



Epistle from Lake Erie Yearly Meeting in Annual Sessions at Bluffton University in Bluffton, Ohio, July 27-30, 2017

To Friends Everywhere:

The one hundred-plus adult Friends gathered for our 54th Annual Sessions addressed the topic “Quakers in the New Millennium.” Our plenary speaker, Greg Woods, member of Columbia, Missouri, Friends Meeting in Illinois Yearly Meeting, spoke specifically to “*Reviving* Quakerism in the New Millennium.” He challenged us with the question, How can we build the Beloved Kingdom on Earth with only people who look and act like us? We were asked not to rest on the past laurels of abolition and women’s suffrage, but instead to see how the spirit is moving among us now.

In powerful language, Greg gave us a vision of Quakers in the new millennium by offering three suggestions. The first was to deepen our worship by preparing to be present ahead of Meeting for Worship. Did we expect the divine to be in our midst? Were we ready to be transformed?

The second suggestion was to reach out to others so that they know that we exist and what we believe. We fail each other when we are quiet about our faith. We fail our youth when we do not teach them about our Christian roots and about the profound devotion of early Friends.

The third suggestion was to welcome newcomers and to reach out to young adults. We need to ask ourselves how we feel welcomed when coming into a new space. If we are more public and more proactive, people will be more drawn to what we have to offer.

We shared a tender moment when a 12-year-old boy rose to speak to how hard it is to “be community” when we live so far apart and see each other so seldom. Friend Greg spoke for us all when he said, “You are wise beyond your years.” May we learn from this young man’s wisdom.

We need to share our radical message with the world, that we are

(Epistle continued on next page)

*Clerks’ table:
Mike Holaday and
Nancy Reeves*



all ministers who are able to be called by God to serve. Let us stop hiding it.

In worship-sharing sessions, we considered two related queries arising from the central theme of these sessions:

How do we continue to make Quakerism relevant in today's world in order to inspire young adults? and

In what ways can we, as Quakers, incorporate people of different generations and backgrounds, especially young adults, into our spiritual community?

Meanwhile, our workshops covered a wide range of topics: Campus Outreach/Ministry to Non-Quaker Campuses; There Is No New Normal; Beyond Reform: Quaker and Prison Abolition; Lucretia Mott Visits LEYM; Friends, Gnostics, and the Still-Speaking Spirit; Trending Immigration Topics under President Trump; and Are You Now, or Have You Ever Been, a Young Adult?

These workshops not only invited us to consider the depths of our roots, perhaps extending back to Gnostic thought and sensibility, but challenged us to consider in what ways our Quaker identity calls us to engage with the modern world. How does the Spirit call us to address mass incarceration and threats to immigrants and refugees? How do we call young people into our precious vision?

Several important matters came before our sessions, on which we reached unity. We approved a minute to be sent to Friends Fiduciary, which holds the Yearly Meeting's funds, asking them to expand its Quaker Values Screening Criteria to exclude investments in companies that support or are complicit with Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands, its economic exploitation and control of the Palestinian population, and/or its violations of international human rights law. We approved scholarships to support adult Friends from the Yearly Meeting who want to attend the White Privilege Conference in Grand Rapids next spring. And we introduced a video designed to familiarize our child care givers and others with the sexual abuse prevention policy adopted by Lake Erie Yearly Meeting after much work over the last three years.

In sum, we left the 2017 Annual Sessions of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting with new knowledge, new friends, and a new commitment to welcome interested visitors into our Meetings and share our faith with others as Way opens.

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PDF copies of
The LEYM Bulletin
are available at
leym.org

Report: Greg Woods' Plenary Address, 2017

The plenary address at LEYM's 2017 Annual Sessions was given by Greg Woods on the topic "Reviving Quakerism in the New Millennium." Greg started by highlighting the underlying premise that Quakerism needs to be revived by citing the case of a fellow Young Adult Friend who had been drawn to Quakerism by the writings of early Friends and their accounts of the workings of Spirit, but has come to feel that present day Quakers rely on their history and shared practices and have lost touch with that Spirit. Greg has felt the same way himself, but keeps being drawn back to Quaker worship, which for him is the place he truly feels the Divine.

