

Southeastern Yearly Meeting

Quakers in Florida, southeast Georgia & coastal South Carolina

To Friends Everywhere,

Loving Greetings from Southeastern Yearly Meeting at its 62nd annual sessions held at DaySpring Episcopal Camp and Conference Center in Parrish, Florida.

The beautiful campus offered us a place of retreat from the world for a few days of rest, community, and connection with nature, each other and Spirit. The weather was gorgeous. We had beautiful sunny days and a huge thunderstorm that was amazing to behold, while simultaneously drenching our walk back to dinner and canceling most of our evening plans on Thursday. This created the opportunity for impromptu gatherings of conversation, movie watching, singing, and game playing. We had a blast laughing through an evening of dance and music together.

We were joined by Friends on Zoom and in person from a variety of different meetings and locations, including DC, Iowa, North Carolina and Atlanta. All of our business sessions, and some of the workshop offerings were hybrid, giving f/Friends who were not able to be with us in person the opportunity to participate and enrich our time together.

This year, we were joined by Leslie Manning (Durham, ME & Three Rivers Meetings) who was our Walton Lecturer and workshop leader. She spoke on our theme of “Hold Fast the Hope that Anchors the Soul.” Leslie has a grounded, rich presence with a delightful sense of humor. The two workshops Leslie lead were rich times listening and sharing together. We explored cultivating compassion (suffering with), and upholding conviction. We shared about our heroes – who have inspired us to live in action aligned with spirit.

We had our first year of morning Bible Studies, presented by Joel Cook (Palm Beach Meeting), focused on the same topic. We delved into how despair leads us to God and allows us to dive through the distractions to be able to hear the small voice.

Our meetings for business guided by clerk Bill Carlie were calm, productive, and spirit filled.

Evening hangouts included an LGBTQIA+ affinity group. It was soul feeding to be with others who share a similar experience.

The youth climbed trees, went canoeing, did ropes courses and had workshops learning about business meetings and discussing being a conscientious objector, and entertained us with their myriad talents in the talent show.

An intimate Meeting for Remembrance honored the lives of those who have passed.

Worship Sharing provided space for f/Friends to sit with quotes and queries and share from their personal experience. This was a meaningful time for many.

We had a plethora of rich and meaningful workshop offerings on deepening our connection to Spirit through writing, exploring psalms, and listening prayer. There were several opportunities to enjoy the beauty of this place through nature walks, outdoor morning worship, and a labyrinth.

Other workshops gave us opportunities to dive deeper into living our faith out through Social Justice. FCNL and AFSC both presented workshops, we explored vocalizing our passions through politics. Florida Impact educated us about the upcoming cuts to emergency support programs for food and encouraged us to explore how we can prepare to support people who will be affected. We sat with queries about why Quaker meetings are so white. Some themes that arose were our need for allies to speak up and to have repair processes when harm is created, and to offer support from solidarity rather than pity. We discussed the pillars that support systems and the roles needed for successful social movements.

The bookshop was a source of constant flow of people and conversation and gushing over book options. Movies were shown in the bookstore three nights and offered f/Friends opportunities to get deeper understandings and discussion of topics of current interest.

We enjoyed AMAZING cookies and meals together while connecting over conversation in the dining hall and mosquito free patio. The staff here was delightful and took good care of us – in making us morning coffee before we were even awake to providing earplugs to be able to sleep together in dorms, to feeding us nourishing food 3 times a day.

It was a great time together. We missed those who were not able to join and hope you are able to join us next year!

Joel Cook and Ruth Gerhard for
Southeastern Yearly Meeting