

ILYM Annual Sessions Questions and Answers

This document has been prepared in order to give short but helpful answers to questions Friends might have about the annual sessions of Illinois Yearly Meeting (ILYM). It is arranged under the following headings:

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1) Basic Information

What are the annual sessions?

The event we call “the annual sessions of Illinois Yearly Meeting” is a gathering of approximately 200 people, almost all of whom attend Quaker meetings that are members of ILYM. Most of those who attend the annual sessions do so in person, gathering at the beautiful ILYM campus in rural central Illinois which is also home to Clear Creek Friends Meeting. For those who cannot attend in person, selected events are available online.

When are the annual sessions?

They always begin at 1 PM on the third Wednesday in June and end with lunch and site clean-up the following Sunday. This year (2025) they will take place on June 18-22.

Where are the annual sessions held?

The annual sessions are held on the 12-acre ILYM campus near McNabb, Illinois. The campus is centrally located between all ILYM meetings, although of course it is not equidistant from all of them. At the center of the ILYM campus is the ILYM Meetinghouse, which is at 14365 North 350th Avenue, McNabb IL 61335.

What takes place at the annual sessions?

There are many events every day, from early in the morning until well into the evening. They include daily meetings for worship, workshops on a variety of topics, lectures, worship sharing and spiritual deepening, meetings for business, shared meals, singing, dancing, programs for

children and high schoolers folks, exhibits from other Quaker organizations, an intergenerational variety show, and more.

Are any special events planned for this year?

Yes! This year's sessions will feature a party on Saturday in celebration of the 150th anniversary of Illinois Yearly Meeting. There will also be a workshop to introduce a new book authored by Peter Lasersohn of Urbana-Champaign Monthly Meeting on the history of ILYM, which will be available for purchase. Quaker history will also be the subject of a talk by guest speaker Tom Hamm of West Richmond Friends Meeting in Richmond, Indiana (New Association of Friends), author of *The Quakers in America*.

What is the theme for the annual sessions?

This year's theme is "Honoring the Past, Living the Present, Envisioning the Future." Those who attend this year's annual sessions are invited to remember and treasure the generations of regional Friends and their spiritual witness, which has grounded our community in seeking Truth for all these many years.

Who can attend?

Anyone and everyone.

Do I have to be there for the entire event?

No. You are welcome to attend for as much of the 4-day period as you want and are able to.

How much does it cost?

ILYM uses a pay-as-led approach to cover the costs of the sessions. There is a representative fee for on-site adult attendance of \$55 per day, which includes on-site housing, meals and snacks, and attending all events. This fee reflects a representative amount which, if received from each adult attender, would cover the cost of the annual sessions, including programs and infrastructure. Those who choose to stay off-campus pay housing fees to those sites separately (see "Off-Campus Lodging" in the section on Lodging, below). The representative fee for adult virtual-only attendees is \$15 per day. No fee is assessed for children or high schoolers.

When registering, you will be provided with a calculation for your suggested fee amount. Most attenders pay that amount, while some pay more (to help cover those who pay less) and others pay less. Detailed explanation of this model and its rationale are on the registration form.

How do I register?

Registration can be done on-line (ilym.org/2025AnnualSessions). Print copies of the registration form can be downloaded from that site or picked up at a ILYM Friends meeting. Please submit your registration before June 1. This helps in planning and order supplies and food.

If I attend in person, what should I bring?

Bring clothes for active wear, sunscreen, mosquito repellent, rain gear, a flashlight. Bringing a canteen, water bottle and/or coffee mug can be helpful. You are also welcome to bring a musical instrument and a snack to share after the evening events. Depending on where you will be staying, you might need to bring camping gear, linens, or the like, as is explained in the section on Lodging.

What should I do when I arrive?

You can check in at the check-in/registration table meetinghouse (banner clearly visible when you walk in). If your first time attending you will get an overview things. The person staffing that table will be able to answer or find answers to whatever questions you may have. There will be a gathering place with activities for newcomers to meet and get to know other attendees on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday afternoons. There will be other welcoming opportunities for newcomers too. You can find out the location of those activities at the registration desk.

