

## **Young Adult Friends' Conference: Living as Friends, Listening Within**

Richmond, Indiana - May 23-26, 2008

Dear Friends Everywhere,

*“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect.”* (Romans 12:2 NRSV)

In worship, in small groups, in conversation, we have been transformed. Friends affirmed their love for one another again and again. The act of coming together physically was a first step to enacting loving unity. We are hungry for connection and growth in grace with one another, and the healing of our divisions. We heard sermons and joined voices in song. Friends had opportunities to experience and participate in unfamiliar forms of worship. We felt the support of seasoned Friends who provided pastoral care and the many Friends that held the gathering in prayer.

Formal small groups gathered every day for checking in and more personal discussion of the challenges and joys of the conference. Small informal groups treasured free time where we found the space to address other concerns. These informal discussions created a foundation for the depth at which we arrived in worship. Earlham School of Religion professors, students, and alumni led workshops, while conference participants held interest groups on various topics. On Sunday, participants could choose between programmed (First Friends), semi-programmed (West Richmond) or unprogrammed (Clear Creek) worship in the community.

In Spirit-led worship we found that Friends spoke to the necessity of continuing in conversations about our similarities and differences. Friends were asked before the conference to consider the cultural norms of others present, and whether certain choices may impact our ability to find common ground. We began exploring scripture together in workshops, Bible study and programmed worship. This invited new challenges and opportunities to engage with texts important to the experience of Friends. We were reminded by Mark Walker that living in unity as a Religious Society of Friends will make us more effective in our work in the world. The discernment of corporate and individual leadings is one of the obligations we have to one another as a Society. We hear the need to acknowledge diverse leadings, such as Gospel, traveling, vocal, and eldering ministries. Recording these gifts is one way of making individuals and Meetings accountable to leadings.

Friends heard a call to find ways to share the good news that has been revealed to us at this gathering. We strive to carry this light with us when we return to our home Meetings and churches. We have invited one another to our respective Yearly Gatherings and to explore ways of opening our spiritual homes. May we share with the world the light and love that was a presence at this gathering.

In peace,

The YAF Conference Participants

### **What is your involvement in Friends World Committee for Consultation, Friends United Meeting, and Friends General Conference?**

As Canadian Young Friends, we have been asked by Representative Committee to bring to the May Representative Meeting information about our involvement with these organizations.

Contact Jessica Klaassen-Wright who is our YF on Representative Committee, or the editors of the Sporadical, if you would like to share your experiences!