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Minutes of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting Representative Meeting March 4, 2006

Hosted by Pittsburgh Friends Meeting

RM2006-3-1 Opening Worship

The meeting opened with unprogrammed worship. Our Clerk, Michael Fuson (Granville), welcomed Friends and spoke of the value of meeting where our constituent meetings worship. He thanked Pittsburgh Friends for making us feel welcome and hosting us so effectively. Friends new to Representative Meeting were asked to introduce themselves.

RM2006-3-2 We broke to meet in committees for the morning, and then enjoyed a good lunch provided by Pittsburgh Friends.

We reassembled in worship and Assistant Clerk Shirley Bechill (Pine River) read the epistle from the World Gathering of Young Friends, held in Lancaster, UK, during August, 2005. Young Friends gathered there felt "the Spirit at work in all of us, calling us not to judge one another's forms of worship but to examine our own hearts, find our own calling. We are called to take what we have experienced here and give it back to our communities."

RM2005-3-3 The Recording Clerk, Thomas Taylor (Ann Arbor), called the roll of Friends from our constituent monthly meetings, preparative meetings and worship groups. The count was as follows:

Monthly Meetings:

Akron	2	Kalamazoo	2
Ann Arbor	4	Kent	2
Athens	2	Mid-Ohio Valley	0
Birmingham	2	Monongalia	0
Broadmead	9	North Columbus	3
Cleveland	6-4	Oberlin	1
Delaware	0	Pine River	4
Detroit	2	Pittsburgh	7
Grand Rapids	1	Red Cedar	2
Granville	2	Wooster	2

Preparative Meetings and Worship Groups

Albion (under Red Cedar)	0	Indiana (Pittsburgh)	0
Erie (Pittsburgh)	1	Manitou (Grand Rapids)	0
Fremont (Grand Rapids)	0	Rio Grande	0
Holland (Grand Rapids)	0	Grand Traverse	0

LEYM attenders: 54

Other attenders: 0

Total attenders: 54

RM2005-3-4 Executive Committee

Executive Committee met last evening. The Clerk reported to us that they discussed the proposal that LEYM develop a new set of Queries to be made available to local meetings. We expect to move forward

with this leading at our yearly meeting sessions in June.

RM2006-3-5 Nominating Committee

Nominating Committee report was given by Connie Green (Cleveland).

Nominating Committee Report

We have immediate needs in a few areas:

1. We are in need of a new Treasurer.
2. We need two members for Finance Committee.
3. We need an assistant recording clerk.

In assessing the reality of our size and functions as a Yearly Meeting, the Nominating Committee would like to offer a change in the approach we take to filling committee positions.

We have identified two categories or types of committees, the Administration and Maintenance (A&M) committees, which are directly responsible for the operation of the Yearly Meeting, and the Spiritual Life committees, which nurture our faith and practice.

The A&M committees, which are Program, Site, Finance, Publications & Archives, and Youth & Children, would continue to have positions filled as is our current practice. We would also continue to nominate representatives to Quaker organizations. We would also continue to nominate the clerk, assistant clerk, recording clerk, assistant recording clerk and treasurer.

We believe the Spiritual Life committees of Ministry & Nurture, Advancement & Outreach, Peace, and Earthcare should have their membership rise up from the monthly meeting level. Monthly meetings better know the gifts and interests of their members. The clerks of these committees would continue to be nominated by the Nominating Committee. We believe this change in structure would better reflect our size, commitment and energy as a yearly meeting.

We ask Friends to reflect on this proposal and the problems it seeks to address. This issue will be brought to our Annual Meeting in June.

RM2006-3-6 Program Committee.

Peggy Daub (Ann Arbor) reported that "Moved by Faith within Community" will be the theme of our Annual Meeting. The main speaker will be Michael Wajda, and five workshops will be offered on the theme.

Singing will be somewhat more organized than it has been in recent years. Worship sharing will be in the same format as last year, and the Saturday night intergenerational activity may include dancing.

