

Radical Richness



LAKE ERIE YEARLY MEETING

Bulletin

One of the interesting things about being clerk is you get a lot of mail that you wouldn't get otherwise. On any given day I may see news from Quakers supporting [conscientious objection](#)¹ or Friends active in [protecting the LGBTQ+ population in Uganda](#)². I'll be informed about AFSC's Meeting for Worship with attention to peace in Palestine and Israel³, and about an opportunity to [join a book club](#) hosted online by Southeastern Yearly Meeting⁴. I'll be reminded of places for Quakers that are [exploring children's religious education](#)⁵, [psychology](#)⁶, or operating as an [intentional community and retreat center](#)⁷. What a wealth of riches! It's invigorating and heartening to know that we are part of a dynamic, global Religious Society and there are ways we can connect with people in our tradition who are manifesting all sorts of passions and leadings.

It's only one of many ways to see our richness. There's considerable evidence that we're a people that knows how to Make Stuff Happen in our peculiar way – but even more importantly, all this stuff hopefully evidences a greater richness (as Joann Neuroth described during a workshop at annual meeting years ago) – that experience of first

¹ Quaker House in Fayetteville NC – quakerhouse.org

² Friends Ugandan Safe Transport – <https://www.friendsugandansafetransport.org/>

³ Thursdays at 5:30 ET until a ceasefire is reached – contact me for a link!

⁴ <https://seymquakers.org/event/seekers-book-club/>

⁵ Quaker Religious Education Collaborative – <https://quakerrecolaborative.org/>

⁶ Friends Conference on Religion and Psychology – <https://www.fcrp-quaker.org/>

⁷ Bamford Quaker Community – <http://www.quakercommunity.org.uk/>



knowing so deeply who we are as that group in that moment, the once-in-a-lifetime capacities and gifts that our organism is drawn to share internally and externally.

Added to all that: there's an obvious richness in doing, fulfilling, experiencing, but we are practiced in knowing a subtler richness of waiting. It's a richness experienced by being comfortable with absence. We shortchange each other if we pave this over, just as we sell ourselves short if we can't be open to sorrow and death in addition to birth and joy.

In so many of these riches it's tempting to see fruits as validation when we know they are the metaphorical finger pointing at the moon. We're not asked by God to create successful programs

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and institutions, we're asked to be faithful to the underlying waiting and discernment, and then to follow with responsiveness. Communication systems, book groups, the weekly vigil – all that is in service to the deeper richness.

Many institutions that we felt would last forever are under stress right now, in the Quaker world and outside of it. Some will undoubtedly not survive (indeed, there are even [organizations](#)¹ devoted to helping other organizations die well!). Those like me, who find meaning and purpose in organizational life, will have much to mourn. When it comes to the Religious Society of Friends, though, I remember the hope that sprung up in me during the first few months of my Spiritual Companionship group. A few of us met every other week and shared an opportunity to wrestle with God in turn, largely silently accompanied by the others. It was as simple as it was deep. Clearly, Spirit was indeed available to us, in all circumstances.

I want to see the riches of Quakers grow. In particular, my dearest hope for LEYM (and for myself) is that we develop deeper and deeper capacity to access that “burning One-ness binding everything” – and if we do, I'll absolutely trust that no matter the size of our organizations, that will be as much wealth as we could possibly want.

¹ <https://decelerator.org.uk/>



**FGC Annual Gathering:
'Rooted in Story'**

Save the Date FGC/Friends General Conference
Summer Gathering

June 30th to July 6th, 2024
Haverford College
Haverford, Pennsylvania

For more information, go to fgcquaker.org

LEYM Query 2023

To LEYM MM clerks:

As we came to consider the topic for this year's YM query, Ministry and Nurture Committee was also looking at feedback that we had received regarding the value of the queries that we send to Meetings each year. After much additional feedback and discernment, it became clear that the Quaker practice of using queries would itself be subject of this year's LEYM Query.

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting Query 2023

- *How can queries enrich the spiritual life of your Meeting?*
- *How does creating and using a query help you or your Meeting to discern a way forward as you go about your personal life or the business and activities of your meeting?*

Please send your responses to Flo Friender
flo@dougandflo.com by **March 1, 2024**.

–Ministry and Nurture Committee, Lake Erie Yearly Meeting

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Represent at Representative Meeting!

