

**Seventh month, 20th–26th days, 2008**  
**Silver Bay, New York**

Loving Greetings to Friends Everywhere,

A soft nourishing rain welcomed us to our 313th Session of New York Yearly Meeting on Lake George, inviting 473 adults and 184 Junior Yearly Meeting participants to sink deeply down into our “Spiritual Community across the Spectrum of Age.” During the course of the week the rains continued to pour down as did the power of God working in our midst.

We opened our week together with an older Friend telling a story to our small ones. The stolen rainbow in the poignant story tells of the discovery that hope lives within us all, across the spectrum of our experiences and ages.

Our general secretary, Christopher Sammond, noted that we were in a place of pausing, asking us to use our spiritual energy in seeking guidance to discern our direction and readiness to address the impending global crises. He asked us to deeply consider: What do we want to create?

Christine DeRoller and Michael Clark, youth directors at Powell House, New York Yearly Meeting’s retreat center, were our plenary speakers on “Breaking Down the Boxes: A Practicum in Listening.” In an experiential program, they raised us from our seats and joyfully jumbled us up in games and activities where we met and made new friends of all ages. Our intergenerational community was deeply affirmed.

Our Bible study, led by Eden Grace of New England Yearly Meeting, opened the vision of the Kingdom of God among us as we examined the description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation. Richly interwoven into her commentary were related Biblical passages and Eden’s personal experiences of witnessing the political and spiritual struggles of the Kenyans with whom she works.

Our second Meeting for Discernment was held for a full day at our Summer Sessions. Six hours of worship over three sessions opened us to hearing how the Spirit is at work in us as a body. Many felt nurtured by the time together, and over half were compelled to remain in Worship longer. We saw some themes emerging and felt the value and the burden of our seeking together for its own sake. As spiritual seekers we deepened our understanding of ourselves, each other, and our communities.

Some issues that had been labored and seasoned in committees included youth programs, racism, care of our earth, work in prisons, conscientious objection, and Alternatives to Violence Programs, both abroad and in the U.S. Aging Resources, Consultation, and Help (ARCH), a program connecting seniors, meetings, and families to resources, has begun its pilot program, and the Young Friends in Residence, a program of middle school youth conferences run by young adult Friends, has taken another step toward realization.

Presentations by Friends working with AVP in Columbia, Ache, and Bolivia, the work of FUM in Kenya, and the Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities (HROC) workshops in Burundi and Rwanda humbled us with their powerful witness.

Many of us are challenged and pained by Friends United Meeting personnel policy, homophobic remarks made at an FUM board meeting in Kakamega, Kenya, and the affirmation of the Richmond Declaration as the faith basis of FUM. We are seeking clarity about how to be in association with the rest of FUM. We are clear that, for now, we are called to rest in that lack of clarity, though it pains us deeply to do so. We are reminded that what we seek to be about is love, peace, integrity, and seeing the Divine in others.

A NYYM Minute on Torture was put forth and approved. The Minute articulated our witness to Friends everywhere and to the wider world, calling on all to be guided by the Spirit into respect for all humanity.

Throughout the week, the Healing Center provided a place of worship supporting the physical and spiritual needs of many Friends.

We delighted in hearing our Junior Yearly Meeting epistles during their Business Meeting. This year, our 11th and 12th graders joined adults in morning Worship Groups as part of their Program. JYM groups attended Business Meeting at the end of each morning session for Community Worship.

Together we worked, we played, we spent time in worship and discernment. Throughout the week the nearly continual rains kept us largely indoors; in community, in relationship, and in ourselves; renewing our inner resources for our work this coming year.

Sing and rejoice, ye children of the day and of the light; for the Lord is at work in this thick night of darkness that may be felt. And truth doth flourish as the rose, and the lilies do grow amongst the thorns, and the plants atop of the hills, and upon them the lambs do skip and play.

*George Fox, 9th month 1663, Epistle 227*

On behalf of the New York Yearly Meeting,

Ernestine Buscemi, clerk