Greeting Friends! We were so thankful to be able to attend the Wider Gathering of Conservative Friends in June, and deeply appreciate the funding given to us to help make trip possible. We arrived safely by air and were graciously transported the remaining distance through rather intense rainstorms by a Friend from OYM. Wesley made a valiant attempt to arrive by car, but was prevented from crossing the border by traffic congestion and a highway closure. We we're saddened that he was not able to attend.

The gathering was a lovely event, and we only wished it could have been a bit longer! Several meetings for worship (unprogrammed) took place over the weekend, as well as a meeting for concerns, and bible reading sessions. The nature of ministry given was quite different from what we have experienced in our own meetings, being distinctly biblical and sermonesque. We felt some surprise at the frequency of singing ministry given! We we're able to meet and chat with Friends from a variety of meetings across the states. We gained some insight into the function of the meetings elders, ministers, and overseerers, all of whom sat on the facing bench as they would have traditionally in Friends practice.

We discovered that conservative Friends, being the smallest branch in the Quaker tree, face numerous concerns that echo those brought up at CYM. There were about 13 plain Friends in attendance, which is a rare occurrence, and it was interesting to hear plain speech being used as well. It was quite striking to be in such and old meeting house, built to hold 1500 people, though now only a small section is utilized. We we're encouraged to see a number of YAF in attendance, including MacKenzie Morgan of Quaker Faith and Podcast. Many late night discussions were held, on occasion with the presence of bright green fireflies which joined us in the meeting house, as well as on the grounds.

We explored Olney Friends School, as well as the Stillwater First Day School, and Archive/Museum. We collected some literature to bring back, and are both planning info sessions to discuss our experiences with our meetings. We brought some information to CYM as well, and holding a SIG on the different branches of Friends, and setting up a display table with pictures and information on our trip and the gathering. We feel this was very well received, and generated interesting conversations and feedback!

We are excited about fostering international connections between Conservative Friends across the border.

Zaley & David