

To all Friends everywhere,

The Quaker Youth Pilgrimage 2006 brought together 26 young Friends and 4 leaders from Europe and the United States. Over the month spent together the group traveled in and around Ohio, Indiana and Illinois exploring the diverse branches of Quakerism.

We met meetings, some programmed, some unprogrammed, for worship, discussion and potlucks. The potlucks were just one of many ways in which Friends fed our bodies and souls. We were provided with gracious hospitality through home-stays in Cincinnati and Indianapolis. The opportunity to experience different branches of Quakerism brought up many questions, some of which were easy to answer, but for others further thought is needed.

During our travels we learnt about a network of escape routes for those fleeing enslavement, known as the Underground Railroad. We visited museums and heard people speak about the support Quakers and others gave freedom-seekers trying to reach Canada.

A much-needed break came in the form of working alongside Habitat for Humanity in Richmond, Indiana. This was a very hot but enjoyable time, where we all learnt new skills such as building walls and roofing. On leaving the house it was rewarding to see the progress that had been made in just three days.

Being able to attend Illinois Yearly Meeting provided us with an insight into how other yearly meetings work. We were warmly welcomed and included and saw a strong sense of community at work.

The pilgrimage has taught us a lot and also provided time for a great deal of fun. We found enjoyment in playing existing games and making up new ones.

A few days were spent in Chicago. While there we visited Chicago Public Radio, heard Voices for Creative Nonviolence and played in Millennium Park fountains to escape the heat. We spent our final night in Chicago sharing a potluck with local Friends, and dancing in a thunderstorm under an orange sky.

The pilgrimage ended with a final retreat at Quaker Knoll Camp where we had Bible studies and discussion. There was also plenty of free time for relaxation, singing and dancing.

As we walked together in community we were challenged by queries regarding the nature of God, Quakerism and how to live meaningful lives. We leave with vivid memories and close friendships.

Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness, and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying for one another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.

- Isaac Pennington, 1667

Signed on behalf of Quaker Youth Pilgrimage 2006.

August, 2006