Greg believes that recapturing the Spirit of early Friends is essential to our survival, but rather than repeating their words, we need to find our own Truths and let them be known. He asked us to consider: "What are our truths? What do we believe as a community? What is our witness in the world today? How are we building the Beloved Kingdom here on Earth?" He went on to describe three specific areas in which improvement is needed: Deepening Worship, Not Hiding our Light Under a Bushel (aka Outreach), and Welcoming Newcomers.

Greg proposed the need for deepening worship first because we must feel sure that what we are inviting or welcoming people to will bring nourishment to them. He stressed how both our preparation for worship and our ties to other worshippers serve to deepen the experience. When we fail to prepare for worship, or

are strangers to one another, we lack the intimacy that is required for deep Quaker worship. He asked us to think about what it would mean to come to worship prepared to meet the Divine there. Sitting closer to one another might

establish more intimacy, and having a table in the center of our worship space might remind us that we are there to share the inward sacrament of communion. He also urged us to be open to other ways of experiencing deep worship that do not require absolute stillness of body, as that standard may be impossible for some.

Greg said our Meetings need to do outreach to keep Quakerism alive. In our aging Meetings, there may be some feeling against what is perceived as evangelizing, but early Friends reveled in their leadings to call other people to join them, even risking jail and death to do so. Greg asked, "Do we value our community enough to talk about our faith?" This is true for talking to newcomers and youth inside our Meetings as well as to those outside. Besides living out our beliefs, it is helpful to talk



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about them, so that we share more deeply about what truly compels us to stand up against injustice or fight against climate change. Greg felt that in his own Meeting he was told little about the faith of Quakers or its roots in Christianity. He believes it is important to acknowledge that the Bible and Christianity were at the heart of the fiery passion of early Quakers, and that we need to know about that to start discovering where our own fiery passion will come from.

When Greg talked about how we can be welcoming, he asked us to consider what makes us feel comfortable and valued in a new space. Sadly, many people, young adults and older adults alike, sometimes visit and are not greeted or welcomed by anyone before or after Meeting for Worship. Ageism, classism,

and racism may play a role in whether newcomers feel welcomed and valued, and we need to do the hard work of breaking down these barriers. As Greg asked: "How can we build the Beloved Kingdom here on Earth with only people who look and act like us?"

Greg ended by stating his belief that "if we are more visible in public everyday life, more people will be interested in what we have to offer." He invited us to join in the hard work it will take to revive Quakerism in this new millennium, to share with the world our radical message that we are all ministers who may be called by God to serve, and to wade into the ocean of Light and Love that conquers the ocean of darkness, inviting others to join us there in building the Kingdom of God.

~ Peggy Daub (Ann Arbor)



Sue Regen (second from left, Rochester Meeting, NYYM) led a spirited retreat on Forgiveness in mid-September as part of the LEYM Spiritual Formation Program. Twenty Friends from seven meetings attended.

Noteworthy Actions at Annual Sessions, 2017

By request of the Ann Arbor Friends Meeting and recommendation of LEYM's Peace & Justice Committee, we approved a minute asking Friends Fiduciary Corporation, where we have two accounts, to change their screening process to exclude investing in companies whose work supports the occupation of Palestinian lands. The minute reads:

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting requests that Friends Fiduciary Corporation expand its Quaker Values Screening Criteria to exclude investments in companies that support or are complicit with Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands, its economic exploitation and control of the Palestinian population, and/or its violations of international human rights law.

We approved spending up to \$8000 for scholarships to help LEYM Friends attend next year's FGC Gathering, in Toledo: \$2000 for assisting children up through grade 8 will come from the Youth Activities Fund; \$3000 for teens will come from the High School Teen Retreat Fund; and \$3000 for adults will come from the General Fund, to be replaced by a withdrawal from our base Friends Fiduciary account, which had grown a like amount in the past year. An additional \$1000 to help LEYM Friends who register through Friends General Conference attend the next White Privilege Conference, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, April 4-7, is made possible mainly by raising the suggested per-member contribution to \$30. Details on how to apply for scholarships will be announced.

