



## **UNLEASH THE LOVE/RELEASE THE POWER**

### **Western Yearly Meeting of Friends**

**II Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.**

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July 28, 2019

Greetings to Friends Everywhere:

Western Yearly Meeting gathered in Plainfield, Indiana from July 25-28, 2019 for our 162nd annual session. Each year our Program Committee works with individuals, meetings, boards, and committees to help promote Quaker unity in refreshing and helpful ways. This year was no exception! Through periodic email updates, the projected content of this year's meeting was conveyed in a way to encourage attendance and interest. The theme, "Unleash the Love, Release the Power" was emphasized through daily worship, business sessions, social times, and creative workshops. "For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love, and self-discipline. (II Timothy 1:7)" became the basis for each day's programming.

Following an uplifting mini concert by Tom Roberts, Joe Roberts, and Joe Wiegand, Quaker Lecturer, Kelly Kellum, General Secretary of Friends United Meeting, presented how the people of FUM have responded, are responding, and will continue to respond with God's Love and Power to the Great Commission on behalf of each one of us who are members. He reminded us of the difficult situations that are sometimes faced by Quakers and how their response helps spread Quaker values in a very real and personal way. Ron Bryan, retired pastor, William Penn professor, and Iowa Yearly Meeting Superintendent, was intrigued with our theme. Coming from Grinnell, Iowa to be the Daily Devotional Speaker, he made sure each day started on a positive note by helping us recognize the Love and Power of God working in each of us.

Tom Bertrand came from Virginia to present the report from Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) and continued to share his expertise by leading a luncheon discussion group and presenting an interest group on Spirit-led Activism. His continued presence and participation through-out the four days provided opportunities for sharing of perspectives and experiences. Western Yearly Meeting remains actively involved with FCNL and other affiliated bodies, relying on their representatives to suggest ways we can work beyond ourselves in the world at large. Reports from FUM (Kelly Kellum/John Muhanji); RSWR (Beth Hendricks); IFCL (Diana Hadley); AFSC (Abdullah Olsen); Earlham College (Kelly Burk/Anne Houtman); Earlham School of Religion (Dean Matt Hisrich/Prof. Phil Baisley); FWCC (Luanne Hagee); FDS (Lane Sims); QHC (Brandon Dennis); and FAH (Kathy Clendening) were well received and appreciated.

Yearly Meeting Sessions are one of the best opportunities for our people to get to know and appreciate each other. A concert sponsored by Indiana Friends Committee on Legislation (IFCL) featuring Indiana native Tim Grimm, was held on Saturday evening. This "open to the public" event allowed us to interact with each other and with community members. Time between scheduled activities and during "breaks" was filled with laughter, visiting, caring, and sharing.

Afternoon workshops designed for all attenders included: a look at "What's going on in East Africa" presented by missionaries Shawn and Katrina McConaughey; "Modern Psalms in Search of Peace and Justice," presented by Dwight Wilson; and a panel discussion on "What in Quaker History Needs Our Contemporary Power?" (John Connell, David Kinsey, Bob Henry, and Dan Lee, moderated by Diana Hadley.)

A full program of additional special interest workshops allowed members to work in small groups to explore multiple ways to "Unleash the Power" in tangible ways. The wide ranging topics included: "Connecting Quakers In the Social Media Age," (MD&N Board); "Seeking Common Ground with Other Friends for Spirit-led Activism," (Tom Bertrand); "Unleash the Power and Love of your Pastor," (Della Stanley-Green); "Confessions of a Quaker Educator," (Dr. Alva 'Doc' Sibbitt, Jr.); "Mesquakie Mission Invites You," (Mac and Bernie McDonald); "Hate Crimes Legislation," (Rep. Greg Steuerwald); "Bi-Vocational Ministry," (ESR Prof. Phil Baisley); "What Can We Do with This Old Building," (Gene Carter); and "Meeting Needs in our Local Community," (facilitated by Sheri Bonham.) James Lyon spoke on the topic "Mark and Twain" at the special dinner for Ministers and their Mates on Friday evening.

The annual Memorial Service conducted by Marilyn Bell and Chris Wynn encouraged us to remember those from Western Yearly Meeting who were welcomed into heaven during this past year: rejoicing in the legacy of service that they provided and remembering their encouragement during our own growth. Recognizing how, by "Unleashing the Love," they are enabling us to "Release the Power" will allow their legacies to continue in Western Yearly Meeting.

Missions work has always been important to Western Yearly Meeting. Nikki Holland, Director of FUM Ministries in Belize was the key speaker prior to the annual USFW/Quaker Ladies and Quaker Men banquets. Time was provided during the business sessions for a presentation by Betty Heshelman regarding her recent trip to Ramallah, Palestine. The Outreach Board encourages support of the FUM Girl Child Education Program as a special project for 2019, with a goal of \$15,000. USFW provided materials, space, time, and instructions for people to help construct sanitary supplies for ladies in developing countries. Mesquakie directors, Mac and Bernie McDonald, assisted with the Campfire Conversations following the Quaker Lecture. Quaker Men provided a Pancake Breakfast on Saturday, collecting free-will offerings to help fund Belize School scholarships. In 1969 WYM recognized a need to serve our local community, particularly retirees who needed safe, modern, affordable housing. As a result, Friends Apartment Homes (FAH) was established and has served as an ongoing ministry ever since. We rejoiced as they celebrated their 50 years of continuing service with an open house and reception.

Youth and children are a vital part of Western Yearly Meeting. Quaker Haven camping experiences, as well as the Board for Peace and Social Concern providing contemporary books with a Quaker message for use during camp Quiet Times, are helping to prepare the younger members for active roles in leadership and service. Youth present report to the Gathered Body, summarizing their activities of the past year and during their own Young Friends Western Yearly Meeting. Throughout the year, WYM provides funding and other supports to allow students to participate in a variety of opportunities for learning and service. Quaker Haven Camp continues to work with WYM to provide wholesome camping experience for youth, families, and meeting retreats.

Meeting for Business is a critical part of this annual gathering. Western Yearly Meeting wants to encourage tangible efforts to release the power of Christ in today's local cultures, recognizing that this may mean shifts from some of the sentimental and historical past ways of doing things. We understand the need to maintain the theological distinctives and preserve those understandings which are distinctly Quaker while finding a way forward in today's world. This requires a willingness to discuss and act on difficult issues with Christ empowered guidance. Please hold us in the Light as we examine these issues.

A reception was held on Sunday to honor Wanda Coffin-Baker and show our appreciation for the work she has done in WYM as Superintendent. With her move into retirement, it was decided that a three-person team would provide interim support during the revisioning and transitioning process. Della Stanley-Green, Sue Whitesel, and Sylvia Graves will work together to ensure cohesiveness as we wrestle with our mission and what that will look like going forward. This will allow an incoming superintendent, when found, to have a clearer picture of the vision of Western Yearly Meeting and how they can best support that vision.

We continue to examine the need for ongoing support of individual members of meetings which have been laid down, those who are living in distant locations, and those whose meetings have decided to join other Yearly Meetings. This issue is not one with an easy and equitable solution. Pray with us that wisdom and discernment will help us meet the very real needs of these individuals for continued fellowship and service with Western Yearly Meeting.

Your continued prayers of support and encouragement are appreciated as those in Western Yearly Meeting "Unleash the Love, Release the Power!"

In Christian Love,

Sarah Lookabill  
Sarah Lookabill, Presiding Clerk

8/27/19  
Date

William Brant  
William Brant, Recording Clerk

8/21/19  
Date

Kay Record Carter  
Kay Carter, Assistant to the Clerk

8/27/19  
Date