



# NYM Journal

Friends EnLightening Friends

Volume 5 | Issue 1

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Summer/Fall 2023



*Lions Lake, Lions Camp, Wisconsin Foundation*

## Northern Yearly Meeting

**Annual Session Epistle**  
**May 26–29, 2023**

To our Friends everywhere:

Historically, Northern Yearly Meeting Annual Session on Memorial Day weekend in Rosholt, Wisconsin has meant at least some period of time spent in rain and clouds, hunkered down under cover of tent flap or roof...but this year we found ourselves under bright skies, warm temps, and seemingly endless sun. The kids and youth took to this grace and went to boats, beaches, and board games without hesitation; many adults took somewhat longer to blink in the sun and realize just how much light there was around us.

It has, though, been four years since NYM met in person as a full gathering. Perhaps a small amount of blinking is in order as we return.

Our collective, shared discussion theme this year was *Pruning Before Growth*. To make this metaphor

real, our workshop leaders brought a houseplant to the opening session and—to some gasps—pruned off a long tendril in order to plant it in a more spacious pot elsewhere, while making room for new growth to emerge.

The weekend's agenda also pruned some traditional events and relocated them. The big budget meeting and State of Society reports were done a week prior to NYM, leaving more time during the Annual Gathering for unstructured time: people seemed happy to splash in the lake, play some board games, and find spontaneous conversations on the green.

Organizers split attendees into small groups to discuss a shared theme each day: *Pruning Before Growth*. This newschedule also included a Quaker Organizations Fair, which allowed for more questions and conversations between NYM Friends and representatives of different Quaker agencies. It also allowed the representatives from the different organizations to talk with each other as led in the moment, rather than with strict agendas!

With the decision to have neither workshops nor plenaries, the organizers created lots of fertile ground for *connecting*.

A seasoned Friend who had been away for four years commented that the mix of deep familiarity and the sense of a lot of time having passed felt a bit surreal. He described *deja vu*: simultaneously accustomed, joyful, and strange. At this gathering, the first full in-

person gathering since 2019, many people described feelings of coming home, reuniting, connecting, and glorying in tradition and years-old customs. At the same time, things felt different, changed, and new. Many Friends have returned physically to NYM after four years away or only connecting on Zoom. Others are meeting Friends in person with whom they have a deep connection, which has until now only been realized online.

## Letter from the Editor

Tom Darrow

Kenosha-Racine Worship Group

Upon returning to school in the fall, children often receive the assignment of writing about their activities during their summer recess. However, children do not engage exclusively in this task. Around the country and indeed the world, Friends have quite a bit to say about their summer activities and experiences. This issue of the NYM Journal collects Epistles and memoirs of Friends from yearly meetings to the east and the west of our central location as well as those from Europe and Australasia. While so many of us participated in our own Annual Session, reconnecting, worshipping and discerning important matters, Friends around the globe were participating in these very same activities.

What do these writings tell us? They show us that we all care about the living witness of our Quaker testimonies. They indicate the concern we all have about the earth and the quality of life that we all live. They tell us of the respect we have for our past and the concern we have about the future. They tell us of the reverent worship of the seasoned members and the exuberance of youth. They tell us of the sorrow of losing dear members and the excitement of welcoming new.

Friends gather; Friends worship; Friends discern.



Photo by Robert Vajagich

This year's Gathering included 180 people, plus 10-15 joining on Zoom. 48 attendees are new to NYM Annual Gathering! 35 children and youth participated this year, as well as a strong, healthy, and engaged contingent of Young Adult Friends. We were pleased to also welcome Friends from Friends General Conference, the American Friends Service Committee, Scattergood Friends School, and young adult visitors from Germany traveling as part of a "Bus-eum" educational project.

Although it was hard to be far away from the dear friends gathered together at Lion's Camp, those joining by Zoom appreciated being able to share some portion of the time together as remote participants. Getting the sound system and microphones working initially produced some noises and squeals; people speaking received calls to hold the mic differently...but with some diligent work from the Planning Committee and the tech support team, remote participation in the Business Meetings got smoother and smoother as the weekend went on. Several remote attendees especially

appreciated the live transcripts, as well as the experience of gathering in the small group discussions, which they described as tender and genuinely helpful. One remote attender said of the weekend, “I felt like I wasn’t alone.”

The Children and Youth stayed active and engaged in shopping and cooking together, planting seeds (pickle plants!), laughing, and playing unending, epically long games of Everybody’s It and Frisbee. Some of the younger Friends built a full blanket fort community, complete with a Meeting House at its center. Bright tie-dyeing created lasting memories and the Soggy Grass Symphony made its clanking, buzzing debut at the traditional yearly Talent Show. The parents, deeply grateful to those who cared for and led the children and youth, gathered for walks, long talks, and many cups of coffee. The Parents Support Group continued a conversation from the NYM Youth and Family Camp Gathering in 2022 exploring Quaker parenting and what NYM can do to support parents.

The pandemic has left notable changes in all of us, but one positive change has been how normal it now is to connect with people via video. Many NYM committees and working groups have now gathered by Zoom for years. Committee members said they now feel less pressure to get business done specifically during the three days of NYM, as they know they can find focused time away from the Gathering to meet productively and virtually.

Amidst the sunlight and singing, we acknowledge what we have lost: particular and beloved members have died or moved on, three years of pandemic anxiety has left lingering effects on us, our children have missed three formative years of opportunities to grow together. Fewer people came to this year’s gathering than in years past. We are tired, doing too much, surviving, and getting through: we relished this weekend’s time and space to breathe and rest and reform community, but also feel acutely just how badly we’ve needed it.

As we finish this round of pruning and preparing for new growth, NYM’s Nominating Committee’s efforts to fill committees drew our attention: We need to more fully take back up efforts we paused during the height

of the pandemic. As we collectively heal and re-emerge, we need to rebuild committees, institutional memory, and active engagement in the work we are called to—and need to do—as Friends.

These are the pots and this is the soil in which we found ourselves this weekend: we are pruned, some by intention, some by accident. We are gasping, sometimes, at the prospect of profound change. Quaking, even, as we grow.



