

Iowa Yearly Meeting, Conservative

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To Friends Everywhere,

Greetings from the Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative), gathering for our 132nd annual session on the campus of Scattergood Friends School. In our daily meetings for worship followed by meeting for business, we have listened with love and reverence to reports of Friends who are following the leadings of the Spirit as well as they may. We have heard the responses of our member meetings to our advices and queries and have listened to reports of the monthly meetings, the annual reports from Scattergood School and Scattergood farm, and reports and concerns of our partners in the wider world: American Friends Service Committee, Friends Committee on National Legislation, and Quaker Earthcare Witness.

Our theme this year, Quaker Seeds, was inspired by the parable of the sower from Matthew chapter 13. In morning Bible study and evening collections, we have wrestled with and celebrated this seemingly simple, yet surprisingly complex, message. Our own Marshall Massey of Omaha Meeting, IYMC, spoke on the metaphors of the seed (God's Word), the soil (each of us), and the sunlight (the light that illumines our moral landscape) as described by early Friends. Debbie Humphries, of New England Yearly Meeting, and Peter Crysdale, of Pacific Yearly Meeting, spoke of ways of deepening the experience of meeting for worship. On Sixth Day evening, several Friends led a discussion on planting seed of hope, justice, and peace.

A continued concern is for the plight of undocumented immigrants. On Third Day evening, two Friends brought us stories and pictures of life on both sides of the Border Fence, lending human faces to the oft-dehumanizing data and rhetoric of politicians and the nightly news. We are also much concerned with the poor living conditions and systemic injustices worldwide that force many to immigrate, often under dangerous, even deadly conditions, and trap others in cycles of desperation. On Fourth Day, Jean Smith shared her work with Kenyan women who are victims of HIV/AIDS themselves and who have lost husbands and, often, children to the disease. Jean brought the skillful handiwork of these women and many Friends made purchases, enabling the women to continue and expand their efforts.

The written responses to the advices and queries submitted by the individual monthly meetings provide specific examples of the life and vitality of spirit within our meetings. The many different ways in which individuals and meetings have responded to the needs and challenges within their communities inspires us to be more faithful within our own lives. We treasure these opportunities to share where we are on our spiritual paths.

On Sixth Day, we welcomed into full monthly meeting status the Yahara Friends Preparative Meeting of Madison, WI, complete with ringing of the school bell. The joy of this event has infused our entire session.

The increased presence of Young Friends this year heartens us. They are responsible for our annual talent show on Seventh Day evening, which is a welcome highlight at the end of our busy week. Simply seeing our youth playing and working in the peaceful setting of Scattergood School gives us hope.

On behalf of Iowa Yearly Meeting, Conservative,



Deborah Fisch, clerk