

Message from Yearly Meeting secretary Noah Merrill, at Annual Sessions, August 9, 2020

When I was a kid, I found refuge in the Earthsea Cycle, by Ursula LeGuin. There's a moment from the third book that's come to me this week. It's a story about a sea voyage, about companions of different generations and life experiences, sailing the farthest ocean on a journey to turn over all that they are so that the world can come more fully alive again.

And in the wilderness reaches of the sea, they encounter a People who are being gathered. In the far flung reaches of the oceans, these people live their lives on boats and rafts—weathering the great storms, voyaging beyond the horizon, being challenged and nourished by the infinite Deep.

But once each year, when the stars are right, they come together again. As each new raft arrives, they're bound to each other's craft, forming a web of connection, care, and encouragement, and for a time, they ride the great swells of the sea together.

And when the people have gathered, they dance. They dance through the day and through the night. They dance for all that has been, all that is, and all that will be. And they sing. They sing the Song, the eternal Song that was in the beginning, that is written in their hearts. And in their singing, the Song comes more fully into the world.

And when the time for them to gather is done, they part with grief and gratitude and joy. They return, in their smaller vessels, to the endless ocean, where the currents and the wind may take them, knowing that when the stars are right, they will be gathered again. They depart from one another knowing that the gathering is powerful and precious—and yet they know their vessels were not made to be in the harbor they offer each other in these precious times. It is for the voyage that they came into the world.

And whenever they feel alone, and whenever they feel afraid, they can turn to the Dance and the Song within them, and find guidance and power to live it into the world, in that moment.

May it be so for us. May the Dance and the Story bless you and keep you, dear Friends—until we meet again.