

JHYM Retreat Staff Notes

Shine On

JHYM Retreats * May 1-3, 2009 * Portland Friends Meeting

WE ARE: Anne Anderson, Kara Price Bachand, Carol Baker (as our Exalted Food Wizard!), Gretchen Baker-Smith, Dave Baxter, Robyn Churchill, Will Jennings, Eileen Johnson, Christy Little, Dimity Peter and Ed Rodley. I want to especially welcome Ed who is staffing with us for the first time. We are thrilled!

WE ARE DEEPLY BLESSED, TOO, to have Dee Kelsey 's ministry and gifts organizing and caring for the service projects again this year, **AND** and to have Susan Lavigne, Tom Antonik, Kiya Smith, Emily Kelsey and possibly Brad Bussiere-Nichols all stopping by at various points throughout the weekend to lend hands, presence, and laughter.

WE ARE so covered in grace and love! Thank you for your generous hearts and spirits and solid youth ministry work. What a tremendously loving and joy-filled crew you are.

JOINING US are 44 JH'ers, all of whom have been registered since 1 week after the February Retreat.....One has never attended a JYM or JHYM Retreat, two are first time sixth graders rising up from JYM, and another is an 8th grader whom we haven't seen in a year! Almost every JH'er who has been part of this retreat year is coming, and they have so much to celebrate. It has been a challenging but very rich and awe-filled year. The community they have created is due to their courageous hearts, awesome staffers, wonderful parents, and God's Grace.

The JHYM Retreat program's goal is to provide a safe and trusting community in which we seek to find that of God in ourselves and in each other. Our charge, as ministers of the Spirit, is to help our young people create a sanctuary. What I appreciate more as the years go on, is just how rare and astounding a "safe and trusting spiritual community" truly is for young teens. What we "do", with the Grace of God, is provide them with an experience in building a spiritually grounded community that they then take with them, and hopefully build on, for years and decades and a lifetime to come.

Timelines

Arrival: I will be arriving with one JH'er around 4:30pm. Registration is at 7pm. I know some won't be with us until after 8pm, so hope a few who can arrive by 6:30.

Wrap-up: Sunday Morning Worship is at 10:30, followed by announcements and lunch. I anticipate we'll be out by 1 or 1:30pm. Thank you!

DIRECTIONS TO PORTLAND ARE ON OUR WEBSITE.

Please let me know how many rakes & sets of work gloves you can bring with you. Thanks!

Small Groups

Small Groups will meet twice over the course of the weekend: Friday evening, and Saturday morning. We will be divided into 5 small groups – with 8-9 JH'ers and 2 staffers for each group. You'll be in the same small group for the weekend.

FRIDAY NIGHT SMALL GROUP: The Power of Unconditional Love

Start with a round of names.

Explain what a check-in is (see sheet in your staff notebook if you need background on this). Make sure that everyone knows that “what gets said and shared here stays here.”

DO a round of check-ins.

Then use the box of questions to have a discussion on some things around the theme. Sample questions are: Who believes in us? Why does it make a difference to have others believe in us? How does it help us to “Shine on?”

The idea is that everyone should have a chance to answer one question and then the rest of the group can respond to that answer. Make sure that everyone feels affirmed and safe in this context. There are no right or wrong answers here – just opportunities for us to share from our hearts and our experiences.

It is always helpful for JH'ers to feel that they have choices – so if they pick a question that stresses them out, tell them it's okay to put it back and pick another! 😊

Remember that the goal is to establish community and a feeling of safety and connection between everyone in the small group.

End with your favorite affirmation, etc, and a thanks to the group for their courage in jumping into this spiritual community together.

SATURDAY MORNING SMALL GROUP: The Spiritual Discipline of Beauty and Gratitude

Start with a round of check ins, taking as much time as you need.

Then invite the group to settle into a bit of Silence. In that Silence, put out the beads and string in the middle of the circle and let them just sit there. After a bit, explain that everyone is going to get to make a set of prayer beads. (I will have told the story of Bill Kreidler and his prayer beads in Opening Worship, so this will make sense.)

Because these will be beads that they will be carrying around and holding/fingering, it is important that they be ones they are comfortable with. Ask them to choose and string 10

beads in silence. They can either keep them as a single chain or bring them back around into a circle – however they wish is just fine. Do encourage the ones focused on finding the perfect beads that it is lovely they are being so thoughtful but that it is okay if they needn't be “that perfect.” ☺

When they have finished putting theirs together, ask them to just silently hold them until everyone is done, centering as much as possible.

Then ask them to try to do the exercise that Bill did every morning, giving sincere thanks for 10 things, or people, or moments, in their current life. In pairs or trios, have everyone as quietly and as worshipfully as possible share their ten things with each other. Remind them to hold these sharings gently and in confidence.

