

QUAKER ROOTS IN NURTURING SOIL

Dick Ashdown

The 2011 Jonathan Plummer Lecture

Presented at
Illinois Yearly Meeting
of the
Religious Society of Friends
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INTRODUCTION

Kay Drake

I am happy to have been asked to introduce my brother, Richard Ashdown, who will be presenting this year's Jonathan Plummer Lecture.

If you've ever been to Illinois Yearly Meeting on the evening of the hay rack rides you probably know Dick, as he's the one with the green John Deere—however, I hear this year it was a red tractor—and the hayrack headed west to parts unknown, but usually past his home with the big oak tree. That is just one of the things he does for ILYM. This year he made the sand box and provided golf cart transportation. At times his red pickup gets called into service as does one of his storage units.

He has been a trustee since 1966, with 6 years off while he was teaching overseas as a civilian employee of the US government—two years each, in Tripoli, Libya, Africa, Augsburg, Germany, and Okinawa. He is active on many of the ILYM committees and he, along with Neil Mesner, are the local contact people and handymen. Most of you know the duties associated with those positions, but I'd like to share a few of the things he does that are not listed in any handbook.

For the last 11 or 12 winters, ever since Bud Wolf moved to Peru, he was the one to turn on the furnace Saturday night or early Sunday depending upon how cold it was. The new thermostat in the Clear Creek house is a blessing for him. When we had the problems with the raccoons in the walls of the Meetinghouse, he was the one who ran the live trap patrol. You might also find him doing weed control, some extra mowing, or on snowy Sunday mornings plowing out the parking area. On the rare occasions when Friends might have a slight slip of memory and leave something behind, he might get a call to check to see if he could find the lost item. I think the most unusual one that I know of is the call to check the bath house to see if he could find a set of false teeth—no luck. When traveling groups, such as the Olney School going to Iowa, or a group of bicyclists on their way to Friends General Conference Gathering at Illinois State University, etc. he's the one to see that the water and heat is on and frequently is the greeter.

While these duties keep him pretty busy, he did have to earn a living which he did by teaching for 16 years and then selling insurance for about 30 years. He's president of the Friends Cemetery Board, and is assistant treasurer for Clear Creek Monthly Meeting and ILYM. He is a member and has been an officer of many community groups, including the McNabb Telephone Company, Conservation District, and others, and at one time Rotary and the Masonic Lodge.

Some of his spare time activities include working in his timber, cross country skiing, flying and doing aerial photography, growing lavender, caring for his two miniature horses, spending time with friends and family, and traveling.

It is a pleasure to present Richard Ashdown, who also is a great brother, to give his lecture on "Quaker Roots in Nurturing Soil."

QUAKER ROOTS IN NURTURING SOIL

Dick Ashdown

Thank you, Kay. It's always scary to have someone introduce you who has known you for 72 years. Good morning Friends, neighbors, and family. Thank you. It's a great feeling to be here today. I want to thank the program planning committee for giving me this opportunity to be here to speak today. After accepting, you get the feeling of inadequacy. I did anyway. And then you wonder if you have anything of interest to say. Will I talk too much about myself? But, I knew that I would have support from the Clear Creek Meeting, so I felt comfortable doing this. And I did have a lot of support.

I'm going to start by saying my view is a lot better than your view. This is wonderful.

I would like to start by saying a few words about the person we have set aside at this time to honor. Some of you may not be familiar with him. Jonathan Plummer was born in Richmond, Indiana, in 1835. Now 1835 was a time that a lot of settlers were coming to this area—Quakers and non-Quakers were coming here. At the age of 39 he moved from Richmond, Indiana, to Chicago, Illinois, bringing his family and his business. Jonathan Plummer was a druggist by profession. He introduced profit-sharing to his employees right from the start and this was a big step in preventing strikes. If employees are part of the company, it helps a lot.

1874 was also the time that Plummer helped develop Illinois Yearly Meeting. He was the first clerk of Illinois Yearly Meeting. This building (the Illinois Yearly Meetinghouse) was built the next year—1875. We've been using this building continuously for 137 years. For three years we did not meet here for IYM. In 1958, we were at a period when we had been taking a lot of the attendees into our homes—Quaker homes and some non-Quaker homes. But the crowd got too large and we did not have room to house them. So in 1958 and again in 1959 we went to Madison, Wisconsin. After that, we decided to come back and build a dormitory. There was one more year, 1972, that we went to West Branch, Iowa—Scattergood School. I don't remember the reason. Anyway, we went there for a year. Other than that, we've been meeting in this building. It's amazing the shape it's in. It was very well built. We've had to do some work on it, but it's great.