RM2006-3-7 Youth & Children Committee

Conleth Crotser (Cleveland) reported to us.

Youth & Children Committee Report

We are excited to have a complete committee this year. A letter which briefly explains our program and expectations for children and adults will be sent to parents and submitted to the *Bulletin*.

We hope to have at least one youth meeting for worship during LEYM.

We will be creating a banner as a community-building exercise on Thursday and Friday evenings.

We are pleased that older children again will be part of worship sharing groups. In an effort to support them we will be asking adults to be buddies with them during this time. Be willing to say "yes" if you are asked.

Youth program sessions need to end on time to allow leaders to have the time they need to connect, rest, etc. Parents may need to leave meetings that run over, to be with their children. Please be sensitive and encouraging to parents in this situation so they can leave meeting when they need to.

As always, anyone is welcome to join in any of the children or youth activities. Who knows, you might find it enjoyable enough to join the committee. Certainly, the experience is likely to enhance your annual meeting in a

very special and delightful way.

RM2006-3-8 Arrangements & Site Committee

Judy Greenberg (Broadmead) reported for the committee. We were informed about site arrangements at Bluffton University for our Annual Meeting this June 16-19.

Arrangements & Site Committee Report

Bluffton's conference registration hasn't reached us yet, but we have some information from the conference director about the arrangements this year. Our main dorms will be the Hirschy annex and Ramseyer, giving an AC and a non-AC choice as in the past.

Since the food has been a concern, the conference director plans to send us menus and a diagram of the salad bar. They will work with us to provide more satisfactory choices for vegetarians and vegans.

Reminders:

1. The registrar needs a list of all full-time youth leaders, official invitees, plenary speaker and companion, and non-LEYM Quakers giving workshops, to figure charges.
2. Committee clerks planning to convene their committees on Thursday and Friday should inform A&S clerk at least two days in advance so rooms can be assigned and committee members directed to the right room when they appear.

We look forward to a splendid YM this year and hope to make Friends as comfortable and accommodated as possible.

We appreciate the proactive approach our Arrangements & Site Committee is taking to provide a comfortable and pleasant yearly meeting experience.

RM2006-3-9 Ministry & Nurture

Merry Stanford (Red Cedar) reported.

Ministry & Nurture Committee Report

- 1. Consultation:** At the last annual gathering of LEYM, the committee discussed holding a consultation for ministry and nurture committees of the monthly meetings. That is being tentatively scheduled for April 2007, in a central location of the yearly meeting. The purpose of the one-day session will be to learn how to encourage spirit-led vocal ministry, build spiritual nurture groups and spiritual friendships, support those who provide ministry or witness in the world, and prepare for the final affairs of one's life.
- 2. 12-step Meetings at YM:** Feedback from the evaluations of the June gathering at Bluffton indicate that Friends appreciated the 12-step meeting that was sponsored by Ministry & Nurture, and requested the option of having a space set aside for daily meetings during the gathering. Ministry & Nurture will continue to work with the Program Committee to ensure that these meeting spaces continue to be offered.
- 3. Spiritual Formation Program:** This year the Ministry & Nurture Committee has sponsored two retreat locations for the LEYM Spiritual Formation Program: one at the Leaven Center in Lyons, Michigan; the other at Pittsburgh Monthly Meeting.
 - a) Fall Retreat in Michigan:* 22 people participated in the fall retreat, held September 9-11, 2005. Phil Fitz, of New England Yearly Meeting, was scheduled to co-lead the retreat with Beckey Phipps, but was absent due to an accident. Beckey led the retreat on the theme "Living in the Presence," leading an early morning Bible study in addition to large and small group exercises. Participants also led each other in experiencing their chosen spiritual practices, from reflective reading to toning and drumming. Evaluations indicated that participants felt the retreat "grounded them in the spiritual formation group process," "gifted them with peace and space to explore inner promptings," "focused their spiritual search," supported their varied individual and collective spiritual experience, and "gave them a very positive experience of eldering and

being elderled.” There are now spiritual formation groups meeting regularly throughout the year in Pine River, Red Cedar, Ann Arbor/Birmingham, and Broadmead meetings involving 32 people. The program is proving to be an outreach ministry to non-Friends in three of the groups.

