

## Junior High Yearly Meeting State of Society, June 2021

Each of us has different ways of describing JHYM.

*It's Joy.*

*My own special community to hold onto.*

*Happiness and people that I can trust.*

*It's my shelter.*

*Connection.*

*Love. *

JHYM has never been a community that spent an entire year together without ever seeing each other in person. This year wasn't all we wanted but what we got helped us get through it. For some, it was nice to get a break from school and our families. Even singing ended up working better than we thought at first.

Some things have been the same. Love. Laughing. Junior high kindness. We've made good friends. We love each other and take joy in each other's existence. As one of us said, "I feel like I can be myself—even online." Another said, "I make friendships that are more important because I don't see them every day." We can look forward to being together because it's such a special thing to see people we don't see every day.

We have missed things. Hugs, capture the flag, warm muffins, comforting people when they can't fall asleep. Looking people in the eyes, 4-square, hearing our voices blend together, cuddle puddles. Playing games in person, green tape, singing while washing dishes, stacking wood at Woolman Hill.

We have been understanding that this year has been hard for everyone. It can be difficult for some people to show up and be able to feel like part of the community. We've lost some people who were part of our community before Covid, and we miss them. If you are one of those people, know that you are truly loved and missed, and we hope to see you soon.

We've sensed grace in everyone's kindness and humor. In vespers. In the sharing of music with each other. In the voice of a survivor of an Indigenous boarding school.

We've grown in so many ways including height! We've learned a lot more about electronics. We've learned how to play different games like scribble io. We've learned we can survive and do way more than we thought we could, to deal with so much at once and still have room to smile. We've learned how to be in a space that doesn't let us physically interact with each other. We've even figured out how to hold hands through a Zoom screen.

Not being able to give people hugs is almost a physical ache, but it almost doesn't matter, really. There are more ways to hold someone close to you than one.

It is HARD to be on Zoom. We don't have our usual ways of connecting—we can't hug other people, we can't hold their hand when they're upset or brush their tears away—so we have to figure out new ways to be even more open with each other. Because being open with one another builds connection better than anything else we can think of, and connection is something we need so desperately.

It's scary, sometimes, being honest, but JHYM is one of the safest places out there. We care so much about each other. This is how we hold each other close.

Junior High Yearly Meeting

NEYM

June 26, 2021