

1st day, Eighth month, 2010

Greetings to all Friends Everywhere,

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting held its 2010 Annual Sessions July 29 – August 1 on the grounds of Bluffton University, Ohio, with the theme “Where there are Shadows, There is Also Light.”

After many years of meeting in mid-June, we met later in the summer to encourage attendance by families whose school years overlapped that time. Further encouragement was added with free registration for youth, with the happy result that there was a 40% increase in the number of youth in attendance. Overall we were 173 strong, with a healthy mixture of ages from 6 months to 91 years.

Our Plenary Speaker, Lloyd Lee Wilson of North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative), provided a timely and timeless message titled “An Epistle of Hope in a Discouraging Time.” He encouraged us to be hopeful in the midst of a Creation which is damaged by humankind and increasingly at risk, and to recognize that not just humans but all of Creation is our neighbor, whom we are called on to love as ourselves. He challenged us to examine our lives carefully to see where the seeds of damage to Creation lie. He helped us recollect our heritage by pointing out that being Faithful means living a life with God at the center, and following the leadings that result; that is, living as if the Kingdom of God is here now. As we proceed we have the tasks of being vigilant in the encouragement of spiritual growth everywhere, all the time, and inviting others to join us in this work.

Our Earthcare Committee shared the results of a lengthy study of the Maumee River Watershed of northern Ohio in the form of a 500 square-foot walk-through map derived from aerial photographs, surrounded by educational posters that gave voice to the dangers facing the fragile ecosystems as well as giving hope by proposing actions we could take to help. This exhibit provided a local example of treating Creation as our neighbor.

Our business meetings were deeply infused by Spirit. Among the moving moments were the readings of memorial minutes followed by worshipful sharing of memories of those from our community who died this past year. Our clerk, Merry Stanford, noted the relative youth of our Yearly Meeting (less than 50 years) compared to others in this country, which are up to 350 years old. She suggested that as we grow more complex we will need to address how we can successfully manage those complexities.

We are pleased with the revitalization of the High School Teen Retreat Program, which promises to keep our youth in touch with each other through quarterly retreats. All of us treasure the relationships we make and renew at our Annual Sessions, whether through singing, worship sharing, conversations over meals and in the bookstore, joining young people in their program, Bible Study, committee work, and the talent show and ice cream party on Saturday night. We are renewed by the fellowship and deep worship we experienced at our Annual Sessions, and found both challenges and hope in the ministry of our plenary speaker and others who spoke from the Spirit.

On behalf of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting,
Merry Stanford, Clerk