2) Transportation

How do I get to the ILYM campus?

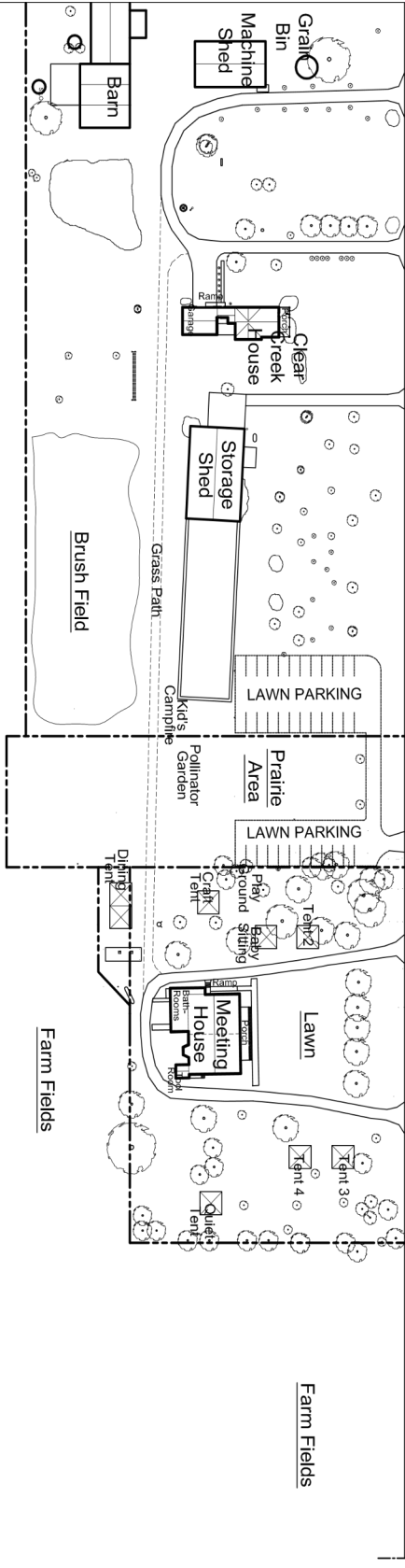
The campus can be accessed by car or train (nearby train station).

For those who *drive*, the address of the meetinghouse is given in the Basic section above. There is ample free parking near the campground, the meetinghouse, and Clear Creek House, all of which is well marked.

For those who wish to *carpool*, the registration form will allow you to select the option of offering or requesting a ride. The ILYM Administrative Coordinator will put Friends who wish to carpool in touch with one another. Coordinating days and times may require flexibility. Asking others in your meeting if they are available for carpooling can also be a good idea.

For those who want to travel by *train*, Amtrak provides service to Princeton (30-minute drive) stations. The places and times of that service can be accessed through the Amtrak website, Amtrak.com. Seats can fill up, so getting a ticket earlier will give you more options for choosing the time of your travel. When registering, indicate that you need a ride to/from the train station and the train arrival/departing times. ILYM Administrative Coordinator will coordinate a ride to or from the Princeton train station.

Clear Creek Friends Meeting Illinois Yearly Meeting Campus Map



3) Lodging

Where can I stay during the annual sessions?

There are several options for lodging. Those that are on the ILYM campus are shown on the map on the previous page.

Camping: The campus includes a three-acre campground across the road from the meetinghouse where you can pitch a tent or bring a camper. It has a bathhouses with showers, toilets, and sinks. There are some camping spaces with electrical pedestals. You may request to reserve a space with electrical hookup when registering (people with medical needs for electricity are give priority reservations, so please state such needs when registering). There are no water hook-ups for campers.

Cabins: There are six cabins on the campground. Each of them has 8 bunks, 4 lower and 4 upper. Each cabin has two screened doors and two windows, which allows for air flow. A curtain can be supplied to divide any cabin into two sections, each with its own door and window, for those who want greater privacy. The cabins do not have lights or electricity, but each one is provided with a flashlight. Another cabin, called the Penn House, has light and power. There are 4 bunks, 2 lower and 2 upper, in Penn House. If you want to stay in Penn House, you should specifically request it when registering. Preference is given to those with medical needs for electricity (for example, a CPAP) and/or a place without stairs.