Representative Meeting – a mid-season opportunity for the Yearly Meeting to consider important questions – returns to an online-only format this year. We'll miss the distinctive energy generated by face to face contact, but at the same time, we'll be able to



have a more cohesive conversation, with one set of tools and one visual focus for everyone.

We'll be meeting primarily on March 9, with business from 10-12pm and 1-3pm. Stay tuned for possible additional supplemental

activities such as opportunities for worship or online community-building.

This Representative Meeting, we'll hear about what's going on in committees (including a preview of what's percolating for June's annual meeting!). We'll

Marking George Fox at 400

The 400th Anniversary of the birth of George Fox is being observed in a number of ways.

Woodbrooke Quaker Centre in England is offering a number of courses around the life and writings of George Fox. These include both multi-week online courses and single online sessions. The single sessions include views on George Fox's life and message from Evangelical Quaker, Conservative Quaker and Feminist Quaker perspectives. For a complete course offering on George Fox, go to <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/fox-at-400/>. The full Woodbrooke catalogue can be viewed at <https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/our-courses/>

Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) is offering a Birthday Pack at <https://fwcc.world/fox/> with various readings and resources, for both children and adults, looking at the life of George Fox.

Friends will have the opportunity to celebrate George Fox's birthday on Saturday 15 June during LEYM Annual Meeting. (Would he approve?)

also be making time to dive into our structures. Like many monthly meetings, we know that our slate, and the requirements around it, no longer are appropriate for the current shape and size of the organization.

These questions can provoke nervousness, concern, and excitement: it's an opportunity to slough off our old skin and discern innovations. How might we re-consider leadership roles? How can we best align energies with possible ministries? We want your input for the Yearly Meeting, and the session may also be useful for people who are considering these same questions in their monthly meeting.

Just like in the last few years, **we welcome** not only people who have a specific role of representing the Yearly Meeting to their Monthly Meetings, but **anyone who would like to join!** We appreciate knowing who is planning to attend – registration is available at:

<https://airtable.com/appZzT3wmX7EjobYp/shragoraDHXST5xVx>

Questions? Reach out to leymclerk@gmail.com



Cleveland First Day School will be hosting a birthday party for George Fox on 24 March following rise of meeting – cake included. Adults have been asked to dress as their favorite Quaker.

Cleveland and Wooster Friends have begun reading George Fox's *Journal* together online on Tuesday evenings.

Is your Meeting planning an event or activity around the 400th Anniversary?

Annual Meeting Returns to Ashland University in 2024

LEYM is returning to Ashland, Ohio for another in-person Annual Meeting to be held June 13-16, 2024. The theme this year will be **“Friends Together: Outpourings of the Spirit”** and we’ll be joined by singer/songwriter Paulette Meier, best known for her Quaker chants, who with assistance from our own Joann Neuroth (Red Cedar MM) will provide the plenary presentation. See further details below.

About the Theme

While seeking a theme for 2024, the Program Committee was inspired by the energy, creativity and life that were revealed last year as Friends gathered again for the first time since the COVID-19 shutdowns. As Friends have known since the start, when a group gathers, settles, and opens themselves to the Spirit, good things happen. This year we expect even more wonderful outpourings of the Spirit as we join together in large and small groupings, sharing meaningful workshops, participating in Bible Study, worship sharing, singing, meals and social time. We’re especially excited about the **400th birthday party** we will be

holding Saturday evening to celebrate early Friend George Fox, born way back in 1624.

About the Location

As Friends who attended last year can attest, Ashland University, located in the charming small town of Ashland, Ohio located about halfway between Cleveland and Columbus, proved to be a good spot for LEYM. Folks appreciated the compact campus, easy parking, centralized space for meeting and socializing, and good food. We also greatly enjoyed partnering with the Ashland Center for

Nonviolence, which was founded by the late LEYM Friend John Stratton.

We invite all members, attenders, and acquaintances of LEYM to join in the fun and worship June 13-16, 2024. Save the date now and look for more information about the full program and registration process in the next issue of the *Bulletin* and online at leym.org/annual



2024 Annual Meeting Plenary Preview

Opening To and Pouring Out the Spirit through Contemplative Communal Chant

Presented by Paulette Meier with Joann Neuroth

Music has a way of opening us up to deeper levels of understanding and connection. This is what Friends report when they hear and sing the chant-like songs on Paulette Meier's recordings, *Timeless Quaker Wisdom in Plainsong* and *Wellsprings of Life: Quaker Wisdom in Chant*. Paulette selected quotations from the spiritual writings of Quaker leaders in which they poured out descriptions of what filled them when they opened themselves to Spirit's presence.

