
Epistles 2009

Epistle from New England Yearly Meeting of Friends

Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound...and ye shall hal-low the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof... —Leviticus 25: 9^a, 10^a (King James)

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. —Luke 4:18-19 (King James)

Dear Friends Everywhere,

New England Yearly Meeting gathered this August in Rhode Island for our 349th Annual Sessions. We pruned our business agenda, allowing more time to pray and listen. We are discovering the spirit of jubilee and the importance of rest to prepare.

Jubilee is a fresh start,
the dawn of a new life,
blessing and ecstasy,
rest in the Creator's beauty and mercy.

Jubilee is justice for the poor and oppressed,
liberation for the rich and the oppressors.

Jubilee is releasing those burdened by debt,
facing and righting past transgressions,
asking forgiveness and forgiving.

Jubilee is letting go of our own willful urgency,
trusting in holy love and grace.

Jubilee brings healing to the earth,
human equality,
peace to the nations.

We savored the sweet spirit of confidence and joy in the Light. Our worship with attention to business was deepened by more time to consider weighty issues. Sadly, we acknowledge that some of our actions deeply grieve some Friends. We are charged to seek the Healer's help in the difficult work of restoring relationships. Despite our distress and confusion, the Spirit who is both love and justice will guide us.

Our mutual love is strong and ever stronger. We hunger for deeper engagement and clearer communication among ourselves, with other Quakers, and with all the world. We feel the Living Presence moving among us, teaching and tendering us. We need to surrender to the Eternal Power instead of relying on our own. With humility, forgiveness, and trust we resolve to follow more closely the will of the Friend of all Friends.

With loving Greetings,

—NEW ENGLAND YEARLY MEETING OF FRIENDS

I felt easy to leave it all to him who alone is able to turn the hearts of the mighty and make way for the spreading of Truth in the earth by means agreeable to his infinite wisdom. —John Woolman, Journal (ed. Phillips Moulton, 2007 p. 66)



Entonces harás tocar fuertemente la trompeta del jubileo. ... Así santificaréis en año cincuenta y pregonaréis libertad en la tierra a todos sus habitantes. —Levítico 25: 9^a, 10^a

El Espíritu del Señor está sobre mí, por cuanto me ha unguido para dar buenas nuevas a los pobres; me ha enviado a sanar a los quebrantados de corazón, a pregonar libertad a los cautivos y vista a los ciegos, a poner en libertad a los oprimidos y a predicar el año agradable del Señor. —Lucas 4:18-19

Queridos Amigos del mundo entero

La Junta Anual de Nueva Inglaterra se reunió en Rhode Island en agosto del 2009 en nuestra 349^a sesión anual. Podemos nuestra agenda de asuntos, abriendo más tiempo para orar y escuchar. Estamos descubriendo el espíritu de jubileo y la importancia del descanso para prepararnos.

El jubileo es un nuevo comienzo,
el alba de nueva vida,
bendición y éxtasis,
descanso en la hermosura y la misericordia del Creador.

Jubileo es justicia para los pobres y los oprimidos,
liberación para los ricos y los opresores.
Jubileo es aliviar de la carga de deuda,
restaurar relaciones,
enfrentar y corregir transgresiones pasadas,
pedir perdón y perdonar.

Jubileo es despojarnos de la urgencia de nuestra propia voluntad,
confiar en la Gracia y el Amor Santo.
Jubileo brinda sanidad a la tierra,
igualdad humana, paz a las naciones.

Saboreamos el dulce espíritu de confianza y gozo en la Luz; nuestra adoración con atención a asuntos se profundizo con más tiempo para considerar asuntos de peso. Con tristeza, reconocemos que algunas acciones nuestras lastiman a algunos Amigos. Nos sentimos encomendados a buscar la ayuda de Aquél que sana y hace posible la obra difícil de restaurar relaciones. A pesar de nuestra confusión y angustia, el Espíritu que es amor y justicia nos guiará.

Nuestro fuerte amor mutuo es cada día más fuerte. Anhelamos profundizar relaciones y comunicarnos más claramente entre nosotros, con los demás cuáqueros, y con el mundo entero. Sentimos la Presencia Viviente moviéndose entre nosotros, enseñándonos, enterneciéndonos. Hemos de rendirnos al Poder Eterno en vez de confiar en nuestro propio poder. Con humildad, perdón, y confianza, nos dedicamos a seguir con más de cerca la voluntad del Amigo de todos los Amigos.