Friends School in Detroit closed its doors in 2015 and the building and property were recently put up for sale. Friends approved loaning FSD up to \$5000, as needed, to help cover continuing expenses (insurance, utilities, and maintenance of building and grounds) and costs associated with the sale, with the expectation that it will be paid back by the end of the calendar year.

We approved changes to the *Policies and Procedures* manual to incorporate the Child and Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy approved last year.

The Ministry & Nurture Committee prepared the following Query for this year:

How might we support each other as we find peaceful and persistent responses to actions that exclude and judge?

In what ways do we, as Quakers, hold ourselves and the Other in the Light when our disagreements seem insurmountable?

How do we find common ground as we listen to those with whom we disagree? ~ Ed.



At business sessions there was lots of knitting.

Young Adult Friends were much in evidence, leading workshops and sharing their talents.



News from Finance Committee

Joan Sampieri (Ann Arbor)

Below are the financial report for the 2017 Annual Meeting and the approved budget for 2017–18. For Annual Meeting, expenses exceeded income by \$961.20. In the budget, expenses (\$26,275) are \$4725 higher than budgeted last year, reflecting several increases. In particular, \$4000 was added for scholarships to help Friends attend the 2018 FGC Gathering (\$3000) and the White Privilege Conference (\$1000). Among other items, travel increased \$500 and FWCC travel increased \$600. Anticipated income from contributions with an increase of \$2 per member leaves the budget with a deficit of \$3885. Much of the difference will be covered by a \$3000 transfer from our Friends Fiduciary base account, and the remainder can be covered through the General Fund, which continues to have a healthy balance.

Financial Report for 2017 Annual Meeting

Income	
Fees	
Housing and commuter fees	\$6,651.00
Meals	7,854.15
Registration fees	5,165.00
Other	
Donations	597.75
Payment for lost key	80.00
Collected for t-shirts	20.00
Earnings on book sales	24.90
Total Income	\$20,392.80
Expenses	
Housing and commuter fees	\$6,651.00
Meals	7,860.00
Honoraria	600.00
Ice cream social	364.00
Youth activities	326.65
T-Shirts	313.92
Copies	89.80
Lost Keys	80.00
First-time attender discounts	331.52
Scholarships	4,737.12
Total Expenses	\$21,354.01
Net Income	(\$961.21)
Adjusted Net Income	\$(961.20)
(= sum deposited in bank less total paid out)	

LEYM Budget for 2017–18

Travel	\$3,500.00
Office	300.00
Contract worker	2,400.00
Finance	75.00
Publications	2,800.00
Advancement & Outreach	50.00
Ministry & Nurture	50.00
Clerk's Fund	200.00
FGC contribution	6,000.00
Pittsburgh MM 1-time donation	1,000.00
Records project	100.00
FWCC Travel	1,800.00
Youth Activities Fund	1,000.00
High School Teen Retreat	0
Spiritual Formation	300.00
Olney Friends School	2,000.00
Consultation Fund	0
Ministry scholarships	0
Service projects	200.00
Insurance	500.00
Miscellaneous	0
FGC scholarships	4,000.00
Total Expenses	\$26,275.00
Contributions	21,300.00
FFC Dividends Income	1,090.00
Total Income	\$22,390.00
Deficit	\$3885.00
Suggested contribution per member:	\$30

On Having 20 Minutes Before Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business

Jo Steigerwald (Cleveland)

And so I sit outside:
Picnic table, background stream, wind.
An umbrellicious oak tree overhead,
Whose cracked bark encapsulates
Its silent witness.

This year, all of us look older
Against distant band camp discord
And the locusts, who buzz at dusk,
While we ask, "What on earth
do we consider?" And answer,
"What on earth do we not, here?"

And it's the "No Exceptions"
Phrase of "Love Thy Neighbor"
That is so hard and is packed too full —
Compressed yet dynamic, like the oak
Who stretches hand-leaves to each of us
And waves, without exception.