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Baltimore Yearly Meeting; Used with permission

## Baltimore Yearly Meeting

**Annual Epistle  
August 6, 2023**

To Friends Everywhere:

Nearly 200 Friends of all ages gathered for our Baltimore Yearly Meeting's 351st Annual Session at the Hood College campus in Frederick, Maryland and over 25 additional Friends participated on-line. Our theme was *Building Our Community with Love and Tenderness*. Our opening retreat explored queries related to what binds us together. In building our communities, individuals are like irregular stones with many different shapes and sizes and sometimes jagged edges. For Friends, neither dogma nor hierarchy are the mortar to bind these stones together.

We were encouraged by BYM General Secretary, Sarah Gillooly, to pay attention to and be guided by what lights us up inside. In this spirit, BYM Friends were encouraged to share our passions, joys, and interests with one another as we entered into community and considered our future together.

We have difficult work to do. Sometimes we're successful. When we get it wrong or make mistakes, we must commit to correcting them together, not shouting across the quiet divide, but listening to each other and responding with kindness and appreciation for each other.

We celebrate the vigorous ministry of BYM camps which engages over 600 children each summer in the exploration of nature, worship, and spiritual community. Our STRIDE (Strengthening Transformative Relationships in Diverse Environments) program is successfully diversifying the composition of our staff and campers.

This year we made a spirit-led decision to move one of our 4 camps, Opequon Quaker Camp, to the 1600 acre Rolling Ridge Conservancy with a 40-year lease, undertaking the financial and logistical complexities of moving the camp and opening it there in 2024.

BYM continues to strive to live into our commitment to be an anti-racist faith community. We have experienced strain as we embrace the intricacies of our complicity in systemic racism in our society. We seek to repair relationships with Friends who have been harmed by our actions, inactions, and words. We are starting to consider reparations, a concept many find uncomfortable. Meetings and individual Friends are encouraged to move beyond discomfort, to start conversations, to be creative and act. We envision becoming a hive coming together trying local reparations that can be a model for state and federal reparations. There is a clear desire to act and a rising urgency among us.

We approved a significant revision to BYM Faith and Practice covering topics central to our faith: *The Quaker Experience and Meeting for Worship*, the first such revision since 1988.

We heard reports from several BYM Friends who attended the Friends United Meeting Triennial in Kenya this summer; including our General Secretary and Clerk. We were reminded that it has been 21 years since BYM faced the question of how to stay in relation to FUM despite profound concerns about personnel policies that restricted service opportunities on the basis of sexuality. The inter-visitation program that we began at that time, to listen and connect with each other, continues to bear fruit.

Jared Wood, a father and Opequon Camp Director, shared inspiring and formative stories from his rich and diverse heritage during our opening plenary.

He described the experience of being a Black father having to choose between survival and joy. He concluded saying that: “Liberation is continuing revelation within individuals, within families, and within communities, it is Redefinition.” Rich sharing followed afterwards in response to two queries: What liberatory traditions can be gleaned from your family story? When do you make decisions automatically that you don’t feel good about, and where do those decisions come from?

We had a wonderful opportunity to participate in programmed worship with the Friends Church of Baltimore and joyfully experienced *A Taste of Africa*.

Diego Navarro delivered the Carey Lecture entitled: *Healing of Harm through Sacred Space and the Genius of Quakerism*. He left BYM and our constituent home Meetings with several challenges: (1) adopt a process for identifying and addressing harm; and (2) conduct an epigenetic historic accounting of BYM’s complicity in slavery and associated businesses, and BYM’s complicity in stealing indigenous lands and participation in the Indian boarding schools.

In our worship, business meetings, workshops, worship-sharing, Bible Study, meals together, and other activities this week, we’ve seen that of God in everyone — and renew our intention to welcome all newcomers as well as returning Friends, to go deeper together, and to let our Light shine in the world.

*Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand.* ~ Isaac Penington

*Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends has existed for more than 300 years. Geographically, it includes most of Virginia, the portion of Maryland west of the Chesapeake Bay, central Pennsylvania, the District of Columbia, and parts of West Virginia. It has about 4,740 members--Friends of all ages--organized into 40 Monthly Meetings plus 13 Preparative Meetings and Worship Groups. 2023 Epistle reprinted with permission.*



## Aunt Ella’s Front Porch

Irene Bialas  
Kenosha-Racine Worship Group

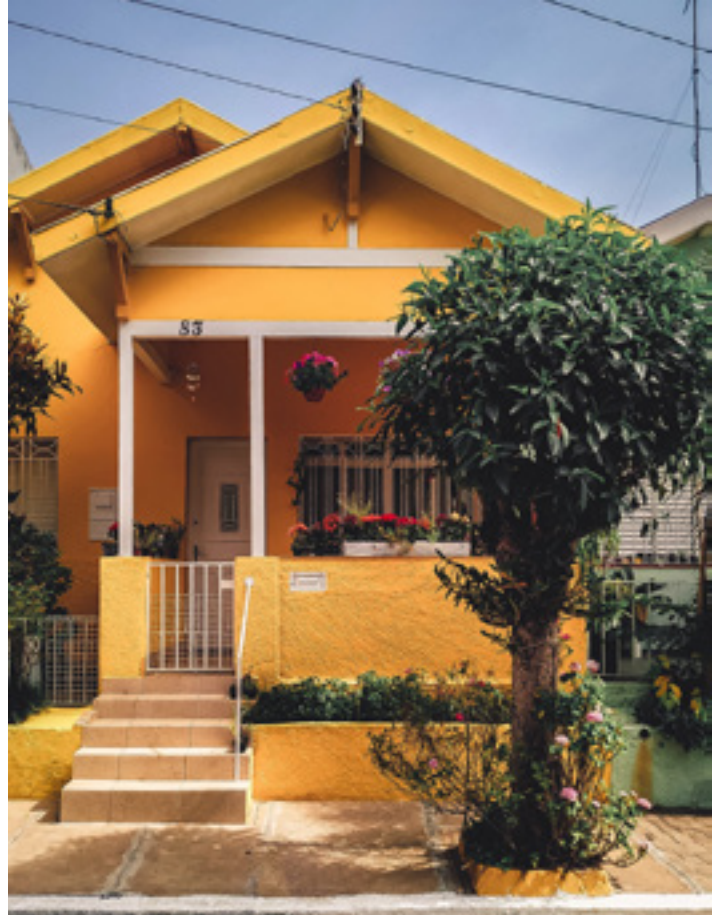


Photo by Gustavo Santana

The other day Aunt Ella was musing about, “false modesty.” It’s a term that defines a trait that is often heard in social settings when a compliment is given. She pointed out that it starts innocently enough with one person giving another a compliment. She defined the trait by talking about two of her friends: Irene and Ruth.

