



## Saying “Yes” and Stepping Forward in Faith

Clerk’s Message, by Peggy Daub

*“Divine love imposeth no rigorous or unreasonable commands, but graciously points out the spirit of brotherhood and way to happiness in the attaining to which it is necessary that we go forth out of all that is selfish.”*

*(John Woolman: The Journal and Major Essays, “A Plea for the Poor,” p. 242)*

*“The social concerns of Friends is grounded in an experience – an experience of the Love of God... Social concern is the dynamic Life of God at work in the world... A concern is God-initiated, often surprising, always holy, for the Life of God is breaking through into the world.”*

*(Thomas Kelly: A Testament of Devotion, “The Eternal Now and Social Concern,” p. 111)*

For nearly fifty years, Lake Erie Yearly Meeting has served as a place where we meet for spiritual discernment, spiritual refreshment, and spiritual friendship. After this year’s annual sessions of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting, I am struck by our collective courage as we discern way forward. Our theme for the 2012 sessions was “Finding our Way: the Process of Discernment,” and Friend Brent Bill’s plenary address Friday evening challenged us to use the criteria of Beauty, Truth, Life, and Love in discernment. His provocative questions “Where is the Beauty?,” “How is it True?,” “Will it bring Life?,” and “Does it come from Love?” were on many minds and hearts at the sessions and I’m sure will stay with us for some



time to come.

Careful discernment can give us both conviction and confidence in finding way forward. It can be a source for courage to try new things. I see how Spirit has been present in many of our recent sessions as we discerned “steps forward.” First, we have moved as a group to reach out in love. We want to share the joy we find in our encounters with others, and to encourage greater participation in the Yearly Meeting. For the last three years we have offered discounts to first-time attenders of all ages, and for the last two years we have granted scholarships in the form of free attendance for all youth through high school age. With the help of these fiscal incentives, we have welcomed new faces to our

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## Clerk's Message, continued

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meetings in Bluffton and definitely seen Truth, Beauty, Love, and Life at work. Our finances have not suffered unduly, partly because of generous donations from many people.

Second, after four years of work by two committees, we were led to accept the July 2012 version of *Advices & Queries* compiled by these committees as a helpful guide for the Yearly Meeting. This compilation may be especially useful for the monthly meetings and worship groups who do not have their own *Advices & Queries*, but it is available for any and all to use as they choose. Just as important as the adoption of this document, though, was the simultaneous recognition that it is neither perfect nor static. When we minuted its adoption, we also minuted the need for a process to receive and consider suggestions for change that will arise in the course of using it. It is a blessing to see our core belief of continuing revelation become tangible in the adoption of this document alongside the recognition that it will change. We know that spiritual experience of the Divine is ineffable and cannot be adequately expressed in words, yet we found that we were ready to say "yes" to accepting the document in its current form. We can now see that the challenge of finding words that can point to the Spirit and assist people along their Spiritual paths is an ongoing process.

Third, we are searching for ways to make our testimonies more concrete in the world, and have said "yes" to the idea of planning and participating in Yearly Meeting service projects. We feel the sorrow and despair of many people around us, and we often feel helpless in the face of the needs of our inner cities. I saw us moved by grace to take a courageous step: we said "yes" to a proposal to support a group planning a service project that would take place in inner city Detroit sometime next summer. "Way" seems to be opening before us to answer a need. This project will depend on enough people volunteering to play an active role, and I invite you to consider prayerfully whether you are called to participate in this project. More information will be coming over the next few months.

Finally, we are stepping forward and saying "yes" as we plan the celebration of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary at next year's annual sessions. We hope that this will be an event to call together memories of the past, hopes for the future, and a deep sense of celebration and gratitude.

Peggy Daub, Presiding Clerk

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### Lake Erie Yearly Meeting Advices and Queries

Thomas Taylor reports that the *Advices and Queries* have been printed. Copies have been sent to the Meetings. Anyone wanting additional copies may request them from Thomas at:  
[tftaylor@tds.net](mailto:tftaylor@tds.net) or 734-995-6803.

## Reflections on the Sixth World Conference of Friends, April 17-25, Nakuru, Kenya

### *Being Salt and Light – Friends living the Kingdom of God in a broken world*

#### **Jana Norlin. Grand Rapids Monthly Meeting**

My family can trace its Quaker ancestry to before 1680, so I truly feel a part of the long world-wide legacy of Friends. Therefore I am deeply humbled to have had the opportunity to represent LEYM at this historic World Conference. After voluntarily attending the FWCC annual meeting of the Section of the Americas in Guatemala in 2006, I have since participated for the past 6 years as a LEYM representative to the Sec. of Am. of FWCC, serving on the Spanish/English Bilingual Committee. Most recently in 2010 I served as an interpreter for the United Society of Friends Women International Triennial in Mombasa/Nairobi, Kenya.

Because this was the second time in less than two years that I traveled within the country and spent time with Kenyan Friends, I perhaps felt less distracted by unknown surroundings and more like I was coming home with Friends from all over the world. During the conference I may have been more comfortable than some Friends with the differing worship practices and beliefs that many times represented some of the varied experiences I've had as a Quaker in the larger Society of Friends. The diversity of Friends represented reflected my personal reality of worshiping with a full spectrum of Friends during my lifetime. Growing up in FUM, moving into FGC as a young adult and traveling internationally among Friends since I was 16, I relished and yet like everyone else had to work through many challenges to attempt understanding. Spirit worked through me to make connections between Friends of different languages, cultures and religious references in ways that taught and enriched us all. I reconnected with Friends from other countries to strengthen our ties and had so many blessed new encounters that I pray will bear fruit in the future, including relationships with diverse Friends in the United States. We had 8 days during the conference to worship, fellowship, celebrate, explore, discuss and labor over the spiritual essence of revealing ourselves to one another, as Spirit worked through us. This was an opportunity we would like to have shared with all Friends everywhere. The richness of concord and conflict is difficult to express. In addition to daily meetings with my Home Group, I interpreted for two Thread Groups and generally at all other times throughout the conference. I was holding all of us in the Light as we tried to express ourselves and listen to each other asking God for enlightenment. While our

diversity was at times a mixed blessing, I witnessed how as individuals, we were led to seek Truth and Light. In opening ourselves to understand others as we wished to be understood, we often relinquished our own egos and agendas to seek God's will and move forward as a spiritual family, seeking a better world society for all.

My pre-conference study tour and family home stay in Kaimosi (SW Kenya) was at the site of the first Quaker mission to Kenya 110 years ago in 1902. I spent time in the Friends' Hospital, Theological College, Teachers' College, primary and secondary schools, boarding schools, rural services office, churches and other Friends' institutions. This gave me eye opening insights on how Kenyan Friends combine evangelical spiritual nurturing with action to meet real life needs for health, education and economic development. It appears that their work has had a much more profound effect than any government on the local quality of life for generations. I stayed with a family that has to carry all of their water from a dirty river 5 minutes away. I appreciated the conference delegates that came from a number of countries to help residents of Kaimosi make bio-sand water filters before the conference.