Con saludos cariñosos,

Me sentí contento de dejarlo todo al único que puede cambiar los corazones de los poderosos y abrir camino para difundir la Verdad en la tierra por medios conformes a su sabiduría infinita. —John Woolman, Diario (red. Phillips Moulton 2007 p. 66)

Epistle from the Young Adult Friends

These are the appointed festivals of the Lord, which you shall celebrate as times of holy convocation. —Leviticus 23:37^a (New Revised Standard)

Beloved Friends Everywhere,

We hold you in the love and light of the Spirit. Young Adult Friends met for our Annual Sessions at Bryant University in Smithfield, Rhode Island from 8/1 to 8/6/2009. This year, we are called into jubilee, a time of freedom and spiritual renewal, a time that “shall be to you a Sabbath of complete rest” (Leviticus 23:32^a NRS). In preparation for Jubilee, Young Adult Friends (YAFs) worked to minister to each other and the wider community of Friends. We sought to define our expectations as YAFs and to support our yearly meeting in its conversations about sexuality and spirituality. Our worship together led us forward in love, and we felt the blessing of each other’s ministry in all of our endeavors.

In worship together this year, YAFs felt called to examine the expectations we hold together as a community. Friends agreed that a legalistic set of rules would not serve to quicken or enrich our retreats, yet Friends also felt moved to form a working party that will examine the expectations and values we hold together as YAFs. We encourage Friends everywhere to review their expectations for worship, ministry, and personal conduct. Be unafraid to lay down what is no longer required. Rejoice in the work that you are called to do. Trusting upon our experience of the Divine, in which we see that of God in all people, Young Adult Friends have found unity to reaffirm our support of same-sex marriage. We are enriched by the ministry of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer Friends. We celebrate and support all loving relationships in our community.

We continue to feel the pain caused by a Friends United Meeting (FUM) personnel policy that we find to be incompatible with our experience of God’s love. We are dismayed that an organization of which we are a part, and whose work and overall ministry we support, has continued a discriminatory policy. Friends support the work FUM has done to enrich the broader community and its efforts to end patterns of colonialism and paternalism. We are holding this concern in the Light and encourage and prayerfully support continued dialogue and intervisitation.

We felt led to create a workshop on sexual ethics at Sessions this year. Our NEYM Faith and Practice describes sexuality as a “part of life from the moment of our birth to the end of our days,” and calls for Friends to “achieve a more adequate understanding of the proper place and purpose of sex and sexual relationships in our lives.” We encourage Friends to discuss their sexuality and to formulate and articulate a view of sexual ethics.

YAFs were called to work with older adult Friends on the continuing struggle to support all the forms of love that we see in our community and to confront the

challenge of how to faithfully engage with the process of budgeting contributions to FUM. In consideration of the work that has been done on this issue, we strongly felt the presence of the Spirit. We gratefully recognize that the healing and discernment witnessed would not have been possible without the gentle ministry of the Spirit in our midst.

YAFs closed our Sessions together with worship and celebration. We send our love and encouragement to Friends everywhere.

Yours In The Light,

—THE YOUNG ADULT FRIENDS OF NEW ENGLAND



Epistle from Young Friends

From our gathering
broke forth
transformation,
 transformation,
flowing discussion,
 and questioning.

Can
 Can
We lay down our
Burdens
 into the hands of our friends?
And shoulder them again
with time?

What
 What
 If the end of the world is
near?
Why wait for
Jubilee?
 Jubilee?

Does
 Does
it matter if a jubilee was achieved?
 Is it possible today?
How can we devote our trust to God?

From our gathering
broke forth
community
 community
What is our responsibility as activist
Quakers in the world?
 How do we listen for
our history?
 our history?
and how do we listen for the journeys
of members of our community?

From our gathering
broke forth
joy
 joy
in vital leadership,
 in vital leadership,
exuberant games,
and a widening connection to the adult
yearly meeting.

From our gathering
 continually broke forth
a strengthened
 and vibrant
community
 community.

—YOUNG FRIENDS OF NEW ENGLAND



Epistle from the Junior High Yearly Meeting

Dear Friends everywhere,

39 Junior Highers from all over New England have gathered at Bryant University for six days to explore our theme of *Coming into Jubilee*. Jubilee is a time every fifty years (according to Leviticus 25) when everyone forgives each other and comes closer to God. Our week started with us planning and leading intergenerational worship on Sunday. Our skits concentrated on delivering messages in meeting for worship and discerning when to speak.

