

Threshing Session

A **Threshing Session** opened with silent worship at 8:00am. Notes of that session were taken but not read back and not approved by the participants. [See Minutes of Plenary VIII for explanation of the agenda of this session.]

Clerk Steve Smith invited those with concerns about yesterday's Plenaries to speak.

Comments shared included:

- Yesterday the issue was raised that we were not in good order or needed more clarity about bringing forth minutes of concern.
- The pattern has been to bring minutes of concern to monthly meetings first, then to quarterly and then to YM.
- Traditional Peace testimony states that we utterly deny the use of all weapons and historically we have taken this message to the authorities of the day. Speaking Truth to power is taking an action. In addition and separately we must wrestle with our yearning to make real change by personal action.
- We have sacrificed the "good" in the search for the "perfect" – a common flaw of compulsive editors. We must have more trust in those who were willing to do the work that we were not.
- We need to hear fully those with questions about when and how we write minutes of concern. The second issue we did not take action on was the proposal to sign the letter regarding solitary confinement which we might be able to agree on and deal with the larger issues of minutes of concern at a later time.
- Some Friends yearn for a statement from the body of Friends that can be used in interfaith work on a peace or justice issue. However, to make such statements, we need to be in worship and not in our "heads".
- We often craft our minutes to intentionally avoid telling anyone what to do. That may result in a diminishment of our action in the world.
- We distribute authority within our society as widely as possible. Our effectiveness in meeting the challenges of the world are impossible to measure.
- We need to figure out how we can follow our hearts and speak out on this and other contemporary issues.

Threshing Session (continued)

- A minute of concern speaks to the outer powers and it speaks to its members. This message tells others that may follow us how Quakers stand on an issue and it tells all our members that this issue compels us to action.

As a practical matter, individual letters to the elected officials are not counted but letters from organizations do get counted.

- We may tend to speak to the current hot topic of the day without much in the way of follow through and ignore larger issues.
- I am impatient with our timidity to speak out loudly against atrocities and for peace and justice.
- We have a tradition within the nation and among Friends to interact with government and speak Truth to Power. I yearn for a public statement supporting our mission for peace and justice.
- The annual session is not a representative body. A minute of Concern should only be written when the issue rises during YM among those present and there should be given adequate consideration of content and purpose.
- We must follow our hearts and act even when the results may not be seen in this lifetime. Other times we take actions that make a visible difference immediately. Sometimes our actions affect others to also act, doubling our effectiveness.
- We have a tradition of speaking out from our hearts when we see injustice. We hold ourselves and our leaders accountable for right action.

The clerk commented that this sharing and reflection was exceptionally rich and deep and honest. It is clear that we are not finished with this process and it will be continued. The final plenary will have other business that must be addressed.