She first set them to plainsong melodies as a way to memorize and internalize the words. Later, through the influence of contemplative Christian Wisdom teacher Cynthia Bourgeault, she experienced the power of chanting them together as a spiritual practice. She has discovered that this collection of Quaker words set to chant serves to enliven and enlighten modern Friends to the radical, mystical understanding of Christianity that the 17th century founders of the Quaker way experienced. In this plenary session, Paulette will share and teach many of these "song-chants" and, along with Joann Neuroth, will provide commentary on the spiritual wisdom they impart.

Sufis say that chant is the bridge between sound and silence. Having experienced this, Paulette says: "The Quaker quotations I have put to plain chant are a heart-opening form of prayer. Singing them aloud with others can bring us to a place beyond the thinking mind, where deep spiritual listening can occur. In this I see the potential for Friends to incorporate chanting into worship, perhaps as a prelude to meeting for worship. I also find that the repetitive nature of chanting, with no need to read notes and words, allows for a more embodied spiritual practice. Combining melody with words allows the words to penetrate more fully, opening both mind and heart. We hear in a new way."

Paulette's hope is that this plenary session will open new invitations to the contemplative infilling of the Quaker way as well as provide another way to experience an outpouring of the Spirit among Friends - through communal chant!

"For many years I have used chants as a key resource for my own contemplative practice and for spiritual deepening experiences that I have supported with multigenerational and interfaith groups.

Paulette's new album recuperates some of the most crucial Quaker teaching and invites Friends and others to explore the deep roots of mysticism. These chants are a call and a celebration of the living Spirit manifested within and beyond our human condition."

– Francisco Burgos, Executive Director of Pendle Hill

"Thy songs have touched my heart deeply, and I believe they have the power to crack open the meaning of the earliest Friends' writings for modern Friends today."

– comment from a member of Stillwater Friends Meeting, Ohio Yearly Meeting (Conservative)

"These inspired words of early Friends, set to music, open our hearts to take in and remember the wise wisdom they express. If you listen to them, and, better yet, sing or chant them, you'll find them spontaneously rising up within you as guidance and accompaniment in times of need, helping you understand how the Spirit is at work in you."

– Marcelle Martin, Quaker author and teacher

"Paulette's new album, "Wellsprings of Life: Quaker Wisdom in Chant," sparkles with the message of joy and steadfastness, even while sailing on troubled seas. One can drink these chants in, almost like an elixir of hope. Paulette's chants are creating a whole new musical and spiritual art form, introducing Quakers and mainstream Christian contemplatives alike to the pearls of transformative wisdom waiting to be discovered in the Quaker mystical tradition."

– Cynthia Bourgeault, author and teacher of the Contemplative Christian Wisdom Tradition



About Paulette Meier

Paulette Meier is a semi-retired Cincinnati Public Schools educator and a singer/songwriter, who has a long history of activist singing in the struggle for peace and justice. As a conflict resolution trainer in schools, she produced an award-winning CD, *Come*



Join the Circle: LessonSongs for Peacemaking, now used in classrooms across the country to inspire and help children learn the ways of non-violence. As a member of Community Friends Meeting and Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting, she received the Artist in Residence Award at Pendle Hill

in 2004, and spent nine months there deepening her knowledge of Quaker history and spirituality. While sojourning among Friends the following year in Philadelphia, she began a practice of setting texts of founding 17th-century Quaker leaders to chant-like song as a way to embody the profound wisdom she discovered in them. Her leading eventually led to Quaker Press proposing to co-publish a CD. *Timeless Quaker Wisdom in Plainsong* was released in 2010 and offers insights into the roots of Quaker spirituality, as well as a tool for meditative focus in spiritual practice.