Thanks to Leslie Walden for this photo and those on pp. 1, 3, & 5

Poem written at Annual Sessions, July 29, 2017

Minute adopted by Birmingham Friends Meeting, August 20, 2017

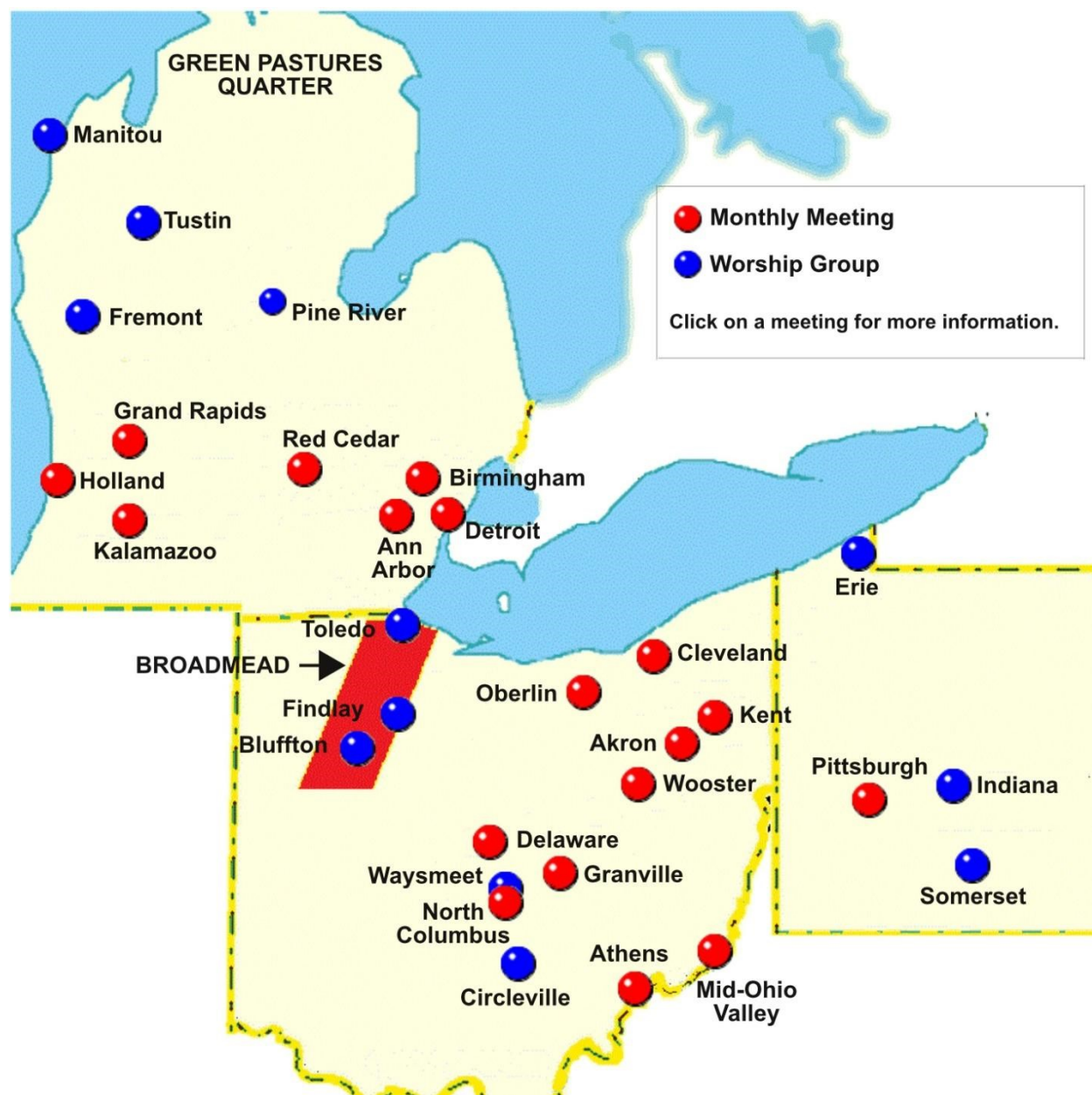
Birmingham Friends Meeting opposes the white supremacist groups marching in Charlottesville, Virginia on Saturday, August 12 and subsequently. That these groups praised the President of the United States and were not repudiated promptly and directly by that President, are a shame and a stain upon our country. Peaceful efforts to show that white supremacy does not rule our country are worthy of praise. That lives were lost and bodies maimed is an additional shame. The silent meeting held by the Quaker Meeting in Charlottesville (Charlottesville Friends Meeting) was a faithful reflection of Quaker values applied to this tragic event.