Jonathan Plummer also organized Friends General Conference. This was more like about 1900. He gave the opening address in 1893 at the World's Parliament of Religions, expressing hope for greater helpfulness and for cooperation among all religions. He died at the age of 83 in 1918. I want to thank him for setting this up. To me the Illinois Yearly Meeting has meant a lot. I have a picture here—I'm not going to show it, well you can't see it. I'm in this picture as probably a 4 or 5 year old, not paying much attention. Because to me, the early years of Illinois Yearly Meeting were more social. We would meet friends and every year we'd meet new friends. This was important as a Quaker, to meet new Quakers from a distance away.

When I was in school, we had a lot of Quakers in my class. I was looking at a picture of my graduating class the other day and there were more Quakers than any other single religion. We had five Quakers and we had three or four Methodists, some Lutherans and some Catholics. It was a good combination. As far as Quakerism, we had it in school, we had it on Sunday, we had it throughout the week. It was always fun to be a Quaker. For me it's all I've been. For me it was a lot of fun. I was a birthright Quaker. That was a big advantage. You get early introduction and at 18, I don't know if I'd pass the Clearness Committee. I don't know, but there's always that chance. I was already in.

I remember Sunday School teachers. I don't remember all of them, but I remember Helen Jean Nelson, Anna Mary Wilson, Virginia Hayward, Gynetha Hawks, and Howard Kinney. Those

are the ones I can remember as teaching different age groups. Anna Mary took us to the Friends General Conference while I was in high school. She took four of us and we went out to Friends General Conference at Cape May, New Jersey. Being with Anna Mary was always a treat.

John Heider and I roomed together at the hotel. I still remember the name of it—The Admiral Hotel. We kind of got kicked out of the hotel. I'll tell you what happened. It was very innocent. We had the windows open, and the wind came up that night. The door between our room and the next one was rattling, and we thought we'd just sleep through it but finally we got up and wedged a chair in front to keep it from rattling. And the next day, we went swimming and came back to the hotel with wet towels. We thought there were more or less all young Quakers staying on that hall, so we started down the hall snapping our wet towels against the doors, causing a little racket. Next to us there were two elderly ladies, probably in their 40's or 50's. They went down to the desk and said that the neighbors next to them tried to break into their room the night before, were hitting the door with their towels, and they wanted them kicked out. We came to find out, they were regulars there. They came back every year, and we were there for two nights—one night! We told our story, and we said, "If it will help you, we'll move out. We have another place where we can go." We'd met a lot of people through this ordeal. So, we moved out and everything went fine. I'll always remember the Admiral Hotel and Cape May, New Jersey.

I'm going to talk a little about my family. When I was asked to give this talk, I kind of researched. I thought I could come up with an exciting story on my spiritual journey. I thought about it for several days and I found out that I did not have a big boomer that was exciting to talk about. It was basically very gradual. I started out young, born into a family that were recently Quakers. In 1850 my father's great grandfather, Mark Ashdown, had come over from England and was Lutheran. On the Koehler side my mother's great grandfather, George Koehler, came over from Stuttgart, Germany, and he was a Catholic. So their backgrounds varied.

My parents met while in school at Bradley College. They were both studying to be teachers. In about 1930 they came back to this area. My mother was raised here; my father wasn't. They taught at the Swaney School. They both taught in the same

building. My father was principal and my mother was a classroom teacher. That wouldn't happen today. Back then it did.

They lived in the community about five years and then they asked to join the Clear Creek Meeting. So when I was born four years later I was a birthright Quaker. In growing up I had wonderful parents, a brother and a sister, a bicycle, a B.B. gun, and a Bible. That was about all I needed. We were probably poor, but I never knew it. My childhood was very good, very satisfactory. I graduated from Magnolia Swaney High School on my 18th birthday, which was kind of unusual, but interesting.

When I was 18 we were required to register for the draft. So, soon after I graduated I went over to LaSalle and registered. In the process, the personnel at the desk asked if I was a conscientious objector. I was surprised they would ask me that. I said, "No, I'm really not a conscientious objector." I would have liked to have been. I wanted to be a conscientious objector. I'm against war. It's inhumane. It's terrible. But I was afraid the rest of the world would not be conscientious objectors, so I felt it was my duty to register and if called upon, to serve our nation for freedom. I loved freedom, so I registered and went on to college.