- b) *Fall Retreat in Pittsburgh:* The October retreat was led by Fran Taber and Katharine Jacobsen of Ohio Yearly Meeting (C) on the theme “Follow your Path to the Center.” Two additional spiritual formation groups spun off from the retreat. There are now four spiritual formation groups meeting regularly in Pittsburgh Monthly Meeting.
- c) *Spring Retreats, 2006:* The spring retreats are scheduled for May 5-7 at the Leaven Center, and May 19-21 at Pittsburgh.
- d) *2006-2007 Program:* Next year’s dates for the Michigan retreats are September 8-10, 2006, and May 4-6, 2007, at the Leaven Center. Pittsburgh is not planning a retreat program for next year.

4. Summary of Meeting Responses to the Annual Query: Each year Ministry and Nurture sends a set of queries to the monthly meetings, inviting their responses. Summary follows.

Summary of Monthly Meeting Responses to the 2005 Queries

In what ways has the Living Presence awakened my faith and turned me around? As a Meeting how do we support each other in being faithful?

These queries, developed by the Ministry & Nurture Committee at the 2005 annual gathering of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting, elicited responses from 11 meetings. Although there were some common themes, there seemed also to be a good deal of variation between and within the meetings.

We referred to the Divine in several of our responses, variously describing the Divine as “God’s Love,” “Holy Spirit,” “Spirit,” “Divine stirring,” “Living presence,” “Seed of Christ,” and “Light.” In many of our responses, however, there was no reference at all to the role of divine guidance in the process of spiritual transformation.

Within our meetings we experience both discomfort with the terminology “being turned around” and appreciation of the experience of “turning.” Many Friends are critical of the words, associating the phrase with the evangelical experience of being born again, which is alien to their own condition. “Being turned around” was an experience commonly described by early Friends in their journals. Today, however, we variously describe our experience of “turning” as more gradual, using other words to describe the experience: “maturing,” “transformation beginning with a Divine stirring in the soul,” “adjusting or modifying one’s course of action,” “gaining new awareness,” “looking back from the vantage point of years and seeing the change,” “a flower unfolding,” and “experiencing grace-filled moments.” One Friend offered the metaphor of walking backwards in the right direction, and needing to turn around in order to walk forward. There is great respect among us for this gradual experience of spiritual transformation.

However, it is well to note that, while the process is gradual for most of us, some Friends admit or hint at powerful mystical experiences, or sudden experiences of love which have moved them to a state of grace. These experiences have, indeed, “turned them around”; but some Friends have not spoken openly of their experiences for fear of being met with skepticism. In fact, our responses to the queries indicate that some among us openly – and perhaps regularly – communicate skepticism about such experiences. We need to find a better way of creating safety for those Friends among us who have experienced sudden, as well as gradual, turnings so that we may learn more fully from each other about the many ways that the Spirit moves among us.

“Faithful” was also a term that proved challenging for many Friends. The question seeming to be asked by many of our meetings was “faithful to whom or to what?” We addressed this challenge by confirming that faith is a very personal thing, that a person’s spiritual journey is a sacred one, and that faith includes a sense of trust that we are not alone, that the Living Presence is, indeed, present. We have a deeply-felt respect for the importance of authentic personal experience on the spiritual journey.

We are quite clear about the ways we provide care and support to each other. We try to be examples for each other, to hold each other in the Light, to listen deeply to each other, and to offer opportunities for clearness. We join together in actions for peace and social justice. We are very appreciative of the caring we find in our meetings. We find it growth-producing to be vulnerable to each other, to be of service to others, to be accepted

and accepting in ways that may not be possible in other corners of the world, to be free to develop a personal understanding of faith, and to be in regular attendance at Meeting for Worship. We sometimes struggle with reaching out to each other when there is need, for fear of meddling; but others among us encourage us to risk making a mistake, rather than leaving a Friend to suffer alone. We also wonder if we are providing enough support for marriages that take place under our care. We are eager to find ways of being more connected to each other, through friendly gatherings of small numbers of Friends for meals, study, or discussion.