Minute adopted by Ann Arbor Friends Meeting, October 15, 2017

Our Faith that there is that of God in every person and our compassion for refugees and immigrants among us lead us to offer Congregational Sanctuary, including hosting refugees or immigrants in our house of worship. We do this in unity, through deep spiritual discernment.

With this minute, Ann Arbor Meeting is preparing to make available room for a person or persons in danger of immediate detention and deportation and who has/have strong local connections and a good case for attaining legal status.

Map of Meetings and Worship Groups in Lake Erie Yearly Meeting



Would you like a copy of this map? It's on the Yearly Meeting website at leym.org/find-a-meeting-2 (under the Meetings & Worship Groups tab), where you can click on each location to go to information, including when and where they hold worship and whom to contact. It's updated annually in the fall. To get a copy of it on a Windows computer, right-click anywhere within the map, select "Save Image As..." and then select the folder to save it in. Printing the graphic file on a full or over-sized sheet of glossy paper on your color printer (or having a commercial printer do so) will produce a poster suitable for display in your Meeting place.

Mathilda Navias, LEYM Webmaster

Quaker Earthcare Witness Report, 2017

(Prepared for Annual Meeting but not Delivered)

Russ Adams (North Columbus), Clerk of Earthcare Committee

- 1.01 How is Quaker Earthcare Witness responding?
- 1.02 QEW emails this month bring us up to date about how the Koch brothers, ALEC people, have been meeting to forward their plans for repealing the 17th Amendment; that's the amendment that requires direct election of federal senators. Since gerrymandering has given Koch forces influence with many state governments, they want national senators to be appointed by state governments.
- 1.03. Other QEW efforts this month oppose the Trump-McConnell Dirty Energy bill that, like efforts to end Obamacare, are pushed without public hearings in order to circumvent public review.
- 1.04. Letters are needed to support FCNL efforts against these and other "sick-society symptoms" of unsustainable society that have huge potentials for doing damage.
- 1.05 This past year, QEW helped encourage Maryland's governor, Larry Hogan, to sign legislation limiting fracking.
- 1.06. QEW participated in the People's Climate March back on April 29, along with 200,000 other people, and supported by another 100,000 in sister mobilizations.
- 1.07 Work against Climate Change included an address at the Spring Meeting, April 20-22 at Atlanta, from Reverend Dr. Gerald Durley, a longtime civil rights leader who is now emphasizing the environment. "God gave us a powerful and ecologically balanced world," he said, and "we are its stewards."
- 1.08. Pamela Boyce Simms continues guiding us toward localizing food production on the worry that if corporate food distribution systems fail, say, due to a global disruption, U.S. cities at any particular time generally have no more than about a three-day supply.
- 1.09. QEW focuses particular attention on the most marginalized peoples, such as the 200,000,000 people of the African Diaspora, of whom roughly 48,000,000 live in the U.S. Almost always minorities are the people most punished as greed aggravates life-support shortages.
- 1.10 The QEW Population Committee updated our excellent Adoption trifold and copies are **available on our QEW website**.

Nancy Nagler (Pine River Worship Group) wrote:

With both [Don and I] in our mid-80s, sadly, we won't be attending LEYM in the future, and will miss those special times. LEYM has been a source of nourishment for us and for our Meeting. The friendships we have shared and the inspiration we have gained through our participation in LEYM has added much to our life.

Sent with love, Nancy

News of Monthly Meetings and worship groups is welcome in the *Bulletin*, as are writings of individual Friends. Please email contributions to Peggy and Jeff at bulletinleym@gmail.com.

