

North Pacific Yearly Meeting

Annual Session

July 8-11, 2023

To Friends Everywhere,

Friends of North Pacific Yearly Meeting (NPYM) gathered for the 51st Annual Session on July 8 through July 11, 2023, on the campus of Western Oregon University in Monmouth, Oregon and on ZOOM. NPYM includes Friends from Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana, and Wyoming. In this session, most Friends were attending in person (using masks and honoring other COVID precautions). While attendance in person was up from last year, it was only a little more than half of the usual attendance pre-COVID. Our meeting time was one day shorter because it followed immediately after the close of Friends General Conference that was held at the same campus. Because we did not invite a Friend-in-Residence we expected to have more time to listen to each other and work together in the Spirit.

The theme for this year's session was "Connecting and Reconnecting: Building Beloved Community." As Presiding Clerk Jana Ostrom wrote in the invitation to attend this session: "What does coming home ... mean to Friends? Is it a beloved community? Do we really 'know one another in the things which are eternal' and in the things which are daily?" She referred to the shorter timing as a blessing.

At the beginning of our first plenary session, the Presiding Clerk read a land acknowledgment as follows: "We are on Kalapuya Ilihi, the traditional homeland of the Luckiamute Kalapuya people, who were forcibly removed from their lands to reservations in Western Oregon. Their living descendants in the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians are still here, caring for the land. It is our obligation to honor the land and to learn from their experiences in doing so." We are on holy ground, where God is holy. The great mystery is enfolding us, is active and present with us now. We gather and do our work in this Spirit.

As a yearly meeting we want to become a more welcoming community. The Committee on Addressing Harm with Care is reconstituted for each annual session. Their individual listening sessions were intended to uphold each other and to hear concerns from people who feel that they were subjected to microaggressions due to race, disability, or gender. The committee members were also listening to people who may have done harm. The Care Committee asked us to bring to our meetings and worship groups the following query: How do we respond when one person harms another and both the person who was harmed and the person who said and/or did something harmful are members of the meeting community?

To serve our children better, the Quiet Quaker Quilt program brought quilts to be finished during this session as a group project. The quilts are primarily intended for use in children's programs. The quilts serve as safe havens for any children who are feeling overwhelmed at a particular time during a children's activity session. We were invited to work on the quilts under construction.

An intergenerational panel presented concerns about communication between younger and older Friends. The theme was "Meeting at the Corner of Wisdom and Power." Younger and older generations both have wisdom and power.

We learned that younger people are making connections differently than older people have done. They often get help online and not by directly asking other people. These younger Friends base their interactions on support and listening to each other. They reach out from their shared values of loving and tender kindness, creating space where all feel welcomed and heard. The elders on the panel spoke about being drawn to becoming Quakers because of the sense of community, especially through equality for all people and equality of revelation from the Light. Both groups expressed gratitude for supportive elders. In general, people are turning toward smaller communities and building support for marginalized

others within their communities rather than in a church setting. Listening must go in both directions. Do we need to follow where God is leading our young people rather than asking them to follow us where we think they need to go?

As is the tradition at annual session, the Junior Friends (high school-age) led one of the plenary sessions. The presentation was about communication between Friends of different generations. The Junior Friends urged all adults to really converse with them. Due to the COVID pandemic, people of all ages became more comfortable with online communication. Many still can feel isolated but with common purpose the feeling becomes one of genuine collaboration. Acceptance helps, but support of everyone has a stronger effect. The Junior Friends asked for more opportunities to learn from young adult Friends and noted a gap in communication with them due to COVID. They requested staff dedicated to Junior Friends as well as adult advisors. It is recognized that there is some tension between Junior Friends' desire to spend time with each other vs. time with the general group of Friends. One response to this dilemma may be to create some sessions to include the Junior Friends along with adults.

Despite the "blessing" of time constraints, we took the time to consider Friendly relationship issues, such as intergenerational communication and care for others, before working on business. We continue to see a dwindling of energy for filling all the yearly meeting committees. Can we really go deep and consider if we are called to serve on committees or if we should look at the overall committee structure?

We are a beloved community.

In peace and friendship on behalf of Friends in North Pacific Yearly Meeting,

Jana Ostrom
Presiding Clerk