

August 15, 2026

Western Yearly Meeting
203 S. East Street
Plainfield, IN 46168

Greetings to Friends Everywhere:

Western Yearly Meeting met at Plainfield, Indiana on August 15, 2026 for its 169th annual business session. This session was the culmination of a three-part meeting held over four months with a uniting theme: "How to be a Quaker Today." The three-part approach was an attempt to involve more members at more levels of the decision-making discussion and process.

We began on May 16, 2026 in Carmel, Indiana with a clearness discussion exploring the thoughts of where we are as a yearly meeting and what our thoughts suggested would be the future of Western Yearly Meeting. After an opening worship service, Tom Rockwell led an informative workshop on conversations and discernment as an organization. This stressed the importance of vulnerability as a skill which is needed for genuine conversation to occur. This includes refusal to live in fear, a willingness to lean into change, and an openness to seeing Hope and Grace as a supporting resource as we explore new ideas and reconsider the "traditional" way of doing things.

Following lunch, Emily Provance presented her observations of how Faith and Practice is utilized in various other yearly meetings and the strengths and weaknesses she has seen. Following the presentation, small groups were formed to discuss the 2005 Faith and Practice for WYM and how it might be reviewed to make it more relevant to the situations we face in 2026. This was not a decision-making discussion, but was an invitation to begin talking about how we, as Western Yearly Meeting, can have open conversations about difficult topics without losing historical perspectives. The goal was to begin looking at WYM Faith and Practice from the viewpoint of today's needs.

June 14-18, 2026 we met as a yearly meeting at Quaker Haven Camp in Syracuse, Indiana for a time of family fellowship, reflection, and workshops. Devotions, worship, and workshops were conducted daily and videoed via YouTube for the benefit of those who could not attend in person. By being held on the campground, families were able to enjoy the traditional camping activities including ice cream, popcorn, campfires, and games. The all-day fellowship building time was appreciated by all who attended.

Workshops centered around the Quaker testimonies (SPICES) and how they can be better expressed and explained in today's world environment. Each speaker brought thought-provoking insights to how traditional views can be presented and reviewed in light of today's world-view. Discussions on how to include new members of diverse understandings without losing Quaker distinctives produced thoughts and ideas on outreach and inclusion. A final presentation presented a challenge to all attendees: "How do you answer the question, 'What do I need to do to become a Quaker today?'"

One highlight of this June meeting was the presentation of a draft of a strategic plan for Western Yearly Meeting based on the May discussions and recommendations. Comments on the draft and continuing discussion since the presentation are resulting in careful and thoughtful revisions to the plan which is to be presented for approval at the

Administrative Council in November. This is a plan that can help guide local meetings as they pursue membership growth and involvement. As with many other things, the more people who unify their approach, the more likely they will see success.

The third session, this business session, concentrated on review of board reports and Western Yearly Meeting financial decisions. Concerns were raised and discussed over decisions being made by affiliate bodies in response to financial issues and how we as Western Yearly meeting can support them through the discernment process. A minute of appreciation was approved for the work Kelly Kellum has done in Friends United Meeting. A decision was reached to support an August 29 peaceful demonstration on Western Yearly Meeting grounds. This is to protest the current practices of ICE and in the overcrowded conditions of confinement in the Indiana prison system. We adjourned this session with approval of this epistle and a resolve to continue searching for the best way to "Be a Quaker Today."

Please pray for Western Yearly Meeting as it continues to work toward a stable, growing, and relevant future.

In Christian Love,

Sarabeth Marcinko, Presiding Clerk

Brenda Rodeheffer, Recording Clerk

John Heshelman, Ass't to the Clerk