

am I to have F/friends who respect who I am as a person but challenge my beliefs in a way that we can have open dialogue and remain open? I believe that Young Friends today are so determined to have dialogue and gather together because they recognize that it is not our differences that are important, but our similarities and common beliefs. Why does it matter if one finds connection with a Higher Spirit through silent worship and one finds that relationship to the Divine through a programmed or evangelical Meeting? Shouldn't we focus on the fact that all of us are seeking that experience and believe in its value. The divide between Friends over petty issues and even really hard ones hurts my soul. How can we call ourselves Quakers and believe that there is the Light of God in everyone if we can't even see it in Quakers who practise their Quakerism in a different way, or due to their experience believe things that are different from what we believe? How can we say that we should split from a group because of those differences of opinion, instead of staying to have continued conversation? Of course it is painful to be in discord. It wouldn't be painful if the issues were not so important to us, or if we did not care about the group/people with whom we are in discord with. But that doesn't mean that it is better to walk away from that pain and conversation.

My relationships with Quakers outside of Canada have taught me that lesson. In Meeting with a group of Young Friends in Guatemala, we were discussing what made us Quaker and how we practised our Faith. To these Young Friends with their ability to talk about God and Christ as their Lord and Saviour and their expressions of Quakerism in their daily lives, I expect that we initially seemed to be unfaithful. However, through conversation (and a translator) we were able to explain how we were taught to practise our Faith and that our referencing a Higher Spirit was how we learned to talk about God. It was only a conversation - we weren't trying to figure out how to work together or questioning each others' beliefs - so that may seem like it isn't the same as some of the issues that Committees or Meetings or Larger Quaker Bodies are dealing with. But it is the same idea. Regardless of how we practise it, the language we use or what our opinion or

belief is on homosexual relationships, the role of women in society, plain dress or evangelizing, we are all members of the Religious Society of Friends and need to start seeing the Inner Light among Friends.

I think that Young (Adult) Friends from around the globe are aware of the need for dialogue, creating community, and learning about one another. That is why there are currently so many Young (Adult) Friend weekends, conferences, lectures, and gatherings. We can't get enough of each other. I think that the larger Quaker world could learn a thing or two from this group. You have to create community first and come together with open hearts before you can start having the tough conversations. I believe that is where we are failing ourselves. We do not teach Young Friends about the various types of Quakers or our history, we don't give them options for picking what type of worship they find most meaningful in creating their relationship with God/the Spirit/the Divine. We don't give them the words to express themselves in a spiritual or religious context or teach them to have an open heart to hear how other Quakers express themselves. We need to find ways to do these things. My F/friendships are as strong, deep, and meaningful as they are today because we are open and willing to discuss and work through our differences regardless or maybe because of our Quaker affiliation.

Living South of the Border

By Jaya Karsemeyer, Toronto MM

I told Rebecca I wouldn't be able to write this unless it happened between 2 and 2:45 this afternoon. That didn't happen, but now it's 2 in the morning and apparently a slot of time has opened. For better or worse, that's how I sometimes feel about my involvement with Friends outside of Canada. A little spot opens and I am able to enter into that special space of fellowship and worship, though sometimes it feels busy and rushed, and too weighted down with the world. I start writing from Barnesville, Ohio where I am working as an Admissions Associate (recruiting students) for Olney Friends School, an *historic* boarding high school on 350 acres of rolling hills in rural southern Appalachia.