

Baltimore Yearly Meeting
Young Friends Epistle, 2008

ONCE...
IN A LAND...
RIDDEN...
WITH YOUNG QUAKERS....
THERE WAS...
A COMMUNITY...
THAT NEVER SLEPT...

This year the Young Friends community has made great progress since last annual session. We feel that it is stronger as a whole and we have found that attendance has gone up, along with the number of newcomers. We have made an effort to improve communication between Young Friends and the greater Baltimore Yearly Meeting as well as among ourselves. In the past year, Executive Committee has tried to integrate themselves farther into the wider Young Friends community and has kept important issues for the business meetings instead of trying to tackle them on their own.

Our conferences were spectacular to say the least. The year began at Hopewell Center where we spent lots of time in the sun playing Smaug's Jewels, Wink and a multitude of other games for our workshop. Then, at Sandy Spring Friends Meeting in November, we enjoyed a massage therapy workshop. Though the weekend was not without its difficulties, we did manage to saran wrap one of our FAP's cars. After a few meeting house and date changes, February conference was held at Langley Hill Meeting with a workshop about the Peace Corps. The conference also happened to celebrate Valentine's Day with our traditional Luv Feast. We gathered at Catoctin in April for our work conference, leaving the kitchen spotless and the grounds clear of fallen branches, brambles and ridiculous roots. And finally, for our last conference of the year, we went out to Goose Creek Meeting where we approved new Exec members for the coming year and saluted the sun with a yoga workshop. Also at this conference, we said goodbye to our seniors by writing them loving comments and a "roast" where we were able to share our favorite humorous stories about those leaving.

Despite the relative simplicity of the year, the largest problem our community encountered was confronted at November conference. November conference, or the Thanksgiving con, is traditionally a time when Young Adult Friends are able to visit the Young Friends gathering. We found that members of Young Friends felt uncomfortable with the YAFs dropping in an out unexpectedly, making it difficult to ensure safety and causing a separation between the two communities. With the added confusion of an absent clerk and assistant clerk, the issue was brought to business meeting where it was threshed out fully. Our final consensus was that YAFs at a Young Friends gathering should be treated as Young Friends and abide by the rules of our handbook.

Looking back we feel we had a jolly old time! This year has been loving, productive, and drama-free (a welcome change from some previous years!). Finally, we would like to thank our FAPs (Friendly Adult Presences) and Youth Program Committee for all their helpful guidance.

Love and Light,
The Young Friends of Baltimore Yearly Meeting