



ILYM Meetinghouse, McNabb, Illinois

Illinois Yearly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends

Consisting of 22 Quaker Meetings and Worship Groups
in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, and Wisconsin

2023 Illinois Yearly Meeting Epistle

Dear Friends Everywhere,

We greet you from McNabb, Illinois where we held our 149th Annual Sessions at our historic meetinghouse. We recognize the past, present, and future elders of the indigenous peoples who have been the traditional caretakers of the land we meet on. We are grateful to be here now. Someday others may be here.

The underlying feeling throughout our sessions was joy. During our time at Illinois Yearly Meeting sessions, we take care of almost all the jobs ourselves, coming together to prepare our meetinghouse and grounds, washing dishes, cleaning bathrooms and cabins. As in a family gathering, children and adults alike taking a role. It brings to mind Jesus' foot washing (John 13:1-5); we seek to serve one another.

The theme for this year was "Creating Faithful Action in Our Changing World." There is so much occasion to be grateful when we gather. At the same time, we are aware of pain in our own lives and those of our neighbors, in our environment and broader world. Yet what kept arising was joy.

Speaker, Sharon Goens-Bradley, Midwest Director of AFSC, invited us to consider our ancestors. She asked "What have you learned from your family's history? How does it impact you? What will your faithful action be?" She gave the image that we were each a puzzle piece and we just needed to find where our piece fits.

Our committee on Racial Equity and Education led many of us in viewing the film "Dakota 38" and ensuing discussion throughout the sessions. Inspired by the actions of these Dakota leaders, we are exploring both current actions and where further truth-telling will lead as we seek to learn from the "family history" of our yearly meeting. How can we be present to this world around us and not feel heartbreak?

Sarah and Noel Pavlovic, beloved Illinois Yearly Meeting Friends, described their life work in caring for OUR environment. Drawing on Eileen Flanagan of Earth Quaker Action Teams and I Corinthians 12, "*There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit,*" Sarah and Noel invited us to consider the many forms that faithful action can take: Helper, Organizer, Advocate, Rebel. Their story exemplified how they felt God's gentle leadings to do their work and encircled us with their love of nature.

Robin Mohr, Executive Secretary of FWCC, Section of the Americas, uplifted our hearts. She reminded us that we need each other. She asked us to consider how we can use the experience of yearly meetings and the yearly meeting itself to better align ourselves with God. We must use our own resources. Reading queries from our *Faith and Practice* book, she asked, "Have you used them?" Whatever we do, we need to focus on doing it together.

The scale of the challenges in doing faithful actions is daunting, and our own shortcomings, individually and collectively, are often distressingly clear. However, we can move forward when we acknowledge our imperfections and nevertheless commit to faithful action, releasing to the Divine our longings for perfection or control. We reach that sense of peace and joy that we have felt here together when we act as faithfully as we know how.

Illinois Yearly Meeting, Sixth Month 25, 2023