News of the CD spread, and upon an invitation by Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in England to conduct two weekend workshops in 2018, Paulette spent time traveling and sharing the chants with Quaker meetings throughout Great Britain. A highlight was at Swarthmoor Hall in Ulverston, where she got to sing words written by Margaret Fell and George Fox, in the very room where they were very likely written. More recently, her work with contemplative Christian Wisdom teacher and writer, Cynthia Bourgeault, led to a 2nd album of chants, again based on Quaker spiritual writings, but more conducive to group singing. Describing these chants, Cynthia Bourgeault said: "Paulette's chants open a door to the pearls of transformative wisdom waiting to be discovered in the Quaker mystical tradition."

Paulette has had a leading to help the Quaker faith and practice to become more known in the world, and she is glad that her music is serving in this way.

About Joann Neuroth

Joann Neuroth found Quakers 40 years ago when she applied for an international position with the American Friends Service Committee, and came home from two days of interviews stunned to have found her people. She was excited to discover there was a local meeting of these "peculiar people," and has been seeking Spirit-led engagement in the world with the Red Cedar Friends Meeting in Lansing, Michigan ever since. She has served on the AFSC governance board at regional and national levels, led week-long workshops at Friends General Conference Gathering, and deepened her understanding of faithfulness at the School of the Spirit's "On Being a Spiritual Nurturer" class. She clerks LEYM's Finance Committee and thus serves on its Executive Committee. She is past clerk of the School of the Spirit (SotS) governance board and an active part of Red Cedar's Worship & Ministry and Peace & Social Justice committees. Last year, she felt a call to leave her board service with SotS in order to develop and lead a re-launched SotS Spiritual Nurture program



during 2025 and 2026, titled "God's Promise Fulfilled." During 2024 she and her co-teacher Adria Gulizia are traveling in service of finding the two dozen people God is calling to deepen their commitment to Spirit together in this way. Speak with Joann if you have an inkling that might include you.

LEYM 2024 Call for Workshop Proposals

Friends from Lake Erie Yearly Meeting and beyond plan to gather again in-person at Ashland University for our Annual Meeting. The 2024 theme is “**Friends Together: Outpourings of the Spirit.**” We’ll meet in Ashland, Ohio, June 13-16, 2024.

If you or someone you know might like to offer an in-person workshop during our Annual Meeting, please review the materials provided at leym.org/leym24cfp/ and use the form found there to make your submission. **We'd like to receive all proposals by February 22, 2024.** Questions can be directed to Program Committee member Greg Mott via mott@findlay.edu

We are asking for the following information to help the Committee make decisions as we put together our program:

- Workshop Title
- Preferred Length (90 minutes is the default, shorter is possible)
- Presenter(s)
- Workshop Description (for use promoting the workshop)
- Workshop Design and Format (information for the committee)
- Technology Needs
- Contact Email

We look forward to receiving workshop proposals from individuals or committees and believe that Friends will have thoughtful and engaging ideas to share with all of us. We welcome a range of possible session formats including discussions/worship sharing, presentations, experiential sessions, guided movement/physical activity, panels, skill trainings, or other formats we haven't thought of. Let the Outpourings of the Spirit begin!

LEYM Program Committee: *Clémence Mershon (Erie Worship Group), Clerk; Ellerie Brownfain (Birmingham); Valerie Groszmann (Kalamazoo); Greg Mott (Broadmead); Bill Wartens (Birmingham); Sally Weaver Sommer (Broadmead)*



Alternatives to Violence (AVP) Basic Workshop

*“Creating Cultures of Justice
and Peace”*

**February 16-18
Columbus, Ohio**

Facilitators: Nadine Hoover, Melanie Siaw,
Timothy Dzurilla

For more information : Don Buckingham
donabuckingham@gmail.com 614-517-9700

The Pendle Hill Quaker Institute: Living Our Testimonies in "The Fierce Urgency of Now"

May 2-5, 2024: Pendle Hill invites Friends and members of Friends community to gather on campus to explore how we can meet this political moment as Friends, individually and collectively. Choose between workshops each day and learn, vision, worship, and break bread together as we explore the role of ministry, Meetings, and Friends' organizations in this time of political upheaval and violence. Learn more and register here.

For a full list of Pendle Hill education opportunities, including our scholarships, residencies, podcast, and pamphlet series, visit <https://pendlehill.org/learn>

Share Your Strength!

Earlier this year, the Advancement and Outreach Committee, in collaboration with the LEYM monthly meetings, enthusiastically agreed to take on sponsorship of a Quakerism 101 series to learn about many aspects of Quakerism. Monthly meetings take turns leading a virtual session each month.