The game starts when Ruth pays Irene a compliment. She might say, “I love your dress.” Irene responds with “Oh, it’s really nothing.” This leaves Ruth with the choice of either agreeing with Irene by nodding her head, as if to say, “You’re right, your dress is nothing” or “upping” the compliment by saying, “Oh, no it’s fabulous! I love those colors and those buttons are simply great and how clever it was of you to pair the purple dress with the blue belt which brings out the color of your eyes!” Job well done,

Aunt Ella would say. Irene has taken Ruth's simple dress compliment and turned it into a rave of her eyes and ability to accessorize!

In a more advanced form, false modesty can be used when acknowledgment of talent or skills are involved. Ruth points out to Irene that Irene has a talent for project management. Irene replies with "Oh, it's nothing really. Anybody can do it. I simply see the task at hand and organize it." This leaves Ruth with the thought, "If it's so simple, then why can't I do it. I must be an idiot!" (Ruth suffers from low esteem anyway). Nice job! Now to cover her own feelings of inadequacy Ruth replies to Irene's "it's nothing" statement with, "Oh, but you're so smart! You are so good with other people. You are so precise. I could never do what you do." Milking, milking, and milking. Again, the simple compliment has been advanced to one that includes intelligence, attention to detail and people skills. All with Irene exuding innocence rather than guile.

On the other hand, no one wants to be deemed a braggart. Even the braggarts don't want to be recognized for what they are. So, what does one do: run like hell when someone starts to pay you a compliment? Aunt Ella pointed out that there is a solution to the problem. Simply acknowledge the compliment. A simple thank would suffice, but if you feel that you must fill the ensuing silence you could go on by saying something like, "This dress is a favorite of mine" or "How kind of you to notice my dress." As to project management, the response is equally as simple with an acknowledgement of the hard work that it took to become a project manager or a reference to someone who taught you the skills.

False modesty is a trap for almost everyone, including Quakers. It is part of the fabric of the Friends to act modestly, to dress modestly, and to be modest. So, as the song lyrics state: "Free your mind (a)nd the rest will follow." Simply, acknowledge that which the Light has given us.

Oh, and at the end of the conversation, when I asked Aunt Ella why it was called "false modesty," she replied, "It's because Irene really does believe she has great taste in clothes and has a talent for project management."



## An Urgent Call to the Religious Society of Friends

July 2023

The Steering Committee of the Urgent Call has continued prayerfully to discern whether and how we are called to further action in anticipation of the 2024 elections and the continuing threats to our democracy.

In light of the events since the mid-term elections, we believe that our original Urgent Call to the Religious Society of Friends,\* endorsed by more than 720 individuals and 80 Quaker Meetings and organizations nationwide, is as relevant and urgent now as when it was first issued.

Many Friends worked hard during the 2022 mid-terms to protect our elections and rebuild democracy by registering voters and serving as canvassers, poll workers, poll watchers, and election officials. To our great relief, the elections were conducted safely and without major problems. Many voters overcame partisan efforts to restrict their access to the polls and rejected election deniers and extremist candidates in key races.

Regrettably, we see that truth, democracy, equality, and civility continue to be under unprecedented attack by authoritarian movements in our society. These extremist movements, many anchored in the tenets of white supremacy, are aggressively pursuing an agenda

that counters equality, integrity, community, peace and justice. Their actions include racist attacks on people and communities of color, restricting voter access to the ballot, denying health care choices for women and LGBTQI+ people, and refusing to address the scourge of gun violence. Meanwhile, the existential threats of the climate crisis are growing dramatically, requiring urgent action to transition rapidly from an economy based almost entirely on fossil fuels to one based totally on clean energy.

We believe Friends are called to persevere in seeking and speaking truth, followed by right action.

We urge Friends to consider taking the following actions, both individually and corporately through our Quaker monthly and yearly meetings, wherever possible working with allied groups to increase the impact of our witness:

1. Publicly affirm our core belief that God gives every human being a measure of Divine Light and encourage every person to act in accordance with that holy witness within them.
2. Publicly denounce all efforts to subvert free and fair elections through voting restrictions, gerrymandering, and other undemocratic means; work to protect and promote free and fair elections by volunteering as poll-workers and election officials; actively support conscientious election officials and state attorneys general.
3. Publicly affirm our historical and religious commitment to the radical equality of all human beings under God. Take up the work of recognizing and repairing the racism, anti-Semitism, homophobia, and other oppressions in our midst, even as we counter intolerant and vindictive forces at work in the broader society.
4. Publicly denounce the MAGA and related authoritarian movements, including their continued lies, distortions, support for autocratic leaders, and attacks on individual liberties and democratic institutions. We are called to counter the use of hate, threats, and violence whenever and wherever we see them.

5. Act locally to support good candidates running for office. Working together as allies of and in coalition with other faith communities and community-based organizations, particularly those led by Black, Indigenous, People of Color and LGBTQI+ people, can help build community and strengthen the impact of our actions.
6. Circulate the Urgent Call within our meetings, churches, and Quaker organizations for individual and organizational endorsements.

The Urgent Call Steering Committee pledges to serve as a hub for communication, conversation, learning, and support as Friends act for truth and democracy over the next 16 months. We will organize periodic national Zoom calls and training sessions to support and facilitate our witness together.

The first national Zoom call is scheduled for September 28, 2023 from 7–9 pm EDT. We are delighted that Parker Palmer, noted Quaker author and teacher, will be providing an opening message on “The Better Angels of Our Nature: Love, Truth, Justice & the Work of We the People.” Please print, post, and distribute the attached flyer in your meeting and elsewhere.\*

Our second call this fall (to be scheduled) will be a learning opportunity to understand the bi-partisan American Anti-Corruption Act, and how your endorsement and work with allied organizations for its passage locally and nationally could lead to major reforms needed to protect truly democratic, free and fair elections.

These national Zoom calls provide opportunities for us to gather in community, affirm our commitment to worship, learn together, and prepare to act locally. Register for these National Calls and future trainings at [www.quakercall.net](http://www.quakercall.net).

### **Who we are**

We are 19 Friends--many of whom have served in public roles in Quaker organizations--are gravely concerned about the deliberate falsehoods and coordinated efforts currently underway to subvert our democracy. If this politically motivated takeover movement succeeds, any hope of progress on the urgent issues of our time will be lost.

