

July 30, 2023

Western Yearly Meeting  
203 S. East Street, PO Box 70  
Plainfield, IN 46168

Greetings to Friends Everywhere:

Western Yearly Meeting met in Plainfield, Indiana from July 27-30, 2023 for its 166th annual session to explore the theme, "You are the Light of the World" based on Matthew 5:14-16. Throughout the meeting, a large mural illustrating the theme was available for attendees to share in coloring the pattern. Brilliant markers and stimulating conversation while working allowed the Lights of many individuals to leave a lasting impression of the meeting.

Pam and Ron Ferguson of Winchester, Indiana Friends, conducted our morning worship times. They were able to share their local and overseas personal experiences to illustrate how the presence of Light in their lives has allowed them to remain powerful in situations of powerlessness. In doing so, they encouraged each of us to share the inward Light of God in the darkness of the world, trusting God to make the best use of that witness.

Superintendent Shawn McConaughey facilitated an open discussion on Thursday morning. Examining the question, "Where is Western Yearly Meeting Headed," he encouraged us to honestly evaluate the mission of Western Yearly Meeting and the mission of each of our individual meetings. He challenged us to "think differently" in order to meet the changing needs of individuals in today's world. Thursday afternoon, a time of remembrance allowed us to celebrate the lives of those who have died in the last year and how each of them "shared the Light" during their time with us. They and their wisdom are, and will continue to be, missed. Thursday evening, Shawn shared how "Love Fuels our Light," in a message of hope, reality, and optimism. He pointed out that life does not exist without change, and change depends on making choices. Deciding not to decide is a choice that leads to stagnation, decline, and eventual death. After the inspiring and motivating messages of the day, attendees gathered to share their lives and the day's impact with each other over watermelon and fruit kabobs.

Routine business was conducted Friday and Saturday. WYM continues to be financially stable. Written reports included in attendance packets enabled only brief summaries, questions, and approval of action items to be addressed during active sessions. One of the more interesting reports was presented by Rachel Doll-O'Mahoney. This report reviewed results of an ongoing project to discern the needs and concerns of those between ages 21 and 41. This information was enlightening and will help WYM and its individual meetings determine how they need to adapt moving forward.

As is customary, multiple workshops were available on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. These included programs on the Friends United Meeting projects in Tanzania and South Sudan (Turkana); prophetic thought and Quaker theology; supporting and attracting young-ish adults; estate planning; Quaker engagement strategies as they pertain to legislation on poverty and affordable housing; ideas and resources to help local meetings enliven Vacation Bible School and Sunday School programs; solar power as a renewable energy option; experiences in revitalizing growth and community; an FWCC workshop; and how Right Sharing of World Resources (RSWR) is continuing to impact families around the world including Guatemala.

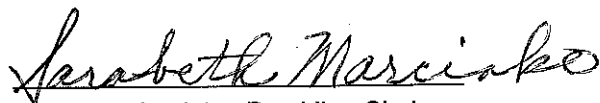
The Quaker Lecture presented by J. Brent Bill on Friday night was thought-provoking. The title, "Living Witnesses: How do Quakers Speak to Today," examined how the Quakers of today sometimes struggle to explain what we stand for today rather than what we are against. Brent's statement, "... in the Quaker tradition, true spiritual witness, at its best, is rooted in positivity." speaks to today's conditions. While our historical past is important, it is what we are doing and living out NOW that will speak to people today. The Quaker lecture was followed by fellowship over strawberry shortcake and ice cream.

A highlight of the business session on Saturday morning was the recommendation for Recording of Gifts for Ministry of Ben Snyder. Many supportive letters from Carmel Friends Meeting were read and friends present spoke in support of Ben's ministry; the recommendation was approved heartily.. Saturday afternoon included a missions report on FUM and triennial from Friends United Meeting, followed by a time for the gathering and business of Quaker Men and United Society of Friends Women groups. These gatherings were then followed by a "Ministry Fair" highlighting ways to be involved in, and aware of, the many ministries of WYM. "Family Night" closed the evening with an evening celebration of fun, trivia, music, and a 1950's Soda Fountain treat time.

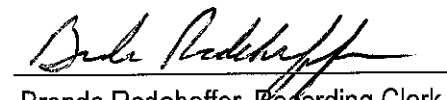
Sunday's program "The Light of Hope" was led by Ron and Pam Ferguson. It included the Recording of Gifts for Ministry of Ben Snyder (Carmel Friends.) This closing service reminded us that the Light of Hope shines onward to the future.

Please continue to pray for Western Yearly Meeting as we seek and share the Light of Christ with those around us.

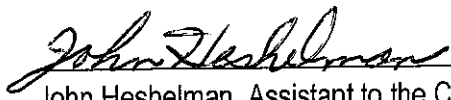
In Christian Love,



Sarabeth Marcinko, Presiding Clerk



Brenda Rodeheffer, Recording Clerk



John Heshelman, Assistant to the Clerk

Summary: For use in Translations and/or digests

Greetings to Friends Everywhere:

Western Yearly Meeting met in Plainfield, Indiana from July 27-30, 2023 for our 166th annual session to explore the theme, "You are the Light of the World" based on Matthew 5:14-16.

This emphasis on Light was explored in many ways throughout the time together. Western Yearly Meeting, like many groups, is recognizing the need to better serve those around us. Within that recognition is the realization that deciding how to best accomplish those needs may require new thoughts, structures, and attitudes. The Recording of Gifts for Ministry of Ben Snyder gives additional hope for the future. Workshops, worship, and messages were constructed to help each of us to begin to make the mental changes that will be needed in the time ahead so that we can each be "the Light of the World" as we meet today's challenges.