

# Southeastern Yearly Meeting *of the Religious Society of Friends*

## 2018 Epistles

### Loving Greetings to Friends Everywhere:

Southeastern Yearly Meeting gathered in Fruitland Park, Florida, Third Month 28-Fourth Month 1, 2018 with 127 participants including 11 children. The beautiful setting is a special gift that supports the much-needed respite and renewal we seek.

Early morning worship on the shore of Lake Griffin made manifest the connection to and deep love for our world that drives our work and witness for care of our earth. We felt affirmed as we head into our second year supporting our SEYM Field Secretary for Earthcare. We are grateful to Beverly Ward for the heart and hands she brings to this work.

Spirit moved bringing together our strong, corporate concern to nurture our youth programming with the leading of an SEYM member. Kody Hersh, through discernment and a process of clearness, has come to us answering his leading to serve the children and youth of SEYM. The result of this spirit led gift meeting our concern is the establishment of an SEYM Youth and Young Adult Coordinator.

In the experiential presentation, "Roots of Injustice, Seeds of Change: Toward Right Relationship with Native Peoples" friends were led through a history of oppression, dislocation and violence. We were brought to a deeper understanding of the life situation of Native Peoples today and to a starting point for seeking way forward in the work we may be called to in support of creating true community that embodies equity and justice for all. We are deeply grateful to Jane Westberg and Boulder Colorado Meeting for sharing their work and witness on the Doctrine of Discovery and attach our minute repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery.

The SEYM 54th Barnard J. Walton lecturer for 2018 was Sa'ed Atshan, Assistant Professor of Peace and Conflict Studies at Swarthmore College. He is Quaker, grew up in Palestine, and is also an LGBTQ rights activist. His lecture "Quaker Response in Turbulent Times" used a multimedia presentation and his life experience. The role Ramallah Friends school played in assuring him an open and affirming school experience as a child in a land of occupation made us realize that the school we have made contributions to is vitally important to both Muslim and Christian children. He used the Pulse nightclub massacre and the different media portrayals of the shooter to bring his theme close to home. We thank Sa'ed Atshan for sharing with us how we as Quakers can respond to systemic injustice and oppression, speaking truth to power, without demonizing the people involved in these systems.

Supporting the student led March for our Lives, SEYM Friends send with this epistle our minute speaking to the moral need for legislation and action against the epidemic of gun violence. We stand with the students saying "Never Again."

Our daily worship sharing was guided by both readings and queries that offered blessed food for deep reflection and sharing. Our worship grounded meetings for business allowed us to address the ongoing responsibility of working together to strengthen the processes, structure and foundation of SEYM.

Our time together was spirit-led and renewing. We are grateful for our time in fellowship.



William E. Carlie Jr., Clerk

*See attachments at end of this document:*

- SEYM Minute on Stopping Gun Violence
- Minute Repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery

# Young Adult Quaker (YAQ ) Epistle 2018

The young adults arrived Friday morning, and participated in the ropes course with the teens. Through teamwork and resilience, we conquered the Giant's Ladder. After a day of reconnecting with long-time Friends, we joined intergenerational Friends in the spirit of dance.

Saturday morning, we were awakened to the hardships of our Native Peoples during the workshop presentation. After lunch, we met with Friends at the intergenerational 'Capture the Flag,' which, for the first time in several years, did not have a controversial finish. At the Walton Lecture, we heard from Sa'ed Atshan about what it means to be a Quaker in these turbulent times. After that impactful speech, we broke down what we witnessed in a discussion at the campfire with dessert from Steak 'n' Shake.

Reflecting on this past weekend, it was a time of truth, spirit, and reconciliation. As we continue into our daily paths, we will continue to hold this community in the light.

Until next year, SEYM!

## Teen Epistle 2018

Dear Friends everywhere,

We the teen program of the Southeastern Yearly Meeting found ourselves only two teens this year. Due to our numbers, we decided to wait on selecting a clerk until the next time we convene as a group. Last year we decided that our theme for this year would be Water. This was, and still is, because there are a number of issues throughout Florida that concern water. These reasons still stand, and so does our focus. We will continue to focus on water issues for this upcoming year, up to and including Yearly Meeting.