We invite Friends and friends of Friends to enter into a national dialogue to discern how best to respond to this urgent challenge.

**Marian Beane**

Charlotte Friends Meeting, Piedmont Friends - Yearly Meeting and Fellowship

**Bruce Birchard**

Central Philadelphia Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Former General Secretary, Friends General Conference

**Laura Boyce**

Providence Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Ujima Friends Peace Center

**Martha Bryans**

Downingtown Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

**Sam Caldwell**

Providence Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Former General Secretary, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

**Gretchen Castle**

Doylestown Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Dean, Earlham School of Religion, Former General Secretary, Friends World Committee for Consultation World Office

**Robert Dockhorn**

Green Street Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

**Tom Ewell**

Whidbey Island Friends Meeting, North Pacific Yearly Meeting

**Eileen Flanagan**

Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

**John Holding**

Lopez Island Friends Meeting, North Pacific Yearly Meeting

**Ayesha Imani**

Ujima Friends Meeting, Philadelphia, Clerk, Ujima Friends Peace Center, Former Clerk of the Fellowship of Friends of African Descent

**Phil Lord**

Ujima Friends Meeting, Chestnut Hill Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

**Mary Ellen McNish**

Byberry Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Former General Secretary, American Friends Service Committee

**Diane Randall**

Hartford Friends Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting, Sojourning Friends Meeting of Washington, Baltimore Yearly Meeting, Former General Secretary, Friends Committee on National Legislation

**Christina Repoley**

Atlanta Friends Meeting, Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association, Founding Director of Quaker Voluntary Service

**Colin Saxton**

North Valley Friends Meeting, Newberg, Oregon

**Jim Waddington**

Salem Monthly Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

**Michael Wajda, Clerk**

Goshen Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Sojourning Bennington Friends Meeting, New England Yearly Meeting, Former Associate Secretary, Friends General Conference

**Pam Yaller**

Upper Dublin Friends Meeting, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting

*Meeting and Organization Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only.*

**\*See: Quakercall.net for full details including a poster for the Zoom call on September 28, 2023**





## Epistle of the Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa New Zealand, Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri

Held at the Quaker Settlement, Whanganui,  
and online, 18th – 22nd May 2023



*Aotearoa, New Zealand Meeting; Used with permission*

Greetings in love and peace to Friends everywhere.

In Whanganui, in the peaceful setting of the Quaker Settlement, 61 Quakers gathered, and were joined by 33 online. After a purely online Meeting last year, we found joy in building community within this blended structure.

The purpose and process of Yearly Meeting formed the focus of a preparatory day. Guided by our revised Quaker Handbook, we considered listening to one another in depth, seeking a Spirit-led way forward embodying the gifts and experiences of all, and being ready to be surprised by the unity which emerged. The book's guidance on careful adherence to Quaker process led us forward into our opening discernment session. The benefits of our preparation time fed the spirit of Yearly Meeting.

Linked online with Friends up and down the country including groups from several Meetings, our all-age worship on Sunday provided a time of tranquility. Within our theme of unity with the natural world, we heard

readings and other spoken ministry, and enjoyed the creative artwork and greetings from the children.

In harmony with our sense of place, a local Friend, Keith Beautrais, opened Yearly Meeting with a greeting recognising our involvement with and dependence on Papatūānuku (earth), Ranginui (sky) and Tangaroa (ocean), under the care of divine power. We recognised the mana (authority) of the tangata whenua (people of the land), especially Ngaa Rauru and Tūpoho, the Māori people of this area. Later Keith provided an inspiring view of the incorporation of indigenous wisdom in the management of Te Awa Tupua, the local Whanganui River, following the extensive destruction of the area by colonial exploitation. In 2017 the River was given legal status as a person (a world precedent), and Māori were recognised as 'people of the river'. All involved remembered and honoured the elders who had engaged in a century-long struggle. We were impressed that young people were actively involved in environmental restoration. We need to draw on all our strength to give our young people hope.

Throughout our time of discernment in a spirit of worship, we sought to listen to one another with love and tenderness, and to be aware of the consequences of our decisions. Periods of silent worship offered fresh depth. Topics which stirred emotion, and which called for centred listening, were the future of our national residential and study centre (the Settlement) and the vulnerability of relationships of trust and care between us.

We also sought for faithful leadings as we considered our ongoing peace and service witness, and topics related to administration. These included the balance between our expenditure and our reserves and the ways in which our website can be enabled to support our spiritual and community life.

The Rainbow Quakers, now a Yearly Meeting group, read to us a statement of commitment and inclusion, *Walking in the Light under the Rainbow*. The statement has arisen from fresh awareness of those in our country and worldwide who differ from conventional expectations of gender and sexual orientation. After months of development and discernment between a drafting group and our Monthly Meetings, our Yearly Meeting has adopted the final text. In emerging from this session, we were greeted by a double rainbow in the sky overhead.



*Aotearoa, New Zealand Meeting; Used with permission*

Acknowledging the value of our young people deepening their Quaker experience, we agreed to support representatives, including Young Friends under 35 years of age, to the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) global plenary, to take place in South Africa in 2024.

We welcomed our FWCC visitors, Marj Angalot (Bohol Worship Group, Philippines), Abhay Wilson (Bhopal Yearly Meeting, India, speaking online), Ann Zubrick (Australia Yearly Meeting) and Adrian Glamorgan (Secretary, FWCC Asia West Pacific Section, also online). We learnt of the interweaving of Friends in our Section in mutual friendship and support, and of the multiple ways in which Friends witness to our testimonies. We heard how Meetings and small groups in Asia engage in relief and reconstruction work, faithfully uphold their worship inheritance, and how deeply they value links with other Friends. We have been invited to balance grief and gratitude as we work for a future with hope.

Treasuring our connection with Friends worldwide, we recall the words of Philadelphia Friends in 1683:

*Oh, remember us, for we cannot forget you:*

*Many waters cannot quench our love,*

*Nor distance wear out the deep remembrance*

*Of you in the heavenly Truth.*

In peace and friendship,

**Anne & Alistair Hall**

Yearly Meeting Co-Clerks

## Epistle of Junior Young Friends Camp 2023

Wellington, 15 – 21 April 2023



*Aotearoa, New Zealand Meeting; Used with permission*

JYF this year was held in Wellington from the 15th to the 21st of April. We did lots of varying activities from rock climbing to visiting Matiu / Somes Island. On the first day of camp we made paper bag books to hold our memories and later played games to get to know each other. The next day we rose early and got ready for Meeting for Worship with everyone from Wellington Quaker Meeting. Later that day we headed down to Bench Space Woodworking Shop for our service project, which we made planter boxes from palettes for an apartment complex so they can grow vegetables.