During my post-conference study tour in the NW Kenya area of Mt. Elgon, we visited post 2007 election areas that were the scenes of unimaginable violence. Led by Friends Peace Teams, local Kenyans shared their personal experiences of working through trauma using AVP (Alternatives to Violence Program), HROC (Healing and Rebuilding our Communities), TTT (Turning the Tide) and Transformative Mediation programs. It was inspiring to witness how victims and perpetrators are working through understanding, forgiveness and mutual support to rebuild their lives, families and communities. I saw the reality of grace and peace that passes all understanding through God's healing love manifest in a genuine joy of life, self and others. This was the experience that most touched my heart with hope for our future, as a People called to know and further the Kingdom here and now.

My name Jana means yesterday in Swahili. I learned to say *juzi*, *jana*, *leo*, *kesho*, *kesho kutwa*, *kesho ingine*, *mtondo*, *mtondo goo* which means "the day before yesterday, yesterday, today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, the day after the day after tomorrow, the day after the day after the day after tomorrow, and the day after the day after the day after the day after tomorrow."

*(reflections continued on next page)*

Let us praise God for all of the forthcoming blessings yet to be revealed from this world gathering of Friends. thank you all for your prayers and support.

-submitted to Lake Erie Yearly Meeting most gratefully and humbly, with the intention of continuing shared revelation

by Jana Norlin, July 26, 2012

### **Jerry Knutson, Pittsburgh Monthly Meeting**

First, I'd like to thank Friends for the opportunity to be one of your representatives to the 6<sup>th</sup> World Conference of Friends at Kabarak University in Kenya.

As a preconference tour I visited Friends in the Bware Yearly Meeting and I gave my first sermon to a Quaker Meeting. Bware Yearly meeting asked me to ask LEYM if they'd like to partner with them. I said I'd ask LEYM.

The most moving event for me was to Jwake up one morning during the preconference trip. The tent was silent and I thought the other five tent mates had gone to breakfast. However, as I started getting out of bed I noticed a Central American Quaker kneeling beside his bed in silent morning prayers. The humility, discipline and faith I felt in that act of worship was astounding. I also see these three qualities in the writings of early Friends. How can I as a liberal Friend rediscover the humility, discipline and faith that was found in early Friends and is still found in some of the Quaker branches?

The topic of the conference was "Being salt and light: Friends living the kingdom of God in a broken world." I wrote a 20 page manuscript on the exegesis of salt and light and presented a three session workshop on this topic at the conference. On Saturday from 3:30 to 5:15, I'll be presenting a workshop on a summary of my research.

I also wanted to let friends know that FWCC Section of the Americas is meeting March 13-17 in Indianapolis. I understand that visitors are also welcome.

### **Clemence Mershon, Erie Worship Group**

I expected the experience of an open space at the World Conference in Kenya to be more like the FUM Triennial near Nairobi which I had attended in 2002. However, I found myself occupied with preparations and surprises at the much more inclusive conference, such as being named a bi-lingual facilitator of a home group.

Prior to the Conference, I helped with English to French translations of some Pre-Conference documents. Then, I immersed myself in the English and Spanish surveys and documents which two of us had helped to pre-

pare as members of the Section of the Americas' Executive Committee. At the conference, we assisted a selected small group of Latin American Friends in the evaluation of the Section's 35-yr. old COAL (Comite de los Amigos en America Latina) program.

At the conference, during the home group sessions (usually morning), we two North American unprogrammed Friends co-facilitated French-speaking Friends from France, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo-Kinshasa and Congo-Brazzaville. Three challenges soon arose. We co-facilitators met daily at breakfast to choose both a Biblical passage and the appropriate translation. Since neither of us had anticipated leading in French, we did not have a French Bible. We depended on two non-English Bibles, one in French, the other in Kinyaruanda.

Needless to say, adding several English Bible translations to these other languages created plenty of opportunity for misinterpretation. Further, when I sensed that we were losing a few Friends' participation because the discussions were in French, of which only one of us was a native speaker, I sought counsel from an African F/friend. He suggested that the Burundian pastor facilitate in French, Kirundi and Kinyaruanda (mutually intelligible). Although more laborious, it allowed several Friends to participate more fully. Finally, since most of these Friends were from programmed traditions where worship sharing and other co-equal activities are not common, we all had to learn to be both assertive speakers and good listeners. Listening to the true Spirit of a person's words, not just the standard biblical quotation or interpretation he or she gave, turned out to be the most important Conference lesson for me.

Unfortunately afternoon fatigue plagued me during the days of COAL review discussions in Spanish. Nevertheless, I was able to share some tips I had given Friends in Bolivia during a visit there. Instead of being dependent on or following directives which the North American missionaries had given, Latin American Friends sought to evaluate which gifts they possessed locally, then ask for help with those organizational or hardware items which the Section of the Americas office could provide. Thanks to some very dedicated Friends, who met for about 15 hrs. over 5 days, I believe that we provided a solid document on the way forward for Latin American Friends. I felt richly rewarded with inspiring those conversations at the conclusion of my term in the FWCC Section of the Americas.

Gratefully, I reconnected with Friends I'd met in Kenya and the countryside through which I'd traveled 10 years previously. The hospitality and facilities were what I

*(reflections continued on next page)*

expected. However, to my surprise, my 53-yr old Kenyan roommate spent most of the little time we were in our room together talking on her cell phone with her husband, who was at the Conference, or with one of her 7 children in Kenya and the USA. This was particularly jarring when the phone rang during the night about 3 am, mid-way through the conference, alerting her to burglary at her farm. The conversation continued off and on for several hours. Afterward, I asked her about the Kenyan justice system, which is pretty brutal. As Friends, she and her husband were not clear about supporting the local tradition of abusing the perpetrator, or whether some more humane corrective methods could be found. I would have so much liked to explore more about Kenyan society. Unfortunately, the phone proved a barrier to greater understanding and learning.

For me, the greatest joy was the large group worship and its accompanying music, led each day by a different World Section. Those melodies and the accompanying words of wisdom from mostly-younger speakers continue to provide me with a lasting message of hope.

#### **Robb Yurisko, North Columbus Monthly Meeting**

I want to take this opportunity to first and foremost give thanks to LEYM for allowing me to serve as one of the representatives to the World Conference of Friends in Kenya and financing this once in a lifetime opportunity not only with money but prayer, love and support! Thank you! Once again LEYM has served and ministered to me in a way that has blown me away. I am so grateful.