This year we followed our theme by attending a workshop on "Water and Climate Justice" offered by our wonderful Field Secretary for Earthcare, in addition to having a conversation about nonviolent direct action. We also held tradition by joining the wider gathering in attending the Walton Lecture, this year on "Quaker Response in Turbulent Times," presented by Sa'ed Atshan.

We also supported the yearly meeting in hiring a Youth Coordinator. Our hopes for this position are many, but our biggest excitement is forming a program that can survive multiple years and be delivered even after the current coordinator leaves the position. We thank our yearly meeting for supporting us as we take steps with them to develop a program that will help develop future generations of youth.

## Youth Epistle 2018

Greetings to Friends everywhere,

The Youth program at SEYM began on Thursday morning with an activity led by Elizabeth Croce. She read 'The Other Way to Listen' and we participated in a Setan watch that involved learning how to listen in new ways. Then, we were joined by Gary Arthur for animal yoga and were led by Kathy Hersh in an activity that used pipe cleaners to learn about each other's favorite things. After lunch, members of the Youth program went swimming at the neighboring Warren Willis camp until dinnertime. Afterwards, we participated in intergenerational bystander with Cece Yocum where we learned how to peacefully stand up for others.

Friday morning, the Juniors joined the Teens for a fun morning at the high ropes course while the Young and Wee Friends went on a nature walk and took part in a leaf rubbing activity. On Friday evening Gary Arthur led everyone in an intergenerational dance.

On Saturday morning, Elizabeth presented a faith and play lesson called 'Listening for God'. Then we went to Warren Willis camp for archery and came together as a community to celebrate a new Friend's sixth birthday.

We are now looking forward to the annual Easter egg hunt this afternoon.

With Love,

The SEYM Youth program: Priya, Bronwyn, Audrey, JJ, Daniel, Kian, Cassandra, Magdalena, Hoyt

# 2018 Epistles Attachments

## 18YM12 SEYM Minute on Stopping Gun Violence

Friends (Quakers) have a vision of humankind drawing together in mutual care, including reconciliation addressing both the safety of the victims of violent acts and the unmet needs of perpetrators of those violent acts. We are committed to healing and raising our children. To this end, we demand that our government, school systems, and all adults in our children's lives take steps to face the root causes of violence in our society. As Quakers, we support the youth in their vision of a world without a ubiquitous background of violence, a world where people learn how to express feelings of anger and pain constructively. This is an issue to unite us in protection of the children and all the people we love. We urge the passage of several pieces of legislation that will make a beneficial difference for all Americans:

### Nationally:

- Require universal background checks on every gun purchase.
- Implement a ban on all high-capacity ammunition magazines and military grade semi-automatic weapons.
- Reinstate the assault weapons ban or institute strict licensing similar to the National Firearms Act of 1934 (PL 73-474).
- Repeal of the "Dickey Amendment", to allow federal health agencies to conduct research into the causes, effects, and evidence-based prevention of gun violence in our communities, and provide funds for this work through Congressional action.

### In Florida:

- Repeal Chapter 790.33 of Title 46 of the 2017 Florida Statutes "Field of Regulation of Firearms and Ammunition Preempted", which now prohibits local governments in Florida (Municipalities, Counties, Cities, etc.) from making any regulations more restrictive than the State laws to control guns or ammunition. Local governments should be able to pass their own regulations to ensure the safety of their residents and children.

In a larger context, we share distress at the degree to which American culture accepts, uses, and relies on violence by individuals and groups to solve interpersonal and societal conflicts. We ally ourselves with the victims of such violence and with their sense of urgency in seeking reforms through non-violent means.

We affirm our belief, faith, and experience in the power of love, respect, tolerance and friendship as bases for living together with those around us, in family, community, societal and global relationships.

We intend to share this Minute with all people in Southeastern Yearly Meeting and all other Yearly Meetings in the USA, as well as our legislators and the students of Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. We encourage Friends to share this concern widely within their communities, to take action and start collaborating. Let us be open to whatever meaningful work our hearts are led to do.

## 18YM16 SEYM Minute Repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery

Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends publicly repudiates the Doctrine of Discovery and supports the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.