I was about to complete college when I was called to take my physical. Six of us went up from this area, to Chicago. It was a real experience. One person was inducted—passed the physical; one person failed the physical; four of us were to be re-examined in one year. They thought I had a bad leg—asked if the veins of my right leg bothered me. I said, "No, they don't." I'd been a seasonal ranger at Grand Canyon the summer before and we hiked a lot and I had no problems at all. So they were going to re-examine me.

I was thankful for this extra year, because I could graduate and have my schooling done by then. I had already attended 4 years at Illinois State University but along the way, I had slipped into the five-year program. I had a hard time in English the first semester of my freshman year. Knowing this, I went and asked Dr. Henline, "What kind of a grade do I have in English, Dr. Henline?" "Richard, you have a C." I said, "Good!" She said, "There's nothing good about a C." I said, "Oh, that's bad then. Well, I just was feeling that if I had a C and if I had trouble with your final, I would still pass the course." She said, "No, Richard, it's not that way. If you fail my final, you will fail my course." I had one day. The stage was set. Anyway, I had trouble and I got

the big one. My first report card had one of every grade on it. To me that's being well-rounded. It wasn't.

But ISU was very forgiving and they would let you make up grade points. If you could make it up the second semester you could continue with them. When I went to college I had money for one year. I had no idea what I was going to do from there on. I liked college enough to continue and found I could afford it with the help of my parents. So I went on. The reason

I'm mentioning this failing of English is not that I'm proud of it, but you can overcome failure.

The next semester I was taking a horticulture class. Lo and behold this Miss Henline, who failed me, called the instructor and wanted to know if he had two students that could come out and prune her vineyard. Well, I wanted to see her again and I also didn't know what she was doing with her grape juice, and I wanted to find that out, too. A friend and I went out and we pruned her grapes. I guess we did a satisfactory job. We became good friends. She had a keeshond dog. I was not familiar with keeshonds, but this was a great animal. During the next summer I got a letter from her that her dog had pups and I was to come down and get one or two pups. I went down and got my keeshond pup. So much for that.

When I had that extra year, I was able to graduate. Since I hadn't heard from the Selective Service, I signed a contract to teach at Tri-Valley (which is in McLean County) and taught there for four years. At the end of four years I found out that the Department of Defense had a shortage of teachers teaching their dependents overseas. I still, in the back of my mind, thought I might be called to serve and I hadn't. So, I thought, "Well, I will sacrifice. I will go over and teach on a military base and, in my mind that will satisfy my military obligation." So I signed up for it and my assignment was Tripoli, Libya. This would have been in the year of 1966.

Libya was under the leadership of King Idris at the time. I went over and it was no hardship at all. It was a pleasure to be over there. I learned a lot about their religion. During the Ramadan Season they honor Ramadan which runs for approximately a month. It's the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. I don't know if you understand Ramadan. They don't eat or drink during daylight hours. From sunup to sundown, they fast. This is for them to search their religious feelings.

Fortunately when I was there Ramadan fell during the cooler months. But it moves during the year and when it's in the summertime, like the day I arrived in Tripoli, Libya, it was 116 degrees. Going without food and water during the day is difficult. That is a real sacrifice. I like being a Quaker.

It was very interesting in Libya. The city, Tripoli, was thriving. They were getting oil money from their oil fields. Everything seemed to be good. We found out through the embassy that they needed teachers to teach English to the merchants. This would involve mostly Italians and Libyans. So after school we'd go into Tripoli, several miles from the base, and teach English. Now, I failed English in college, so this was a great experience for me and I wanted Miss Henline to find out I was teaching English. She wouldn't have slept at all. This was a group that wanted the basic English. We talked and all I could say was "Kheif halak, sadiqi." It meant "How are you, friend?". The rest of the class time we spoke English. Those were about the only words I knew in Arabic. It wasn't hard for me to stay with English. We had a great respect for the people of Tripoli.

While I was in Tripoli there were a lot of sights to see. Leptis Magna and Sabratha were

Roman ruins. To me they compared to the Coliseum in Rome and the Acropolis in Athens.

They had been unearthed and these were Roman ruins. They are still discovering things there. Well, up until 2 years ago, they were still uncovering mosaic tiles and artifacts. I'm glad of that. I hope they can get that country settled. I enjoyed it. It's a good area. There were a lot of tourists that would come there from Europe because the climate was warm. They had good beaches there. We could snorkel. It was nice.

