

Epistle—Young Adult Concerns Committee

New York Yearly Meeting

To Friends Everywhere,

On May 30, 2014- June 1, 2014, members of the Young Adult Concerns Committee of the New York Yearly Meeting of Friends gratefully gathered in Alfred, NY supported by the hospitality of Alfred Monthly Meeting who fed and housed us. We gathered with the intention of deepening in worship together, expanding our understandings of our individual Faith journeys and discerning our leadings as a committee. What occurred exceeded those goals. We envisioned the ways in which our committee is being led to serve the Yearly Meeting, even if it diverges from what is anticipated or expected of us. We aspire to nurture and connect Young Adult Friends (YAF) within the Yearly Meeting and beyond, but we are also called to nurture and support the Religious Society of Friends as a whole.

We foresee Young Adult Friends leading a worldwide Quaker movement that utilizes the tools, old and new, that our Faith offers to enable Friends (and friends) to deepen in Spiritual inter-visitation, prayers, worship, discernment, clearness, stories, workshops, and Opportunities. We see ourselves acting as a foundation to nurture growth and Faithfulness within society (and our Religious Society) through our positive outlook of change. We can challenge ourselves to look deeply at our Faith (and our Faith community) and in turn challenge others to do the same. In recognizing this, we challenged ourselves to stop dwelling in obscure language and instead hold in the light the corners of our Faith community in which there is darkness. As we held these concerns, we endeavored to tenderly and faithfully listen and move forward with integrity.

What is a Quaker? What do Quakers believe? What is “worship”? What does it mean to be in Community? We realized, through a simple role-playing exercise, that we do not all know how to answer these questions, nor have most of us ever been encouraged to try. This was profound. How have some of us grown from children to adults, within a religious society, without ever taking the opportunity to learn what it is that we are, or rather what we are striving to be? This was frustrating at first: why did there seem to be so few opportunities to speak about our Faith with one other? However, it quickly became joyful and exciting to have a forum to express our experiences of the Divine and our Faith and to endeavor to live in a way that testifies to these experiences. We embraced this blessed invitation to go deep with each other, giving time to those things that are often overlooked or taken as self-evident. We continued with awareness of our jargon, taking time to define what we meant when we said things like “let’s settle.” Unsurprisingly, this meant something different to each of us. But all definitions fostered the experience that we all seek.

We are called to action. Our God is dynamic. We must respond to continuing revelation among us and support the *new* leadings of the Divine working among us. Our Faith is active. How can we live *deeply* into our Faith? We sense that it will require much more than what our current structures offer. This energizes us.