However, we may not be clear about how it is that we support each other in being faithful. Perhaps we should first consider more deeply the role of divine guidance in discerning just what it is we are being called, as Friends, to do or to be in the world. What is our gift to the world? And are we being faithful to the giving of that gift?

RM2006-3-10 Publications & Archives

Jeff Cooper (Ann Arbor) reported for Rosemary Coffey, who was returning from Australia.

Publications & Archives Committee Report

1. Unfinished business.
 - a) We remind Nominating Committee that our committee still needs one or two more members.
 - b) We remind monthly meetings to give us contact information for their newsletter editors. As *Bulletin* editor, Jeff sometimes distributes notices for potential publication in MM newsletters. Too, Jeff should be receiving MM newsletters, but currently receives only three or four; Friends are asked to remind their MM editors to send newsletters to Jeff via email or snail mail (cooperdaub@hotmail.com; 1506 Arborview Blvd, Ann Arbor, MI 48103).
 2. Deadline for Winter Bulletin.

We propose changing the deadline from December 15 to January 1, as December 15 falls at a busy time for both contributors and Jeff. January 1 would need to be understood as a firm deadline.
 3. Reviewing materials from Advancement & Outreach Committee (A&O).
 - a) A proposed new form for collecting information for Monthly Meeting Statistical Reports in the *Annual Records*. This second draft incorporates many suggestions made in response to an earlier draft. The form proposes collecting information on worship groups and preparative meetings (contact persons, time and location of worship, etc.) directly from the local contact; we recommend collecting such information from the MM that has care for the worship group/preparative meeting (if there is one). We believe that the two committees and the Recording Clerk together can decide on the best way to proceed. [We also had thoughts on formatting and on requesting full information on MM committees, which we conveyed directly to A&O.]
 - b) A review from A&O on information in the Statistical Reports, the *Annual Records* in general, and the *Directory*. We supported many of A&O's recommendations, especially the following:
 1. The LEYM web site should make available a web page for any MM that wants one – or a link to the MM's own web site.
 2. We should distinguish between members (of the Religious Society of Friends) and MM attenders in the LEYM *Directory*, if this does not effect delay in its publication.

We have a different perspective, however, on two issues:
 3. We should continue to include the brief LEYM history and record of clerks in the *Annual Records*.
 4. We should include summaries of the plenary address and the workshops in both the *Annual Records* and the fall *Bulletin*.
4. LEYM Directory 2006.

Leslie Walden had generously offered to produce this publication, but for health-related reasons cannot complete it before the Annual Meeting. He has collected much data, but cannot convert it into a finished product. We urgently request a volunteer to take on this important project. Leslie and Marvin Barnes can generate reports that can be sent to MMs for final corrections.

5. Annual Records 2005.

Extra copies of this useful reference source were offered to Friends. Nancy E. James will edit Annual Records 2006.

RM2006-3-11 Peace Committee

David Lore (Granville) reported.

Peace Committee Report

National and international, federal and state issues of concern were taken up during our two-hour meeting in Pittsburgh. Agreement was reached to contact monthly meetings this spring, urging that they ask their respective Congressional representatives to oppose President Bush's recent proposal to provide India with nuclear fuel and technology in contravention of U.S. law and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Meetings are directed to House Concurrent Resolution 158, supported by Friends Committee on National Legislation, which urges diplomacy and other non-military responses to terrorism and adherence to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which India has never signed. Congress should reject Bush's proposed unilateral waiver for India on the basis that it likely will result in India increasing its stockpile of nuclear weapons, in increased tensions among India, Pakistan and China, and in the weakening of treaty curbs on the development of nuclear weapons by other non-signatory countries, including Iran.

