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## **2014 INTERMOUNTAIN YEARLY MEETING – MAIN EPISTLE**

### **June 11 - 15, 2014, with Early Days June 8 -11**

### **Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu, New Mexico, USA**

Dear Friends Everywhere,

Intermountain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (IMYM), made up of seventeen monthly meetings in Colorado, Utah, Arizona, New Mexico and Western Texas, met amongst the red-soiled mesas, dry arroyos and soul-stirring vistas of Ghost Ranch near Abiquiu, New Mexico. Friends gathered for our fortieth annual sessions during the week of 6<sup>th</sup> month, 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014, with early days the 8<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup>. 289 Friends attended, with 75 children in that number. Optional early days allowed for relaxation before our business began, with 60% of IMYM attendees taking part.

IMYM is the only yearly meeting that is a member of Fellowship of Quakers in the Arts, and our diverse early days seminars reflected that. This year they included a full palette of workshops in the arts—theater, writing, watercolor, storytelling movement, SoulCollage®, and creative discernment. We see art as an effective tool for positive change in our needy world.

IMYM implemented a new organizational structure this year. We have replaced our overworked Continuing Committee with a structure including more volunteers as the Representatives Committee (the discerning voice of our monthly meetings, standing committees and youth group leaders) and the Arrangements Committee (which plans and implements the annual gathering).

Continuing our focus on the Kabarak Call for Peace and Ecojustice from last annual sessions, our theme this year was “What do we have to offer as Quakers in these challenging times?” We were blessed to have Diane Randall, Executive Secretary of Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), and Shan Cretin, General Secretary of American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) as our plenary keynote speakers. They spoke about a joint initiative of FCNL and AFSC to envision a new U.S. foreign policy grounded in worldwide shared security for our global community. It is a big project, a fifty-year vision, but we are excited by the collaboration of these two strong Quaker organizations and the conversation they have started among us. The speakers emphasized that we must have both an inward faith journey and outward witness to make effective change in the world. The Peace Testimony is not so much a philosophical position but the fruit of an inward spiritual journey. Diane Randall expressed her belief that Friends can offer the world our abiding love of the Spirit that takes away the occasion for all war. Shan Cretin challenged us to start our work in the world by laying down the worn out American and Quaker exceptionalism that we bear, shining a light on our privilege. We must heed George Fox’s admonitions and be a pattern, walk cheerfully and really see that of God in everyone.

So, what does a faith-based Quaker witness in the world look like?

- \_It looks like an IMYM Young Adult Friend, reporting on his experience as Friends General Conference Gathering clerk, sharing a vision of a coming Quaker Renaissance.
- \_It looks like an artist making a movie about homelessness in her hometown.
- \_It looks like getting to know each other more deeply in our beloved small daily worship sharing groups. One of the morning groups is held in Spanish, reflecting our appreciation for Latino heritage and cultures and our proximity to the U.S./Mexico border, once north, but now south of this land. Afternoon groups are intergenerational, led by our Senior Young Friends.

- \_It looks like Friends Peace Teams getting trained in trauma healing in Nepal and taking the technique back to New Mexico prisons.
- \_It looks like working with one another to shift from the big theoretical conversation of privilege to examining what we can actively do to create change.
- \_It looks like our adult meeting creating a safe space for our Junior and Senior Young Friends to share in an intergenerational Listening Session on Youth and the Quaker Testimonies.
- \_It looks like the lives of elderly friends, celebrated in their memorial minutes, who exemplified inward journey and outward witness.
- \_It looks like our own musicians forming a Contra Band with our own caller for our Friday night dance, using our gifts to spread joy in our midst.

After two years of work, and in solidarity with indigenous rights organizations, IMYM approved a minute affirming the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Over two plenary sessions we tenderly labored with this concern, wanting to be certain we were supporting the voices of indigenous peoples without creating an “us versus them” dichotomy and not outrunning our guide. This was deep and heartfelt work as we desire to live in right relationship. The minute is attached. Upon hearing the keynote speakers and the reports from Friends organizations, an octogenarian Friend remarked, “we are leaving the Society of Friends in good hands.” We feel energized by hope as we hear the voices of our youth and reports on our service in the world. We enjoy acknowledging the threads of connection we have and cultivate in the complex Quaker web and send our greetings and encouragement to you.

How is God calling you to live into the vision of the world that we seek?

In the Light, Intermountain Yearly Meeting of Friends

Sara Keeney, Clerk  
imymclerk@hotmail.com  
imym.org