

Epistle of Northern Yearly Meeting

Rosholt, Wisconsin, USA

May 28-31, 2010

To Friends Everywhere:

The smell of warm pine trees, the melody of a robin in the woods, the shrieks of happy children jumping in the lake, the snap of twigs underfoot on the path around the lake. While cars bring us here, we blissfully give them up for three days of motorless conveyance. This is the setting at the Lion's Camp in Rosholt, Wisconsin, where we hold the session in our 35th year of Northern Yearly Meeting. Here we gather to do God's work.

Our theme for the session came from British Yearly Meeting's Faith and Practice. '*LET YOUR LIFE SPEAK. When decisions have to be made, are you ready to join with others in seeking clearness, asking for God's guidance and offering counsel to one another*'?' We found that our yearly meeting is consultive. This year it brought deeply rooted clarity that nurtures and sustains our ability to walk our talk, to live more wholly as Quakers.

We sold our yearly meetinghouse this past year, which formerly housed one of our meetings. We had discovered that our widely-flung geography kept us from using it well. It was a relief to end our responsibility for the meetinghouse, but also hard to lose this connection with our home and history.

Our hearts were tendered during Sunday morning's Memorial meeting for worship. With open hearts we shared three memorial minutes, several Friends' personal stories of loss by death, and finally the sorrows of selling the meetinghouse. By the time the meeting closed with a spontaneous circling and singing of "There Are Angels Hovering Round," we were blessed by deep and divine connection hovering round.

From our total attendance of 323, 108 are children. The older teen group set a record with 41 present, along with 21 in the younger teen group. This is likely the fruit of increased support and programming for the Children and Youth Committee, which sponsored nearly monthly retreats for the teens. NYM's first employee was hired this year to plan and facilitate teen retreats. We are blessed with generous talent and enthusiasm in our Children & Youth leadership. Friends at the session also reported a lovely spirit among younger Friends, as evidenced by adolescents inviting grownup acquaintances to join them at dinner, or big kids frequently throwing the Frisbee to little kids in a mixed-age game of ultimate Frisbee.

After at least 10 years of exchanging visits with Friends in the El Salvador Yearly Meeting, no visits are currently planned. This is a year of rest and discernment on both sides as to how future doors may open to fruitful sharing.

Anti-racism and diversity work wove itself through many levels of program, from plenary to workshops, to the older and younger teen groups' programming.

We have a standard dining option provided by the camp, but are noticing the sharp growth of the Simple Foods group, which had 97 participants this year.

Here in our 35th year together, we have grown to witness each other's lives; we are community. Spirit has gathered us, moves with us, and will bring us back together. ☺