, industrial economies to a life-sustaining society that we might also call the Peaceable Kin-dom.

Buried within this experience is the road to deep hope. It begins in the secret place of grief and lamentation; we cannot hope if we cannot grieve. Invited to speak our grief out into the silence, many of us shared lamentations about poverty, devastation of the living world, refugees, loss of bodily autonomy, divisiveness, deaths, fears, and sadnesses. Friend Carl then reminded us that it was out of lamentation and despair that Quakerism was birthed.

*"When all my hopes in them [in priests] and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could I tell what to do, then, oh, then, I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition,' and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy." -George Fox*

In The Crumbles, our ways of knowing are out of date; we need to hold our knowing loosely and be ready to self-correct. Because Quakerism is a narrative, an evolving possibility, we can rely on continuing revelation. Friend Carl said, "When we surrender enough of our fears, worries, doubts, resentments, judgment, and control to heed Isaac Pennington and sink down to the Seed, we find that we rest in Spirit so completely that we cannot help but rejoice, and hope, and work as we are led." This is Love as *opti-mysticism*, and ours is an optimystical faith. Carl's ministry was rich and deep. We recommend viewing it in its entirety at:

 ["Deep Hope in Optimystical Times", Address by Carl Magruder NPYM \(Quaker\) Annual Se...](#)

Our NPYM committees have worked in the Light throughout this year, and we easily approved a minute circulated by several Quaker bodies about migration. After a great deal of seasoning, Friends at Annual Session approved a minute of support for indigenous people. In an effort to uproot racism in our Annual Session, we used the Ouch/Whoa/Oops tools throughout all our

proceedings, to acknowledge and respond to harm as it happened. Such harms can come from the best of intentions: A skit meant to teach Friends the use and purpose of these tools trivialized the real pain experienced by many on a daily basis; the committee apologized. We were asked, “What is the caring response to this expression of pain?” We do not have a comfortable answer—and that is probably good for us.

During open worship, some wrestled with feeling entitled to allyship with marginalized people, when we know that trust needs to be earned over time. Also, we recognize that we have a need for growth and awareness regarding ableism, trans issues, patriarchy, ageism, classism, and other forms of marginalization. Language isn’t always adequate, and actions speak louder than words. We are a multi-faceted, multi-racial gathering of Friends, and we labor earnestly to be a community where everyone truly belongs. Out of worship, a Friend sang this new verse for “Simple Gifts”:

*When true diversity is gained, to bow and to bend we shall not be ashamed/  
To turn and to learn will be our delight/  
Till by turning and learning we come round right.*

As part of confronting injustice, we approved a fund for honoraria for our Friends in Residence, and other teaching opportunities. In recent years we have established paid positions to support administration and the well-being of our children; we now also acknowledge that ministry is labor, and worthy of financial support.

Here in The Crumbles, many of our Meetings are dwindling, and the end of the Religious Society of Friends, as we know it, is a real possibility. Recognizing this, do we continue to put our time and effort into bringing new Friends into the meeting; focusing our energies on witnessing our faith into the world; and/or educating our children on our faith and witness? On our final evening together, our Junior Friends (High School age) led a worship with queries, including this one: “Can you think of a time when a junior, central, or youngest friend has shared ministry in your chosen meeting? If not, why do you think that is?” We hold these questions in our hearts.

This is a generative time. Volatility is good news because new social organization grows out of chaos. Let us navigate our way with a practical, deep and wise hope.

*“Optimycism is the profound hope that comes from surrender, the right-sizing of the ego, and the direct encounter with God, which reframes entirely both what hope is and what we might hope for. It enables radical witness... Quakerism also has the Crumbles, but may just be on the cusp of a profound transformation. We are the inheritors and stewards of this gift. And that may be a great Adventure.” -Carl Magruder*