

rules inflamed my instinct to alienate others, label others and pass judgment on them.

I had based so much of my animosity on what I thought Friends from the other branches of Quakerism would be like. I felt like I could pin all of my personal hang-ups on what I thought were the tendencies of the other branches. In my head I did not find inspiration in their evangelical style worship, nor in their proselytizing tone, nor in their strict paternal theological framework. However, in reality I didn't know who "they" were. Because of the structure of the weekend, I couldn't even begin to label these people who I had grown to love and respect. This is a stark contrast to what we are used to in large part because we have tended to apply labels to people first, and attempt to find unity second.

The focus of this gathering was to find unity and community among Friends who may differ in social, political, and religious perspectives. This conference brought me to understand that these barriers have very little to do with the labels we apply to people, and that our differences on the whole are usually embellished by stigma and vague perceptions.

There were precious experiences in worship where the Spirit would seem to build itself on the foundation of our community and friendship (using a small "f" intentionally). If the weekend were to be reduced to a single question as to whether Young Friends of all stripes and walks of life could live in community and Friendship, I'm not certain that I, or anyone who was present, have a definitive answer. However, I am most certain that the connection we shared in building loving social bonds was essential for our worship to be even possible, let alone meaningful. We as Friends must be prepared to live in community, supporting each other with humour, play, work, and companionship, before our worship can truly take root in our spirit. I believe this is the ministry of all Young Friends to our community.

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Quaker Youth Pilgrimage, 2008

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This summer I was privileged to attend the 2008 Quaker Youth Pilgrimage (QYP) on a journey "Through Conflict to Peace", through England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. As a group of twenty-five youth hailing from Canada, the US, Mexico, Germany, and the United Kingdom, we learned and grew together spiritually as well as in the knowledge of our Quaker roots and beginnings.

I started on my journey August 15 when I flew to Philadelphia to meet with the other North American pilgrims and two of our leaders. We had the great opportunity to explore the "City of Brotherly Love" and learn about early Quakers and their role in and around the city. Being in Pennsylvania was particularly exciting for my cousin Elen, who attended the pilgrimage with me, and for me because it is where some of our family came from. We flew across the Atlantic and finally gathered as a whole group in Glasgow, where we were mixed into host families in order to adjust to jet lag and a whole new continent. I was blessed to stay with a lovely lady who took me to see "the bonnie, bonnie banks of Loch Lomond" and more of Scotland's beautiful countryside.

Our journey as a whole group truly began when we hopped on a bus and drove through rolling green hills covered with sheep, to the 1652 country where George Fox roamed spreading the word of Quakerism. Here we stayed in the quaint old Yealand Conyers schoolhouse next to a beautiful Meeting House all surrounded by a most peaceful cemetery and equally tranquil countryside. It was here that we came together spiritually. We worshipped together in different ways, learning to appreciate both programmed and unprogrammed worship. During the ten days we spent there we had ample time to walk in Fox's footsteps. We climbed Pendle Hill to visit Brigflatts Meeting House where early Friends were arrested for their beliefs. (It was very foggy, so I must return when it is clear!) We saw the Quaker Tapestries in Kendal and Lancaster Castle where many friends were imprisoned. Of these many interesting and beautiful locations, my favourite was Firbank