We are looking for one more presentation for the ongoing series and hope that you will talk with others in your monthly meeting about a topic that excites you! The April session is still available (third week of April, date to be set in consultation with the presenter). Creative ideas are welcome! Some topics that might complement the other presentations so far might be

- Committees - How do Quakers get things done?
- What is Meeting for Business?
- Quakerism and Sustainability
- Quakerism and Conflict Resolution
- Intergenerational Worship - what it looks like and how to do it
- Clearness committees
- Other ideas! These are just to get you started and are not restrictive

Some things to Consider:

- Does YOUR Meeting have unique experience or knowledge of a particular issue that could be shared?
- Keep in mind our collective commitment to anti-racism, especially if presenting a topic about who we are as a body of people and/or our history.
- Think of ways to encourage participation from attenders.
- Presentations can be from an individual or a group of individuals with their Monthly Meeting as host.
- Think outside the Meetinghouse! Presenters need not be members of LEYM member meetings or worship groups.
- If your small meeting or worship group is unable to host, but you have a topic idea, reach out to the A & O committee. We will try

to pair you with a monthly meeting with hosting capability.

Please join North Columbus, Broadmead, Ann Arbor, Kalamazoo, and Red Cedar that have already presented, or are scheduled to present soon.

Email Joe Mills at millrae@juno.com with your proposal or with questions (Quakerism 101 in subject line).

Upcoming Quakerism 101 Sessions

Tuesday, February 20: **Faith and Practice** (Ann Arbor Friends Meeting)

Thursday, March 21: **What Do Quakers Believe?** (Kalamazoo Friends Meeting)

April: Your Meeting's idea??

Thursday, May 16: **Quaker Organizations** (Red Cedar Friends Meeting)

All on Zoom at 7 pm. Details at LEYM.org

*All mind your gift, mind your measure;
mind your calling and your work. Some
speak to the conscience; some plough
and break the clods; some weed out and
some sow; [...] But wait all for the
gathering of the simple-hearted ones;
for 'they that turn many to
righteousness, shall shine forever'.*

George Fox, Epistle 1 (1650)

History of Cleveland Meeting

Cleveland Meeting will be marking its 100th anniversary in 2025. I am in the process of assembling a history of the Meeting. I would welcome any recollections, reflections, or memories about peoples or events in the life of Cleveland Meeting by former members, attenders or visitors. Photos of the Meeting or people involved in the Meeting would be especially welcome. If you have anything you would like to share, please contact Christopher Farrand at cpfarrand@sbcglobal.net.

Report from 2023 FCNL Annual Meeting and Quaker Public Policy Institute (QPPI)

by John Howell

LEYM Representative to FCNL General Committee

The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) held its annual meeting and Quaker Public Policy Institute (QPPI) November 15-19 in Washington, D.C. Along with John Deikis, Wink Covintree, and Michael Fuson, I serve on FCNL's General Committee as a representative from LEYM. The General Committee has responsibilities analogous to boards of directors of other nonprofit corporations. Decision-making is done in the manner of Friends, a remarkable process with a group of approximately 180 people, most in the room physically, but some on Zoom. It is hard to imagine a more challenging clerking task. It was carried out this year gracefully and patiently by Mary Lou Hatcher of Philadelphia Yearly Meeting. Our own Michael Fuson of Granville takes on that role for the coming year.

The QPPI precedes the annual meeting and involves lobbying for peace. My wife, Suzanne, and I along with other Ohio Friends spent time in the offices of Senators Vance and Brown and of Representative Balderston. We met with staffers who were very knowledgeable and courteous.

We urged support for 3 items in the Federal budget which support peace building efforts within the US Agency for International Development (USAID). To see the specific ask go to www.fcnl.org/qppi-ask and send your own emails to our representatives asking for their support. It is very helpful for the legislators to know that there are people in their districts who care about these things. In some cases, a request was also made to support a ceasefire in Gaza, a movement that is gaining strength and would also benefit from our contacting our representatives about it.

The FCNL Annual Meeting dealt with 3 major issues:

1) A new strategic plan was adopted. For the most part, the Plan reflects continuing FCNL's efforts but with emphasis on strengthening its nonpartisan influence among federal policymakers in a highly partisan environment, and, to that end, strengthening its grassroots advocacy work as a diverse, strategic, and intergenerational movement.