Friends agreed to continue research on the following issues for possible action during Yearly Meeting in June:

1. Re-affirmation of FCNL's STEP (Sensible Transition to an Enduring Peace) resolution on Iraq, and especially STEP's call for eventual withdrawal of U.S. troops with no permanent U.S. bases left behind. The need was noted for continuing education in Friends Meetings on the history and culture of the Middle East.
2. There is concern that some Quaker meetings and peace groups, including some in Ohio, have been under surveillance by local police, the FBI and the Department of Defense because of their opposition to the Iraq war and military recruitment.
3. The genocide in the Darfur region of Sudan continues, despite recent efforts by the U.S. and others to intervene with African Union peacekeepers. FCNL in January recommended the Bush administration increase diplomatic efforts to end the violence and increase humanitarian assistance while working with the UN and NATO to strengthen the peacekeeping force.
4. Friends join others in opposing mistreatment and torture of alleged terrorists held by the U.S. in prisons and detention centers around the world, in contravention of the Geneva Accords and other international treaties as well as the recently adopted "McCain amendment" in Congress. A number of yearly and monthly meetings are sponsoring a Quaker conference on Torture at Guilford College, June 2-4, 2006.
5. Several issues of concern are likely to be on this November's state ballots in our region. These include initiatives to abolish Affirmative Action programs (Michigan), raise the state minimum wage (Michigan and Ohio), and bar homosexuals from adopting children or serving as foster parents (Ohio).

It should be noted that only seven of LEYM's 20 monthly meetings were represented at this session of the Peace Committee. All monthly meetings are encouraged to designate representatives to participate during Yearly Meeting in June so that the committee can benefit from their knowledge and experience.

RM2006-3-12 Earthcare Committee of Concern

Judy Greenberg (Broadmead) reported. The committee met only briefly this morning, since few of its members were present and Judy Greenberg had other responsibilities. The group feels that the issue of earthcare should have a fundamental place in the YM's work – it underlies all our testimonies. Some of our meetings have committees working in this area. The YM committee is just beginning to form and do its work; it is hoped that new leadership will arise to guide our efforts around the concern.

Meetings were encouraged to include earthcare as a priority when they report to FCNL about its lobbying priorities at the 110th Congress.

RM2006-3-13 Advancement & Outreach

Mathilda Navias (Broadmead) reported.

Advancement & Outreach Report

Contact Information for Meetings in LEYM. The Advancement & Outreach Committee, in cooperation with the Publications & Archives Committee, has put a lot of work into creating an up-to-date list of all the monthly meetings and worship groups in LEYM. It includes contact information for the use of people wanting to attend the meeting as well as full mailing addresses that can be used by the yearly meeting and yearly meeting committees for mailings to meetings. It clarifies what worship groups are under the care of a meeting. We believe that the information is reasonably accurate as of August of 2005.

A&O recommends that this information be included in the yearly meeting database and be updated regularly.

Monthly Meeting Web Sites. A&O has completed developing materials to help monthly meetings put up web sites. Copies of the pamphlet we wrote have been sent to those monthly meetings that expressed an interest. More are available.

LEYM Web Site. We have been working with Bill Wartens, the new webmaster, and the Publications & Archives Committee on re-designing the yearly meeting web site. A new design is currently on-line. A&O is asking Bill for some further changes in format, such as a larger font, to make it more usable and appealing.

We are working on new text for the home page and will be sending that to Bill soon. We are also working on additional pages for seekers.

Bill is hoping to make one web page available to each meeting that wants him to post basic information without putting up its own web site.

Annual Records. A&O is working with the Publications & Archives Committee and Thomas Taylor, LEYM Recording Clerk, on revising how statistical and contact information is gathered from meetings and published in the *Annual Records*. We have asked yearly meeting committees and officers to look at the *Annual Records* and let A&O know of any changes they would suggest.

We would like to get revised statistical report forms ready for use this summer. We hope to make forms available both on-line and through regular mail so that meetings that have the information available in electronic format can send it in easily, which will also minimize the number of mistakes made when typing in hand-written information.