Report from Baltimore Yearly Meeting

Sam Milford (Pittsburgh), LEYM Visitor

This summer, I attended Baltimore Yearly Meeting's Annual Session (August 1-6) as a guest of BYM and a representative from LEYM. Richard and I both felt warmly welcomed. The theme for the Sessions was "Growing Towards Justice — Acting on Faith." Over 400 people attended.

Among the highlights of the sessions were the plenaries. The first, on Wednesday afternoon, focused on *Nonviolence and Social Action for All Ages*. It began with one-on-one exchanges between younger and older Friends, followed by a collaborative and creative activity in small groups, each with mixed ages. A large group of campers from Catoctin Quaker Camp hiked 14 miles and camped overnight to participate, adding to the numbers of younger Friends who were attending Junior Yearly Meeting. It was inspiring to meet with and talk with these young people.

The evening plenaries included a panel of experts discussing the various societal forces that contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline and Shan Cretin, General Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee, sharing her personal experiences working on issues of race, poverty, and privilege. She shared that a Black Panther told her, "We black folks can take care of ourselves. Your white community needs to change." From the plenaries and topics discussed during the sessions, I took away an impression that BYM is seeking to reduce the barriers to participation of Friends of Color and Young Adult Friends and working on engaging local Meetings more directly and deeply in this work.

Another highlight at the session was the appearance of Nature's Trash Monster, brought to us by the Unity with Nature Committee. The monster appeared dressed in a cloak of plastic shopping bags. It would sit during the session, go to meals, and generally wander around drawing attention to itself and the problem of plastic waste. Films about the plastic in the environment and the oceans were shown in the evenings, and a minute was adopted to promote not accepting plastic shopping bags at any point of purchase sale.

There were, of course, a wide range of workshops and interest groups to participate in and an entertaining No-talent show on Saturday evening. But overall, I found comfort and, indeed, joy in coming together with other Friends to witness their work on topics and issues of mutual concern with an ever-present spiritual underpinning.

Opening Doors to New Ways of Worship

Clémence Ravaçon Mershon

On four occasions over 30 years, I am grateful to have had Spiritual and financial support from Lake Erie Yearly Meeting to be able to share the opening of my world of worship with Friends of different traditions, particularly Latin American Friends.

In 1977, at an FWCC Section of the Americas conference in Wichita, Kansas, I first met Evangelical Friends from Latin America. As a Friend who grew up in silent meeting for worship, I felt uncomfortable with their exuberance and fervent exaltation, especially as they sang hymns of praise to Jesus. However, I focused more on the music than the words, even though I could understand their hymns, because their Spirit was so audible in their singing.

In 1991, at FWCC's World Conference of Friends in Tela, Honduras, I discovered another form of worship in song from the Evangelical Friends from Africa. Surprisingly exuberant singing was acceptable; dancing was not. A deep sense of reverence for our shared Friends' vocabulary (in four languages) pervaded our word-smithing in the Epistle Committee, where I interpreted and clerked simultaneously.

In 2005, I served as a Traveling Friend in Bolivia and Peru with a Friend very experienced with Altiplano Friends. Yet because I was a woman, I was welcomed most warmly into worship and idea sharing,

particularly among the indigenous women of the Altiplano. I could feel that fervent Faith, resilience, and self-reliance I had heard about from my experienced traveling Friend. Although Friends' preaching and the leadership of men was more traditional, these women were interested in learning about other Friends' forms of worship and offering their talents to the whole congregation.

Most recently, in January, 2016, I felt honored to represent Lake Erie Yearly Meeting at the FWCC World Plenary in Pisac, Peru. As a home group leader paired with a younger Evangelical Friend from Kenya, I found a richness of Spirit in our home group daily worship that I haven't experienced elsewhere. We were men and women of varying ages and traditions from four continents (Africa, Europe, and North and South America). Because our home group met daily in four languages, the addition of a fifth (Aymara) on the middle weekend, when additionally-invited Peruvians and Bolivians joined us, brought a special depth to our listening and waiting expectation. We were further enriched as our visitors spoke of the arduous physical journeys they'd experienced to reach Pisac, as well as their decades-long spiritual journeys to Friends.