Now there are two things that I signed up for and haven't followed through on. One was deep sea diving. I signed up. Snorkeling was great and I thought, "Boy, if you could get down deeper that would be good." So I did some reading on what you had to do and what it would include. One of the things you had to do—they would throw your mask off at a certain depth and you had to get that mask back on and rehook it. I didn't think I needed that. So I did not do scuba diving.

The other thing I didn't do was to jump out of a perfectly flying airplane. I signed up for a parachuting class in

Bloomington and the day was rainy. I think God was giving me a message, so I went in and unsigned. I think the plane would have to be sputtering before I would jump out.

A low time in my life was September 29, 1960. I was in college and I got a phone call that my father had passed away of a heart attack. It was a shock to me. I had no idea that he had heart trouble—he didn't either. I wondered why this had to happen. He was 53 years old. I was only 21—I still needed my father. It took awhile to get over it. But, then I realized I had him for 21 years. That's a formative time of your life—your first years. There's a reason for everything. That was probably a very low time.

Let's talk about a good time. A very important time was in 1954 while I was in high school. I was 14, my brother Larry was 13. Our local veterinarian had purchased ground just west of my house. He stopped by and he saw we had a tractor and said, "You have a tractor.

Would you boys want to farm my recently purchased ground west of you?" We immediately said yes. To become a farmer—that's what I wanted to do. So we loaded into his car and we went down. It was mostly timber. He had 10 acres that had been plowed and put into corn the previous year. He wanted us to leave the slopes to plant trees, but we were to plant soybeans in the remaining acres. This tractor we had was a small Allis Chalmers that pulled a one bottom plow and had a one row cultivator to control the weeds. We spent many hours in the field that year, but enjoyed every minute of being outside with nature.

Doc Pletsch, the veterinarian, was interested in grafting trees. He would graft English walnut twigs onto black walnut stock. So we did some of that. I learned a lot of forestry from Dr. Pletsch. Dr. Pletsch was my Bill Howenstine before I met our Bill Howenstine because he taught me a lot about the timber. Now we have our own Bill Howenstine here and I can still learn a lot from him.

We enjoyed farming; it just became a haven to relax in. If you wanted to feel spiritually, you felt it when you were in the timber. I surely did. It is kind of like this building, and my timber, and I'm sure all of you have a place where you can go, talk to God and it's a local call. Here, in my timber, even in the airplane it's a local call. I think we all have those places.

Twenty years later I was able to purchase this timber and field. I do not feel we really own timber ground. Most of the trees were there long before I bought the ground and they will still be there long after I am gone. We have the care and some control over it for a while. God is the real owner. I try to include God in my decision-making. Especially in cutting cross country ski trails and thinning timber stands. I have had countless hours of enjoyment in this timber—cross country skiing, raising lavender for the honey bees, trimming walnut trees and watching the wildlife. It is a continuing spiritual experience.

In 1982 I married Betty Yates. With her came three wonderful children, Kimberly (11), Cassandra (9), and Bryan (6). They were the highlight of my life. I was very happy when Betty asked to join the Clear Creek Meeting a year after our marriage. Later we divorced but have remained good friends and she and the children include me in family gatherings. Twenty-nine years later, the grown children are here today and I am very proud of them. I have 5 grandchildren at this moment—and I really enjoy them.

I want to talk a little bit about local history here. Just down the road we have a place that was known to us as the tile pit. The tile pit got its name because they dug the clay—I don't know when exactly—in the 1800's and made tile and bricks. They were having a lot of log cabin homes in this area burn because of the way they kept them warm. Bricks made a sturdier home and were more fire resistant. Down the road here, a quarter of a mile, was this pit that had been used to make tile and bricks. I'm assuming that a lot of the brick homes in this area might have been made of bricks from this pit.

There was a brick home right next door, down the road where the Clear Creek House is, just west of where the house is now. I knew it as a garage. When they built the Clear Creek House, about 1905, they were going to tear down the brick structure. They took off the upper story, which came down fairly easily. But they couldn't get the bricks apart on the first floor. So, what do you do? You put a roof on it and use it as a garage. So I knew that building as a garage. About 10 years ago it collapsed. The bricks probably came from that tile pit.

