

Seventh month, 19–25, 2009
Silver Bay, Lake George, New York

From the clerk's opening remarks:

In our time together we can, as a body, hold our hearts open and seek the vastness of the Light. Let us seek Love, Respect, and a sense of being who we are; allowing each of us to be as GOD has created us.

That is the practice, for us all, of walking in community as we seek that of GOD. In our worship here we can begin to become that which GOD means us to be.

To Friends Everywhere,

The 314th annual Sessions of New York Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends considered the theme of: "Equality: Living Into the Testimony." To begin this difficult work we found that it was essential to practice the Presence—keeping our souls awake to GOD.

Through sessions on racial healing and our part in Friends United Meeting, and in meetings for discerning the meaning of faithfulness, it became clear that our task is to become whole as individual Friends and as a corporate body. Our clerk implored us not to be afraid of being held in tenderness.

We spent many hours in extended worship. As a result Spiritual conversations have been occurring outside of sessions that open doors to deep fellowship and new possibilities. The effect of this extended worship on Yearly Meeting sessions has been to bring us into a deeper stillness where f/Friends meet in love and unity, where we can be with our disagreements. New York Yearly Meeting is unified in finding that of GOD in everyone and we are united through love for one another to where we can celebrate our differences. It can still be a bumpy road (who ever promised or expected that it would be smooth?) requiring patience and courage, but there is a palpable sense of a greater power that holds us in Love, Truth, and Eternity.

While 620 f/Friends (including 160 children) were able to attend these sessions of Yearly Meeting, we know that many f/Friends were not with us because of financial needs and time commitments. As we experienced a deeper unity, we will not be whole until all who wish to attend yearly meeting sessions can be present.

In our plenary session, Donna McDaniel and Vanessa Julye presented an overview of their book, *Fit for Freedom, Not for Friendship: Quakers, African Americans, and the Myth of Racial Justice*. It was a time of hard truth, gentle laughter, and celebration of a major project that has taken many years and is being well received.

In our consideration of wholeness we learned greater tenderness as we heard of f/Friends struggling with the hard truth of their lives—of meetings coming to approve the marriage of members who are of the same gender, of what love requires when disagreements are great. As we realize our differences we learn that GOD's love is sufficient.

The difficult work that we have been doing this week was in response to a prophetic call from our young f/Friends that we needed to live into the unity that we proclaim. We have begun to answer that call. We have approached the burning bush and stood on holy ground.

The challenges before us are great. We trust our living GOD to give us what we need.

In closing we pray that we will be still, faithfully sharing the abundance we've received with humility and joy.

On behalf of the New York Yearly Meeting,

Ernestine Buscemi, clerk