



Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

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Fourth Month 20, 2014

Loving Greetings to Friends Everywhere:

Southeastern Yearly Meeting gathered in Fruitland Park, Florida, Fourth Month 16-20, 2014, with 172 participants, including two beloved members who have attended Gathering for more than 40 years, and 22 children. We joyfully celebrated our 50th anniversary with the theme *Quakers in the 21st Century: How do we address our traditional testimonies in our modern electronically driven world.* This is particularly appropriate since we just published the 4th edition of our *Faith and Practice*, in both print and eBook formats. Monthly meetings and worship groups brought posters of their histories, and we celebrated the anniversary with cake and a group photo.

Joining bird song beside the lake each morning in worship, we were opened to the power of love in the Spirit that renews. "Silence, especially in life's busyness, leads us through the whitewater of life to gentle pools of still and calm," wrote J. Brent Bill (New Meetings Project, FGC). Selected as Walton lecturer, he led us through workshops with humor and inspirational exercises to deepen our spirituality, build community, and envision the steps we need to take to lead us to the yearly meeting that we want five years from now. Brent Bill focused our attention on the future of *Friends "Lost-and Found-in Space"*, urging us to be true to the testimonies we feel in our hearts, and tolerant of the differences in ways that Friends feel them.

During meetings for worship with attention to business, Friends were moved to:

- Support the work of Quaker House, in Fayetteville, North Carolina, near Fort Bragg, the largest military base in the United States.
- Minute our deep concern for how we Friends address climate change as recommended by our Committee for Earthcare.
- Express our appreciation to ProNica staff and Board who reported that income from educational-service delegations cover operational expenses, so that 100% of contributions go directly to projects.
- Cheer our youth and youth leaders who created their "Tomato Crops to Mountain Tops" programs, working with the Coalition of Immokolee Workers and Mountain Justice in Appalachia. Our youth encouraged us to join them in an Earth Day demonstration with Earth Quaker Action Team at a PNC Bank Stockholders Meeting in Tampa, Florida, next week. We minuted support for this action.

We continued through our days together, with early morning worship at the lake, in worship sharing sessions, meetings for worship with attention to business, and a wide variety of workshops presented by Quaker organization staff, representatives, guests, and members. All workshops were nourishing, notably a double session on the topic of Eldership, inspiring to many. We experienced Grace: greeting old friends and meeting new ones, dining, singing around the piano, playing intergenerational games, camping, relaxing together, and dancing. Our Faith and No Practice Band provided music for our lively intergenerational dance, and we closed the evening with our traditional acapella round of "*Oh Lovely Is the Evening.*"

We ended our Gathering with gratitude in our hearts and feeling more deeply connected to the Spirit and each other, aware of new ways to thrive as Southeastern Yearly Meeting engaged in the world.

In the Light,

Phoebe Biers Andersen, Clerk

Epistle Committee: Lyn Cope, Nancy Howell, Susan Taylor

Young Adult Quakers Epistle

April 20, 2014

To members of this Southeastern Yearly Meeting:

As Young Adult Quakers, we face unique challenges due to our position in life as neither fully teenagers nor quite “seasoned” adults. This year, we – each coming from our own place with respect to Quakerism – met to discern the future of the Young Adult program. First of all, we agreed it serves an important role at this yearly meeting. Despite all of our comings and goings, we would like to express with joy our vision of what “is not” but “could be”. Last night, we discussed the possibilities, dreams, visions, desires, etc., that this particular space could hold open. Among these, we would like to include:

- practical and spiritual, active questioning and the value of being a seeker of truth,
- experimentation and exploration of alternative ways of living in the world,
- expression of concerns and objections where needed,
- accessibility and outreach to other friends,
- creating a sense of community and connectedness both among Young Adults and with Teens/Adults.

Please hold us in the Light as we continue to discern our calling. We thank you for your help and support, your openness, and compassion.

— Young Adult Friends

SEYM Teens Epistle

April 20, 2014

Dear Friends,

We are the Southeastern Yearly Meeting (SEYM) Teens. Beginning last Friends General Conference Annual Gathering (FGC gathering) we have been in contact with the activist group Earth Quaker Action Team (EQAT). After our successful action to Wendy's with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) the Clerks of the 2014 FGC gathering contacted us to ask us to help mentor other teens in leading an action to stop mountain top removal. We decided to send Jocelynn as our liaison to the next gathering. We also sent Jocelynn on an immersion visit to the Mountain Justice Spring Break. On April 1, we received an e-mail from EQAT telling us that the PNC Bank shareholders meeting had been moved from Pittsburg, PA, to Tampa, FL. We decided to lead an action with EQAT to this meeting, which is ironically on Earth Day (April 22) and a few days after Yearly Meeting.

On Wednesday after noon, Kate and Lis presented to Executive Committee meeting to ask for a minute of support for this action. However, they deferred us to the Peace and Social Concerns Committee and the Earthcare Witness Committee. On Thursday afternoon we had a video conference with EQAT to plan for the action and our workshop. In the evening we planned for our workshop, "From Tomato Crops to Mountain Tops", and brainstormed ideas for signs for the action. On Friday morning we participated in a high ropes course and got to know our new teen friend Evie. After lunch we had the opportunity to participate in the workshop lead by the Walton Lecturer, Brent Bill. In this workshop we brainstormed ways to take more action in social justice issues. We then led a workshop, "From Tomato Crops to Mountain Tops", about our journey from working with the CIW on farmworker rights to working with EQAT on mountain top removal. Since there was a rainstorm, there was a lack of adult presence so we did a makeshift fishbowl where we talked about the future of the SEYM Youth Program. In the evening we enjoyed the intergenerational dance. On Saturday morning after Worship Sharing we made lots of signs and welcomed Michelle and Sara to the Youth Program. After lunch we presented to SEYM business meeting where we gained a minute of support from the Yearly Meeting. Hannah and Mathew from EQAT came down from Philadelphia, PA, to help lead a workshop on mountain top removal and train people for the action on Earth Day. Some of the teens sat in on the Young Adult Quakers' (YAQ's) business meeting on Saturday evening. This yearly meeting was made enjoyable with the abundance of snacks and Dustin's jokes. We hope to continue our work with both the CIW and EQAT in the coming year.

SEYM Junior & Young Friends Epistle 2014

Dear Friends,

Greetings from SEYM Elementary and Juniors. We have had a wonderful weekend at the LEC in Lessburg, FL.

We came together first on Thursday morning with a small group. We had introductions, reviewed guidelines, and walked the labyrinth. On Thursday evening, more Friends joined and did activities including blowing bubbles and the parachute.

Friday morning, the juniors were challenged by the high ropes course, including catwalk, 40-foot-tall zipline, and vertical playground. Elementary students went to the Gold Room for animal yoga and meditation with Gary Arthur. Friday evening, we had an intergenerational dance, a fun way to bond with both young and old alike.

On Saturday, we had the most young people. We played Step into the Circle and Big Wind Blows. We also heard a story from Cathy Gaskill. We went on a nature walk with Tor Bejnar. Saturday afternoon, some of us participated in a workshop led by the teens and EQAT; it was about a PNC bank investing in mountaintop removal.

At SEYM, we had lots of fun in the elementary and junior program. We hope to come back next year!

Warm regards,

Audry Elise

Daniel

Hoyt

Ezra

Julia

Leo

Priya

Bronwyn