

North Pacific Yearly Meeting 38th Annual Session

"Practicing Hope: Living and Witnessing Our Testimonies"

July 14-18, 2010

University of Montana, Missoula, Montana

To Friends everywhere:

Our Friend- in-Residence, Bridget Moix, suggested practicing hope is a way Friends minister to the world. As the director of the Peaceful Prevention of Deadly Conflict Program of Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), she is aware of the formidable problems confronting us today. We identified with the metaphor provided by Bridget's two-year-old son, Pablo, of a barquito grande, a big little boat, that helps us sail over a large ocean of darkness. We draw inspiration from Bridget's belief that in difficult times, our hope suffers and then it picks us up and sets us to work to change the world.

Annual Session planners provided numerous opportunities to practice and experience hope this week. One morning, attenders of all ages served throughout Missoula by helping at community gardens, the food bank, a homeless shelter, Habitat for Humanity, and by clearing trash, pulling noxious weeds, and recycling bicycles. Food cost savings from a simple meal of beans and rice one day benefited projects of Right Sharing of World Resources. In an effort to reduce our carbon footprint, we offered online registration, encouraged carpooling, reduced paper copies of documents, and used pedicabs and bicycles in addition to golf carts for transportation around the campus.

Just as George Fox had to look in to the "Ocean of Darkness" in order to see the "Ocean of Light," Friends at this session called us to hope in a variety of ways. Many of us are involved in Quaker organizations such as FCNL, the American Friends Service Committee, Quaker Earthcare Witness, Friends World Committee for Consultation, and Friends Peace Teams. Interest groups reflected the wide range of Friends' concern and action in such areas as restorative justice, global change, Quaker process, conscientious objection, and economic justice.

Bridget's suggestion that "we Friends are bold enough and blessed enough to believe we can create the community of God" is evident not only in our work in the world but in recent changes in our yearly meeting structure and function. Decision-making processes remain in transition with a goal to increase involvement of monthly meetings and attenders at Annual Session in approval of the budget, nominations and action minutes. Our structure has changed to include ten standing committees, among them Peace and Social Concerns and Ministry and Oversight, as well as two ad hoc committees considering affiliation with Friends General Conference and Quaker Earthcare Witness. The benefit of ongoing committees was exemplified by the new Youth Committee's leading to improve communication among youth and parents, provide a

children and youth summit, and support children and youth programming at all levels of the yearly meeting. We especially look forward to the t-shirts they plan to make.

Our task of revising our Discipline has become a living and lively process. Our goal is to provide a faithful, clear, complete description of the depth and breadth of faith and practice in this yearly meeting in this time.

We leave here well aware that the ocean of darkness threatens to rise around our barquito grande. We take strength and courage from Fox's vision of the "Ocean of Light" as well as Bridget's closing reminder that we are not alone. "That's the power of community, to uplift and multiply each other's gifts," she said. Considering the abundant gifts in our midst, there is much reason for hope.