

2012 Annual Session Epistles

Epistle from the Children's Program

Fifteen school age young Friends met at the 192nd annual sessions of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana from July 25 – 29, 2012 to consider the theme of “Love One Another as I Have Loved Thee.” The peaceful and beautiful campus of a historic Quaker College was the background for a time of fellowship, a deep spiritual sharing, learning about Quakerism, ourselves and each other, and working of service projects. Children learned about expressions of love and courage between friends of different races in the book, Freedom Summer by Deborah Wiles, which inspired their skit. They could all relate to being hurt when excluded and how powerful love can be to heal this pain. Children also learned about Quaker Elizabeth Fry's work in prisons giving hope and dignity to people who were so rejected. Children made pictures of love and hope for prisoners to make them feel less lonely and more cared for. OVYM Friend Eileen, who also works in prisons, shared how important it was to understand the whole story of a person in prison. Children also learned about Jesus' acts of love to people who were rejected and learned that giving love makes real changes.

OVYM Teens shared about their service trip in D.C. and expressed how important it was to look at someone who was homeless, not walk away. Children learned that if you can think about it, you can actually do it and saw all the food teens picked and provided for hungry people.

Children shared love through making toys for and visiting animals in a shelter. Their hopes for the future are that nobody would be poor and unloved, everyone would have a home and food, that people would treat each other and animals with care and respect. Finally, we believe that we can give love without expecting anything back, in our own individual ways and that can change the world.

Epistle from the Middle Youth Program

Greetings from the Middle Youth who attended the 192nd session of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting held at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana the 25th day to the 29th day of Seventh Month 2012.

Six Middle Youth Friends from Bloomington, Oxford and Yellow Springs monthly meetings were present.

We enjoyed many activities. Rafting was super fun. We travelled eight miles on the Whitewater River. It took us a respectable and relaxed five hours. On the way, we filled bags with trash and recycling that we found as a service project to help the river environment. We saw a lot of wild life, such as a tortoise, several great blue herons and a school of fish. We did many outdoor things on the campus, including tree climbing, hiking trails and playing with the skip disc we found.

We created a giant walking labyrinth with chalk, based on our experience making and learning about mandalas. We all learned as mastered the art of making paper cranes for a peace project in Lexington to remember the Japanese victims of the nuclear bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. We received many positive comments from Friends about our paper cranes displayed in the stairwell and our labyrinth in the parking lot. Also relating to war and peace, we visited the AFSC Windows and Mirrors exhibit, where Emma guided us through the mural gallery of art portraying the suffering of war in Afghanistan.

We watched the movie “The Princess Bride” and then prepared and performed our own modified skit titled “The Quaker Bride”.

We especially want to thank our visiting speakers, Ben, Kirsten, and Jean-Marie.

Overall, coming to OVYM brings us to a friendly, peaceful place. Next year, we would welcome more Middle Youth to join our fun activities.

Middle Youth of the Seventh Month, 2012

Epistle from the Teen Program

To Friends everywhere:

The 192nd annual session of the Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting gathered together from Wednesday July 25th through Sunday July 29th on the Earlham Campus in Richmond, Ind. Twenty-one teens, three of whom were first-time attenders, gathered and centered on the message of love, considering the query, “Love One Another, As I Have Loved Thee.”

Teens were inspired and challenged by plenary speakers Jean-Marie Barch and Ben Griffith, who offered us their gifts in meeting with us as a group and leading by example the opening of oneself for the creation of a loving community.

The teens contemplated queries about our spiritual life and daily life as a group, in small worship sharing groups and individually. Individual spiritual practices included running, listening to and making music, drawing, writing, and meditating.

This year the teen group had a mass exodus of graduating seniors. Six seniors (Emmett Olis-Cartmell, Adam Togami, Silas Bruner, Corrigan Eckert, Jonathan Birkel, and Adam Funck) will be joining the young adult friends this coming year. In addition the teen group has nominated and approved Rachel Logan-Wood to serve as Recording clerk and Dylan Cahalan as the new teen co-clerk serving with Lucy Grace.

Teens powered the Intergenerational Service Project at the Cope Environmental Center, and highly encourage more people of all ages to join in this sharing of community building through service.

Teens bonded through the shared trials of the annual canoe trip, spending time together, playing music and games,

They accepted with gratitude the dialogue that Simply Speaking brought to us and appreciated the wisdom that an intergenerational activity can bring.

The universal language of music – the songs and chants – never stopped.

Our time together was emotionally and spiritually motivating, and we will carry the love we have for one another and OVYM as we go back to our home, creating communities of love everywhere

In friendship, until next year,
The Teens

Epistle of the Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting.

Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting Epistle
Seventh Month 29, 2012

To Friends Everywhere:

Greetings from the lovely Earlham College campus in Richmond, IN, where Friends are gathered for the 192nd annual sessions of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting! Although our region is faced with a severe drought at this time, we have been blessed with an outpouring of Living Waters. Our time together has fostered the growth and development of our spiritual lives as a community grounded in love and faithfulness, and we look forward to seeing a bountiful harvest of fruits of the Spirit.

The theme of this year's sessions, "Love One Another As I Have Loved Thee," has aptly captured the unifying motion of the Holy Spirit in our plenary sessions, our business sessions, and our fellowship with one another. Friends in Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting have also expressed our care for all Creation through an intergenerational service project at Cope Environmental Center, workshop themes, children and youth projects, and impassioned yet hopeful calls to action from Quaker Earthcare Witness and the Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting Earthcare Committee.

In our evening plenaries, we were privileged to hear two arias about love sung in different keys. Long-time Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting Friend Ben Griffith shared from a tender and vulnerable place about the personal sacrifice and transcendent forgiveness that God's Love both requires of us and gives to us. Visiting Friend Jean-Marie Prestwidge Barch helped us to realize how we can know that we are loved and to appreciate that we are a sanctuary for the Love of God.

Despite a heavy agenda, tenderness and gentleness filled our meetings for business. Even when struggling for unity on one or two thorny matters, Friends listened with open hearts and patient concern to one another. Friends enthusiastically approved revisions regarding close relationships for the Yearly Meeting's Book of Faith and Practice and made a decisive commitment to action to strengthen our support for the youth of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting and to explore how we can become a more diverse faith community. We also had the pleasure of welcoming Englewood Friends Meeting into membership in our yearly meeting.

Many of our usual opportunities for worship and fellowship together were also infused with a deep sense of love and tenderness. For example, as usual, our Teens took under their care both an opening get-acquainted activity and frank sharing on a challenging topic in small groups. These events are always popular at Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting, and this year they were particularly helpful in bringing us together first as friends and then as Friends. We experienced similar depth in our early morning meetings for worship, our worship sharing, our workshops, the memorial meeting, the Living Witness presentation by our Friend Peg Champney, and our informal conversations over meals and in our free time. We have truly come to know one another better in those things that are eternal.

We pray that the Eternal Spirit may grant you the grace and love that we have experienced these past five days.

In the Light,
Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting