



SOUTHEASTERN YEARLY MEETING OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS
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Southeastern Yearly Meeting Epistle

Fourth Month 8, 2007

To Friends Everywhere,

As Friends gathered on the Picciola Peninsula into Lake Griffin near Leesburg, Florida, we were greeted by live oaks with Spanish moss, and great blue herons by the lake.

Yearly Meeting began with two workshops on clerking given by Arthur Larrabee, in which he modeled the clerking techniques he was teaching. When our business sessions began, Friends saw that our Clerk Susan Taylor had already adopted many of the techniques modeled earlier. Friends reminded themselves that we are all part of the clerking process, and should attend with a “clerking frame of mind.”

Nearly 200 Friends attended—more than 160 adults and 30+ children. We have an ongoing concern regarding the difficulty of families with children attending because of the increasing costs, and to that end we are developing a Youth Endowment Fund to subsidize the costs of Yearly Meeting for families with children.

A revised version of the SEYM **Faith and Practice** is nearing completion. The two sections approved at these sessions on the “Blessed Community” and “Concerns, Leadings and Testimonies” seemed to express the spirit of this Yearly Meeting gathering. Shared meals and intergenerational singing, dancing, and music-making were community-building activities. Friends shared their concerns and leadings in a wide variety of special interest sessions on topics ranging from the “Minute of Grave Concern” regarding domestic spying from Palm Beach Monthly Meeting to immigrant concerns to environmental issues. We minuted the importance of spreading word of the impact of the war in Iraq as seen from the Iraqi perspective and were urged to consider how we might be led to respond. Visitors representing many Friends’ organizations made us feel connected to the wider community of Friends. ProNica was represented by Lillian Hall, the Managua, Nicaragua, coordinator of ProNica; Davida Johns, stateside coordinator; and Pam Haigh, who demonstrated the ProNica project she started last year teaching haircutting and other beautician skills to impoverished Nicaraguan women. Friends saw a short video made by Carl Hersh of Miami Meeting about the beauty school.

The setting, facilities and beautiful spring weather enabled a wealth of outdoor activities including a nature hike, early morning worship by the lake side, a “ropes course” experience for Young Friends, and quiet benches and swings for private meditation. Several families and individuals camped in tents or RVs under clear star-filled skies and a near-full moon.

Friends noted with sorrow the passing of J. William (“Bill”) Greenleaf, a founder of Southeastern Yearly Meeting. Bill died in January 2007 at age 90.

In the J. Bernard Walton lecture, Arthur Larrabee shared his well-considered ideas on “Leadership and Authority in the Religious Society of Friends.” He stressed respect for human leadership in Friends meetings, within the context of the leading of the Spirit. He also discussed appropriate delegation of authority, using pertinent examples.

Throughout our several days together, we continued discernment we began two years ago on our right relationship with Friends United Meeting (FUM). An ad hoc committee met in prayerful consideration for a total of nine hours. After which, its clerk gave a meaningful report that helped focus further discernment by the Yearly Meeting as a whole. We labored for 71/2 hours seeking unity through the strong sense of desires both to lay down and maintain our membership with FUM. Friends felt the need to remain in membership in order to be a witness to the truth that Quakerism is inclusive and therefore Friends should remain present, continue laboring and see what love will do. The need to lay down our membership was solidly grounded in the need not to be part of an organization that practices exclusion and in the need to be released from laboring with this concern. As Friends, we share a strong, enduring commitment to our faith path and to the work our testimonies call us to in the world. We respect and love one another. We were concerned that our responses to this issue threatened our unity as a Yearly Meeting. We understand that we as a body are experiencing the strong call to the work and witness for social justice for our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender brothers and sisters. We are called to acknowledge the ongoing oppression, prejudice, exclusion and violence these brothers and sisters are subject to in our culture, our country, our world and our Religious Society. We are called by our testimony of equality to walk the walk with these brothers and sisters. As we labored in our sessions, we were mindful of Arthur Larrabee's quoting from Galatians 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. Against such things there is no law." A Godly outcome of discernment reflects those fruits of the Spirit. We felt the Spirit moving among us, and eventually, the following minute emerged:

07YBM15 SEYM is in unity in declaring that our Yearly Meeting has entered a period of transformation with regard to our membership in Friends United Meeting. We acknowledge great pain and struggle within our body and, as we have heard, among other members of F.U.M. as well, over this process and we strive to hold each other in love and Light as we labor.

We will work as a Yearly Meeting toward reaching unity with regard to laying down our present relationship, and toward creating new relationships as opportunities arise and as spirit leads.

