

Dear Friends of Iowa Yearly Meeting Conservative and beyond,

We began our Young Friends program talking about the theme of this year's annual sessions, Accompaniment and Giving Voice. In the spirit of this theme, we have decided to "give voice" ourselves, and share more deeply with the greater Yearly Meeting through an epistle expressing our perspective as Young Friends. We spent almost an hour and a half in a worshipful discussion on Fourth Day morning, sharing deeply about our concerns for the world, what gives us hope, and what it means to accompany someone.

Accompaniment is, to us, a type of listening, and being there for those in need of care. We shared who we feel compelled to accompany, including racial and religious minorities, refugees, undocumented immigrants, victims of sexual assault and child abuse, people who choose to get abortions, LGBTQ people, and even people who may share different beliefs than us. We noted that it is still possible to listen and accompany people, while actively disagreeing with what they believe.

We spoke about many of our concerns with the modern world. The two that we kept returning to throughout the discussion was polarization in our society, and our clear concern on the changing climate and how it will affect our lives. We see the polarization in our society furthering a pattern of not listening to one another and encouraging a culture of hatred. We noted that by listening, we can often understand the struggles behind an opinion with which we disagree. We are also very concerned with the changing climate, and the displacement of people and wildlife that comes consequently. We recognize that a lot of the issues we care about are related to the environment, and that there will be an increase in poverty and war worldwide if we don't actively try and reverse climate change.

We also have a lot of hope for the future. We understand that we are living in an age of technological advancement, and while there are some negatives to this, we also see a lot of hope in what that might bring. We see that technology can be used as a tool to share ideas, connect with people across the globe, and find helpful information. We see that more medical advancements can be made, and that innovations could improve access to food, clean water, and quality of life for many worldwide. We find hope, often with the help of the internet and social media, in seeing people speaking their truth to power all over the world. This includes people speaking out for women's rights, resisting ICE raids, being stewards to our planet, and our fellow young people leading the movement on gun reform.

We appreciate the space IYMC gives us, to accompany and give our own voice.

Love and light to all,

IYMC Young Friends 2019