Clear Creek House: This is a 2-story house located about 600 feet from the meetinghouse. It has five bedrooms on the second floor and one on the first floor. Each room is equipped with futons or bunks, twin beds, double beds, or beds with trundles. It has a bathroom on each floor and is air conditioned, with fans in each room in case they are needed. The house also has a meetingroom, dining room, and kitchen. Clear Creek House can only accommodate up to 15 people, so it should be specifically requested when registering. Priority is given to adults with self-reported health or mobility issues and those with a need for quiet sleeping space. Parents with very young infants may also be considered.

High School Bunkhouse: A large bunkhouse on the campground can hold up to 40 high school Friends and chaperons.

Off Campus: There are several off-campus hotels located within about a 30-minute drive of the campus. They are listed on the website and the session info pamphlet registration form. There are also B&Bs, and Airbnbs in the area. ILYM attenders who register at the Days Inn in Oglesby will receive a price reduction (at least \$30 per night) if they reserve their rooms before May 18th, detailed information available at ilym.org/2025annualsessions.

Requests for lodging in Clear Creek House, the cabins, or Penn House should be made before the early registration due date, which is usually the first week of June. It may not be possible to fulfill requests made after that date.

If I bring a tent for camping, can I get help setting it up?

We plan to have tent helpers available at the campground on Wednesday afternoon and evening and on Friday afternoon and evening. Ask about this at the registration desk in the meetinghouse. You are also welcome to ask someone camping nearby for assistance. Most folks are willing to lend a hand to help out, so don't be shy about asking.

If I stay in a cabin, what do I need to bring?

You will need bedclothes, towels, washcloths, toiletries, sheets, and a pillow. You should also bring a blanket or sleeping bag, as the temperature can drop significantly at night. You might want to bring a battery lantern or flashlight, as the campground is unlit. There are a few bedrails available for borrowing at the registration desk for children sleeping on an upper bunk. Cabin or tent campers might want to bring a chair.

If I stay in Clear Creek House, what do I need to bring?

You will need bedclothes, towels, washcloths, toiletries, and sheets.

4) Food

Will there be regular meals every day?

Yes. The meal service begins with supper on Wednesday and ends with lunch on Sunday. The schedule is as follows:

Breakfast: Thursday, Friday, and Saturday 6:45-7:45 AM; Sunday 7:30-8:30 AM

Lunch: 12:00-1:00 PM

Supper: 6:00-7:00 PM

Volunteers helping with meals may eat their meal ½ hour before the beginning of the scheduled mealtime. Parents with small children are invited to bring them to the dining hall ½ hour before meals to afford them extra time.

Where are meals served?

Meals are served in the basement dining hall in the meetinghouse.

Where will I eat?

There are tables and chairs in the dining hall. Alternatively, Friends may choose to eat outside, either in the dining tent or at a picnic table near the Meetinghouse.

What kind of food will there be?

Meals at the annual sessions are simple but nutritious, with fresh ingredients used to the degree possible. Our cooks have been with us for almost 20 years and are Quakers themselves, so they are familiar with Friends and their food preferences. The cooks are adept at providing meals for a variety of diets (vegetarian, vegan, low sodium, etc.) as well as for those with food allergies and sensitivities, gluten and lactose intolerance, and other dietary restrictions. All dishes are clearly marked. Menus are posted at the top of the stairs leading to the dining hall.

How will the cooks know about my dietary restrictions and preferences?

Registrants should list any dietary restrictions and preferences on the registration form. When registering, state your dietary needs on the registration form and submit the form before the early registration due date, which is usually the first week of June. This will allow the cooks to plan for and purchase appropriate items and amounts. While every meal has vegetarian options, the cooks need to know how many vegetarians will be eating at each meal. You are also welcome to check in with the cooks (in the kitchen in the basement of the meetinghouse) before your first meal so they can be sure to understand your needs.

