

Junior Friends Session (Session 4)**July 14, 2016****7:00 pm – 8:30 pm**

After 15 minutes of group singing led by Carter Costello and Solange Marcotte, the Junior Friends (JF) group began a presentation to explain how they *do* Junior Friends. Part of the presentation involved their answering questions gathered from the Friends who were listening. Finally, during closing worship, they asked for feedback from the assembled Friends.

Junior Friends' Code of Conduct

A major aspect of how Junior Friends do what they do at annual session is their Code of Conduct. They listed and explained the elements of the code: no sex or other sex-related activities; no illegal drugs, alcohol, or tobacco; attendance at mandatory activities; getting enough sleep; respecting others' rights; doing no harm or potential harm to self or others; and compassionate and respectful interactions with others. Their committee structure includes a Concerns Committees to whom Junior Friends can turn if they are uncomfortable with anything occurring during the session and other JF gatherings. The code was created by Junior Friends and is affirmed at the start of each of their gatherings.

[They led us through an appreciation-of-each-other activity that demonstrated part of their developing closeness and creating life-long friendships.]

Worship Sharing

Their understanding of this practice was described by using a comparison—each speech and the subsequent silence is like dropping a pebble into a pond and then letting the ripples settle until the pond becomes calm again. This lets the words that were spoken settle and sink in.

They advise stepping up and stepping back, meaning that those who would tend to share often step back to listen and those who are quieter step up and share. This holds the group together in a special way. They expect each person to speak their own truth and not someone else's truth. They also do not respond directly to someone else's speaking.

Meetings for Business

The focus during meetings for attention to business is on recognizing the present of the Spirit; business meeting is not about individual agendas but about what is best for the group. At the current annual session they worked through Quaker Process 101, a period during which they talked about aspects of Quaker decision-making process. These included listening for the Spirit, being open to transformation, and recognizing that it is important that all voices are heard and listening is full. In both worship sharing and meetings for business, the Spirit lives in the silence that is part of the process.

[They then asked us to participate in a game that led to much laughter.] The time that they spend in worship and business is joyous and laughter is an expression of the Light—lively, energetic, dynamic.

Q&A Segment

During this segment of the presentation they solicited questions from the listeners. What kinds of issues does the Concerns Committee address? Relationships between the JFs and their advisors, specific instances during which a JF is uncomfortable with process, conversations that have occurred, any sort of hard time. All conversations with the Concerns Committee are confidential.

About what are they passionate? Currently, they are most open to discussion of gender issues and gender identity, including bathroom usage issues. Inclusivity is their overarching principle.

How do they take what they learn in Junior Friends to other places besides Yearly Meeting? They use the habits and processes learned here in a variety of ways in their everyday lives. How do they choose their co-clerks? They have their own Nominating Committee. After the nominees agree that they are willing to serve, appointments are affirmed in their meeting for business. They have several other committees in addition to the Concerns Committee. How do they resolve conflicts? It depends on the type of conflict. Resolution may simply be one-to-one, or it may involve the Concerns Committee. Members of this committee are chosen because they have conflict resolution skills.

What do Junior Friends want from the adults in the Yearly Meeting? Love and respect, interest in their process, less separation between groups, more advisors and friendly adults, funds for Guatemala, learning from each other, asking them for their opinions, joining in their activities.

How can the adults obtain Junior Friends' opinions? Talk with their co-clerks or Concerns Committee members.

What might their role in Yearly Meeting be after they move out of Junior Friends? Further development of leadership skills. At first they will still be seeking to understand their own lives.

Should there be a clearness committee process for helping Junior Friends make the transition to Young Adult Friends? It might not be necessary, or some help might be needed.

What are the roles of the Junior Friends advisors? As a stabilizing influence and promoting liaison between Junior Friends and the rest of the Yearly Meeting.

Their biggest current issues are the following: (1) what advisors should be and do, (2) gender identity and the choice of campuses for holding Yearly Meeting, and (3) appropriate uses of and reliance on technology.

We were reminded again that inclusivity is especially important to all of them.

In the final worship period, they asked for and received feedback from the adult Friends. Reported by Angie Alexander, Recording Clerk