RM2006-3-14 Finance & Budget

Sally Weaver Sommer (Broadmead) reported. We are grateful to Sally for agreeing to serve as clerk of Finance Committee in the absence of Zig Dermer, now living in Vietnam. We are saddened that Erika Smith has had to resign as our YM Treasurer and are grateful to Connie Bimber (Oberlin, Assistant Treasurer) for agreeing to serve in her stead.

We approved that YM should cover the registration, room, and board expenses of David Zarembka and David Bucura, who will present the African Great Lakes Initiative work at Annual Meeting. We hope they will have time to present to the young people as part of their time at YM.

Finance & Budget Committee Report

The make-up of the Finance & Budget Committee has changed since appointments were made at last year's annual sessions. Zig Dermer has resigned as clerk of the committee. Sally Weaver Sommer has been appointed to serve as clerk. In addition, Erika Smith has resigned as treasurer, and Connie Bimber, currently assistant treasurer, has agreed to serve as treasurer through this year's annual sessions. Michael Fuson met with the committee today and we thank him for helping out during this transition.

The presiding clerk and the Finance Committee have been working on a transition plan. We are aware that some of you have requested reimbursements that you have not received and others have sent checks that have not cleared the bank. These are being taken care of, and you should receive reimbursements within a few weeks. Between now and the annual meeting sessions in June, please send checks and requests for reimbursement to Connie Bimber. Her address, phone number, and e-mail address are printed in the *Annual Records*. Sally will e-mail this information to all meeting treasurers.

The committee reviewed expected expenses for the Annual Meeting. Calculations suggest that keeping the registration fees equal to last year's registration fees will provide sufficient funds to cover expenses.

The committee reviewed the 2005-06 budget. We do not have current data on income and expenses for this fiscal year. Our estimates at this time suggest that we will propose that the 2006-07 budget be the same as the 2005-06 budget.

RM2006-3-15 FGC

Shirley Bechill (Pine River) reported that the Friends General Conference Central Committee has met recently; there were a number of young people at the meeting, bringing new liveliness to the committee. There is a new standing committee on youth, which brings new challenges and opportunities.

Sally Weaver Sommer, Assistant Finance chair for FGC, told us that FGC is in the middle of a feasibility study for a possible new fundraising campaign. The seed money is there. Funds will be sought for the benefit of programs in traveling in the ministry, youth, combating racism, etc.

RM2006-3-16 Christian Peacemaker Teams

Jim Satterwhite (Broadmead) has told us that the four Christian Peacemaker Team captives are still being held. Jim reminded us that CPT workers take the same risks as those faced by military personnel. Iraqis' lives are also constantly in danger from abductions as well.

RM2006-3-17 FCNL

Thomas Taylor (Ann Arbor) reported. FCNL staff and committee meetings are back in the very green building on Capitol Hill. Friends are encouraged to visit and to use the facility to see their representatives. Meetings are encouraged to participate in the priorities-setting process for the FCNL lobbying work with the 110th Congress. The materials were sent to meetings and churches in early January. The deadline is April 30.

RM2006-3-18 FWCC

Clémence Mershon (Pittsburgh) reported. The Friends World Committee for Consultation Section of the Americas Meeting will be held later this month in Chiquimula, Guatemala. Five Friends from LEYM plan to attend; Clémence expects to travel among Central American meetings after the FWCC Section meeting.

RM2006-3-19 LEYM Bulletin deadline

Jeff Cooper reminded us that the deadline to receive materials for the next issue of the *LEYM Bulletin* will be March 15.

RM2006-3-20 FLGBTQC

Shirley Bechill and Bob Roehm (North Columbus) have let us know that the FLGBTQC met near Flint, MI, last month and it was a delightful event. The group's application to meet next at an FUM Quaker site in North Carolina was turned down, but they have been accepted at an Episcopal facility.

RM2006-3-21 Closing worship

We entered a period of unprogrammed worship to close the meeting. We look forward to our Annual Meeting, planned for Bluffton University in Ohio, on 15-18 June, 2006.

Thomas Taylor, Recording Clerk

Michael Fuson, Clerk