Will there be snacks?

Snacks are available in the dining hall after the program each evening. Friends are encouraged to bring snacks to share, dropping them off on the counter behind the serving area in the dining hall (downstairs) when they arrive at the meetinghouse.

Will there be beverages at non-meal times?

Coffee, hot tea, iced tea, lemonade, and water are available in the dining hall from breakfast through late evening.

5) Fellowship and Volunteering

Will there be opportunities for Friends to work together?

Building fellowship is an important part of the annual sessions, and working together is one way we do that. There will be several such opportunities.

- 1) *Site Preparation (Site Prep)* takes place on the days just before the beginning of the annual sessions. This year Site Prep will begin on Saturday, June 14, and will conclude with lunch on Wednesday, June 18. Everyone is cordially invited to help get the campus ready before the main event begins. You can come for all or any part of the four days of Site Prep. Meals and housing are free. Those planning to participate should fill out an online form that is available on the ILYM website.

- 2) Since annual sessions are a primarily volunteer operation, those who attend are asked to take on *volunteer tasks* that are needed during the sessions. For example, while cooks have been hired to prepare our meals, all other serving and kitchen tasks are performed by volunteers. These tasks include serving food and drinks, assisting those who need help getting to their tables (inside or outside), cleanup of both the dining hall and the dining tent, washing dishes, and serving snacks. Other tasks, such as cleaning bathrooms and common areas, also require the labor of volunteers. The audio and video components of sessions are also done with volunteers. These are excellent opportunities to get to know other Friends and to make the annual sessions run smoothly. Attenders sign up for whichever tasks they choose in the registration desk area in the meetinghouse.
- 3) *Site Clean-up* takes place on Sunday, June 22, beginning during lunch. This is an all-volunteer community effort to return the campus to the state it was in before the annual sessions began. Helping with site clean-up for an hour or two on Sunday is a final fellowship event, as well as a great way to help everyone get back home sooner than if only a few people were to stay to clean up the site.

6) Online Opportunities

If I can't attend the annual sessions in person, can I attend virtually?

Yes. On the registration form, select "online sessions" for the days you will be attending online.

Is it possible to attend in person at some times, but virtually at others?

Yes, you can register for a mixture of online and in-person sessions. You should indicate that on your registration form. If you register for virtual sessions and in-person sessions on the same day, your suggested fee will only be for the in-person sessions (see "How much does it cost?" in the Basic Information section).

What events will I be able to participate in?

All worship sessions and Meetings for Business will be hybrid, with those attending online welcome to participate. The evening events in the meeting room in the meetinghouse will also be hybrid. There maybe online worship sharing on Thursday and Friday afternoons. There might be additional hybrid opportunities. To learn more about online/hybrid events, consult the schedule on the ILYM website (ilym.org/2025AnnualSessions)

How will I connect virtually with the annual sessions?

If you register to attend virtually, you will be given a Zoom link for the days you register to attend virtually. Your face will be visible on a large screen in the meeting room. If you are led to speak, you can be heard through loudspeakers. You will be able to hear the speakers who are in the meetingroom, who will use a microphone. It should be possible to enable closed captioning on your device to read what is being said.

7) Programs for Children and Teenagers

What will my kids do during the annual sessions?

Illinois Yearly Meeting provides programs for the younger set throughout the annual sessions. Program activities provide time for children and teens to experience aspects of Quaker faith while having fun connecting with old friends and meeting new ones. Opportunities include a craft tent, swimming, recreation on the lawn, and all-ages workshops. These are scheduled during times when parents may wish to participate in other events.

Who plans and directs the program for children?

The children's program is planned and supervised by the Children's Religious Education Coordinator. Babysitters, childcare assistants, and volunteer teachers carry out activities for children through eighth grade. Please visit ilym.org/2025AnnualSessions for more specific information.

Who plans and directs the program for high schoolers?

The program for high schoolers is planned and organized by the Youth Coordinator, the Youth Oversight Committee, and High School Friends. You can find more specific information at ilym.org/2025AnnualSessions

My kids are too young (0-3 yrs) to participate in the children's program. What can they do?

