

Deep Hope in Optimystical Times

North Pacific Yearly Meeting
July 13-17, 2022;

Our Friend in Residence, Carl Magruder, has a message for us: Looking at the world as it is right now, we see a very bleak picture. People, such as Friends, who develop a mystical awareness of themselves as part of the whole universe are less afraid of dying and are liberated to courageous forms of witness and activism. This is what it is to be “Optimystical”. We can have hope in these times and live with a buoyancy that comes from our trust in the Divine and our connection with everything.

This is deep hope, not feeling hopeful because we are ignoring what is in front of us, but having the hope that comes from knowing that we are not alone, that there is love and support surrounding us and allowing us to go forward, even when we are not sure of the path. We are connected to the Spirit and to each other. There is the deep hope of the transformation that comes when we have surrendered to the in-breaking Spirit, and we are able to see things with new eyes. Howard Brinton said in 1943, also a challenging time, “For Friends the most important consideration is not the right action in itself but a right inward state out of which right action will arise. Given the right inward state right action is inevitable. Inward state and outward action are component parts of a single whole.”

Dear Friends, I invite and welcome you to this Annual Session gathering. Please come to worship together in small and large groups, to share and hear from others about the work you are called to, and to learn how the Spirit is present and working among us. May we open our hearts to those we see as different—in age, experience, interests, opinions—so that we can strengthen our community, get to know Friends in new ways, and make new Friends. We will also discern together in our Meetings for Worship with Attention to Business as we hold our business and each other in the Light, trusting that we will be guided to the place where we unite. Our ability to hold each other in love strengthens our discernment.

Carl Magruder, MA, Mdiv, BCC, is a “cradle Quaker” and palliative care chaplain, whose ministry is under the care of Strawberry Creek Meeting (Pacific Yearly Meeting). He reminds us “the core of our faith is this mystical experience. Woolman said, ‘Love was the first motion.’” (*Western Friend* September/October 2016). In his *Western Friend* article “Desert Church” from March/April 2019, Carl asks “What does it mean to live in a multifaith, multiethnic, multicultural society? It means celebrating difference, engaging radical inclusivity, and a continued dedication to Truth-seeking. Hate, bigotry, fear, xenophobia, and nationalism have no place in the beloved community.” As we in NPYM meet together, we will consider together how we can rely on this love and connection as we move out from Annual Session to face and engage with the work that is before us.

We continue to learn about the barriers some Friends find in our gatherings that make this time and place feel unsafe and difficult. May we be aware that we do not all see Annual Session in the same way and be open to asking and listening to others' experiences. NPYM must identify the barriers and take effective action to remove them. We do share together through Abundant Financing so that cost does not prevent anyone from attending Annual Session.

We hope that we will be able to meet in a hybrid/blended session this year. We particularly want to be able to offer programs for children, Central Friends, and Junior Friends to meet in person; few of our meetings have found ways to engage our youth during the time of the pandemic. We will have our Annual Session this July, and as I write this, we are still discerning where and how we will meet. Updates and registration information can be found at www.npym.org.

—Jana Ostrom, Presiding Clerk, North Pacific Yearly Meeting