



SOUTHEASTERN YEARLY MEETING OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS
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4/11/2004

To all Friends everywhere,

The 42nd Annual Sessions of the Southeastern Meeting gathered at the United Methodist Life Enrichment Center in Leesburg, Florida, from Fourth Month 7 to 11, 2004. The tranquil setting on the shore of Lake Griffin shaded by stately live oak trees was perfect for our theme of Peace Building. Friends were blessed by the ministry and witness of Mary Lord, Assistant General Secretary for Peace and Conflict Resolution of the American Friends Service Committee, who served as our J. Barnard Walton lecturer. We also treasured visitors from Friends General Conference, Friends World Committee for Consultation, Friends Committee on National Legislation, the American Friends Service Committee, and Quaker Earthcare Witness, who enriched us by their presence and their insightful messages.

In keeping with the peace building theme, Mary Lord offered an opening talk called, *“When Peace Work Brings Division: the Prophet and the Mediator,”* a workshop on *“Discerning Leadings as People of Peace,”* and the Walton lecture titled, *“A Vision of Peace.”* She reminded us of Raymond Wilson’s words, “If your toolbox contains only a hammer, then everything looks like a nail.” She challenged us to claim the lessons in peacemaking in our everyday lives, and use these insights to add to our peace tool kit. She urged us to come to our peacemaking not in our pride, but in our brokenness. Letting go of our pride as Quaker peacemakers allows the transforming power to work through us in our witnessing for peace.

Our focus on peace building was deepened each morning by opportunities for worship by the lake and for communion with the glory of nature. Worship sharing each day provided us with powerful quotations and queries to guide us to new insights about our role in creating a more peaceful world. A rich variety of workshops and interest groups enabled us to explore the interconnections between spirituality, our witness in the world, and the work of our hands. Opportunities for music making added to the rhythm of our time together.

As we return home in these times of turbulence and testing, may we draw strength from the inspiring Epistle of the French Yearly Meeting in the year 1943 as quoted by Mary Lord:

We do not ask that you pray that we be safe; we ask that you pray that we be faithful.

We send you our hopes and visions of peace and our prayers for all of our faithfulness.

In the Light,

Petra Doan

Petra Doan,
on behalf of
Southeastern Yearly Meeting
of the Religious Society of Friends

To Friends everywhere,

This year at SEYM, the middle and high school Friends participated in a variety of workshops about this year's theme, *Diversity Among Friends*. These workshops dealt with racism, gender and sexuality, programmed and unprogrammed meetings, disabilities, and Friends around the world.

In our racism workshop, we used a multitude of captivating scenarios to explore our true feelings about race.

In the evening we discussed gender and sexuality, asking ourselves such questions as: how does gender affect our lives? How many genders are there? And why is gender an important part of diversity? Sometimes we used metaphors inspired by *Finding Nemo* to help answer these questions, and we also developed a "gender quotient."

On Saturday morning we contemplated programmed and unprogrammed meetings, trying to set aside our stereotypes and look at each type with open minds.

We came to the conclusion that both offer different ways for people to worship. Also, we realized that diversity within religion is just as important as diversity in race and gender and sexuality.

During our disabilities workshop, we talked about how people with disabilities are treated in Quakerism, and what constitutes a disability. We shared some experiences in which we felt different because of our different abilities. In order to feel what it is like to have physical disabilities, we participated in a relay race that involved wheelchairs, crutches, and writing our names with socks on our hands to simulate gross and fine motor skills.

Our last workshop focused on the travels of Friends around the world. We talked about differences in culture between American Quakers and Quakers in other countries. Some of the countries we talked about were Tibet, Indonesia, Japan, Egypt, Nicaragua, and Columbia. We discovered that although we have many differences, we also have many similarities.

This year's Walton lecture by Mary Lord from AFSC entitled, "*A Vision of Peace*," made us think and see the subject from a different point of view.

Our planning committee has decided on the theme "Organizing For Change" for next year, and has approved Daniel Doan, Katie Hersh, Dana Putney, and Annie Schmalstig as clerks and Alan Schmalstig as recording clerk.

The middle and high school Friends would like to thank (457 1/2 times) all the wonderful volunteers who led workshops including the Hooleys (who were also friendly adult presences throughout Yearly Mtg.), Petra Doan, Alice Bejnar, Doris Emerson, Roxi Hunter, Gerry Groupe, Eduardo Diaz, Lillian Hall and Hans Fletcher. And we give special thanks to our clerks (Katie Hersh, Jessamyn Doan, and Dana Putney, also recording clerk Daniel Doan) and our facilitator, Bill Flannery.

In the Light,

SEYM middle and high school Friends

P.O. Box 510795, Melbourne Beach, FL 32951 USA

The Poet's Epistle

By Daniel Doan on behalf of SEYM Junior Yearly Meeting,
Teen Friends' Epistle Committee

This session of Yearly Meeting
Set all the teens madly bleating

As if we were sheep
With not enough sleep

We spoke of Diversity
In our own city

And in the world
With all races swirled

After our workshop on gender and sexuality
We all felt compelled to re-analyze anatomy

Then we enthralled by Alice's Greetings
About the programmed and unprogrammed meetings

Later our phenomenal workshop with Doris
Changed our perception of disabilities for us

During the workshop we already raced
With faked disabilities that showed what some faced

Luckily, we stayed intact
After that exciting act

In our period on the last Saturday morn
We focused on worldwide places where meetings were born

In the evening we listened to neat Mary Lord
Who in the Walton Lecture told us how not to hoard
The building of peace, and we were not bored

Without the overflowing vigor of young Juan
The afternoon business meeting would not have been much fun

Now that it's Sunday we're real sad to go
But, next year, this is the place we will flow

SEYM Young Friends Epistle

Bob and Theresa came from the Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice. After some discussion we decided to call ourselves the Peaceful Manatees at Peace Camp in the Green Room.

We were happy here because we played some things we wanted to play. The most difficult thing was when we had to make a Peace Sign out of a rope. Another difficult thing was learning to make paper cranes.

Erin brought her pet bunny named Alice that we played with. We also played Frisbee and Big Wind Blows.

Even though this sounds nice, we also went through some rough times. Sometimes people would not listen to each other and were yelling and being destructive, but we're still young Friends in the process of learning peace.

[Jocelyn, Violet, and Jessica presented this epistle.]

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