I could talk all day about the deep and intimate worship and sharing that took place there but in the interest of simplicity of time I will share only a few things: The most moving event was the dancing worship of Kenyan Friends which touched me deeply and moved me emotionally. The most surprising element was the incredible preaching that took place there! Each and every speaker spoke from that deep well of Spirit I have found within our Unprogrammed Worship, proving George Fox's awakening and vision has been carried forth in all branches of Friends. The deepest learnings I gained were to look beyond the initial hurt of a painful situation and see those who have hurt you with eyes of compassion and that while our testimonies are ideals, we cannot use them to judge one another by.

I made connections there with Friends from all over the world and hope to stay in contact with them for a lifetime. I am planning a visit to Ireland Yearly Meeting and hope to visit friends in Australia and New Zealand

one day. Each day, new and blessed Opportunities for Worship came in unexpected ways and the Worship and Ministry spanned across the boundaries each of us makes within our own traditions thus making my experience there rich and alive - reviving an old but new understanding of expectant waiting together on God who is ready to burst forth at every moment if we would just yield to letting it out of the box of our usual experience.

#### **Rosemary Coffey, Pittsburgh Monthly Meeting**

For me, this was mostly eight days of working very hard. This is not to say that I didn't enjoy and learn from the often moving plenaries, conversations with my previously unknown companions at mealtime, interactions with my Kenyan roommate, and so on, but I was busy. Very busy!

In the period preceding the conference, I spent many challenging hours translating the registration documents, as well as a couple of the plenary speeches and the descriptions of available tours, from English into French. Once I arrived at Kabarak University, I was assigned to co-facilitate a French-speaking "Home Group," which met for 90 minutes a day on six days, featuring mostly Francophone Africans (from Congo, Cameroon, Rwanda, and Burundi.) In addition, I co-led a "Thread Group" on Diversity Among Friends for three sessions; co-lead an interest group on Right Sharing of World Resources (RSWR), a Quaker micro-granting organization of whose Board I am Recording Clerk; and summarized the financial situation of the Section of the Americas of Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) in my capacity as Clerk of the Finance Committee.

So what did I do for fun? I visited one of the sites where the Leakeys did some digging, uncovering lots of axe heads along with some very old human bones. I reconnected with a number of our Friendly FolkDancer hosts from Australia, Ireland, Kenya, Rwanda, and Cuba. I talked a lot with old F/friends and new. I figured out how to stay clean for ten days with no hot water. And I had a great time with old friends in Paris on the way to Nairobi and in London on the way back!

## **Earthcare Committee Report**

The LEYM Earthcare Committee (EC) has again had a busy year. Highlights:

Earthcare concerns were reflected in a reformulated Ad Hoc Committee on Advices and Queries after it was concluded during the 2011 LEYM annual sessions that the document needed further work. Phil Clappitt, co-clerk, accepted the invitation to participate in the spirit-led and productive deliberations of this fine new committee during the fall, winter and spring of 2011-2012.

Judy Greenberg, co-clerk, participated in the fall LEYM Executive Committee Meeting in Bluffton, Ohio, and both Judy and Phil Clappitt, the other co-clerk, participated in LEYM's Representative Meeting in late March in Perrysburg, Ohio. We were pleased to have a lively EC meeting during the latter event.

We were happy to welcome Valerie Groszmann, Tom Small and Kyo Takahashi in their first meeting as new members of the Earthcare Committee, held on January 21<sup>st</sup> at the home of Judy Greenberg in Toledo. It was in part a valuable get-acquainted meeting, and in part a planning meeting for the future.

We held a second lively meeting at the Greenberg home on March 2<sup>nd</sup> in which we came to a sense of the meeting that an Earthcare workshop entitled "Discernment on 'Fracking'" should be held during the 2012 LEYM annual sessions. Parts of a remarkable documentary film, "Gasland," would be shown, followed by worship-sharing around specially formulated queries. The workshop title fits into the theme of discernment, this year's Yearly Meeting theme. "Fracking" is the nickname for hydraulic fracturing, a relatively new but controversial method for extracting natural gas from shale formations deep beneath the Earth's surface. We have learned during our planning process that the topic we chose is a particularly difficult and challenging one. However, we remain firm in the conviction that Friends who care about our Earth and all its life should welcome the

challenge to explore this topic, with all of its implications.

Individual committee members remain active in their particular environmental interests, as well as other activities.

We continue to seek the involvement of younger adult Friends in our Earthcare activities, including as members of our committee.

To illustrate the dilemma Friends face in discernment on 'fracking,' we quote two knowledgeable, thoughtful people, both of whose views we respect, who have come to rather different conclusions:

Fred Krupp, President of the Environmental Defense Fund, says this: "Let's be clear: We can't ask people to trade away their health and quality of life in exchange for cheap energy. And there are some places, where shale formations are too close to aquifers that supply water for drinking and farming, where drilling should be banned. / But the truth is, hydraulic fracturing and natural gas are not going away. The genie is out of the bottle and the abundant new supply of energy that hydraulic fracturing has made available can benefit the nation." (EDF Solutions, Summer 2012, p. 2.)

Sandra Steingraber, biologist and member of the Ithaca (New York) Friends Meeting, in a beautiful and powerful essay, "Why I Am a Fracking Abolitionist," says this: "Collective despair, in my experience, is the biggest obstacle to environmental justice. Little wonder. Our problems are overwhelming and entrenched: our economy is now ruinously dependent on fossil fuels in the same way that, in the 1830s, it was ruinously dependent on slave labor. And both are homicidal abominations."



# Report of the High School Youth Program Retreat Committee

This report was prepared by Merry Stanford, Clerk of the Committee, and Robb Yurisko, Coordinator of the Program. Robb is presenting the report on behalf of Merry and the Committee. The following persons serve on the Committee: Joyce Balderston, Meghan Diffenderfer, Clemence Ravacon Mershon, and Ana Reichenbach.

The LEYM High School Teen Retreat Program is staffed by a contractual youth worker, who plans and implements four retreats during the program year. Three retreats were conducted prior to annual sessions, on a college campus and in monthly meetings, and these were reported about at Representative Meeting. The fourth retreat, held in the summer, is occurring right here at annual sessions. This is the first time LEYM has integrated the teen retreat program and the High School Program held at annual sessions.

We had three goals in integrating these two programs:

1. To increase teen attendance at annual sessions.
2. To increase teen attendance at the Teen Retreats.
3. To integrate the two communities of teens which have, until now, been separate: some teens attend only the teen retreats, and some teens attend only the annual sessions. We know of only one teen who has, until now, regularly attended both.

Our first goal has been well met! Last year there were six teens attending these sessions. This year there are 16! Our teen retreats have also been attended by five or six (different) teens. We hope that this increase in attendance will continue into the fall. We know from previous experience, and the presence of Adult Young Friends here at annual sessions every year, how vital it is to provide an active teen retreat program in order to nurture Quaker community!

