

Epistles to all Friends
Intermountain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
June 11-18, 2017 (including early days)
Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu, New Mexico, USA

To Friends Everywhere

As is always the case, we were enchanted by our surroundings at Ghost Ranch this year: canyon walls changing color throughout the day, cottonwood leaves rustling in the breeze, vultures spiraling up into clear summer skies. Yes, there were also a few gnats and no-see-ums, but they were manageable distractions. While it is true that Friends can gather and practice in any setting, it is also true that many attenders of Intermountain Yearly Meeting have developed a special fondness for this place which, among other things, evokes many memories.

Each year at IMYM we have the opportunity to integrate creative practices with our lives as Quakers. We believe that the arts at IMYM offer a relaxed and contemplative way to go inward, as well as opportunity for deepening fellowship among Quakers. This year, during early days, many Friends contributed to a huge mural. Our own “contra-band” got everyone moving at the Friday night contra dance. And on Saturday night, we were entertained by a variety of creative pursuits, including story, song, and some homespun comedy.

While the arts nurture the contemplative dimensions of our yearly meeting, business meetings reflect the outward movement of our faith. This year, we passed a minute endorsing the 2017 Border Convergence sponsored by the School of the Americas Watch as a nonviolent means of opposing the militarization of the border and the mistreatment of those who cross it. This event will take place Nov. 10-12, 2017 in Nogales, Mexico. It was also noted that two of our meetings, Mountain View Monthly Meeting in Denver and Albuquerque Monthly Meeting, are currently offering sanctuary to immigrants without documentation who are threatened with separation from their families.

Our theme this year was “About Money: A Call to Integrity, Community, and Stewardship.” In our worship sharing groups and discussions we were reminded, on a personal level, how feelings of fear, guilt, defensiveness, secrecy, resentment, denial, worry, and pain can be disabling and also that sharing these feelings can be liberating. We were also reminded that ethical considerations about money, whether regarding personal budgets or meeting finances, have powerfully spiritual roots. Many worship sharing groups considered Jesus’s words in Matthew 6:21: “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Pamela Haines, our guest speaker this year, who has been active in peace, justice and environmental work in Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of Friends and in the Friends Economic Integrity Project, brought queries that challenged us to consider our values and spiritual orientation toward money. How do our traditional testimonies—Integrity, Simplicity, Equality, Community, Peace—guide us in making money decisions, both in our our personal lives and in our meetings? How can we live in a growth economy that profits from war, exploitation, and environmental destruction? Pamela shared her belief that materialism damages the soul and the fabric of society and that an economic system based on greed and unlimited growth generates even more evil than war. She asked us to consider the role of conscientious objectors? Do we object to the economy we live in? If so, on what basis? And how do we respond? She invited us to write our own statements of conscience, a challenging exercise that led to much thoughtful discussion.

Ethical considerations of money were especially prescient this year as we are preparing to adopt a pay-as-led system for our 2018 gathering. We believe that a payment system based not only on one's resources, but also on spiritual discernment, will make our annual gathering more accessible to all Friends (as has been demonstrated by New England Yearly Meeting). Adopting the pay-as-led system for our yearly meeting will also be a way of bearing witness to the belief that "our resources are gifts from God to be held in trust and shared" (IMYM Faith & Practice).

Once again, Senior Young Friends offered us their gifts in another listening session this year. Adults listened in worshipful silence while young Friends offered their responses to a variety of queries on the theme of identity. With careful reflection and great poise, they spoke to the role of ethnicity, religious affiliation, socio-economic status, and gender in shaping identity. "Identity is about more than just gender," said one Young Friend. "It's about who and how you love. Love is at the root of it all."

Later on in meeting for business, we considered the possibility of a move in the event that we outgrow Ghost Ranch. Several Friends spoke to difficulties—distance, accessibility, and heat among them—that this location poses to those who have physical challenges. Whatever the facility, one Friend said, what's crucial is how we care for another. We were reminded again that wherever we gather, love is at the root of it all.

With Gratitude

Intermountain Yearly Meeting of Friends

Molly Wingate, Clerk

Epistle from Senior Young Friends

We gathered and sang and ate cherries and ramen
We swam and spoke and listened and cared
He and she and they and we
Seasoned peace and wellness and money
There were faceplants and long rants
And chest bumps and tired slumps
Sasha in lipstick, highlights on point
Mafia and frozen mint
And sleepy sunburnt eyes
Inspired by successful civil protest
Skipping through the sunshine
With new ways to give our best
We were blown away by policy
Putting econ to the test
As the week began to close
We found it time to write this poem
To share our joys and sorrows
With Friends of different shores
Down with the capitalist agenda

Yours always,
The Senior Young Friends

Epistle from Junior Young Friends

Dear Friends Everywhere,

Junior Young Friends had fun and made friends at IMYM. We started our week together with a long hot hike on the Rim Vista Trail.

We set up a cantina to sell snacks and ice cream as a fundraiser for Mountain Friends Camp. It's unofficial name was Chilli's. "Welcome to Chilli's." We made over \$700—before expenses! If you have wondered what Friends will do for a Klondike Bar, we raffled the last bar for \$27.

We also did high ropes and waterfront. High ropes were really windy and scary. We went through our fears! Waterfront was great! We had kayaks, canoes, and went swimming. The water was swell.

During free time we got to know each other better. We played ping-pong, Foosball, and went to the pool to swim and talk to "Pink Shirt" the life guard.

We also did art and crafts. Jenny taught us how to collage and watercolor. Lisa taught us how to make an upcycle bracelet.

Dancing was hot! The cantina there was swamped. The band was great and Deb the caller taught us how to contra-dance. We had lots of fun in our best camp clothes.

We look forward to more fun together at IMYM next years!

Junior Young Friends

Epistle from Children's Yearly Meeting

Greetings to Friends around the world from Children's Yearly Meeting of Intermountain Yearly Meeting. We met at Ghost Ranch, New Mexico. It is a beautiful place. The adults came here to eat, nap, and go to Meetings. We came here because our parents want us to be happy. We want to play and have fun here. We did and saw so many things. We felt good.

Here are some things we did that we really enjoyed. We went on hikes and played with water. We played on the creek that had algae, an animal skeleton, mud, and water creatures. We played games in the arroyo. We built with legos and painted with watercolors and markers and learned origami. We went to the museum and got to do a dinosaur dig. Some of us helped at the nursery.

Our keynote speaker came to talk with us about our theme of money. We learned that some people are rich and others are poor, and it's not fair.

We love coming to IMYM and we are glad that we get to have fun. It is hot, so we love to swim every day and play in the water in the creek, especially if we get otter pops in the afternoon. We love the rocks and sand that we get to play with. We hope we can come to IMYM again.

Sincerely,
The Children of the Childrens Yearly Meeting

