



ILYM Meetinghouse, McNabb, Illinois

Illinois Yearly Meeting *of the Religious Society of Friends*

Consisting of 24 Quaker Meetings and Worship Groups
in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Missouri, and Wisconsin

2019 Illinois Yearly Meeting Epistle

To Friends Around the World,

Seeking Leadings: A Small Effort Shaped to Us

“If we are to take heart in the face of all the crying needs and find some rest for our souls, we must each, first of all, seek leadings as to very concrete, specific ways to respond to these needs that are in tune with our gifts and strengths. We must put our beliefs into action.”

On the Spirituality of Lightheartedness, Helen Steere Horn (Pendle Hill Pamphlet 456, 2019)

Quakers from Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Missouri gathered again at the historic Meetinghouse near McNabb, Illinois, from June 19-23, 2019 for the annual sessions of Illinois Yearly Meeting.

As we explored our chosen theme of Facing Fear with Faith, we were inspired by stories of Quakers from Kenya and Bolivia overcoming differences by their faith that God's love resides in all. Other workshops had us confronting conflict in our meetings and in seeking justice for those downtrodden by history and prejudice. One workshop even featured a bicycle ride along the historic Hennepin Canal tow path. Another workshop examined Mennonite financial stewardship rooted in faith and values. A different workshop focused on conscientious objection as it relates to our youth today.

Our small children overcame their own fears of a frog by naming it “Sweetheart.” The middle school children were given an historical tour of our graveyard, including a visit to the gravesite of Benjamin Lundy, a well-known abolitionist and journalist of the 19th century. The older children practiced their carpentry skills by constructing Leopold benches, reusing old boards from our barn and simple hand tools to put together durable seating for our evening campfire sessions.

Our introductory evening lecture was an inspiring talk by Amelia Kegan from FCNL titled “Keeping Courage and Faithful Focus in a Crisis-driven Society.” The featured speaker was Eileen Flanagan from Chestnut Hill Meeting near Philadelphia, who taught us how to translate our beliefs into action. In her plenary remarks, she spoke about effective activism, climate change, and environmental justice. Our session concluded with the annual Plummer lecture, given by Gwen Weaver about her life and spiritual journey.

Maintaining an historic 1874 Meetinghouse has its challenges. In addition to its annual use during Yearly Meeting, it also houses the Clear Creek Monthly Meeting, and has been registered with the National Register of Historic Places since 1992. Blue River Quarterly – affiliated with Illinois Yearly Meeting – will also observe its 200th anniversary in Salem, Indiana in late September. We had an exciting encounter with a stubborn septic tank, and discussed a retirement party for our aging industrial-size refrigerators. The weather presented its own difficulties: the unusually cool June

temperatures produced heavy rains with high winds that knocked over our tents one afternoon, and drenched us in our sleep. We also found time to celebrate and recognize the retirement of Dick Ashdown, a lifelong resident and faithful Friend who served for 53 years as steward and groundskeeper of the McNabb Meetinghouse. His service has been exemplary, and a model for all of us to celebrate and value. His annual hayride for the children during Yearly Meeting has been a highlight for younger Illinois Friends for generations.

In spite of the serious social matters facing us, music enlivened our hearts and raised our spirits, from our traditional square dancing on the front lawn to the inspiring and rousing songs by the team of Aaron Fowler and Laura Dungan. They led an inter-generational group in enthusiastic singing and storytelling.

Our business meetings ended on a joyous note with a dramatic announcement that our own Faith and Practice has finally been completed, after twenty-seven years of research, editing, and effort. The members of the Faith and Practice Committee have invested years of effort into this accomplishment, and we wish to recognize their hard-won achievements.

“Fundamental to all else is the need that men should grow to understand and practice patience and tolerance, and to substitute for the clumsy, uncertain, cruel tools of violence, the methods of reason and cooperation.”

Emily Greene Balch, Nobel Peace Prize (1946)

Illinois Yearly Meeting, McNabb, Illinois, Sixth Month, 23, 2019