The fall retreat is being sponsored by Red Cedar

Friends Meeting, in Lansing, Michigan over the Veterans' Day weekend, November 9-12, 2012. The program will begin on Friday evening and extend at least through Sunday lunch, and possibly through Monday lunch, depending on school schedules.

Further retreats will include the famous 'Quake that Rocks the Midwest' sponsored by ILYM and attended by various yearly meetings and Friends Schools which will be held in Evanston, Illinois, over MLK Jr Day weekend in January 2013 and then a second Quake sponsored by LEYM which will be held in May 2013 on Earlham's Campus and attended by various Yearly Meetings including ILYM, OVYM and IYM with Scattergood and Olney Friends Schools being invited as well.

Some of the work we have been doing this year is collecting data from young Friends about the benefits and challenges of attending the LEYM Teen Retreats. We have collected some of that data online, and some of it at Retreats.

Our online survey revealed that the primary factor that keeps teens away from the retreats is transportation, although some are also challenged by their busy schedules or the cost of getting to the retreats. We are happy to say that we received clarification at Representative Meeting from Finance Committee that teens can apply to the Presiding Clerk for travel reimbursement for attending the Teen Retreats, in the same way that Friends may apply for travel reimbursement for attending LEYM committee meetings. So we hope that cost for transportation is not an inhibiting factor for families. However, even when cost is not a factor, teens have trouble getting rides to the retreats. Car pools are often arranged, but even then teens may have a hard time getting a ride to the pickup point.

It appears that in most of our moderate and larger meetings where there are teens, the number of active teens in the Meeting is only one to four. Our meetings are distant from each other, and teens can feel pretty isolated in their communities. Parents have busy work weeks and cannot always leave work early to drive their teen on a Friday afternoon or evening to a pickup point. We are therefore asking nonparent Friends with flexible schedules to assist families by volunteering to drive teens to their retreats. There is also a need for a volunteer to coordinate the transportation of teens in the monthly meetings. More information will be coming to meetings

*(Committee Reports continued on page 8)*

about this in the fall.

A testament to the power of these retreats can be felt when we hear comments like: "I have finally found a place where I can be myself" "Now I know why my parents are Quaker" and "I have really never laughed so hard in my entire life,". The larger joint Retreats seem to have the most impact; hence we are working this year to create a second larger joint retreat or "Quake" in the Spring and those plans are flowing smoothly! Being witness to and part of the deep sense of community that our Teens create when they come together across States, Yearly Meetings and even different branches of Friends is always a distinct privilege and a beautiful example for adult Friends.

Next summer we are hoping to participate in a week-long Retreat/Service Trip and an opportunity has presented itself for our Teens to volunteer at a Quaker Retreat Center, Camp Neekaunis, in Ontario, Canada. Whether way opens more fully in that regard or another, this feels an important endeavor for our Teens and we hope to liaise with Finance Committee to make this possible, as it would require additional funding.

Your support whether in prayer, helping financially or offering transport for teens to retreats is greatly appreciated. Thank you for helping to make this last year spectacular! Please spread word of this program around your Monthly Meetings, even if there are only one or two teens there. From what we have seen Quaker Teen Programs can make a huge difference in the lives of young Friends and it is our responsibility to make sure that they have these Opportunities to be together and grow into their measure of the Light.

## Early Elementary Epistle LEYM 2012

We found our way to our classroom, under the bridge and along the creek; to the farmers' market and to treasures through a treasure hunt set up for us by the middle school group. We found our way to each other blindfolded. We were not sure where we were going. We found our way to somewhere we did not even know we wanted to find (the playground). We found our way to fun games, to the lake and bowling, to the cafeteria and the ice cream machine, to our dorms and the enjoyment of creativity with the crafts.



*We've Moved!*

*Our new address on the worldwide  
web is*

<http://leyrn.org>





## Pre-School Epistle LEYM 2012

*What we've done is run, run, run.  
We painted tee shirts with our feet.  
It was neat.  
It was fun.  
It was part of run, run, run.  
Building Duplo towers tall,  
Pushing them over to make them fall.  
Get to start over, so we're never done.  
Very close to run, run, run.  
Number blocks, letter blocks, so much fun  
Even missing the number one.  
We play a game, the Snail's Pace Race  
Match the colors, snail to dot.  
Move the snails from start to stop.  
This for a moment slowed our pace  
Then back to run, run, run.  
We went for a walk to the climbing stones  
They're so big they must weigh a ton!  
This was part of run, run, run.  
Then on a few blocks a playground was found  
We climbed all the way to the sky  
We ran back and forth so way up high  
Then slid back down to the ground  
So much fun. Another part of run, run, run.  
Pipe cleaner—pink and purple, yellow and green,  
Twisted into animals never before seen!  
This short rest was quickly done,  
Then back to run, run, run.*



## Middle School Epistle LEYM 2012

*We are the middle school group for Lake Erie Yearly Meeting. We are staying at the Bluffton Beaver Dam in Ohio. On the first day we made a treasure hunt for the early elementary group. The prize was a cool home-made paper airplane for each person. We went swimming with demon fish in turquoise blue water. On Friday evening we did a lot of crafts. We made popsicle stick and pipe cleaner people, shadow boxes and kaleidoscopes. We ate all the snacks for the weekend on the first day.*

*On Saturday we added another Friend to our*



*group. We made t-shirts with bursts of color. We had worship sharing about Finding our Way. We went bowling and had to patch a sock. Noah was king of bowling. We did more crafts and played air hockey and foosball.*

*We ate lots of ice cream and other desserts. We found that we are all friends and have a great sense of humor. We formed LINDA, Lake Erie Yearly Meeting Inspection & Detective Agency. We found out we have a lot in common and we are made of pure awesomeness. We have awesome fun Friends.*

*Peace to all. DFTBA (Don't forget to be awesome)*



## High School Youth Group Epistle

### LEYM 2012

We, the teens of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting, met over the weekend of July 26-July 29, 2012. Since Annual Sessions last year, we have met four times. Our time together has been fun. We have met with other yearly meetings for retreats, including Illinois Yearly Meeting and Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting. We have met in Cleveland, Chicago, on Earlham's campus in Richmond, Indiana, and, finally, in Bluffton, Ohio for Annual Sessions. We are a passionate and sleepless community of young Friends.

To us, being a Quaker means acceptance of everyone. We found that our time together, though brief, has offered us many things. But most precious of all has been the opportunity to be fully ourselves. In the coming year, we have several retreats planned, which again cross yearly meeting boundaries as well as including Friends from other Quaker traditions. We find our commonalities outweigh anything that would divide us. We hope that the passion we feel for spending time in community will serve as a testament to adult Friends.

Walk in the Light,  
The teens of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting.



