

Gila Friends Monthly Meeting Responses to Fall Queries from Intermountain Yearly Meeting (for 2019)

PLEASE NOTE: Responses to the IMYM queries are as comprehensively summarized as possible, without attribution to any speaker. The use of the word “I” is also not reflective of the recording clerk or any other single speaker.

1. About the schedule for our Annual Gathering

a. Do we want to continue having the Early Days for four days?

A Friend remembered attending the IMYM annual gathering many years ago, before Early Days began. Later, this Friend discovered that Early Days was very expensive. If we retain Early Days, the time should be shortened and funds conserved.

I love Early Days. I recognize that the expense restricts participation to those who can afford it, but it is a very beneficial experience to those who do attend. Concerns that Early Days experiences with the keynote speaker may foster emergence of an in-group who have gained from the initial events with the speaker may be offset if those who attend such events in Early Days refrain from attending follow-ups, to open those opportunities to others.

One issue is that IMYM pays for the entire week at Ghost Ranch, regardless of the number of Early Days participants. Early Days was initiated when Ghost Ranch required that IMYM commit to a full week at Ghost Ranch.

When a particularly charismatic keynote speaker offered sessions with Early Days attendees, those who were able to participate had a special feeling of cohesion and of engagement with the speaker. Others felt excluded from this in-group.

As we shift to Ft. Lewis, will we have Early Days experiences that many Friends have valued at Ghost Ranch, perhaps connected to the special environment of Ghost Ranch?

As much as I have enjoyed Early Days in the past, I see both benefits and downsides as we move to Ft. Lewis.

I have not attended Early Days, but during the regular days I have omitted some scheduled events in order to explore the natural setting and deepen acquaintance with other Friends. The shorter period is adequate, and more affordable.

Early Days have given committees some extra time to work together, ahead of business sessions.

This year our keynote speaker will arrive on Wednesday evening. The Program Working Group is considering how we can meaningfully bid farewell to Ghost Ranch. This year, it seems that Early Days will be especially important.

Do we want to make the change only as we move to Ft. Lewis?

Some families don't attend Early Days together, but send children with other families, so that the children can benefit from Early Days.

Without Early Days, IMYM will lose opportunities such as the valued #metoo sessions for men in 2017.

Early Days are important to Young Friends, almost all of whom come for Early Days (JYF and SYF).

Comparing past experiences in other YMs to IMYM, I felt a deepening and expansion in myself in the Early Days. For me, it has been a wonderful addition to the regular days. I also recognize that participation in Early Days is a privilege that cannot be shared by all, due to financial limitations and competing commitments.

b. Are we done with Early Days?

It's too early to know. We do not yet have experience on how Friends of all ages would experience and be affected by Early Days at Ft. Lewis.

c. Would we like them to become part of the regular days of the annual gathering?

We are not clear on what this means. Less business and more open time, Wednesday evening through Sunday lunch? A format more similar to FGC?

d. Do we want to begin any changes to Early Days when we move to Durango, or this year, 2019? [This sub-query was added by Gila Friends.]

Friends generally agree that we need additional information before we can make this decision.

NOTE: We are assuming, but we do not know, whether IMYM has discretion over how many days we'll be at Ft. Lewis.

2. About Pay as Led

a. How did your monthly meeting experience pay as led?

We heard that IMYM actually did better than to come within 4% of making expenses. There may have been an overage. Bringing more younger Friends is a great benefit.

We cannot answer as a Meeting, since many of us were not at the 2018 annual gathering.

Gila Meeting paid our full assessment. A camper remarked that camping fees are paid directly to GR, and s/he chose to contribute more.

We do not know whether participation by our monthly meeting was affected by pay as led.

A friend who has always chosen to pay more than direct costs felt that there was little change. In our monthly meeting we have had no requests for scholarship support for years.

We heard statements of support for pay as led.

b. Would your meeting rather add to your assessment payments than make a separate contribution to the equalization fund?

I oppose adding any more to the assessments. [Several Friends agreed.]

c. Would you like to encourage individuals in your meeting to support the annual gathering?

We heard statements of affirmation.

This question may refer to resentment by some Friends in IMYM about paying toward an assessment that supports a gathering these Friends never attend.

Assessments are used by IMYM for many purposes, such as enabling young Friends to travel for Friendly purposes. These uses are detailed in the reports of the IMYM Finance Committee. Friends who resent the assessments may not realize how they are used.

This begins to approach the issue of awareness that our meeting is part of the larger Society of Friends... and some Friends identify only with their specific local group.

d. Do you have other ideas?

3. About relationship between IMYM and MM.

Do you have any concerns about how your Monthly Meeting relates to the Yearly Meeting (not just the Annual Gathering) throughout the year?

The website, imym.org, is not easy to use. IMYM's information should be made available to Friends who lack Internet access or choose not to use electronic communications.

I regret that a large proportion of our monthly meeting's members and attenders do not attend the annual gathering, and seem to feel that IMYM is irrelevant to them.

This question relates to whether at the monthly meeting level Friends feel connected to the larger Religious Society of Friends. Our MM does have many links to the larger Religious Society of Friends, thanks to the activities and reports of many of our members.

Active involvement by Friends in this monthly meeting in the music and dance at the annual gathering is important.

Are there programs or other things you wish the Yearly Meeting could offer or provide?

Perhaps clerks of committees could travel to monthly meetings and regional meetings, helping to support efforts to revitalize meetings at all levels, and make them more effective.

We heard an expression of gratitude for the energy, efforts, skills, and dedication that many Friends contribute to provide leadership and support for the yearly meeting's activities.