

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)

June 17, 2007

LEYM Epistle 2007

Monthly Meetings

Akron
Ann Arbor
Athens
Birmingham
Broadmead
Cleveland
Delaware
Detroit
Grand Rapids
Granville
Kalamazoo
Kent
Mid-Ohio Valley
Monongalia
North Columbus
Oberlin
Pine River
Pittsburgh
Red Cedar
Wooster

Worship Groups

Albion
Circleville
Erie
Fremont
Grand Traverse
Holland
Indiana
Manitou
Rio Grande
Tustin

To Friends Everywhere:

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting met at Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio, June 14-17, 2007. We have now gathered at Bluffton for fifteen consecutive years and this beautiful campus in rural Ohio has become a welcoming home.

We arrived in Bluffton feeling a longing to embrace each other and our faith community. This longing is sharpened by loss of longtime community members as well as by the massive deaths caused by the wars in the Middle East.

The theme of this year's Yearly Meeting sessions was "Living Our Witness to Peace" and we explored this theme through bible study, worship sharing, and most intensely through Mary Lord's plenary address, "Finding Peace, Healing Brokenness."

Mary Lord told us that peacemaking is active, not passive or avoidant. It takes skill and practice. She narrated how the amount of world conflict has diminished in the last 50 years and described a series of "wars that did not happen" because of successful conflict resolution, diplomacy, and alliance building. She emphasized that differences among people are real and that it takes an act of faith to honor the different perspectives. "The power that makes peace is the transforming power of God's love." Mary concluded with two "parables" – one the familiar story in John of the healing at the pool of Bethesda, whose center is the question, Do you want to be healed? The other was a modern story of forgiveness following the brutal murders in an African country, leading us to consider the role of forgiveness in peacemaking in our families, community, and the wider world.

Amplifying both the need for peacemaking and our dependence on our faith community, young Friends organized a vigil of remembrance for victims of the Iraq war, both American and Iraqi. We silently walked a path chalked with the names of the dead from our states of Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, while holding slips of paper with the name and age of an Iraqi war victim. We concluded our vigil by sharing songs and the names of the Iraqi victims.

This community witness called each of us to consider our choices and commitments as we strive to realize the Kingdom of God. In this light, we strengthened our community by supporting and benefiting from the activities of the newly formed Adult Young Friends group and by new initiatives linking our meetings and worship groups through consultation and visitation.

We leave our annual meeting with renewed commitment to community, to peacemaking, to being alive to the consequences of war and human disaster, and with hope engendered that peace and healing are possible through the power of the Holy Spirit.

On behalf of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting,

Shirley Bechill, Clerk

c/o Office Manager, Ann Arbor Friends Meeting, 1420 Hill Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Teens' Epistle

Are our eyes really open? Do we want them to be open?

Would we all rather plug our ears and sing loudly off key to block out the bad news?

The HS and YAF group were introduced to the video of the Eyes Wide Open project. This was part of the theme of this year's meeting - "Living our Witness to Peace." Mary Lord, the plenary speaker made the point at that Quakers often avoid conflict rather than resolving it. By planning and leading a vigil on the human toll of Iraq, we attempted to take the first step of recognition in the process of conflict resolution.

In contrast, we took several opportunities to engage in fellowship with other members of the meeting during our hike through the Nature Preserve, walk to the farmers market, and community sing and play-along. We celebrate each other, pay attention to the names on the sidewalk, and worked to cultivate peace in our communities. While we try to stop the endless addition of premature memorials we also remember and embrace why we are here in the first place. We are living our witness to peace.

LEYM Adult Young Friends Epistle

Dear Friends everywhere,

We gathered for the first time this year as an Adult Young Friends group. We were excited to have eleven people in our first year. This weekend, and throughout the entire year prior, we were thankful for the support and encouragement given to us by the adults in LEYM. They invited us to contribute to the meeting as a whole by planning a peace vigil to follow the plenary. Watching the Eyes Wide Open video and creating our own visual representation of those who have died [in Iraq] helped to lead the meeting down a path of greater understanding. As we joined hands in a circle, we witnessed the effects of war, connected both physically and spiritually to our fellow Friends. This weekend, provided us with many other opportunities to connect both with the greater congregation and within the AYF group. We worked together to identify our changing roles within LEYM as we move to new stages in our lives. We invite others to join us in years to come as we grow in faith and fellowship.

Wishing you hours of comfortable sleep,

The LEYM AYF group