Our first business meeting affirmed the nominations of J Lynn Erikson as clerk, and Acacia McDowell as recording clerk. Also, visitors to other business meetings were chosen and reported back later in the week.

On Monday, we had six panelists visit us and talk about their experiences and jobs. One of those was Janet Schrock who talked about her work with Heifer International, in particular vermiculture (worm farming). Another panelist was Nancy Shippen who works with a program called Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP), a program that works with prisoners to help them resolve conflict. David Ehrens went to Israel and Palestine and bore witness to the conflict there. Philip Raines is a Quaker pastor for a semi-programmed meeting. He talked about his work and making people passionate about their beliefs. Lisa Graustein taught about the seven chakras of the human body and led a guided meditation. Alma Sanchez-Eppler talked about the Quaker Pilgrimage, which followed the path of George Fox in England and Ireland, and her personal journey to appreciating her Quaker faith.

On Tuesday, we took a trip to Quaddick State Park in Connecticut. When we first arrived, it was cloudy. Soon, however, it warmed up and we had fun eating, swimming and playing games such as Kissing Rugby. Other fun things we did during the week included a Dance-Dance Revolution party, a pool party, and a pizza party.

Over the week, we worked on several art and drama projects that tied in with our theme. One of these was our God box. These are boxes that we decorated and put slips of paper in, with people and things that we want to forgive, so we can go back to them at a later time. We also did skits about other religions and their traditions that are similar to Jubilee. On Tuesday night we saw Theatre for Transformation's performance of *Show me the Franklins: Remembering the Ancestors, Slavery & Benjamin Franklin*. A point that stood out was that we should shift the discussion of slavery from our head to our heart.

In the light,

—THE JUNIOR HIGHERS OF NEW ENGLAND



Epistle from the Junior Yearly Meeting, grades 3–6

Hello children everywhere, from Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) at New England Yearly Meeting, grades 3-6. We arrived Saturday August 1, 2009 at Bryant University, Smithfield, RI. There are 42 of us and we left Thursday, August 6, 2009.

Each day we opened with singing and Bible 10 minutes. Our theme this year was *Community, It Happens* with a song of the same title created by our leader Betty Ann Lee. Some of us came for the first time and want to come again. JYM staff is awesome and nice. Many of us came with wheels such as scooters, bikes and roller blades. Some of the activities we did all week were JYM ball which we played a lot, made wooden models, made a Mandela outside made of colored beans, kickball game, swimming in the large indoor pool, where we played basketball in the water. We made plaster face, foot and hand masks that we painted. We did paper bag skits, played capture the flag, made new friends, and experienced coffee house where there were singing and skits.

We had two visitors, one from the Heifer project from whom we learned that resources aren't fairly distributed throughout the world. Our second visitor was the Friends Camp Director. Friends Camp is a place for children, ages 7–17, who stay in cabins for one to two weeks in South China, Maine.

Each night we end with vespers, coming together as a community to settle in for bed with stories and music. Please write to us if you want instructions as to how to play JYM ball or if you want the words to our *Community, It Happens* song.

—THE JUNIOR YEARLY MEETING, GRADES 3–6, OF NEW ENGLAND



Epistle from the Junior Yearly Meeting, grades k–2

This year in New England Yearly Meeting Junior Yearly Meeting K-2nd grade, we made shakers and rain sticks and sang name songs to learn each other's names. We drew our faces on plates, glued them to sticks, and paraded with them. Outside we played with bubbles (and popped a lot of them) and made necklaces and bracelets. One-day the older kids invited us to make ice cream with them. We also made up funny skits with them for Paper Bag Skits. We used our scooters and bikes to get around. We liked Capture the Flag and swimming in the pool.

Inside we made a community of houses out of big boxes and made mailboxes, curtains, and doorknobs. We talked about how to share them so everyone had fun. When some people were not playing nicely, we talked about it to understand each other. We all had fun. We became a community.

—THE JUNIOR YEARLY MEETING, GRADES K–2, OF NEW ENGLAND



Childcare Epistle

Stories, singing, play dough, bubbles, play house, ooblek, chalk on sidewalk, pudding finger-paint, puppets, music instruments, blocks, water play.