

Young Adult Friends Retreat Epistle

Our work is based on this thought: “What you have inherited from your forefathers you must acquire for yourselves to possess it”. That is to say, each generation of young Friends by its experiments must discover for itself the truths on which the Society is built if it is to use those truths and to continue to enlarge the work of the Society. Hence, the occasional separate meetings of younger Friends and our desire to have means of expressing corporately our own experience.

YOUNG FRIENDS COMMITTEE, 1926 21.04, QUAKER FAITH AND PRACTICE, 2ND ED.

On the weekend of 7, 8 and 9 November 2003, a mysterious (and eclectically decorated) van made its way through the rush-hour traffic of Southern Ontario, picking up Young Adult Friends (YAFs) along the way. YAFs came from Kingston, Guelph, Toronto, Hamilton, and even Winter Park, Florida. Once filled to capacity, the van headed through flying snowflakes toward an undisclosed location “outside Kitchener”.

We were welcomed into the home of Brent and Carol Bowyer at 10 pm. We filled our stomachs with hot pumpkin soup and bread, and fed our spirits with

good company in the warm glow of the farmhouse kitchen and its wood stove. A cozy sleeping nest had been prepared for us in the loft of the shed (insulated, like the house, with used freezer lids!). Over the course of the next day-and-a-half, under the subtle guidance of Don Bowyer, our group enjoyed worship sharing, sunny hiking through the new snow, moving and stacking next year’s firewood, playing cards, watching the lunar eclipse, singing folk songs with Tony, Fran and Rachel McQuail and Shelley Paulocik, attending Meeting with Lucknow Worship Group, going on a horse-drawn hayride at Meeting Place Farm, sharing meals, and discussing issues both profound and ridiculous.

Some of us had known each other for years, and some of us had never met. Some of us had grown up in Quaker meeting, and some of us had discovered our places in the Quaker community relatively recently. But from the moment we were assembled, we felt a comfort in being together, both building on a shared past and discovering our separate histories. We felt this strongly during the worship sharing session on what Quakerism means to us and the role of the YAFs in the Society. The ideal location and the generosity of our hosts combined with extraordinary luck in timing and weather to create

a feeling in all of us that we were part of something magical and blessed. We left each other with a sense of gratitude, contentment and hope, looking forward to the next gathering, wherever it may be. ✱

*Go now in peace
May the spirit of love
surround you
Everywhere
You may go.*

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: FREDDY LARA, KATE JOHNSON, DOUG MORRIS, DON BOWYER, DIANA SHEPARD, JESSE HUSK, AND JESSIE STARLING
FRONT: EMILY SHEPARD



— Carol Bowyer