To allow this process to occur, SEYM will suspend formal membership in F.U.M. for two years. During this time, our yearly meeting will make no financial contributions to F.U.M. Instead, the funds that would have gone to F.U.M. will go to support F.U.M.-related activities or outreach at the discretion or suggestion of SEYM. We will offer both financial and spiritual support to representatives to F.U.M. as our members come forward to carry out those duties. If at the end of the two-year period our membership is not in unity to renew the relationship, SEYM will permanently lay down our membership in F.U.M.

We seek to maintain a loving relationship with Friends United Meeting. We also look for opportunities to communicate with members of F.U.M. about our concerns.

We are grateful for the prayers of support we received from Friends throughout the world during our Gathering.

May Peace be with you and everyone.

In God's Lovingkindness,
The Epistle Committee and



Susan Taylor, Clerk
Southeastern Yearly Meeting, U.S.A.

Southeastern Yearly Meeting
Teen Epistle
April 8, 2007

Our theme this year was *Quaker Inventors, Innovators, and Contributors to History*. In the beginning of our meeting a big wind blew that drew us together. We began to meet each other and became reacquainted.

Our first speaker talked about the right sharing of world resources. We did an interactive game with a tarp that displayed a cultural map. With the map, we learned how the world's resources were divided up among North America, Latin America, Europe, Africa, Japan, Australia, and Russia.

Our second speaker was Max L. Carter who wrote a book named *Minutiae of the Meeting*. He spoke about Quaker connections. He was very informative and contributed much information to our theme, and his beard was pretty kickin'!

Ned Stowe talked to us about his work as a lobbyist in Washington, D.C. He talked about "green" buildings. Samir Noukaddam is a representative of American Friends Service Committee. He explained the Israel – Palestine conflict.

We helped the Easter Bunny hide eggs.

On our last day we had another speaker. Arthur Larrabee explained how to clerk a meeting and to whom you should direct your voice in meeting. He also gave us new ideas on how to be respectful in listening to others' opinions and when to talk.

We had fun doing the fish bowl, playing sports, and a freezing hour at the pool. The fish bowl consisted of thoughtful questions and answers as the adults quietly observed.

We had a movie night watching *Mr. Deeds*. It warmed our spirits following a week of seriousness.

We hope we will see everyone next year, and we look forward to seeing new faces, too.



Southeastern Yearly Meeting
Young Friends Epistle
April 8, 2007

Greeting to Friends everywhere from Young Friends of Southeastern Yearly meeting.

We are fifteen elementary school young Friends plus King Majolika Nagahoma Carare to Dare from the Green Room at a Methodist camp in central Florida. The king's name was created using two letters from everyone's name. We come from all over Florida with some people as far away as Indiana and New York. We met over Easter weekend from Wednesday, April 4 through Sunday, April 8.

We had lots of fun. We looked through the mysterious suitcase with art supplies, found an old cigar box, which we decorated, and then put the king bear on the box's top.

We did help increase the peace discussions with games like Tug-of-Peace and pattern ball. We learned about teamwork doing a ropes course. We blew bubbles, played kickball, went swimming, and dyed Easter eggs. We also worked with the teens on a world map and talked about how much food is in different parts of the world. We also had a great time at the intergenerational dance.

While we played, we talked about bullying and how conflict escalates. We learned to try to talk and ask for a peaceful solution. We shared whom we trust and why we trust them. We used the Quash ball to help us take turns talking and listening to the person with the Quash ball. We learned lots of stuff and had a fun time learning it.

Southeastern Yearly Meeting
“Wee” Friends Epistle
April 8, 2007

Greetings from Wee Friends.

We met at the Southeastern Yearly Meeting at the United Methodist Life Enrichment Center in the Blue Room in Leesburg, Florida, from April 5 to April 8, 2007.

Our Wee Friends leader was Marie Marcinkowski, who came prepared with a schedule and copious resources centered on the theme of Loving Ourselves, Loving Others, and Loving the Earth. What we discovered was that Wee Friends already knew these things, and really we just wanted to have fun, fun, fun, fun.

We loved ourselves by knowing that we needed to be outdoors blowing bubbles, playing hopscotch, and enjoying new and old Friends. We just wanted to have fun, fun, fun, fun.

We loved others by creating the flower centerpieces for the enjoyment of all Friends.

We loved the earth by just wanting to be in it all the time, especially when Berry, Caroline, and Judy led us on a nature walk. We wanted to have fun, fun, fun, fun.

The Wee Friends enjoyed the Easter egg hunt with the Teen Friends.

We liked everything we did. A favorite part was making the “Fun” posters. We liked going outside every day for fun, fun, fun, fun.

One Wee Friend enjoyed playing soccer with his Dad. We liked meeting and playing with new Friends: fun, fun, fun, fun.

In light of what we learned, our theme next year will be “Having Fun Within the Blessed Community.”