Later that night we had a gun violence discussion with Michelle and Pippa. They showed their experience with gun violence. We toured Parliament, travelled the cable car and wandered through the Botanic Gardens and the city. We visited TePapa more than once. On Matiu we saw beautiful little blue penguins and geckos. We also played the most Quakerly game of Mafia and it was fun. We did watercolours, walked and some went swimming. The last night we had a great concert, played our tuna fish can banjos, wrote our Epistle and our affirmations for each of us. As to next year the most important thing is being together but prefer both some city time and some nature time.

Each of us shared some of the highlights of the week...

- Seeing birds we don't often see,
- Being in the rain,
- Doing things we don't usually do,
- Getting connected to nature,
- Feeling connected to each other,
- Meeting new people who have different stories
- Stepping out of our comfort zone,
- Learning about our environment,
- Getting close with our Quaker family,
- Creating TikTok's with friends
- Finding new places to explore,
- Long laughs.
- Being prime minister for a while,
- Great photos for our memories
- Late night swimming,
- Seeing people I have missed seeing,
- Holding a gecko.
- Playing Mafia,
- In the press room of Parliament,
- Matui / Somes Island

Loved it all!



## Epistle from the FWCC Europe and Middle East Section

Annual Meeting held Online  
4-7 May 2023

Responding with hope to God's call to cherish creation – and one another

*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Jeremiah 29:11 (NRSV)*

**To Friends everywhere, greetings:**



FWCC—Europe and Middle East Section; Used with permission

Dear friends, annwyl cyfeillion, kjære venner, chers amis, liebe Freunde, lieve vrienden, queridos amigos, cari amici, kära vänner, kære venner, rakkaat ystävät, kallid sõbrad, drazí přátelé, dārgie draugi, dragi prijatelji, дорогі друзі, дорогие друзья, kedves barátaim, drodzy przyjaciele, Shanovni Droozi, a chairde, Salamaat Asdiqa

Loving greetings to Friends everywhere from the FWCC Europe and Middle East Section Annual Meeting 2023, meeting at Woodbrooke, UK and online.

Our annual meeting this year saw 60 Friends gather together from the Europe and the Middle East Section and further afield. Since the start of the coronavirus

pandemic this was our 2nd blended annual meeting together in person with attendees at Woodbrooke and on Zoom. 50 of us met in person and 10 Friends participated through zoom. Alma was our youngest joy at a year and a half old.

We were able to create a rich experience. Cultivating joyful relationships enabled us to do our work. We became a gathered community.

Silence was deep when we commemorated Friends who died last year, we gave thanks for their lives and they will inspire us into the future.

Sandra Berry, Director of Woodbrooke, greeted us and she invited us to share memories of Woodbrooke. From Simon Best we heard about the wide variety of courses and other possibilities to pursue studies on-line and at places we invite Woodbrooke to in the upcoming years.

Personal testimonies and introductions of Finland, France, Netherlands Yearly Meetings also from Poland and FWCC Asia West Pacific Section enriched and inspired us to know more about activities of smaller groups, and cooperation within the YMs and beyond. The situation of the sold properties was explained, as well as figuring out the new normal after the pandemic, and searching for ways of outreach.

Meetings for worship were held, and gathered friends from across the section at Woodbrooke and online. Worship sharings brought us to discern more clearly, giving rise to thoughts and encouragement to bring back home.

In the reports from last year, we heard about activities that made us grateful for the work that had been done, and the efforts Friends put in. We were encouraged to work on sharing content indifferent languages and to find ways for outreach on social media. During the Meeting for Business we looked at the Accounts, the Budget, making the plans for and working on the discerned and most valued activities in the upcoming year.

Quaker United Nations Office New York and Geneva, Northern Friends Peace Board, Europe & Middle East Young Friends, Quaker Council for European Affairs, Quaker International Educational Trust and the FWCC World Office inspired us with their ongoing work,

through means of quiet diplomacy and ways towards human and ecological security. We were reminded that we must keep asking what love requires of us.

Timothy Ashworth opened up the keynote quotations from Jeremiah and world Friends, in the lecture *Sustaining Hope: Faith for Long the Term*. Can the generosity in ourselves be set free to make our partners “glow”, as Bjork sings in her song from *Biofilia*? Our speakers on climate change and Quaker history brought us challenging themes to reflect upon. In our Home Groups we attempted to answer some of the questions we were given:

- Jeremiah’s message was a deeply controversial one in his time, counselling acceptance in the face of dominant power. In our own time of crisis, are we open to a call that prioritises the nurture of our families and communities?

- Are we in a position of creative responsiveness to the biblical story, such that we can share in authentic dialogue with Friends from around the world?

- Both the early Christians and the early Quakers felt they were on the cusp of a breakthrough for humankind. Both groups used words like “yearning” and “longing” for new life to come. In our time, how do we hold in our hearts the hope for that new life even as we are realistic about the risk and pain in our present crises?

- What is our gut reaction to the idea of linking our care for creation with the parts of creation that are closest to us – our most intimate partners in life? What bridges do we need to build towards each other? Can the generosity in ourselves be set free to make our partners “glow”?

- What is the source of an authentic hope that will sustain us ‘woven together in transformative faith and love’? We are a people of faith and follow the eternal Truth of the Spirit, which has many names around the world.

- Do we challenge growth for economic growth’s sake? Early Friends like James Naylor showed great courage in their conviction. Many Friends are doing so now in their stands on the environment.

- How do we convey our epistle to those who name the spirit differently to the Bible?

A personal testimony reminded us that the words we choose to use will limit the way we think and live. All creation, including us humans, goes into the ark before the rainbow. Sustainability is the watchword. Our dependency on the earth that sustains us is central to the continuation of our existence.

As part of the new Sustainability Policy 2022, *Among Friends* and other publications have been moved from print to instead be available online. We were considering the climate impact of our events and travel. We need to find a way to reduce the damage of the climate crises – find out what is needed and cooperate with Friends from other Sections. We made a good start and have a road ahead. We need to find the answer for our questions such as What is the strength of our conviction.

We heard testimony on what it is like to live up to Quaker values in a war situation, help refugees, stand up for the rights of those suffering and the challenges of living up to Quaker values.

