

Alaska Friends Conference

Religious Society of Friends
11380 N. Douglas Hwy
Juneau, Alaska 99801

Yearly Gathering Epistle

Seventh Month 25, 2010

Greetings to Friends Everywhere,

The 2010 Annual Gathering of the Alaska Friends Conference convened at the Mahala Dickerson Friends Center in Wasilla, Alaska on Thursday, 7th month, 22nd day, 2010. Five monthly meetings and two worship groups were represented. We enjoyed the customary Wasilla weather of sun, clouds and rain in rapid succession. We joined in Meeting for Eating and enjoyed the fine cuisine of Dana Hallett (Haines WG) and Julie Ball and Sierra Ball (Kenai River WG). Thanks to the long daylight hours, Friends arrived throughout the night, crossing the miles that separate our monthly meetings.

We enjoyed the wisdom and thoughtful discussion arising in Charley Basham's talk relating to her residency at School of the Spirit's program "On Being a Spiritual Nurturer." We sat with the query, "How do we know one another?" We are a short once-yearly community of "whoever shows up." We are challenged to pay attention to corporate needs when in some instances those needs appear to contrast with our individual needs. Our challenge is to "stay in the arena" instead of one party to a conflict simply going away. Another query asks, "How do we provide for the spiritual nurture of our community?" She described the process she followed in coming to clearness about going and her support for the development of a Western School of the Spirit.

In Meeting for Business we heard reports from the monthly meetings and worship groups. Yearly Meeting Ministry & Nurture Committee reported on the well-received Spiritual Nurture Retreat this spring hosted by the Three Rivers Worship Group (Talkeetna). Our representatives to FCNL, AFSC, FGC Central Committee, and FWCC reported recent business being considered by their respective organizations.

We confirmed nominations to new terms with AFSC, FCNL, William Penn House Advisory Committee and our delegate to FWCC World Gathering, Charley Basham. Meeting minuted its intention to encourage Alaska Friends, and especially young Friends, to volunteer for service with these organizations and will endeavor to provide financial support to make participation possible. Representative Committee was charged with promoting these opportunities.

We arrived at unity over an intention to promote wider use of the Yearly Meeting property in support of individual, family, and small group retreats as well as joint meetings of Anchorage and Mat-Su monthly meetings. This use is to be coordinated by

the Site Committee. Following discussion, we charged our AFSC representatives to promote the establishment of service opportunities, such as work camps, for Quakers as a program of AFSC. We approved our next year's budget

Next year's Annual Session was set for August 5-7, beginning Friday 3 pm through noon on Sunday. Chena Ridge Meeting will explore a Young Friends' Gathering at Chena Hot Springs in place of Fall Quarterly. During a Fall visitation, Chena Ridge will approach Three Rivers WG (Talkeetna), which is under their care, regarding hosting a Spring Retreat on the lines of last year's retreat. If they are willing, M&N is charged with developing a program.

Following Saturday's supper, young Friends Maya McPherson, Danie Holden, and Autumn Ball related highlights of the Youth Exchange with Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting that preceded their attendance at this year's FGC Gathering. It included instruction in the Waka-Waka Hey Hey dance.

Meeting adopted a memorial minute celebrating the life and mourning the passing of Friend Valdis Kirsis, a young father and caring mentor who passed suddenly this past March.

AFC Programs for Young Friends:

Clerk noted our repeated agreement on the importance of programs and support for young Friends, and noted the small number of young Friends in attendance.

Friends noted the importance of including young Friends in planning events that they will appreciate. A specific program, "Godly Play," was mentioned as being successful in engaging children. Some Friends found it difficult to have children's programs when a very small number of children attend. Anchorage Friends are finding a twice-monthly First Day School appropriate for their Meeting. Homer's once/month family game night seems successful in attracting families with children; Chena Ridge's annual program-less retreat has been successful and engaged young Friends.