



Greetings to Friends worldwide from the 121st sessions of the Northwest Yearly Meeting of Friends Churches (NWYM), held at George Fox University in Newberg, Oregon. We thank the many meetings and associations of Friends who sent us their greetings, and are grateful for the opportunity to hear from you all. We were grateful to welcome Jim LeShana (Barclay College), Christine Betz Hall (North Pacific YM), Madeline Schaefer (AFSC), Alicia Lucasi (Bolivia YM INELA), Jane Snyder (North Pacific YM and FWCC Section of the Americas), Phil Baisley (Earlham School of Religion), David Eley, (Ohio YM), Christine Greenland (Philadelphia YM), Robert Festa (Quaker Cove Ministries), Mary Heathman (Rocky Mountain YM), and Matt Macy (Evangelical Friends Mission). It was delightful to get to know them as we shared Ice Cream After the Manner of Friends on the first evening of our sessions, and we have appreciated the many opportunities to enjoy fellowship with our guests throughout the week.

Our theme was *The Risen Christ: Our Identity and Hope*. In her keynote address, our superintendent Becky Ankeny used the metaphor of the diverse cast of *The Muppet Show* to challenge us to appreciate our diversity as we delve into potentially troubling discussions. She reminded us that Jesus was known to be alive *by showing his wounds*. Through the wounds we bear as the body of Christ, God's power is made perfect in our weakness. If we could resolve to hold onto that position of humility we could have "*the most sensational, inspirational, celebrational, Friends-relational Yearly Meeting*" (sung after the manner of *The Muppet Show* theme song.)

Joining us as our speaker was Richard Foster, Christian theologian, author, and Friend. His written works, including [Celebration of Discipline](#), urge Christians around the world to live up to and into the measure of the grace we have received from the Holy Spirit. In our evening sessions, Richard

- challenged us to develop the practice of grace, mercy and forgiveness with disciplines that make them our default responses
- opened to us the role of Christ in creation as the Maestro of all who saves us into a life of forgiveness, teaches us to dwell in God's presence, leads us in the ways of truth, and journeys beside us as our friend
- and brought us into the healing heart of God, reminding us that our own hearts tend to condemn us for who we are, where we are, and what we do. God's forgiveness undoes this self-condemnation, restores our confidence, and permits us to face ourselves rather than condemn others.

All of our evening sessions were also webcast for our Friends who were unable to attend Yearly Meeting in person and will be available to view at nwfriends.org.

From the very beginning of our sessions we felt a sense of lightness and a prayerful tenderness, which gave us the space to wait on the Holy Spirit to bind up our wounds and give us clarity through a perspective that is beyond our limited understandings. We still struggle with a sense of relational uncertainty and have a lot of listening work to do, but have confidence that Jesus Christ who is, as Becky



Ankeny put it “the brains of the outfit,” will guide us as we seek His heart. Our youth brought a query on conflict and differences for our consideration at our joint business meeting, which guided our hearts on the final day of our sessions:

Recognizing human imperfection, how do I strive to follow Christ’s example in the way I love and respect others? When confronted with a conflict, how do I actively show Christ with a compassionate and grace-filled heart? How am I leaving space for change? How do I value other persons when charged with their reputations, remembering that they, too, are children of God? How do I build up the individual in the light of God?

Our discussions are drawing our youth and young adults into full participation in the business of the yearly meeting. The youth gave a particularly moving presentation Wednesday night. Their message focused on embracing our individual identities as the unique creations of God using queries, challenges, dance, and music. At the end of their presentation, they invited us to make hand prints on paper which lined the walls of the auditorium, symbolizing the unique imprint each of us has to make on the Church, the Yearly Meeting, and the World.

Gil George, Sherri Sheirbon, and Syd Wyncoop were recorded as ministers of the gospel. Their testimonies blessed and challenged us in unique ways that highlighted their talents and spiritual gifts. We look forward to their continued ministry among us.

We labored with great tenderness over a proposed modification to our statement on human sexuality, and agreed not to rush a decision, but to allow more time for seasoning. In the process we affirmed God’s call for us to love all persons. As we labor to grow into the deep unity Christ desires for us, we come back over again to the source of our identity: the present, risen Christ who has come to teach us himself. We must only silence ourselves and listen for instruction. It is our prayer that you would join us in listening well for the voice of our Teacher who will lead us all in the path of love, mercy, grace and peace.

Tom Stave
NWYM Presiding Clerk

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