## **Financial Report for 2012** **Annual Meeting**

|                                |              |
|--------------------------------|--------------|
| <u>Income</u>                  |              |
| Fees                           |              |
| Housing & commuter             | \$8,860.50   |
| Meals                          | \$8,774.30   |
| Registration                   | \$5,564.00   |
| Additions and subtractions     |              |
| Donations                      | \$1,105.00   |
| Program discounts              | (\$696.95)   |
| Scholarships                   | (\$6,566.00) |
| <u>Total Income</u>            | \$17,040.85  |
| <u>Expenses</u>                |              |
| Housing & commuter             | \$8,860.50   |
| Meals                          | \$8,700.85   |
| Program                        | \$543.00     |
| Honoraria & travel (estimated) | \$440.00     |
| Copies                         | \$84.20      |
| <u>Total Expenses</u>          | \$18,628.55  |
| <u>Deficit</u>                 | (\$1,587.70) |

## **Budget for 2012-13**

### **General Fund Expenses**

(\* = transfers into funds)

|                                |               |
|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Travel                         | 6,000         |
| Office                         | 100           |
| Contract Worker                | 2,040         |
| Finance                        | 210           |
| Publications                   | 3400          |
| Advancement                    | 100           |
| Ministry & Nurture             | 100           |
| Clerk's Fund                   | 300           |
| FGC                            | 4500          |
| Records project                | 100           |
| FWCC Travel*                   | 1000          |
| Youth Activity Fund*           | 1000          |
| High School Teen Retreat Fund* | 4900          |
| Spiritual Formation*           | 100           |
| Friends School in Detroit      | 4500          |
| Olney Friends School           | 600           |
| Consultation Fund*             | 0             |
| Scholarship Fund for Ministry* | <u>1500</u>   |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>30,450</b> |

### **Income**

|                           |               |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| From Meetings             | 30,000        |
| Balance from General Fund | <u>450</u>    |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>30,450</b> |

*Suggested contribution / member* 40

## **2012 Lake Erie Yearly Meeting Adult Epistle**

To Our Dear Friends Everywhere,

The forty-ninth Annual Sessions of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting were held July 26-29, 2012, on the campus of Bluffton University in Bluffton, Ohio. We were blessed with comfortable, warm temperatures—a welcome change from the extreme heat of the last several weeks. A bit of rain one evening brought some relief for our thirsty earth.

One hundred fifty-three Friends gathered for business and fellowship in the Spirit on the theme of “Finding Our Way: The Process of Discernment.” In Bible study, we followed this theme in such stories as Moses and the Israelites in the desert, and Mary and Joseph after the Annunciation. In worship sharing, we considered how we discern the difference between our will and God’s will. Workshops allowed us to study discernment in real-world issues such as violence and environmental degradation.

Our plenary speaker, Brent Bill of Western Yearly Meeting, captured our attention with humor and personal stories as he invited us to consider an interesting approach to the discernment process. He gave four criteria useful for testing a leading, presented as queries for action: the presence of Beauty, Truth, Life, and Love. Friends carried these queries with them, applying them to challenges both in our individual lives and as a corporate body.

Our Meetings for Worship with Attention to Business were held in a deep, worshipful mode, in which we heard reports from our Yearly Meeting committees, our Quarterly Meeting, national Quaker organizations, and two Friends Schools in our vicinity: Friends School in Detroit (Michigan) and Olney Friends School (Barnesville, Ohio). We welcomed the presence of staff members from Friends General Conference and Friends Committee on National Legislation as they participated fully in the long weekend of worship, business, and play. We were enriched by the visit of Friends from Tsuchiura Monthly Meeting of Japan Yearly Meeting.

In our deliberations, we labored tenderly with one another; our affirmations of each other and our Yearly Meeting body were gentle and Spirit-filled. Several visiting Friends shared with our clerk that they had noticed how the Spirit was moving among us as we conducted our business. This was particularly true as we wrestled with the report from the ad hoc committee on Advices and Queries. As Friends expressed both support and concerns, the quality of the silent spaces in the meeting continued to deepen. Creation of our own set of Advices and Queries was a four-year project, developed under the care of a committee bound together by Love in God, with ongoing assistance from Friends across our Yearly Meeting. With the approval of these Advices and Queries, we recognize that it is a living document, and our meeting will create a system for collecting insights to guide us in the future.

We heard reports from our representatives to the sixth World Conference of Friends in Kenya. Their experiences included being “moved and surprised,” finding “concord and conflict,” and witnessing “deep faith and discipline.” They expressed their sincere gratitude for being given this life-changing opportunity. Two other members of our yearly meeting were chosen to fill open places at the conference; both used their gifts in translating to help Friends to communicate and understand better and to listen behind the words.

We were enlivened this year by expanded numbers of teens in our midst, as the high-school teen retreat program met here during our annual sessions for the first time. In all, 34 children ages 2 to 18 came to Yearly Meeting; 17 of these were in the teen retreat program. Many dedicated adults joyfully gave their time and energy to the children’s program.

As our time together comes to a close, we return to our homes and monthly meetings, eager to share Brent Bill’s tools of discernment for finding our way. As you test your own leadings, may you also ask yourself, “Where is the Beauty? How is it True? Will it bring Life? Does it come from Love?”

Peggy Daub, Clerk

## Lake Erie Yearly Meeting 2012 Plenary Address

J. Brent Bill

### Beauty, Truth, Life and Love: Four Keys for Finding Our Way

It is a joy to be with you. And I especially appreciate the chance to speak about discernment and finding our way. That seems to me one of the pressing concerns for Friends today – how we find our way. Individually and collectively.

While my life has been full of many seeming missteps and mistakes, this desire – coming to learn

God wants to do then ing it – been of the ing is- of my This sire has me to many books dis-



what me and do-has one driv-sues life. de-led read on

cernment – and even write one myself.

Still, in none of them, even mine as good as it is, did I find the final answer, the ultimate “how-to”. Instead, I found that discernment is like an onion. It has many layers. Sometimes it tastes really good (especially battered and deep-fried – an onion, not discernment!). Sometimes it makes us cry (onions and discernment). Regardless, the deeper we go into discernment, the more we find we have to learn. It’s a continual peeling back into new discoveries. And so I’d like to share with you four concepts I’ve been unpeeling. Those four are beauty, truth, life and love.

I think that beauty, truth, life, and love are especially important to discernment – to finding our way forward – precisely because they’ve

been so neglected. We rarely look for them when we consider what God wants for us in our jobs, relationships, life choices, and so forth. Instead, we ask things such as “What should I do? What duty do we as Friends have? What’s the best thing? What’s the biblical thing? What would George Fox do?”

I, like you, have sat through many meetings for worship with a concern for business where those were the prime questions. They are not bad questions, but they are not enough to take us fully into the deepest, most soul-satisfying forms of discerning and doing the Divine will – either as individuals or as a religious society of God’s friends.