Now this is information that I got from Turner Mills' writing. Turner left us a paper that he wrote in 1970 about the 60 years before. He wrote more about what that pit was used for

after the bricks and tile. What do you think it was? Fishing? We would ice skate on it as a kid. But before that, it was the ice house. They would take a horse with no-slip shoes, they called them. Turner said this ice was 12 -14 inches. Now Turner exaggerated just a little bit at times, so I reduced that down to 10-12 inches. But Turner left a legacy here. Turner was great. He left this information. After they marked the ice, they pulled this thing with the horse that marked the ice, approximately 6 inches deep, 2 foot slabs, then they went the other way. Then they would saw these chunks. Then after they were sawed, they would crack them and break them off. They stored this ice down here in sawdust and during the summer they would deliver it to the homes for their ice boxes.

How much ice did they use during a week? One block? Two blocks? I'm not sure. But I know it was between one and two blocks. How cold were their ice boxes? The ice boxes were probably not 40 degrees; about 50 degrees—kept things cool enough so they wouldn't spoil for awhile. These ice houses were very important. In Putnam County there were probably four ice houses at that time—one up by Standard, two by Hennepin, and the fourth one—I'm not sure where it was. They had to be every five to ten miles. They would sell this ice all summer. Then refrigerators came along.

The tile pit is still there. It's grown up in trees and has been left to go native, but it is real close. That was a Quaker group. Most of them were Quakers—Mills and Wilsons who were selling the ice and the bricks. I still wonder about my brick house. It was built in 1843. They say the bricks came from the property. I don't see any hole where they would have dug out—unless from the basement. Maybe they were from the tile pit. I don't know; we can speculate on that. That's a little bit about our own local history here.

After Libya I went to Germany. I want to tell about one experience in Germany. Gretta—I don't remember her last name, we taught school together—asked if I would go with her over to East Berlin on her vacation and visit her father. Her mother had escaped from East Germany with two children; I'm not sure what year, but the father wanted to stay in East Germany. He said, "You'll never make it. I have a job, I have food, I'm going to stay." But Gretta wanted to go back and see her father, so I said sure I'd

go with her. We got our passports and everything. We got through Checkpoint Charlie. This is in the year of 1968 or 1969. We went over there and I met her father. A real nice gentleman. He was satisfied. He had his job. He purchased a car that year. He hadn't had a car. His age would have been about 40 or 50. He was happy with it. She had to translate since I knew very little German.

When we got ready to leave he asked her if we'd take some figurines, which were family heirlooms, back with us. I was wearing a suit coat, so I put some in my pockets and she had some in her purse. I never thought anything about it. We got back to Checkpoint Charlie, and I thought, "Oooh, we're smuggling things out." I tried to remain calm as could be. We got there, they looked at our passports. It seemed to go on for 10 minutes, but it didn't—it was just a minute or so. We got through. I felt like we were criminals at that point. I hadn't even thought about taking these across the border. Maybe it wouldn't have been a big deal. But we were sitting there at Checkpoint Charlie and wanting to get back to Augsburg, Germany, and then back to Clear Creek. Everything worked out fine.

That was a real pleasant experience. I remember going to the stores in East Berlin. Selection was very limited. Shopping was quick. If you wanted cereal, no decision—you grabbed a cereal box. I am sure things have changed in forty two years.

I want to talk a little bit about the importance of Yearly Meeting. To me this Yearly

Meeting is very important. We want to keep it a vibrant, continuing source of Spiritual Fuel for all of us. This, of course, depends on our local monthly meetings. We have to remain strong.

Rufus Jones once made a statement: "The best service Friends can render is to not fade away." (Rufus Jones, 1914 Lecture). That's pretty simple, but to not fade away sometimes seems like a far reach. With this group, the people we have here, the spirit, the commitment and the spirit and commitment of the young Friends, I'm very confident that we are not going to fade away. There were times way back when I wondered. But in the last few years our young Friends have really stepped up to the plate. I don't make sand boxes for just anybody!

I want to quote—these are words I've read somewhere, I've known them for a long time.

