



SOUTHEASTERN YEARLY MEETING OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

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Southeastern Yearly Meeting Epistle

23rd day, 3rd month, 2008

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

—Matthew 11:28

To Friends everywhere,

Loving greetings from Southeastern Yearly Meeting, as we gather at the United Methodist Life Enrichment Center in Leesburg, Florida, for our 46th annual sessions. For the past five days, we have worshipped, rested, and played together in God’s own living cathedral of vibrant green live-oaks, blessed by both warm sunlight and much-needed rain. We enjoyed many opportunities for worship: early morning worship on the shore of Lake Griffin, daily worship sharing in small groups, and meeting for worship with attention for business, where our visions, leadings, and love come to fruition.

We try to meet each other where we are. Friends feel cared for and accepted here, whether new to our community or already well-known among us. The greatest gift of our time together is the gift of unconditional love.

A variety of workshops, interest groups, and retreat sessions created space to explore our connections to the wider Quaker world, seek deeper engagement with social concerns and Quaker witness, and make ourselves available in a variety of ways to the Spirit among us. We found ourselves often in deep, generous dialogue about our individual experiences of faith, discovering a rich variety of personal belief, language, and experience among us. Yet we find that in faithfulness and love, we have a connection much deeper than our differences.

Stephen W. Angell presented the Walton Lecture, “The Foundations of Liberal Quakerism.” Our experience was that deepened understanding of our historical foundations both gave us a sense of rootedness, and provided a context for understanding the challenges facing our yearly meeting today.

Southeastern Yearly Meeting is still challenged by the question of our affiliation with Friends United Meeting. However, as we take a sabbatical rest from considering it in our official business, we are able to see some of the gifts that our process of discernment has given us. Painful struggle has cracked us open, pushed us into deepened dialogue about our beliefs, and reminded us of the need to rest in God’s loving arms.

So we have rested together in this time. In resting, we find renewed energy for other important concerns. We established new committees for earthcare and racial justice. During one of our evening sessions, we marked the passing of the fifth anniversary of our country’s war on Iraq with a powerful theatrical presentation, “What I Heard About Iraq.”

In fall 2007, a committee was established to hold our relationship with Friends United Meeting in prayer and discernment. Southeastern Yearly Meeting seeks ways to move forward in faithfulness with God’s unmediated guidance. In order to do this, we must release judgment, forgiving ourselves and others. From this place of love, we find renewed energy for witnessing Truth in the world.

“He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.”

—Isaiah 40:29

May Peace be with you and everyone.

In God’s Lovingkindness, the Epistle Committee and

Susan Taylor, Clerk

Southeastern Yearly Meeting, USA

Southeastern Yearly Meeting
Teen Young Friends/Jr. Yearly Meeting Epistle
March 23, 2008

To Friends Everywhere,
We send our greetings.

Our teen group met Wednesday for Yearly Meeting.

Thursday, we learned the worship sharing ropes,

Later we looked through a telescope,

Earlier we made something out of nothing.

And in the evening went "alligator shining"

On Friday we worked the ropes and

Built some teamwork, I hope

At the Fish Bowl we were asked in depth questions
And the adults said things I ought not mention.

We danced our hearts away that night

It really was an enjoyable site

On Saturday, we planted a tree after worship

And became space buddies, but not in a bookshop

Next year, we want to learn to express . . . Peace

But for now we want to get some sleep

We can't wait to meet, again. But, for now this is the end.

Southeastern Yearly Meeting
Elementary 'Young' Friends Jr. YM Epistle
Third Month 2008

To Friends everywhere:

We enjoyed silently walking in the labyrinth, sitting at the center, waiting, watching, looking, listening, feeling peaceful.

We had a wonderful experience with free time outside collecting things from nature, swinging, finding raccoons, squirrels, alligators, June bugs, caterpillars, butterflies, and fungi.

Those of us who were here on Friday overcame our fear and learned to trust on the Ropes Course.

We learned things about each other by playing Big Wind Blows.

We found natural wonders such as acorns, Spanish moss, and leaves and carved stamps out of potatoes to print family napkins and garden flags. We had fun dancing, singing, learning too.

Songs were in our hearts during silent worship.

Erika, Kate, Ben, Jamie, Jocelynn, Addie, Gavin, Noah, Liz, Jacob, Brian, Catherine, Laura, Tom, Rebekah.

Southeastern Yearly Meeting
Wee Friends Epistle
Third Month 2008

Playing in the spirit, the Wee Friends led all to create a chain with quotes and friendly feelings. The result was a quaker chain with "no weak links," almost 30 feet long!