If we believe that God wants our lives in the Spirit to be abundant and full, which is what Scripture tells us, then we need to look for ideals that are deeper and more soul fulfilling than those of duty, obligation, and Quaker correctness. I suggest that those ideals are beauty, truth, life, and love. These four are less practices or techniques, like the ones that fill my book, than they are queries. This should fit well with our Quaker understanding of discernment – asking questions that draw out what we are learning from Christ, our Present and Inner Teacher. These move us beyond doing it correctly into doing it right.

#### ***The first is “Where is there beauty?”***

Since I’m no deep theologian, let me begin with a story. Nancy and I went to the opera one night. It was a first for me as someone who has always mocked (albeit gently) opera as little more than a country-western song that lasts three hours and is sung in a foreign language. “Tosca” sort of fit that criteria -- it was long (2 hours and 49 minutes instead of 2 minutes and 49 seconds, like many country western songs) and very sad (all the leads die -- “There’s blood everywhere,” said our docent happily prior to the show). Of course, where it differed was that there was no truck or

dog or D-I-V-O-R-C-E, just death and sadness.

What I didn't expect, though, was to be so completely drawn in and mesmerized by "Tosca." It was beautiful -- the sets, the symphony, the singers, the music. Captivating. The time flew by. At each intermission, Nancy and I looked at each other with eyes that said, "Wow." No words were needed. It was amazing. And while I didn't run out and buy season tickets, you can be sure that we'll be back. It was too beautiful an experience not to enjoy again.

This made me think about discernment. Too often, we do things in our times of discernment that have much to do with rightness, obligation, duty, causes, and so forth. We rarely ask, "What beautiful thing will come from this?"

What we don't seem to try is seeing God's will for us -- and our discernment of the Divine will -- as beautiful. As we consider what we think God wants us to do, we need to seek beauty in the plans God has for us. This beauty can appear in a number of ways, including making something beautiful for the world or fulfilling our longing for beauty in our souls.

What would it be like for us Friends to live a beautiful faith? Not what programs can we sponsor or activism we could undertake, but what would it be like for us to live beautifully, in response to the Spirit's leading?

After going to the opera that night, I am more than ever convinced of the wisdom of such a wild idea. After all, my preconceptions of opera were shattered not by rational arguments by leading critics, not by a pledge of rigid adherence to Puccini's original score or staging, and not because they provided an "opera-seeker-sensitive" listening experience with cup holders at each seat, watered down content, and sit-com length. No. Instead, my ideas were changed for the better because the participants cared enough to make it beautiful. And that beauty made me long to experience more. Our souls hunger for beauty wherever they can find it. As Jim Croegaert's song says:

*Frost on the window never the same  
So many patterns fit in the frame  
Captured in motion frozen in flame*

*And in the patterns is there a Name  
Why do we hunger for beauty?  
("Why Do We Hunger For Beauty" ©1989  
Meadowgreen Music Co./Heart of the  
Matter Music)*

Our hunger for beauty is part of who we are -- and what calls us to beauty and to God. That's because that hunger is rooted in our hungering for God, for a real and profound connection to the Divine. That desire for connection comes from deep in our bodies and souls. We are drawn to beauty as we are drawn to the Divine.

Closely linked to our hunger for beauty is our desire to create. While many of us, for whatever "good" reasons, have put off much of our creativity as we age. We've put away the Play-doh, making music with kazoos and waxed paper wrapped combs, quit telling each other fantastic stories, and the like. We have quit doing many of the things that gave us joy and hope and meaning -- and created beauty -- when we were young.

The same, sorry to say, is often true about putting away the things of faith that brought us joy and helped us create beauty. Think of the times when you were closest to the Divine -- feeling the Spirit's spark in a way that was compelling and beautiful.

These desires for beauty and creation are part of who we are -- as creatures created in the image of our God. When we open scripture, the first thing we see is God's creative nature. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1 (NIV)) God brought order and beauty out of chaos. In that same way, a potter takes chaos in the form of clay and shapes it into something beautiful. Or a baker uses ingredients springing from the earth and its bounty and makes a cake. Or a supervisor sees the potential in the disparate talents of a company's workers and helps fashion them into an amazingly inventive team. Or we, as individuals and an association of Friends, come to see our lives as creative works and seek to make them obedient in beauty, not just duty.

Quaker writer Caroline C. Graveson once wrote

*“There is a daily round for beauty as well as for goodness, a world of flowers and books and cinemas and clothes and manners as well as of mountains and masterpieces... God is in all beauty, not only in the natural beauty of earth and sky, but in all fitness of language and rhythm, whether it describe a heavenly vision or a street fight, a Hamlet or a Falstaff, a philosophy or a joke: in all fitness of line and colour and shade, whether seen in the Sistine Madonna or a child's knitted frock: in all fitness of sound and beat and measure, whether the result be Bach's Passion music or a nursery jingle. The quantity of God, so to speak, varies in the different examples, but His quality of beauty in fitness remains the same.”*

Seen that way, beauty is redemptive. Creativity – whether in the art studio or lived out as spiritual pilgrims discerning the Divine will – invites us to participate in God's redemption of this world. God calls us to bring beauty and order from chaos; to bring glad tidings of great joy, and to live, as Gordon Crosby said with such “a striking resemblance to Jesus that people sense they have encountered him when they encounter us.”

Dare we live a beautiful faith and thereby call people to God? Dare we not?

***The second query is “How is it true?”***

In the same way we rarely ask, “Where is there beauty?” we don't often ask where there is truth in our actions. They may be true, but do we even ask about truth? Of course, the question that we may ask about truth may not be easily answered. I think we often forget the heart of truth as we're in search of the more esoteric notion of truth. The heart of truth is, I think in the rightness of the ordinary – which is where we live. It reminds me of an old Steve Martin comedy shtick. Martin plays Socrates, whose faithful followers

come with the news that he has been convicted of corrupting the youth of Athens and has been sentenced to drink hemlock, which he does—heroically and unafraid. When his followers ask him how he can face death so bravely, Socrates is startled. He asks what they mean. They're bewildered—doesn't he know that hemlock is poison? When they tell him, he's quite upset. He proclaims, “It was always: ‘Socrates, what is truth? Socrates, what is the nature of the good? ...’ And not once did anyone ever say: ‘Socrates, hemlock is poison!’”

Ah, the rightness that jibes with ordinary experience. This idea that truth is more than propositional is something that has been a part of Quakerism since our early days. As Margaret Fell wrote:

*“I saw it was the truth, and I could not deny it; and I did as the apostle saith, I 'received the truth in the love of it'. And it was opened to me so clear that I had never a tittle in my heart against it; but I desired the Lord that I might be kept in it, and then I desired no greater portion.”*

Again, allow me to tell you a story. Almost nine years ago, Nancy and I began building our house. We had cleared land that was part of her family farm and set about erecting a post and beam house made from recycled wood from, of all places, old armament factories. Well, we didn't do so much of the erection ourselves. The house came ready to build on four semis from a factory in New Hampshire. The posts and beams were all cut, notched, and numbered. The framing crew, from just up the road, had never built such a home before. But they set to it with vigor. They used 2-pound sledgehammers to drive eight and twelve inch spikes into the posts and beams to set them. I drove – ceremonially – one or two. I was mostly a go-fer – going for more posts and beams and nails and water for the guys doing the work.