After Pisac, worship has become so much more than just silent, expectant waiting or singing and preaching. Now, I experience worship as a woven tapestry of many fibers and hues. I hope to be able to continue sharing that Spirit which is the rich world of Friends.

News from AFSC

John Deikis (Ann Arbor), LEYM Representative to AFSC

From September 2017 through May 2018, AFSC is offering free webinars to help communities across the country working to create ***Sanctuary Everywhere***.

Join AFSC staff, other experts, and community members to learn how everyday people can come together to keep each other safe. We'll discuss strategies and approaches for communities working to protect targeted groups from state violence — including immigrants, people of color, targeted religious groups, or LGBTQ folks.

Search for "AFSC Sanctuary Everywhere" in Google or another search engine to get more information and to register.

You may also want to read the transcript or listen to the webinar from last July, "How to Offer Sanctuary," at <https://www.afsc.org/video/conference-call-how-to-offer-sanctuary>.

As an update:

- The office in Indianapolis has been conducting bystander trainings and has received a university award in support of a two-part training of local Muslim youth who want help preventing Islamophobia in central Indiana;
- AFSC staff and volunteers in Chicago are working on the Palestine Youth Diaspora Project and have continued work on the Gaza Unlocked Project, reaching people at farmers markets;
- The Dayton office has been instrumental in having that city be the first in the U.S. to earn "Certified Welcoming Status";
- AFSC's Michigan Criminal Justice Program celebrated the organization's centennial in September with a gala fundraiser, *Both Sides of the Bars*, and a showing of the MCJP's documentary *Changing the Narrative: The Case for Commutations in Michigan*, which you can see for yourself on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2452lAQtbM>.
- In Pittsburgh, AFSC's Pennsylvania Empowering Voices for Peace and Justice Program continues to bring people of divergent views together to build a peaceful and just world.

White Privilege Conference

The Privilege Institute will hold a **White Privilege Conference** to “empower and equip individuals to work for equity and justice through self and social transformations” from Wednesday, April 4, to Saturday, April 7, 2018 in *Grand Rapids, Michigan*. This conference is open to all and strives to unite people from various groups, including educators, members of faith communities, healthcare workers, and more. Workshop topics range from Islamophobia to social media to reconciliation to internalized oppression, and are available to beginners as well as to more seasoned members of social justice communities. Registration opens on January 15. Register through FGC’s website (fgcquaker.org) to obtain a registration discount. Scholarships will be available through LEYM; watch for details. See www.whiteprivilegeconference.com/ to learn more.

Blair Ellis (Ann Arbor), on behalf of
Advancement & Outreach Committee



Friends in the LEYM Service Project at the Habitat for Humanity ReStore in Lima, Ohio, July 2017.

Calendar for 2018

January 15: Due date for submissions for winter *Bulletin*

April 4-7: White Privilege Conference, Grand Rapids, Michigan. *See above.*

April 14: Representative Meeting, Athens Friends Meeting, Athens, Ohio (tentative)

May 5: Spiritual Formation Retreat, Red Cedar Meeting, Lansing, Michigan

May 15: Due date for submissions for spring *Bulletin*

June 30: Due date for State of the Meeting Reports

July 1-7: FGC Gathering, University of Toledo, Toledo, Ohio. *See <https://www.fgcquaker.org/connect/gathering>.*

July 15: Due date for Statistical Reports

July 26-29: Annual Meeting, Bluffton University

LEYM Committee Clerks, 2017-18

(Contact information available in *Annual Records* and on the LEYM website)

Adult & Family Program

Claire Cohen (Pittsburgh)

Advancement & Outreach

Mathilda Navias (Broadmead)

Arrangements & Site

Jon Sommer (Broadmead)

Earthcare

Russ Adams (North Columbus)

Finance (no clerk yet named)

Ministry & Nurture

Flo Friender (Kalamazoo) &
Carla Pratt-Harrington (Athens)

Nominating

Clémence Ravaçon Mershon (Erie WG)

Peace & Justice

Joel Ottenbreit (Detroit)
Linda Beaty (Akron)

Publications & Archives

Bill Lefler (Pittsburgh)

Youth & Children's Program

Greg Mott (Broadmead)