

Young Adult Field Secretary
NYYM Spring Sessions 2013 report
Locust Valley, NY, Long Island Quarter
4/6/2013

- Good Morning Friends! I am excited to be able to report to you this morning. I have been serving in the position of Young Adult Field Secretary (YAFS) for 2 years to date. This feels momentous to me, and I am happy to report that I am still filled with joy and passion for this work. In my first report to you, 2 years ago, I shared a prayer that I still use often “ with an open and grateful heart, I take the next step, through the next door.” I have walked through many doors since then, and I still feel that it is with gratitude and an open heart that I do this work along side so many people from this Yearly Meeting. I am honored to be serving as a witness to this work. So many people and Meetings are working faithfully to be inclusive, welcoming, supportive, and understanding of Young Adult Friends and Families, and People of ALL ages. My report today will be about the evidence of the work that is being done, and where Spirit is alive in this Yearly Meeting. This is not just MY work; it is OUR work. We are all responsible, regardless of age, for being agents of loving examination and change, supporting each other, and nurturing each other by listening deeply and knowing each other’s gifts. The good news is, this is happening.

HERE IS WHAT I HAVE DONE

- I have made over 67 visits to Regional Meetings (RM), Monthly Meetings (MM), or individuals, retreats and gatherings, since I started this work 2 years ago. Friends have invited me into their homes, into worship, into Friendship. This shows an appreciation and hunger for connection and the changes that ensue.
- When I accepted this position, I was asked to find out what YAF want, where they need help and what will help them be involved. So, I have conducted a survey of 151 Young Adult Friends (YAF) and families from NYYM. This is not the whole of the demographic, but it shows that there is a strong cohort of people who are either engaged, or willing to be engaged. We know things now like: how many more Convinced Friends there are than we thought, the large number of YAF with children, the ways YAF are interested in being involved, the ways that Friends find our meetings, what they long for and when they have been hurt. It was an honor to hear them share their experiences in an open and loving way. Please consider reading what they shared, a mere glimpse into what you asked me to find out, so that we can all benefit from their honesty and engagement. I will give out copies of the full results of the survey, if you ask me for a paper or electronic version. I am happy to share.

MANIFESTATIONS OF SPIRIT: ACTIONS AND LEADINGS

- One thing that the survey showed was a need for a way to disseminate meaningful and timely information to the YAF in NYYM. My newsletter, in the first 4 issues, has attempted to address those needs. I admit that it needs some work, and I desperately need a graphic designer to help me, but it is a start to a way of pulling the information of the YAF in this YM together. I also maintain a blog, and a facebook presence. I can get anyone, who is interested, the information on how to get signed up to the newsletter and my facebook page.
- In response to the information that I am collecting, Young Adult Concerns Committee (YACC) has been working very hard to discern and envision the work they feel needs to be done to serve and include all the YAF. The make up of the committee has changed. It now more closely represents the demographics of the YAF in this Yearly Meeting. There are now parents, Friends throughout the age range, Friends from both Programmed and Unprogrammed traditions, graduates of the Powell House Youth Program as well as Convinced Friends. The work is slow and hard. Schedules and life-needs make it complicated. They are doing good work. If you know someone between the ages of 18-35 ish, who has gifts of discernment, planning, eldering, enthusiasm for programming and gathering, or anything else that might add to this work, please approach Nominating, or the clerks of YACC, or myself.
- Young Adult Friends and Families continue to gather. There have been 3 Circle of Young Friends retreats since I began this work. And one planned for May 31-June 2, on Self Care and Spirituality. Other gatherings have included the Winter Wonderland weekends at Powell House where Families have gathered for 2 years. This has been an unstructured time when they can be present together. On May 10-12 there is a weekend for Families at Powell House. We will be looking at the tools our Quaker Practice gives us, and how people of all ages can use them. I have information on both upcoming conferences.
- Regionally, there are regular gatherings. YAF in Ithaca, Brooklyn MM and 15th St. MM gather monthly for fellowship, worship and food, in various combinations. In my travels, I have been involved in many gatherings that bring YAF and Families together.
- There have been 3 new Worship Groups that have formed in the YM, in Rochester, the Ithaca area and Princeton, NJ. These are all run by either parents with young children, or YAF (in 2 cases both). They are all open and welcome Friends of all ages. Please support all of these ministries. They are brave, and faithful Friends.
- It is evident that there is a call to engage, and nurture Friends of ALL ages. There have been extensive conversations about Youth and Young Adult programming. These are thoughtful and loving, and are truly seeking to deepen the experience of us from the youngest to the oldest. There has been much faithful and loving work around the concern for the use of drugs and alcohol at Summer Sessions. These are conversations that MUST continue as

- we commit to the spiritual growth and nurture of all ages. *If we are to change, we need to engage in hearing each other.* Please join that conversation.
- 2 years ago I asked the YM to look at the way we nominate YAF to YM committees, and MM committees. I asked you to think about gifts, not age, as we nominate people of all ages to serve. I see this improving. I encourage Friends to continue to ask for gifts, and not merely the presence of a young person. Get to know each other, and then find the person suited for that work. This has been happening more.

WHAT HAVE I LEARNED? WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

- Much to my delight I have found a Spiritual Hunger that exists in this Yearly Meeting. I have also found that change is slower and harder than I thought. I imagined that it could be done with a much broader brush. I think that my work has been most effective in the fine strokes, the small moves that make bigger, more widespread results. It has taken individual conversations, step-by-step guidance, personal handwritten letters, phone calls, lunch dates, and late night conversations to start to see momentum. Simply handing out a business card, and a schedule of events will not result in a widespread increase in involvement. This work we are committed to as a Yearly Meeting is done through relationships. People really want to know that they are known and heard and cared about if they are going to be connected. This is more important than I realized at the start. Knowing each other is deeply personal, and often uncertain and scary. I cannot stress this enough. I have learned that people of all ages feel connected when they are reached out to, and noticed. And, when we do this for each other, people stay. I hear it all the time. People have felt noticed, and when they are, there are deep bonds between the noticed and the noticer. Those connections between people of all ages, become landmarks in Spiritual journeys. People crave connection. I see this desire evidenced in people eagerly sharing their time, homes, hearts and faith journeys with me. This work that we do takes TIME and EFFORT, and it is an HONOR for all that are engaging in it. It is taking us out of our comfort zone. It is an act of *faith* to know each other, name and support gifts, and CHANGE what we have done, or are doing, with this new knowledge. We are doing just that, Friends. We have much work to do, but look what we have done! Thank you!

Respectfully submitted,

Gabrielle Savory Bailey