Another one of my jobs was to bring twelve foot 2 x 4s to them to use for bracing. Every post

needed braced at plumb. Every beam that tied in needed to be held level. Over four days we went from a flat plywood deck to a fully constructed post and beam frame that was perfectly true from every angle.

When the framers finished, they stopped, stood back, and admired the cherry stained wood shining against a clear blue April sky. Nancy asked them to pose for a picture with the frame. They turned around and smiled. “No, not down here,” she exclaimed. “Up there,” pointing to the top beam, 30 feet in the air. They gamely climbed back up and posed for a picture.

The frame, when complete, was both beautiful and true – all on its own. The proof that it was true was when the carpenters began to hang the pre-made outer walls. Each one fit, with a minor tap or two. Then I began removing the supports. The trueness of the construction held – and continues to hold nine years later in our home that is solid, warm, filled with light, and hospitable to all who visit.

In the same way that I could see – and my soul’s eye said – that frame is well built and perfectly plumb, so too do we need to ask how what we sense in discernment is *plumb* right? Does it fit with the integrity of fitness into our lives, individually and collectively?

There are lots of truths. Certainly biblical truth is one of the truths we need to look for. However, we as people of God need to look for more than biblical truth – we also look for truth in the sense of rightness and integrity.

Margaret Fell’s experience of that which is true was that it was true in all its forms. We also need to remember that God’s leading us into “rightness” is not dependent upon pleasantness. Jenifer Faulkner, a British Friend, is quoted in *Britain Yearly Meeting’s Faith and Practice* as saying:

“About a dozen years ago I became critically ill and I have a vivid memory of looking down on myself on the bed; doctors and nurses worked on that body, and I felt held in such secureness, joy and contentment, a sense of the utter rightness of things - I was held in the hands of God. The crisis

passed and I was filled with wonder at the newness of life... “

A sense of the utter rightness of things and those things being held in God is why “How is this true?” is an essential query. It is like the story that Jesus tells of two builders.

“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” (Matthew 7:24-27, NIV)

If we listen to the Divine Word, put that word into practice doing the work that we are meant to do -- not could do, ought to do, but are meant to do – there will be that sense of utter rightness, a work that is true in all ways and able to withstand all storms.

### ***The third query is “Will this bring life?”***

Quaker spiritual director Patricia Loring once wrote:

*“The central issue is always, ‘Where is the Spirit leading you?’ If God sets before us every day the choice of Life and Death and says, ‘Choose Life!’ (Deut. 30:19–29), where is Life? Biblically, it is in love of and obedience to God; ‘staying close to the Root,’ as earlier Friends might have said. It may not always be gaiety, song and dance, or even snuggling babies; but neither will it be grim duty. It will be the place that touches the ‘quick’— an old word for where the life is in oneself: life answering Life. One of the traditional Quaker tests of the authenticity of a*

*leading has been, 'Is there Life in it?'"*

In regards to my feeling called to a ministry of writing, which first started almost 35 years ago, the "Will this bring life" question continues to be answered with a "yes."

That's not to say it's not hard. It is. At least for me. However, sometimes the things that bring us life are difficult.

One time when I was teaching at Earlham School of Religion, I invited another Quaker writer to come make a presentation on his writing life. "Writing is easy," he began – after four weeks of my telling the class just how hard it was! I was furious – in a very Friendly way, of course. A way I call pacifist-aggressive.

Later, as we talked, it did come out that writing seemed very easy to him. But not to me. I write. I pace. I fuss. I rewrite. I question myself. I question my editor's wisdom in asking me to write that book or article. I write some more. I vacuum the rug. I think. I write.

To me it's as hard almost as hard as spending a day splitting wood. The difference is, I really don't enjoy splitting wood. My dad, when he was my age, loved it. And so does my son-in-law. He loves to get out the big chain saws, hook up the splitter to the tractor, and spend the day outdoors turning logs into firewood.

I don't hate it, but it's a chore. That's the difference between my Dad, Michael, and me. The best part for me is spending time with them and smoking my old pipe. But I am pooped to the extreme when I'm done. Dad and Michael were ready for the next task. "That's living," Michael smiles at the end of the day.

That's how I feel at the end of a day of writing. For all its hard work, I am tired, but invigorated. It gives me life – the intellectual wrestling with

how to bring an idea to life so my reader will "get" what I mean in a meaningful way.

Writing gives me life. I've also found that that my writing gives life to others. Often people I don't know. My day fills with life when I get a letter such as the one I received one day – "I just wanted to write you and share with you how your book has changed my life. ... I thank God for you and your ministry to my spirit." God, in God's grace-filled wisdom, allowed my writing to make its way to my new friend David, who's a Pentecostal pastor. It led us both to life. And that's one way I know I am called to do it.

Life gives life. That's something that many of us forget – that the God of life calls us to life. Because we forget that, we then begin to think that living in God's will for us will be difficult and draining. But the opposite is true. If what we're truly called to do is from God, even if it's hard, it will give life, not steal it.

That's why I love the optimistic tone of something Quaker William Littleboy wrote:

*"Here is the unfailing attraction of the life in Christ. It is a life which even to old age, is always on the upgrade; there is always something calling for a joyful looking forward; it is a life where, across each revelation of God's grace as it comes to us is written, in letters of gold, Thou shalt see greater things than these. It gives full scope ... to our desire for high adventure. No conceivable life can be so interesting, so stimulating, as that which we live in Christ."*

I especially like that "even to old age" part since that season of life is drawing near. It's good to know that the spiritual adventure does not end just because we reach geezer-hood.



We often forget, in our endeavors to do the Divine will, to look for life. Yet, Jesus himself said “I am the way and the truth and the life” and “I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

If we, who call ourselves the Friends of Jesus, want to live the life that only we can live – collectively and as individuals, we will ask, of all our actions and leadings and stands -- “*Will this bring life?*”

***The fourth question is “Does it come from Love?”***

“All you need is love,” once sang The Beatles. Well, it may not be all we need, but it certainly vital. Especially when it comes to discerning and doing the Divine will. The ultimate purpose, I believe, of desiring to do the Divine should not be out of some sense of duty or “ought to,” but because it is that in which we will find our ultimate fulfillment as individuals and a Society of Friends. Doing the Divine will, if it starts aright, leads us from love into more Love.

“What is love?” asks Quaker mystic Isaac Penington.

