

Epistle from the 194th Session

Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends
Seventh Month 30, 2014 to Eighth Month 3, 2014

Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path. Ps 119:105

The Friends of Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting met at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana from 7/30-8/3/2014. We gathered under the theme “Living up to Our Light”. The question that we addressed in our time together was: how is our light embodied in action? As Friends met, the answers that gradually emerged began to move us toward the truth that light is entrusted to all of us, not just to us as individuals.

In plenary sessions, workshops, small groups, interest groups, and other activities all of us were given the difficult question: how can our light make a difference in a broken world? As our sacred time together progressed, we experienced not despair but a powerful sense of hope that we can make a difference. In living up to our light together, we are empowered to change the world.

The light given each of us is like a screen made up of many pixels that alone do not look like anything, but taken together form a beautiful picture. From our individual gifts we have a role to play, however small, that is our part of the whole. We were given encouragement, tools, and opportunities to put our gifts and testimonies into practice.

We were reminded that we are not alone in this enterprise. Others join with us to bring growth in each one of us, much as plants grow toward the light. An awareness of the problems of our world could not be avoided but seeds were planted that can only bear fruit if we care for ourselves, our families, our meetings, and the communities where we live, breathe, and have our being.

There is much work to do in the healing of our world and we received both encouragement and tools to set about this work.

In the Light,
Stephen Angell, Clerk

Epistle from the Teens

On the last week of the seventh month in the year of two thousand and fourteen, nine teens joined the Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting sessions to foster community and spiritual growth. Most of our objectives were met to the highest degree. Through various activities, such as the intergenerational canoe trip, creation of crafts to fundraise for our service trip to Costa Rica, and late night interactions and conversations helped develop deep bonds within our community and to the larger body.

Community building was not the end goal of our interactions. We sought and continue to seek a deeper spiritual grounding within our lives. We returned this session to the practice of worship sharing and personal spiritual time every night to enhance and develop our knowledge and bond with our own spirituality. Along with this daily routine, this year the teen program was centered closely upon understanding our inner light and using the light to practice our Quaker testimonies. This included an in depth panel discussion with three gathering members all from different backgrounds in their Quaker practice. Diann Herzog, Willhelmina Branson and Erik Clevon joined us in this conversation and gave different perspectives on spirituality and practice. As always we would like to thank the members of the larger community who reached out to us to share their wisdom and who made space to listen to us. We appreciate the realization that intergenerational communities require effort from all age groups and look forward to future interactions. Special thanks goes to Susan Stark, George Lakey, Roland Kreager, and all others who shared their stories and beliefs with us this year.

We would like to take a moment to ask all of you to hold in the light several members of our community who could not attend OVYM sessions this year because of health or family issues. Hold in the light all those who live in parts of the world affected by war and violence, those who have yet to find the light through peace, and those who need our help and compassion. Also, take a moment to hold in the light All of our loved ones, whether or not they were able to attend the OVYM. Thank you.

Epistle from the Middle Youth

Greetings from the Middle Youth who attended the 194th sessions of the Ohio Valley yearly Meeting held at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana the 30th day of Seventh Month, 2014.

Nine Middle Youth Friends from Ohio and Indiana were present. It was the largest group we have had for several years.

We did many activities that connected to the theme of “Living Up to Out Light.” On Thursday we went to the Levi Coffin House and learned about how his family helped slaves on the Underground Railroad. On Friday we went rafting on the Whitewater River. The red raft won the first leg and the blue raft the second but both groups had fun, counted turtles, and went swimming with the fish.

Saturday we went to Huddleston Historic Farm. We learned about how the Huddleston family helped travelers going west on the National Road and volunteered our time weeding the garden and moving tables to help maintain the farm for other visitors, Later that day we talked with George Lakey about his activism to stop mountaintop removal and how we can help.

Mountaintop removal inspired the idea for our skit for the talent show, which took up most of the Saturday.

We had a great week seeing our friends and making new ones while learning what it means to live in our light. Special thanks to Erin Pulley from AFSC and Susan Stark who both spent time with us this week.

We look forward to coming to yearly Meeting again next year, and not just for the ice cream.

Middle Youth, 7th Month, 2014

Epistle from the Children

Greetings to Young Friends Everywhere,

The Children's Program of the Ohio Yearly Meeting met July 29 – August 2, 2014, on the campus of Earlham College. The theme of Living Up To Our Light guided our program.

We discussed how God is like Light. God shines the Light on people. When people are sad they can feel God and the spirit and be lifted to know God is holding them in the Light.

We shared many concerns. We went to the animal shelter to give the homeless cats some catnip. We raised money to help kids with cancer and to stop pollution. We are also concerned about chickens being eaten and trees being cut down.

We enjoyed rhyming with our new friend, Susan Stark. We shared and would like to send our message about the importance of reaching out to make new friends and find our common ground with people we don't know.