Babysitting is provided during these times. Additionally babysitting and supervised time in the play area are available during Meeting for Worship (8:00-9:00 a.m. each morning) and during the times for worship sharing and workshops (1:15-4:00 p.m. on Thursday and Friday afternoons). Babysitting and childcare are offered at other times of the day as well. Consult the schedule on-line or posted in various places in the meetinghouse a full listing of times and programs.

How do I inform ILYM that my kids are coming to the annual sessions?

You will need to fill out a separate Children's Sessions Registration Form for each child.

How much will it cost for my kids to attend?

Young people (aged 18 and under) attend ILYM the annual sessions free of charge.

8) Adult Young Friends

What are Adult Young Friends?

Adult Young Friends (AYF) of ILYM are a group of 18- to 35-year-old Quakers who are led to maintain a sense of community with their peers. As a subgroup of adult Friends, AYF participate as active adult members of ILYM. New members are always welcome.

What activities are there for Adult Young Friends?

Adult Young Friends often engage with the teens (see previous section) for some of their afternoon and evening activities, including a walk to the Quaker Cemetery followed by pizza on Saturday night. Otherwise they participate in adult activities or organize their own.

9) Accessibility and Special Needs

What is the ILYM campus like?

The campus is rural and rustic. There is a smooth paved and lightly trafficked road connecting all of the properties that can be walked along. Most walks and drives on the campus are either gravel or grass.

What kind of support can a person with mobility challenges expect at the annual sessions?

Clear Creek House might be a good option for lodging, and priority is given to those with special needs (see “Where can I stay during the annual sessions?” under Lodging). There is a golf cart that can take people around campus, especially between Clear Creek House and the meetinghouse. Those needing the golf cart can schedule a ride at the registration table. The first floor of the meetinghouse and Clear Creek House are accessible via ramps, and both have accessible bathrooms at that level. The High School Bunkhouse is also accessible via a ramp. The campground bathhouse entrances are at ground level, but the cabins (except for Penn House) have a few stairs.

I have trouble going up and down stairs. How will I get my meals?

The dining hall in the basement of the meetinghouse is only accessible via the stairway, but assistance will be provided for people with mobility issues. For those unable to navigate the stairs to the basement, arrangements can be made for the volunteer serving staff to bring your meals to the dining tent or picnic table. The serving staff can also assist in carrying plates and drinks to the dining tent, the picnic table, or tables in the dining hall.

What if I can't hear very well, or have difficulty seeing?

There can be some background noise in the meeting room from outside sounds, talking, indoor fans, and so on. Microphones and speakers are used for events in the meetinghouse. Headphones are available for those who need additional hearing assistance. If you are visually challenged, you can download the advance documents and use the accessible features on your mobile device.

If I have vision issues, should I bring anything beyond what is listed in the Basics section?

If you have vision issues, you should bring an easily carried bright flashlight to help navigate the campus after sundown, as the campus is spread out and can be very dark at night. You might also want to ask another attendee to assist you.

If the weather is hot, where can I go to cool down?

The dining hall in the basement of the meetinghouse is air conditioned and will be available. There are some chairs with cushions in the corner under the front stairs. There is also a Zoom station so that folks can participate in whichever sessions are being held in the meetingroom upstairs. The dining room of Clear Creek House, which is also air conditioned, will be available as well. The meetingroom has open windows and doors, vintage paper fans, ceiling fans, and some large fans to try to move the air.

Where can I go to rest and relax during the day?

There is a quiet area near the meetinghouse with recliners so that attendees can rest. You can also find a quiet chair under the trees, in an unused activity tent, or on the front porch of Clear Creek House (though the porch is usually a place for casual conversations), or you can cool your feet in the kiddie pool on the west side of the meetinghouse. The places mentioned under the previous question are also good options. If you are lodging on campus, you are welcome to go to your tent, cabin, or bedroom for a nap.

10) More Information

Where can I find more information about this year's annual sessions?

Go to the ILYM website at ilym.org/2025AnnualSessions.