

Friends deserve our support in their work building bridges across our differences. Young Adult Friends around the world feel a leading to reach out to one another within the Society of Friends to seek loving unity. One YAF said that Young Adult Friends would feel abandoned if CYM were to withdraw from FUM.

This energy and desire to work together in loving understanding that is bubbling up out of the YAF community in North America is something I hope is shared with the wider Quaker body. Recently a YAF who I have met at different Quaker gatherings wrote in an open letter to FUM, that really speaks my mind and heart. One part reads: "I believe that everything we do to create and maintain authentic, deep relationships among the different branches of Friends is a step toward a more vital Quakerism. Because I carry this conviction, I am proud to be from a dually-affiliated yearly meeting-- and sad and scared that we may cease to be one, and others may follow in our wake... I want to live out the next 60-70 (God willing) years of my life in a Quakerism that is committed to deep seeking, to dialogue, to relationships that challenge the people who are in them. I want to give that to my children and grandchildren. Long after the personnel policy is a dead issue, the fruit of our commitment to dynamic engagement, fellowship, and spiritual bridge-building (or the absence of that commitment) will be manifesting in the quality and vibrancy of religious life in Quakerism."(<http://unwavingbandsoflight.blogspot.com/2008/12/open-letter-onfriends-united-meeting.html>)

The deep seeking and dialogue that relationships with Friends of diverse traditions allows, has meant that I can now say with conviction, "I am Quaker". Because of this I have requested and been accepted into membership at my local Meeting. The relationships that I have formed with YAFs from different branches of the Quaker tradition and geographical regions, allow me to learn, grow, and be nurtured in my spiritual life. This diverse community allows us to deconstruct the 'us and them' categories, to pose hard questions, and pushes us to be more honest with ourselves and one another. I pray that the seeking continues, and that it spurs us all, regardless of age and theological standings, into action.

## **The Experiences That Have Made Me a Friend**

Amy Jean Singleton-Polster, VIMM

When I was contacted to see if I'd like to contribute to this Sporadical I knew I wanted to write something, but because of exams I was a bit pressed for time. Next it was Christmas, and visiting family and friends, and suddenly the holidays are almost over. As YF and YAF we are all so busy, and often it seems school and work take up way too much time. Add in the spatial challenges for YF in Canada and it's easy to see why gatherings (at least in the west) with more than a dozen YF or YAF are rare.

However, for myself, YF gatherings have been the experiences that have made me a Friend. In 2004 I traveled on the Quaker Youth Pilgrimage (QYP), organized by FWCC. We traveled in England, the Netherlands, and Germany. The connections made on this trip will last a lifetime, even if we never have the opportunity to all be together again. (Just today I met my new roommate on exchange from Ireland, we were chatting and it turned out she knew one of my close friends from QYP and he had been over at her house in Ireland just last week!) In 2005 I participated in the World Gathering for Young Friends (WGYF). At WGYF there were 226 participants from 58 different Yearly Meetings and nine different unaffiliated regional groups. The WGYF for me was an amazing experience. It stretched me, strengthened me, and challenged my beliefs. It forced me to examine how I live my life. To me, the greatest challenge for myself was understanding the beliefs of different Friends, particularly Friends from more Evangelical Christ-centric churches, and how that fit into my own beliefs and how I defined myself as a Quaker.

Both QYP and WGYF are pivotal points along my spiritual journey. The links made between Friends around the world are what hold us together through the good times and the bad. In 2005 at WGYF we pledged to build bridges between our Quaker communities to bring us closer together. I wonder what am I doing today, and what are all Canadian Young Friends doing, to build bridges between our