Video greetings from Friends in Ukraine and friends in Georgia deeply moved us. Some talked of sustaining hope for peace in the horrible war situation. Others shared their views and different experiences, explaining that you can fight without weapons, with the power of creativity and resistance. Central European Gathering and The Funding for Ukraine Group shared experience of ongoing aid work that's still needed, as well as keeping in touch without humiliating those in need.

We heard about the preparations for the FWCC World Plenary Meeting in 2024 in South Africa. We are invited to discern the possibilities of creating hubs in our Section / Yearly Meetings / Area Meetings so that we create the environment for Friends from our area to join in the Plenary Meeting and connect to Friends from other Sections of FWCC.

The introduction of the current situation of the Ramallah Friends School in Palestine highlighted the importance of staying committed to Quaker values and the sustenance they can give when everyday activities and tasks have been disrupted or made hard to accomplish in a situation of frequent military onslaught, checkpoints and unequal civil rights. Supporting Friends from this area of our Section and their work is very much needed

and appreciated. Sami Cortas from the Quaker meeting in Brummana in Lebanon reminded us of the quiet Quaker way, our peace testimony, seeing that of God in everyone and how they had inspired former pupils of the school with different backgrounds and beliefs. On Sunday morning we joined in Meeting for Worship with Quakers in Kyiv and their supporters around the globe. Our prayers are with all those involved.

Our meeting was worthwhile beyond words. Next year we hope to meet, thanks to online devices, relying only on Zoom. Please do think about joining us.

In Friendship, mewn cyfeillgarwch, i vennskap, i vänskap, i venskab, ystävyydessä, bien amicalement, in Freundschaft, in Vriendschap, en amistad, in amicizia, v přátelství, u prijateljstvu, draudzība, baráti üdvözletel, sōpruses, w przyjaźni, Zi Droozhnim privitom, в дружбі, в дружбе, le cairdeas, fi alsadaqa.

Signed on behalf of  
FWCC Europe & Middle East Section

**Ethel Livermore**  
Clerk



## **In the Blink of an Eye**

**ME Kilpatrick**  
**Birmingham (AL) Friends Monthly Meeting**

In the blink of an eye,  
I see the smiles of a sick child,  
when I'm the bad wolf in the wild,  
howling at the moonlight.  
In the blink of an eye,  
I cry with the bald-head mother,  
whose man left her for another,  
as she sadly cries, "Why?"  
In the blink of an eye,  
I note the bloat of the belly,  
as the brave voice turns to jelly,  
in a man 'bout to die.  
In the blink of an eye,  
I wink at the senior in bed,  
who loves songs of the Grateful Dead,  
and everything tie-dyed.  
In the blink of an eye,  
I catch the tear of the patient,  
who hears good news of an agent,  
who lives after he died.  
In the blink of an eye,  
I've been with them all,  
when I got the hospital call,  
where the soul never dies.

## **Two Way Bridges**

**ME Kilpatrick**  
**Birmingham (AL) Friends Monthly Meeting**

River Chaos is crossed by two way bridges,  
when dry you can see the stony ridges,  
and a rocky path where water once flowed,  
bridges still get you where you want to go.  
When winter cold and snow thaws,  
River Chaos rises against rocky walls,  
and rapidly moves without hesitation,  
but bridges get you to your destination.  
When spring floods each side,  
River Chaos motions decide,  
when you wait and when you cross,  
but well built bridges save you from loss.  
When summer rallies people on the move,  
River Chaos grows and creates a mood.  
Giving and taking life night and day,  
bridges serve you when they go both ways.  
When autumn leaves and temperatures fall,  
River Chaos leaves you with this call:  
Whenever and wherever you want to go,  
two way bridges get you over life's ebb and flow.

## Epistle of the 76th Annual Session Pacific Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Loving greetings to Friends everywhere from Pacific Yearly Meeting's annual session.

We met July 21-26, 2023, at Mount Madonna Center, in what is now known as Watsonville, California, the ancestral homeland of the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band. While some activities were held solely on-site or on-line, most were blended. Thanks to capable technical help, we joyfully saw and heard Friends on screens in meeting rooms. Attenders came from Mexico and Guatemala, California, Nevada, Hawaii, and several other parts of the United States.

This Epistle shares some expressions and revelations of the Spirit moving amid Friends at this summer's gathering. We sought to listen carefully to what has been said, to hear what is between the words, and to understand what is deeply felt. This experiment, called **Beloved Community Part II: Centering the Voices of the Next Generation**, prompts us to recognize the ministries present and emerging among us. We shared worship, plenaries, affinity and interest groups, worship sharing, and Bible study. We listened and learned, walked, heard birds and frogs, swam, played games, sang, ate, washed dishes, connected and celebrated together.

Youthful Friends Sophia Faith Cantu and Nora Lisette Cooke (who grew up in our Yearly Meeting) led the main plenary. The Biblical text was Romans 12:1-8, 11, which includes, "but be transformed by the renewing of the mind so that you may discern what is the will of God – good and acceptable and perfect..." They alerted us that their words may bring discomfort for some, and that the plenary would be filled with prayer. As Quakers, we have no first communions, confirmations or bar mitzvahs, yet, no matter our age, we thirst for ceremony to mark milestones in our growth. Faith and Nora led us through a 5-step ritual ceremony of: acknowledging the old; letting it go; pausing in the Gap (liminal, uncertain, undefined); bringing in the new; and celebrating through prayer and dancing. Ministry included exhortations and queries: What holds us back from continuing revelation? What will allow us to be released from bonds that no longer serve us? What is holding our container strong, what is holding us back from continuing revelation? How can we reach out and ask for

help? Is thee faithful? Does thee yield? Pray with music and movement. Commune with Christ in ways that push our boundaries. Move through muddy layers to bring in the new. Replace judgement with genuine curiosity. What holds us back? How can we discern what is to keep and let go; sustain what is to keep; nourish and support what is rising?

As we lean into the future, we struggle visibly and viscerally with crowded agendas, dwindling numbers to fill committees, and differing generational perspectives. Worship and discussions about the future of the yearly meeting are pressed for time. Full business agendas are not conducive to intergenerational participation, and leave little time and energy for connections among age groups. We need to re-emphasize our commitment to the testimony of Simplicity.