Kind of in closing, or tapering down, I just want to say, that as Quakers, as people in the community, we need to “Live Simply”. Now, living simply, I don’t know! I try to live simply. I like to fly, I have an airplane—I justify that with, “I’ve never had a new car so I can afford an airplane.” I learned how to fly over in Libya. It was a means of transportation over there, for one thing. We could get down in the desert more. They had airports down there—a couple. I’m going to talk a little bit about this trip in Libya. I was with my instructor Jim Jackson and two friends in the back seat. We checked the weather. The only place we couldn’t go was to Benghazi because the weather was bad. But we could go to Ghadames, south in the desert. Fine, we’d go there. It was about a two and a half hour trip. When we arrived the weather looked bad, so we refueled and headed back, but on the return trip we got into a storm, black clouds. I was with my instructor—good! I said, “We can’t put this plane down out here in the desert.” Jim said, “When we turn out of the storm you have to keep flying straight north toward Tripoli.” Not being able to see the ground or the horizon our only option was to fly by instrument, maintaining our current altitude. Jim assured us we would eventually get out of the storm and be over either sand or water. If we were over water, we’d do a 180 until we were back to sand, then we could easily locate Tripoli. When the storm cleared we were still over sand. I remember looking out at that wing and every foot is riveted, and the weather was so rough they were flexing.

I learned three things: Respect the weather, the plane was pretty well built and the third thing: have faith in God, because we got by in good shape. The people in the back seat were air sick but that was minor. I still think we should live simply—within limits. I like the quote, “Live Simply, Love Generously, Care Deeply, Speak Kindly and Leave the Rest to God” (Ronald Reagan).

We had a death, two days ago, of a gentleman that I think most of us know: John Wilson. Now John Wilson was a true gentleman. He was a Quaker. He stopped by on Thursday. He wanted to talk to me. His son, Steve, and his wife, Dorothy, were along and a daughter, Mary Ellen. We had a good little chat. He talked about different things. His mind was sharp as could be. One thing he said was, “I can remember when your parents came back to this area to teach, I was in 6th grade.” He’d been my neighbor forever. The day before he died, he came around, was

driven up here to see the Yearly Meeting. But he was ready for his next phase. The Big Journey. John Wilson was Clance's brother, an uncle to Allen, I believe. It's good to see you (Allen) here today.

I thank you for letting me speak to you today. This was the 51st Plummer Lecture.

Before this we've had noted Quakers, who were tremendous speakers. This year, after the 50, they decided to lower the bar just a little bit. And the 51st one, I don't know what they're going to do next year, but for this year they lowered it just a little. I appreciate it.

Thank You.

THE JONATHAN W. PLUMMER LECTURE

Beginning with the 1961 sessions, Illinois Yearly Meeting of Friends proposed to annually honor its first clerk by designating the principal or keynote address, the Jonathan W. Plummer Lecture.

Jonathan Wright Plummer, acknowledged by Quaker Torch Bearers, as the father of Friends General Conference, was born in 1835 at Richmond, Indiana. He died in 1918 at 83 years of age and lies interred at Graceland Cemetery in Chicago.

When he was 39, he moved to Chicago, where he was first with E. R. Burnham & Son, wholesale druggists. Later, this was the Morrison-Plummer Company, wholesale druggists, and is now known as McKesson & Robbins.

He introduced profit-sharing in his business and he practiced tithing, giving one-tenth of his private income and one-tenth of the income from his drug business. He also loaned money freely to people in need. He advocated prison reform.

“He did go to Meeting, headed committees of action, and notably in 1878 wrote letters which were albatrosses about the neck of pious epistolary correspondence. Illinois Yearly Meeting, which he helped to create in 1875, was housed in the country near McNabb, Illinois. Here he came once a year by train to meet with Friends from 10 neighborhoods of Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, and Indiana, as well as with spiritual leaders from other Yearly Meetings.

“In 1878 he came with a project as clear as a blueprint. Its framework was a conference and its aim to co-ordinate widely scattered activities.... Jonathan Plummer desired a conference that would consider all the social testimonies of Friends. As a result, minute 52 of Illinois Yearly Meeting’s proceedings in 1878 set him at liberty to prepare an address of invitation to the several Yearly Meetings for holding a general conference once in five years or oftener.”

He gave the opening address at the World’s Parliament of Religions (held during the ‘93 Fair), expressing hope for greater helpfulness and for co-operation among all faiths.

“He was not a pronounced religious mystic, as were many earlier Quakers. He listened to the ‘still, small voice,’ and this prompted both charity and vocal ministry.

“He measured up to the test of greatness set by Goethe in that he expressed clearly what others felt but were unable to express. He lived in the midst of what shall not pass away. Whoever is the messenger of its truth brings surprises to mankind. Such was Jonathan W. Plummer.”