

My High School Experience at the FGC Gathering

By Madison Paulus

I found my voice in the Gathering's High School Program. I remember the summer I was a rising junior. With college applications in mind, I was ready to jump at any opportunity for viable extracurricular activities. When the High School Program introduced the opportunity to participate on the Long Range Committee on Planning serving Central Committee [Friends General Conference's governing body], I seized the opportunity.

Little did I know the impact this experience would have on me, let alone the value it would offer well beyond the optics needed for college applications. In LRCP, I came into my own. Participating as a valued member of an active community beyond high school was what I needed to begin to see my full potential.

The FGC high school program has been a constant in my life throughout a period of intense development and growth. Having this sense of stability helped me feel consistently supported. This proved to be tremendously necessary during college application season.

As a high school student in the Seattle Public School district, I have participated in the Gathering High School Program for three years. A prominent and beautiful component of our program each summer is its sense of community. The friendships cultivated during the Gathering bloomed in the high school program's environment, and I have made connections for which I am eternally grateful.

In moments of reflection, I have come to understand Friends General Conference as an integral aspect of my life thus far, as I have been a participant in its annual Gathering for eight years. I recall the flutter of enticing excitement that arose with any mention of the High School Program. The freedom offered by the program made one's participation symbolic of coming-of-age. The social dynamics within the Quaker youth are unique, and the sense of hierarchy associated with age and program was an aspect of my experience. However, because of this social dynamic, my appreciation for this community of high school Friends grew long before my fourteenth birthday.

The program has lived up to the years of anticipation and impatient waiting.