

Closing Minute

Accompaniment and Giving Voice was the theme for our 142nd annual sessions this year. This proved a very rich topic to center our week around as we explored how these words combined with the word, "sacred" bring us into relationship with others and with the Divine.

We live in a time of change, anxiety and turbulence that sometimes is manifest in our own lives. But a sense of calmness graced our time together as we stopped to gather ourselves and create space to listen to each other. There was a feeling of pleasure in all of this: pleasure in the infectious joy of our Junior Yearly Meeting and the prophetic ministry offered to us from Young Friends. Pleasure in working side by side, sharing meals, songs, stories, Bible study, laughter, sorrow and tears. Pleasure in the challenges offered us by our Peace and Social Concerns Committee, pleasure in the challenges offered by our Representatives to stretch the way we think about our yearly meeting, and pleasure in the challenges offered us by our presenters who reminded us that "creating sacred space" is the intention to open ourselves to the Spirit. Creating Sacred Space *is* "being present."

The Parable of the Good Samaritan was a recurring thread throughout this week.

"Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher, he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He answered, You shall love the lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer. Do this and you will live." (Luke 10:25-28)

"Do this and you will live."

We enjoyed engaging our heart and soul and strength and mind.

Worshiping with our mind: We found pleasure in our collections, study and the work that so stimulates us intellectually.

Worshiping with our hearts: we found pleasure in moving beyond our intellects into the physicality of becoming grounded in our bodies.

Loving our neighbors: we found pleasure in writing and hearing from others, and being here in the company of each other.

Loving God, loving neighbor as ourselves.

"But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29)

Who is my neighbor???

Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'" (Luke 10:30-35)

We, like the lawyer, ask the question "Who is my neighbor?"
But Jesus flips it to ask:

"Which of these three do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers? (Luke 10: 36)

Jesus changes the question from, "*Who* is my neighbor?" and challenges us to ask ourselves, "How are *you* at being a neighbor?"

What are you doing to:

Build friendships from a more diverse group of people?

Learning how to listen more deeply to those who don't share your opinions?

Jesus tells us that being a neighbor is not a philosophical statement of belief. Being a neighbor takes action with our bodies.

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hand of the robbers?"

He said, "the one who showed him mercy."

Jesus said to him, "go and do likewise". (Luke 10:37 NRSV)

We now conclude our 2019 annual session, planning to meet again, God willing, at Scattergood Friends School and Farm, near West Branch, Iowa 7th Month 22 to 26th, 2020.