Then, return as a group together. Ask for any thoughts on what this exercise was like. Is it something that might be helpful to them? Did they learn things about each other from hearing their 10 things of gratitude? Did the process shift anything within them? Could they envision it doing so in other settings and times in their lives? How might it help them to “Shine On?”

End with a bit of Silence and thanks for their honesty and friendship!

Other Program Details

Worship and Message on Service Work: Before lunch on Saturday, Jeffrey Wood, founder of e-Hope, will join us to talk about the founding and workings of this wonderful organization as well as his general wisdom and understandings of the blessings and opportunities in open-heartedly giving and receiving at the same time.

SERVICE PROJECTS: On Saturday afternoon we will be going out into the Portland area to lend our hands and hearts in a variety of ways. Dear Friend Dee Kelsey has, once again, organized these opportunities for us, and I cannot adequately express my awe and gratitude for the prayer, patience, and gifts of organizing which she brings to this work. She starts months in advance, contacting organizations and individual Friends, trying to match needs with time lines/teen attention spans and abilities/available cars/safety concerns/feedback from previous years – and with enormous good humor and love, delivers this Saturday afternoon experience to our JHYM community with neat folders, maps, and grace. Her generosity and talents are incredible. Please join me in thanking her at every opportunity.

This year's opportunities include helping to prep the evening meal at a local soup kitchen, doing yard and garden work for various Friends and the Portland Friends School, making and posting signs for a Green Initiative Group, washing and packing clothes for children in the Dominican Republic, and decorating flip flops and wiffle balls for those same children. I am hopeful that all JH'ers and staffers will get either their first or second choice of service projects.

We'll head out for these at 1:30pm and aim to return at 4:00 or 4:15.

Quiet Hour outside in the back yard with Gretchen: As long as it's not raining, this Portland tradition will happen again for those who wish to join me. (Trust me: Staffers love this. The Meeting House is almost empty, and you get to take real naps inside!)

Saturday Evening: We will break into two groups: The 8th Graders will have a discussion on going into Young Friends in the fall with Tom Antonik, Emily Kelsey, Kara and Dave. This program time could include sharing a YF song or two, and possibly a YF game. (Hint: "Spanking Yoda" has been a big hit the past 2 years.)

Simultaneously, the 6th and 7th graders will joyfully -- and quickly -- work on creating special Quaker Oats Box gifts (a requested tradition at this point) to present to the 8th graders at the Circle of Affirmation, which will immediately follow.

Last year's Circle of Affirmation was really a beautiful evening of extended sharing in friendship and community – I anticipate this year's will be also.

Sunday Morning: Portland Meeting has Business Meeting on the main floor on Sunday morning, which means that we have to have that floor and the top floor completely cleaned up and ready by 8:30AM. Ouch. We have done it the last 2 years – so we know it's possible! (I'll bring Dark Chocolate Espresso Beans for staffers who need them....)

We will have breakfast at 8:45 and then sing and have our closing circle and traditional round of Big Wind Blows in the basement until Worship starts at 10:30.

Our Exalted Food Wizard and Meal Assistance

Once again, the amazing Carol Baker has volunteered to be our cook for the weekend, assisted in her meal planning by daughter Hannah. As is our practice, each small group will take a meal to assist preparing and cleaning up. Anyone lacking something to do at any time is always welcome to check in with Carol and see how you can help. Thanks!

The Quiet Room

For over a year now, JHYM Retreats has had a Quiet Room available throughout the retreat for JH'ers who need a break. It's become a lovely haven – and, no, staffers, you can't all be people of presence there all weekend ☺ but I do encourage you to stop by and help to nurture and preserve the space. Let's again use the front "parlor" on the first floor for this.

"FREE TIME"

This is especially important this retreat, dear Friends! ☺

Junior Highers want free time, but most of them want it with structure so that they can be in community. This is my mantra: "free time" is not *staff free time*. All of us on staff need to initiate group games (Apples to Apples, Egyptian War, JYM Ball, Graveyard Tag), inspire craft projects, encourage the creation of new Who's Who Book pages, and engage stragglers into the mix in any ways we feel led – or the young people themselves lead. With JH'ers, it can be especially important to gently, continually nurture *inclusivity*. Please consider your gifts and leadings – and go for it!

Staff Assignments

Retreat Nurse: Robyn, aided by Eileen if necessary

Craft Table Elders: Dimity and Christy

Name Tag Czar: Ed

Photographers: Robyn and Kara

Service Project Master Planner: Dee

Free Time Staff Coordinators: Anne & Dave (inside and outside, please)

Service Project Snack Packing Queen: Eileen

Service Project Transportation Coordinator: Will (not hard – don't worry!)

Group Game Leaders: any and all!

Exalted Food Wizard: Carol Baker – with much thanks and love!

Final note

Do know, dear Friends, my gratitude and love for each of you.

Gretchen Baker-Smith, JHYM Retreat leader

508-997-0940 (h) * hellogretchen@gmail.com * 508-287-6441 (cell)