In the Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) program, a friendly responsible adult presence (FRAP) observed how quickly bonds are built through simple acts, such as clerks reaching out to check in on each of their peers, participating in service together, and playing community-building games. Staff support each other. Bodies are depleted of energy, but hearts are full of love.

At the Memorial Plenary, as each name was read, we mourned the expected and unexpected passing of Friends, and celebrated their lives and how they touched ours. What will become of the roles they filled? Maybe Spirit intends some of our current work to be laid down, or picked up by newly convinced adults, rather than laid on the shoulders of our youth.

Even with our imperfections, we can be present and **receptive to continuing revelation**. With continuing revelation, our structures, activities and words may change. For example, what if we use PazYM as the abbreviation for our Yearly Meeting? Exchanging one letter and shifting the vowel sound from ã (as in "pack") to ä (as in "ahh") changes a truncated word that means Peaceful to the entire word, "Paz" meaning "Peace" in Spanish. Many members of our Yearly Meeting reside where Spanish is widely spoken.

We continue to experience the wounding of racism. We pray for guidance and support for reckoning with and healing hurts and harms. Met and unmet needs bring up feelings! Conflict and struggles present us with opportunities to pursue deeper understanding.

As we grasp for how to address freshly activated pain, we can refer to the Pacific Yearly Meeting *Sacred Space Healing Harm Process* document, to try this process and build on this work. We need help to trust each other, especially where trust has been strained or broken.

Undergirding all of our inner and outward commotion is the practice of being present with the Living Spirit. We are grateful for those among us who sit quietly, ministering by holding our body, our community of faith, in Love and Light.

Friends come to yearly meeting with diverse identities, life experiences and faith traditions--Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, theist and non-theist. The Religious Society of Friends is an experimental religion. The research in which we participate honors what others know and what we know ourselves.

Experience of a transcendent, non-material reality is at the core of our faith. Beliefs are the “clothes” we put on that experience. What is inside is essential. As we move in community and deepen our faith, Experience is key, and Love is essential.

Still, we need appropriate “clothing” to live and move in our contexts of community, culture and climate, and to engage in the work we are each called to do in our time and place. Our sacred work needs both qualities of character and practical skills, with Friends’ Testimonies: Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, Stewardship or Sustainability (SPICES) as guides to our discernment and decision-making.

We exclaim, sometimes laughing with joyful surprise, at the Truth that comes to us through another Friend. We remain open to the continuing revelation of Truth and Light, as we affirm the presence of the Living Spirit of God in each of us.

Laura Magnani, Presiding Clerk  
on behalf of Pacific Yearly Meeting

*The Pacific Yearly Meeting comprises 56 monthly meetings and worship groups made up of more than 1,100 members and attenders in the states of California, Hawai’i and Nevada. Also included are Mexico City and Oaxaca, Mexico.*

## **Southeastern Yearly Meeting of The Religious Society of Friends**

**Epistle 2023**



*Southeastern Yearly Meeting; Used with permission*

Loving Greetings to Friends Everywhere,

Southeastern Yearly Meeting gathered for its 59th sessions from Forth Month 5th through 9th Days. The meeting sessions were hybrid, allowing Friends at a distance to join with those in person to conduct Yearly Meeting business. In-person, we met at the Dayspring Conference Center at Parrish, FL. This was a new location and facility for us. Our in-person gathering was full of joy and laughter.

145 Friends gathered for our sessions; 108 in-person (88 adults and 20 youth) and 37 on-line. We were also joined, on-line, by Friends from the Havana (Cuba) Unprogrammed Worship Group. The short virtual visit by Friends from Cuba, with a message from Alejandro Castellanos, the Clerk of the Worship Group, was a source of great joy. Alejandro expressed hope for the day when we can meet together in-person at Havana. We look forward to this day, also.

We welcomed Friends from other Yearly Meetings and Friends organizations, including FGC, FCNL, Right Sharing of World Resources, AFSC. It is a joy to meet with Friends beyond the borders of our own Yearly Meeting.

Our theme this year was “Deepening at the Root: Tending the Source of Our Worship & Witness.” Christopher Sammond brought us the Walton Lecture and two (2) retreat sessions. The retreat sessions gave us the opportunity to experience deep listening to each other and the Spirit, to share deeply with each other, gaining skill in tending to the Source.

Opportunities for worship, fellowship, and workshops offered us further ways to deepen our spiritual lives together.

Our Yearly Meeting committed to maintaining our Field Secretary for Earthcare position by changing from a



program supported by separate donations to part of the general administrative budget.

Togetherness

Unity

Boldness

Flowing

Like the murmuration of starlings

Love

Rabbits and raccoons at worship

Snakes sunning

Spirit moving

Sometimes one despairs that one has lost their way

We are not alone

We have not bowed to Baal

We are all the beloved

We are all the wounded and the healed

The lost and found

The betrayer and the Savior

The persecutor and the persecuted

Children of the Light we are still here

Our hearts are of one accord

Our steps move as one

Yet each has its own rhythm

Our dance in the river of Life

*Blessings and Peace to You All in Light*

Southeastern Yearly Meeting  
of the Religious Society of Friends

## **Southeastern Yearly Meeting Youth Epistle 2023**

Dear friends,

We want to share our experiences at the SEYM yearly gathering of 2023. This year, the theme for the youth and young adult program was the natural world that we live in.

On Thursday, we started out with an inter-generational zombie apocalypse workshop, where attendees could express and share ideas on what they would do in the case of an apocalypse or natural disaster.

Friday morning, we took part in an activity that focused on how the five senses can be emphasized and heightened in nature. We also spoke about the importance of acknowledging all senses, instead of focusing on just 2 or 3.

We then went on a canopy walk while using this knowledge to be increasingly aware about what we see, feel, touch, taste, and hear. Once we were back at the youth center, we had a lot of fun constructing seed balls that would be beneficial to all gardens.

Later on, many of us enjoyed a high ropes course that challenged us mentally and physically. We practiced understanding the differences between the danger your body thinks you're in, and the danger you're actually in. One of the instructors, Erica, also urged us to look at how we want to be supported by others, and to remember the importance of asking friends the same question to best suit their preferences.

During the high ropes course, everyone also practiced learning their limitations of how far they can go before hitting a healthy place to stop. We learned how much challenges are based off of mental strength as opposed to physical strength.

After reconvening, a member of our youth group hosted a talent show available to anyone who wanted to participate and share their gifts with the community. There were many interactive acts, including laughing yoga and hand-held dancing/singing as a group to feel connected.

