

June 19, 2005

To Friends Everywhere:

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting of Friends met June 16-19, 2005, to consider “The Ground of Our Being: Listening to Earth and Spirit.” One hundred fifty-three Friends gathered at the tree-blessed campus of Bluffton University in Bluffton, Ohio, to share and explore ways of attending to earth and spirit. We did this through participation in business sessions, worship sharing groups, workshops, Bible study, discussions over meals, the children’s program, and music.

Plenary speaker Kim Carlyle, of Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting and Association, spoke on activism for the earth from the Spirit. He made it clear that living in harmony with the earth is a spiritual practice, and our goal is to forge peace with the earth as well as peace on earth. Our connection with the earth should be, and occasionally is, healing, soothing and divine. We were challenged by Kim to look to our own relationship with the earth and take steps to cherish it, such as limiting pollution and abuse of our natural resources. Kim asserted that “our earth is in crisis; it is a spiritual crisis.” He issued a Friendly challenge to reduce our personal fossil fuel use by 70% within the next seven years. We felt moved by Kim’s presentation and challenged to examine our own lives and actions. The following day, after thoughtful and prayerful exploration, we approved the transition of the Earthcare Committee of Concern into a standing committee of the Yearly Meeting.

As has become our tradition, Friends gathered each day for early morning Bible study. Susan Jeffers helped us focus on our spiritual relationship with the earth. Saturday afternoon workshops helped us explore practical applications of our simplicity testimony and gave us lessons from Noah on caring for creation. Some Friends gathered for a meeting for healing; others discussed the draft and draft counseling; and others explored how we can increase outreach through our monthly meetings.

The theme of Listening to Earth and Spirit was set to rousing music performed by singer and banjo player Paul Tinkerhess and his cello/bass-playing son, Eric. Never did Earth Care sound so melodious.

Over the last few years, the pace and spirit of our meetings for worship with attention to business have lent a growing atmosphere of thought-fulness and prayer to our sessions. The possibility of a greater aware-ness of God’s presence in our deliberations has been fostered by our closer attention to Quaker practices such as pausing while the recording clerk writes the minute (giving us time to ponder and reflect before reading and approving it) and requesting periods of silence when we are getting distracted or confused.

We leave you with the challenge we have set for ourselves: to reflect upon our lifestyles, consider how they might be more earth-friendly, and encourage and help one another reorder our priorities and practices as needed.

Signed on behalf of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting,  
Michael Fuson, Clerk

### **From the Infants and Toddlers**

The children and their teachers introduced themselves to the Meeting for Business. They were: Joyce Balderston and Susan Jeffers (teachers), Jayson Smith, Samantha Smith, Japiri Crowley, Carl Dierauer, Gabriel Mott.

### **From the Early Elementary Group**

- We read *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle* and then made a pine forest with crows.
- We made a leaf collection and pinecones, berries, dandelions, and rocks.
- We made a craft holder from a can.
- We made gifts for Easter Bunny and Santa from old cans, paper, and tape.
- We found dandelions and discovered that the name comes from the French “dent de lion,” meaning lion’s tooth, because of the leaves.
- Swimming was fun — there were fish — we tried to catch them — we did not get any!
- We went on a scavenger hunt. At the market we bought homemade cookies and local strawberries.
- I love the sprinklers ... the good chocolate ... the double bass.

Signed: Olwen Pritchard and Tim Damon (teachers), Eric Dierauer, Ali Fisher, Nora Armijo, Serenity Crowley, Evan Heritage, Dyani Armijo  
(and decorated with leaves; paper flowers, birds, and fruit; and other tenderly assembled illustrative materials)

### **From the Upper Elementary Group**

“The Ground of Our Being” means “where we came from” and “where we are.” We listened to the Earth in many ways during our time together this week. We visited a farm that helps give us food. We helped the farm and our Friends community. At the farm we pulled weeds and picked onions. The onions were used to make soup to share with our community.

The Earth told us that nature is beautiful and that we can help keep nature beautiful. We walked in the woods and stopped to enjoy the lake. We were amazed by the beauty of a great blue heron. We were sad to find garbage left at the lake. We are proud that we helped the Earth by taking away the garbage we found.

We heard the simple and delicious sounds of the farmers’ market in town. Our group shared fresh strawberries grown by local farmers.

We heard the Earth as we lived and played here on campus. We had fun times playing games like “Capture the Flag” and “Hospital Tag.” We learned about solving problems and cooperation. We made new friends and spent time with old buddies.

We went swimming, built a sand castle, and created stories at the lake.

Yearly Meeting is special to each one of us. Just being here is special.

Signed: Peter Crowley and Angela Suarez (teachers), Nicholas Suarez, Louis Suarez, Spencer Keashly-Warters, Andrew Riley, Amani Crowley, Serenity Crowley, Sam Spry

### **From the Middle School Group**

Nothing happened Thursday. Friday most of us experienced worship sharing for the first time. Some of us are proud to say we spoke during that time. In class we met some new people and got reacquainted with old friends. We read some Maori, Chinese, and of course the Biblical creation story. With lots of laughter and joy we wrote our own creation story. A chilly 20 minutes in a freezing cold fish-infested lake was quite enough.

Later we joined the adults in the plenary session, which we also discussed in our class group. We all agreed that the quote from Gandhi, about riding on a train, was the best part. More friends joined us Saturday. We had a track meet at the vacant Bluffton football field. We played on the high jump, the long jump, the football post, the track, and the bleachers. We watched “The

Medicine Man,” which some of us enjoyed and others didn’t (Tori, for instance). The ice cream social was cool. We thought the performers did a great job during the musical part.

Signed: Vanessa Fuson and Joe Mills (teachers), Max Fisher, Will Smith, Jody Pratt-Harrington, Meaghan Diffenderfer, Shannon Pratt-Harrington, Brittany Crowley, Tori Pearson, Jessie Cooper, Bradie Connor

### **From the High School Group**

Dear Friends Everywhere,

This year at LEYM we came with many questions and found some answers. We had in-depth discussions about food, learning about different ways food is produced, processed, consumed and marketed. We noticed the lack of quality in our cafeteria food, so we ventured out to search for fruits and grains in the wilderness of Bluffton.

We explored the inner spirituality of communism by pooling all of our money to purchase a communally-eaten bucket of strawberries, organic bread, jam, and pizza.

Speaking of food, we experienced déjà-vu when we found ourselves again under overcast skies at Twin Lakes. We learned that water is warmer on the top than on the bottom during our discussions about global warming and experienced it at the lake. Later we refined our knowledge of nouns and adjectives by playing “Apples to Apples” and we finally opened the expansion crate.

During our simple-living activities, we discovered how Quaker teens are more distant from cultural norms than other teens, which explains everything.

And now the year is — sniff, sniff, sniff — gone forever. And we can all say we’ve played inside a sewer pipe.

Signed: Clémence Ravaçon-Mershon and Paul Burkholder (teachers), Zack Ford, Micah Sommer, Erin Diffenderfer, Angel Riley, Abbey Pratt-Harrington, Christa Pratt-Harrington, Laurel Fuson, Psyche Castro