

PYM Young Adult Friends (YAFs) – Epistle, PYM Annual Session, July 2015

To Friends Everywhere,

In 2015, Pacific Yearly Meeting's Young Adult Friends are in many places at once, playing many roles. This annual session, our community came together from three countries over thousands of miles, comprised of participants from age eighteen to forty, attending Meetings for as little as one day to as many as twenty-four years. During the session, we have participated as teachers in the Children's Program, Friendly Responsible Adult Presences and workshop leaders with Junior Yearly Meeting, and committee members for the Yearly Meeting. Our disparate group united through daily check-ins in the style of worship-sharing, during intergenerational events, and in times of unstructured fellowship.

This year we have gathered in these beautiful golden hills of Marin and have been rejuvenated by this land. As we have walked and hiked this earth, we honor the first peoples of this region, the Miwok, and we recognize the healing work there is to do towards right relationship with indigenous peoples here and everywhere.

YAFs have augmented our name tags this week with our preferred gender pronouns because we want to lift up the plurality of our experience and ensure a safe space in our community.

As we began our nominations mid-week, we settled in to lift names up from the silence and found our process dry. We struggled with this process that, at its best, allows us to lift up our members in recognition of their gifts and lift up our community in recognition of our commitment. Instead, we were mired in logistics. We encountered the confusion of being ourselves: far-flung, far-reaching, and closely tied. This struggle wasn't a place to get stuck. It was the time to give over and dive deep. From this emerged three fundamental questions, central to the experience of being a Friend:

Who are we?

What are we doing here?

Who do we want to be?

In the Annual Session Keynote, Friend Lloyd Lee Wilson shared with us his reflection as a beekeeper. The unit of bees is not the individual insect, but the hive. And, the unit of Quakers is not the individual Friend, but the Meeting. To this we would add that the time of Friends is neither the past nor the future. The time of Friends is the present. As a Young Adult Friend ministered, "We are not the future, we are the Now." Our laboring is not toward some imagined eventuality, but for faithfulness today to the Spirit revealed. This is our call— what we are called to. As we remain faithful to our bee roles, we create and sustain a thriving hive.

So, what is our role as YAFs? We participate in the whole in so many ways. Our community is formed as its own entity by some parameters of age or transitions in life, and yet what feels most true is that we are of the unit of this Yearly Meeting. Still, we recognize the value a gathering of YAFs provides for our own growth and as an incubator for our Monthly, Quarterly, and Yearly Meetings. Our experience is a living manifestation of Matthew 18:20, "For where two or more are gathered in my name, there am I among them." The grace of God moves visible and invisible among us and we ripple among you.

With Love and Light,

the Young Adult Friends of Pacific Yearly Meeting