After the talent show, there was a welcoming campfire that many gathered around and enjoyed. Meanwhile, young adults and youth clerks met and discussed if a Quaker stance on abortion should be taken by the FCNL, and why.



In the early Saturday morning, youth group members partook in a healthy worship meeting that prompted thought about many topics surrounding nature. We then began our business discussion, where we formed committee groups that nominated next year's clerks, wrote the epistle, and discussed potential activities for future meetings.

We ended by having a youth centered discussion with a representative from FCNL in regards to the Quaker community's stance on Abortion. Soon after, those who wanted to go canoeing had lots of fun in the cove, practicing communication and teamwork.

We then gathered to play a friendly but intense game of capture the flag, after which we ate and played board games. Lastly, there was an LGBTQIA+ affinity group for anyone who wanted to join.

On Easter Sunday, we reflected on our time together, and wrapped up with a fun and engaging Easter egg hunt!

*Southeastern Yearly Meeting is a community of 25 unprogrammed Quaker Meetings and Worship Groups in Florida, coastal Georgia and South Carolina, and Managua, Nicaragua.*

## Moments of Awe

**Michael Houle**  
**Kenosha-Racine Worship Group**

When the soul is  
touched by beauty...  
there's a soft exhale of

*Awe*

When your eye captures  
the silhouette of an owl silently gliding  
in the light of a full moon...

*Awe*

As you stand watching over  
a sleeping baby, so relaxed with its sweet  
breath gently slipping in and out...

*Awe*

When music swirls into your ear  
vocal, orchestral or sounds of nature  
and it moves the soul...

*Awe*

When you are taken by surprise  
as you glance at the sun setting, its red rays are caught in  
the ripples of a pond...

*Awe*

At that last moment of life  
as the soul slips away  
there is that final and most sacred exhale...

*awe*



## L'expérience Taizé

LETTRE DES AMIS – Le Bulletin des Quakers  
en France, Hiver (Winter) 2022



Taizé is an ecumenical community based in Saône-et-Loire that welcomes many believers every week for moments of prayer, collective life, discussion groups and many others. Brother Roger created this community in 1940 and it still lives fully eighty years after his birth.

Led by the pastor of the Protestant parish of Roubaix, our group visited the community from August 22 to 28. This week was dedicated to gathering mainly young adults, from 18 to 35 years old.

The days in Taizé revolve around three times of prayer of about one hour each (in the morning when you wake up, at noon and in the evening after the meal). Very large parts of these times of prayer are filled with songs in all languages, silence, dear to Quaker practice. All times of prayer include several minutes of silence. When nearly one thousand three hundred people are silent, together, it brings considerable energy to carry us in prayer and the search for the Holy Spirit. We also had the chance on Saturday to witness the lifelong commitment of a new brother in the community. This moment was particularly rich in emotion.

This week, reserved for young adults, was also punctuated by many conferences or presentations. In addition to Ursula Von der Leyen (President of the European Commission and Lutheran family) who was the main guest of this week, many religious (pastors, priests, etc.), associations (ATD fourth world, etc.), academics (philosophers, scientists, etc.) and politicians (European Commissioner, president of communities of municipalities, etc.) followed one another around a wide variety of themes. The safeguarding of biodiversity, the main theme of this week, joins other topics, such as the issues of life in prison, death, inter-religious dialogue, or poverty.

Every day, we met in a small group to discuss the biblical text read in the morning during prayer time. I had some fear of doing the wrong thing or not knowing enough during these moments but they turned out to be very beautiful opportunities for exchange. This was obviously an opportunity to present Quakerism, about which very little is known, but was of great interest to my group members. Indeed, the exchanges led us to share our points of view and experiences on the question of ministry, the place of silence in worship (a practice discovered in Taizé for many Christians) or our relationship to the Bible. The singularity of Quakerism on these subjects led the members of the group to question me on many subjects. Very interesting exchanges that led me myself to question Quaker practice about which I still have so much to discover.

Living a week in Taizé is also an opportunity to experience community life. Meals are prepared, served and cutlery cleaned by participants of the week, as are collective places, every one having a “job” for the week. This experience is enriched by the diversity of nationalities present on site. The French do not constitute more than a tenth of the participants. While the Germans, the Spanish and the Dutch-Landers formed a large part of the young people, several dozen nationalities were represented.

Taizé is a unique ecumenical experience in which Quakers can find their place, both to enrich themselves with other Christian traditions, but also to make their contribution. Alone or with family, young and old, in summer or in other seasons, everyone can come and discover this magnificent experience!

For five days, our group will be able to reconnect with these moments of prayers, songs and shared joys when we gather in Rostock, northern Germany. —*Valentin L-D*

*Google translation from the original French.*

## Visual Poetry

**Bill Hendricks**  
**Minneapolis Friends Meeting**



*A bit of light on a fall day, Bill Hendricks*

## About the NYM Journal

The NYM Journal aims to inform and inspire Friends with examples of Quaker faith and practice.

Editor: Tom Darrow  
Kenosha-Racine Worship Group

Layout: Bill Hendricks  
Minneapolis Friends Meeting

The NYM Journal is available to the public and posted on the NYM website:

[northernyearlymeeting.org](http://northernyearlymeeting.org)

Friends of Northern Yearly Meeting are encouraged to submit creative artistic work and writing, including personal reflections and articles about your work and experiences as Quakers, to [nymjournal@gmail.com](mailto:nymjournal@gmail.com).

Deadline for submissions for the Spring Issue: March 31 2023

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## NYM Journal Editor Needed

Terms of office on NYM committees are for three years; this term may be renewed once. This current year is this editor's final year on the committee. A new editor will be needed for the NYM Journal beginning in June 2024. Now is the time for a potential replacement to join the staff of the Journal to work and train before assuming the position of editor next year. If you feel led to take on this responsibility, contact Vicki Berenson, Clerk of the Communication Committee: [vicki.berenson@gmail.com](mailto:vicki.berenson@gmail.com).

## NorthernYearly Meeting Upcoming Dates

**Quaker Call to Action Zoom Program**  
**September 28, 2023**

**World Quaker Day:**  
**October 1, 2023**

**NYM Interim Session (In-person and virtual):**

**Milwaukee Friends Meeting**  
**November 3-5, 2023**

**Date for Winter Issue submissions:**  
**November 18, 2023**

Visit us at [northernyearlymeeting.org](http://northernyearlymeeting.org)