

Conservative Friends were in fact still alive. For example, "May I take thy coat?" or "Will thou have a cookie?" Some choose to wear plain dress: suspenders, a white shirt and black slacks for the boys; bonnets, dresses, aprons for the ladies. My experience of worship at the historic Stillwater Meeting House (which was responsible for Olney Friends School until ten years ago) has been wonderful. I recently asked to be a sojourning member of Stillwater MM.

It's almost three in the morning. I am now at the Burlington Meeting House in NJ. Sarah Hartzell sits across from me holding me in the Light so I don't collapse in the last leg of this writing I finish this article remembering my pilgrimage and first interactions with American Friends. I recall the part of the YAF conference that has stayed with me most. On the Sunday morning we worshiped more than

two hours and I experienced a breaking open of love. More than a hundred YAFs were awake together in the same room, and dare I say I was trembling with the greatness of it. This love was overpowering. It felt like Jesus had stopped just knocking at my heart and had thrown the door open. It brought tears and laughter and the kind of worship that feels like you're being baptized in light. No ritual could compare to this vast loving Presence. We heard ministry that spoke of Jesus Christ and God by other names. The words felt small but true. The experience felt eternal. May we all invite God into our lives with such abundance and love! I pray that the way opens for all of us in Canada, and around the world, to heed the call. Praise be to God!

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### **Living as Friends, Listening Within Experiences of the May 2008 YAF Gathering in Richmond, IN**

Ravi Joshi, Toronto Monthly Meeting

Like many Canadian Young Quakers, I had not previously traveled to the US for a Quaker gathering, much less one of this magnitude. This gathering of all, was one where Young Friends

would be challenged to build community with Friends from many backgrounds, from many branches of Quakerism, from all over North America.

From the outset this conference provided a needed social scene for YAFs to connect and build lasting relationships. Through NeeKauNis, Friends in Canada and most of the US have the chance to meet and build this connection of fellowship and community. However, gatherings such as this weekend allowed for the same group of Friends to connect, with an expressed goal of building community between the different branches of Quakerism. That community was kindled early on by the reuniting of old friends, and in meeting new people. For me, I found I was meeting Friends I had never met before, Friends I had not seen in a long time, and Friends whom I saw yesterday and who live nearby. My personal favourites were the Friends who I had heard so much about through Canadian YAFs but had never met

The weekend was an incredible time to build community, in spite of our differences. I would soon learn that we built community *because* of our differences, but that wasn't immediately apparent. Time was spent in worship, learning together, and often playing together. It was important to have the time to socialize and interact with each other, namely because it was a chance to talk about things other than the things we disagreed about. Friends who knew each other well spouted inside jokes and references. Friends who hadn't seen each other in a while caught up, and stunningly, Friends who had just met each other were able to chat as though they had known each other for years. This led me to believe that we indeed had a lot in common, certainly more than we had been told about by our respective branches.

I was surprised by some of the rules that were set out for the conference. They included women being asked not to bare their shoulders, and for everyone to refrain from using foul language. We, the four of us coming from southern Ontario, compensated in particular with a 30 second 'swear-a-thon' before we made it to Earlham and it seemed to hold us over for the weekend. I suppose I didn't find these rules overly constraining. However, these