*What shall I say of it, or  
how shall I in words express its  
nature? It is the sweetness of life;  
it is the sweet, tender, melting  
nature of God, flowing up  
through his seed of life into the  
creature, and of all things making  
the creature most like unto him-  
self, both in nature and opera-  
tion. It fulfils the law, it fulfils the  
gospel; it wraps up all in one, and  
brings forth all in the oneness. It  
excludes all evil out of the heart,  
it perfects all good in the heart. A  
touch of love doth this in meas-  
ure; perfect love doth this in full-  
ness.*

That’s why our discernment must begin (and end) in love. John Woolman noted that when he said, of one his ministry trips, “Love was the first motion.”

Shortly after we built our house, we began to consider what we should do with the land we then had. About 22 acres of former pasture and woods. I knew I didn’t want to keep it mowed! So we met with various conservation people and devised a plan to put in 8 acres of woods, 8 acres of prairie and 1 acre of various fruit bearing trees and berry bushes to encourage the reestablishment of wildlife.

We hired a forester to plant the 8 acres – since that involved about 7,500 tree seedlings. Likewise, a local conservation group agreed to plant the prairie for a donation. But Nancy decided that we should plant the 400 trees and bushes that would grow as a buffer between our yard and the prairie ourselves. She did not want them in orderly, evenly spaced rows as the machine planted trees in the lower field would be.

Four hundred trees is a lot of trees. Even if they are seedlings. Even if they supposedly require just a slit in the ground, a slipping them in, and stamping the ground back into place. Fortunately, we have a large family and they all love Nancy. The call went out for a tree planting party. We picked a date. We ordered the trees. The big day came – along with siblings, children, grandparents, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, the trees – and a down-pour!

At the designated time, we donned raincoats, windbreakers, hastily purchased one size fits all ponchos and headed out. I opened the first packet of trees and saw that the supposedly slit, slip, and stamp method would not work. The trees were 1-2 feet tall with roots that ex-

tended 2-3 feet. We'd have to dig holes for each one. So some of us started digging holes, others planted, Nancy directed where various species should go – Kentucky coffee tree here, pawpaw there, blackberry bushes along the perimeter. All in the pouring rain.

Two hours later, we had planted all 400 hundred – along with some extras the DNR had thrown in. Our family and friends stood there dripping, filthy, and smiling in wet grass and circles of mud. They had come not because of a deep love of conservation, or duty, or because a job needed done. They came and worked in that rain because of one thing. Love. Love for their mother, sister, daughter-in-law, aunt, grandmother (and hopefully at least a little for me) was their first motion.

The work in the rain and mud followed easily and without grumbling – except for the good-natured part. Especially when the sun broke through the clouds fifteen minutes after we planted the last tree.

To think of that day, and the love, even now clutches my heart.

This is not something new as regards to doing God's work. Paul wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians

*If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

*Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-*

*seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

*Love never fails. (1 Corinthians 13:1-8)*

In light of this, where is love in the things we feel God wants us to do? If we cannot answer that question, then perhaps that's not what we should be doing. Living out of, and through the power of love, ensures that we undertake our souls' work in goodness and with the right attitudes. As Pierre Lacout wrote in 1969:

*It is by an attention full of love that we enable the Inner Light to blaze and illuminate our dwelling and to make of our whole being a source from which this Light may shine out.*

Love also warms our lives as we live more fully into God's deep love for us.

Let me close with a story where beauty, truth, life, and love combined in a leading that Nancy and I had. A number of years ago, Nancy and I stood in the checkout line at the local grocery store, our cart well loaded. Our three sons lived at home at the time and they went through food quickly. In front of us was a member of our Meeting, who also had three sons. Her cart held a few essentials. A single mother, she was between jobs and doing her best to get by. I felt a prompting inside me. I remembered Jesus' words, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink." I looked at Nancy, she nodded, and I tapped our friend on the shoulder. "Nancy and I would like to buy your groceries, if you'll allow us," I said so only she could hear. A look of relief filled her eyes and she nodded yes. As we three left the grocery, she said "Thanks. I have a lead on a job and this will really help tide us over until it comes through." That was the last thing ever said about this incident between us.

Love, in this case, was the first motion. It manifested itself in an act of love toward our friend

and her family and deepened the love between Nancy and me as we agreed in Spirit. This act also brought life – literally and figuratively. The purchase of food gave her family nourishment. The gift also brought life to our friend’s previously lifeless eyes. It warmed our hearts as well, invigorating us. It was true in that we had the means and she did not. And it fit with everything we feel about being a community of faith and helping each other. Finally, it created beauty – even if was the small beauty of grateful eyes and smiles on our three faces. A new light graced the Kroger checkout line, not thought of usually as a place of beauty.

This story is not about me being a good guy, but rather how, at least in that instance, I listened to the prompting of love, life, truth, and beauty—and responded. In doing so, I was helped more than my friend was—my soul was enlarged I participated in what my Jewish friends call *Tikkun olam*.

*Tikkun olam*. That's a concept I first learned from my little Jewish brother, Rabbi Aaron Spiegel. Aaron told me that *tikkun olam* means "repairing the world" or "healing and restoring the world" and ties to the Jewish belief that we have a shared responsibility to work with God in healing and transforming the world.

We are all called to work with God in the healing of the world. We all have the opportunity to work with God in redeeming the world. We are called to this wonderful work that, besides repairing the world, repairs us.

Beauty, truth, life, life and love lead us toward *tikkun olam* – and invite us, as the apostle Peter wrote, to participate in the Divine nature. Peter says,

*“His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature...”*

When beauty, truth, life, and love are all present in our relationships, ministries, vocations, life choices, then we are much more likely to find ourselves participating in the Divine nature and living more deeply. They feed our souls with nourish-

ment necessary for us to grow fully into the people we are created to be. The Friends of God.

### LEYM Change of Address

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to:

Thomas Burnett  
3816 Spring Valley  
Albany, Ohio 45710

Thank you!

### Submission deadline for LEYM Winter Bulletin

**DECEMBER 20,2012**

### LEYM Committee Clerks 2011—2012

**Advancement & Outreach:** Mike Hinshaw (Wooster)

**Arrangements & Site:** Jon Sommer (Broadmead)

**Earthcare:** Phil Clampitt (Birmingham) &  
Judy Greenberg (Broadmead)

**Finance:** Sally Weaver Sommer (Broadmead) &  
Jeff Cooper (Ann Arbor)

**High School Teen Retreat Program:** Merry Stanford  
(Red Cedar)

**Ministry & Nurture:** Don Nagler (Pine River)

**Nominating:** Thomas Taylor (Ann Arbor)

**Peace:** Nancy Taylor (Ann Arbor)

**Program:** Clemence Ravacon Mershon  
(Erie Worship Group/Pittsburgh)

**Publications & Archives:** Rosemary Coffey (Pittsburgh)

**Youth & Children:** Olwen Pritchard (Broadmead)

**Address Service Requested**

**LAKE ERIE YEARLY MEETING**

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Fall 2012 Bulletin

