



Young Adult Friends Epistle 2022

To all Friends everywhere:

Greetings from a gathering of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting Young Adult Friends, together from many different homes for Annual Sessions, July 26-31, 2022. Many of us gathered from the lands around Philadelphia, on the traditional homelands of the Lenni Lenape. We humbly acknowledge that many of us are settlers here, and live on stolen lands.

At Annual Sessions this year, as in the past two years, we engaged in Zoom video conferencing for many of our evening fellowship events. For other events, we were able to gather as safely as possible in-person. We welcome the chance to meet virtually with those who could not have come in person, and mourn the fellowship we used to share more freely than we currently can.

On Wednesday, the opening night of PYM's 342nd Annual Sessions, Young Adult Friends gathered in person at the historic Arch Street Meetinghouse for fellowship. We played games and ate pizza, then gathered to listen to Eppchez Yes deliver their visionary keynote on how we can build a better beloved community in PYM by repairing the foundation of our institution. On Thursday we gathered virtually to cultivate a space for fellowship with attention to grief and resilience in our community. Friends shared words of comfort and suffering from their homes and joined in a restful worship to honor the challenges of our current moment. Friday evening we reunited after the day's programming and participated in a Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business nestled in between the larger body's evening event. After business, Friends shared hopes and concerns for the future and offered support and solidarity to fellow YAFs. This gave way to a time for laughter and play - a welcome relief at the end of the long day. While we write this epistle on Saturday, we look forward to our trip tomorrow to the shores of Brigantine Beach in New Jersey and hope the day will be filled with joy and bonding.

As we reflect on the events of the week, we lift up the messages of inclusion, solidarity, justice, and reparations from our keynote sessions this week, particularly from Eppchez Yes. Eppchez encouraged our PYM body to notice patterns of domination in our Quaker history, emphasizing that we do not get to have a better past. As Young Adult Friends, we affirm the need to participate in reparation work as a community, to create spaces of ancestral accountability, and to reconnect to our bodies through movement and touch as a way to resist white supremacy.

What would happen if we were to let go of the desire for control and the need to "be good," two cravings rooted in white supremacist thinking? What could we be instead of "good"? What could we do with all that energy we put into goodness, afraid to lose control? Perhaps we could follow Eppchez's invitation to live with reciprocity, becoming activated to repair the world, and allow Death to burn away what is no longer necessary. In doing so, how might we build a more loving house of faith? Young Adult Friends sit (and dance

with!) with these ideas (or nibblings!) moving forward from Sessions.

As a young adult community, we notice moments of transition in this stage of life. Many of us are nearing the upper end of the traditional 18- to 35-year-old age range of Young Adult Friends. We are feeling the weight of time as we age. Throughout this process, we welcome the next stage of living in which we are no longer young adults, but adults in our own right. We would like to see programming directed toward adults 36+ to shepherd this transition and provide fellowship for us in our next phase of life.

Over the past year, YAFs have seen our community ebb and flow, changing with new Friends joining and other Friends leaving. We gathered for a fall retreat and a winter potluck in 2021, a spring retreat in 2022, and nominated new co-clerks Jeff Rosenthal, Naomi Madaras, and pastoral care clerk Tucker Birmingham to leadership positions. For the first time, BIPOC YAFs (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) gathered in the fall of 2021 to be in community in a safe space with each other. There were feelings of recognition and fellowship and the need for these kinds of spaces to exist within PYM to make it a more inclusive institution and welcome friends of all kinds. BIPOC YAFs who gathered expressed that they would like to have more spaces and events like this in the future.

We as a community value the work that Aeryn Luminkith (ze/zir/she/her), Young Friends Co-Facilitator, has put into youth programming here at PYM. Aeryn is leaving zir position after four years. Ze has been a wonderful resource for so many of our young people, particularly our queer youth. The YAFs would like to thank Aeryn for zir thoughtful and capable service.

Throughout this year, YAFs have witnessed the consistent efforts from PYM staff members Kimani Keaton and Afroza Hossain to nurture and support this community. We share our deep gratitude for their work, and lift up a concern regarding the high turnover and increasingly heavy workload for PYM staff. The Young Adult Friends community would like to see better support, compensation, and a more balanced workload for PYM staff, particularly for staff members working with young adults and children.

As members of PYM, Young Adult Friends lift up the need for repair in our Quaker relationships and in our wider communities. We have witnessed the “unwelcome vibrations” Eppchez named in their sharing from the twin cravings of control and needing to “be good.” May our fears of death and change be composted and recycled in the fertile ground of justice, abolition, and hope. In community we can accomplish much more than we can alone.