2) A significant change in governance was approved, a change which transfers fiduciary responsibility

from the General Committee to the Executive Committee while retaining other governance authority with the General Committee. Financial decisions which bear fiduciary responsibility often need to be made during the year. The Executive Committee, which meets several times during the year, is better positioned to handle these matters than the General Committee, which meets only once a year.

3) A change in the policy statement in the publication "The World We Seek" addressing reproductive health and abortion was approved. It replaces the statement which had said that FCNL takes no position on abortion. The wording adopted is:

III.2.7. Reproductive health and abortion. Quakers recognize that human life is sacred, and that Spirit can guide us individually and collectively. Based on these beliefs, members of the Religious Society of Friends have come to different conclusions regarding abortion. FCNL supports individual discernment in a spirit of love and truth in making reproductive healthcare decisions, as we do in other areas of conscientious moral choice. We oppose the criminalization of people seeking, undergoing, or involved in abortion services. We support equitable access to abortion services. FCNL also supports policies that reduce unwanted pregnancies by ensuring equitable access to contraception, sex education, family planning, fertility and adoption services, and support for all who decide to have children.

The FCNL Policy Committee had labored with this issue over the year, inviting input from Friends throughout Quakerdom in the U.S. The Committee's proposal was considered 3 times during business meetings over the weekend of the Annual Meeting. Each time modifications were recommended by members of the General Committee. Each time the Policy Committee met again and made changes. The recommendations always reflected deep thought and spiritual searching. The work of the Policy Committee, under the capable and patient leadership of Ebby Luvaga, formerly of the Athens Friends Meeting, was intense. Mary Lou Hatcher's firm but gentle clerking was of enormous help in allowing us to come to unity. Let me encourage LEYM Friends to participate in FCNL's work. It is indeed a rich and rewarding experience. Next year's annual meeting will be held Nov. 13-17, 2024.

LEYM Fall Youth Retreat 2023

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting Annual Fall Youth Retreat was held at the end of September at Temples Hills UCC Camp in Belleville, Ohio.

Folks traveled from Monthly Meetings in North Columbus, Broadmead, Red Cedar and Athens. Our ages ranged approximately from five through



seventeen. We explored the outdoors, played, crafted, hill rolled and of course had our annual campfire with s'mores. Friendships were nurtured and renewed.

If you are over 18 and interested in joining us next year (last weekend in September) and being another adult presence, please contact Diane Mott or Ellerie Brownfain.

P.S. Hill Rolling exempted if wished.

Olney Friends School Report

Ellerie Brownfain
Olney School Representative

Olney started this school year with approximately 30 students and several waiting for visas.

The campus is truly an international campus with more students from outside the United States.

As head of the school Christian Acemah says: "In our collective activities (eg., 'Almost Anything Goes,' The Hike to Raven Rocks, Olney Distance Run, and Fall Outing), I noticed everyone working together to build the Olney community. Students and teachers supported each other during moments of joy, hope, loss, fear, homesickness and more." During my fall visit I experienced the feeling of togetherness and fellowship that represents the Olney community.

They have an array of wonderful and interesting classes such as: Race, Power and Privilege, Art in Nature, Chemistry

and Blacksmithing, and, of course, Quakerism.

Olney has recently been awarded grants of \$12,885 for air filtration and purification equipment and \$5,000 for environmental stewardship with the farm.

As winter approaches, we encourage individuals to donate to the Annual Fund if possible. The Olney community is grateful for Lake Erie Yearly Meeting's continued interest and involvement with the school.



Epistle from 2023 Gathering of Ujima Friends Meeting

Dear Friends Everywhere,

Warmest greetings from Ujima Friends Monthly Meeting. We are a Quaker community of African descent, rooted in Africanity, welcoming F/friends and family of all backgrounds and ethnicities. We have a steady group of Friends who meet weekly at the Ujima Friends Peace Center in North Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, but we also have a wide community of members who worship with us and respond to the movement of the Spirit online. We therefore consider ourselves to be a hybrid – in-person and online – community of faith, one that is without borders.

We are relatively new, having begun to enjoy fellowship with one another in 2016, and we remain a small but mighty (and steadily increasing) community. In fact, the vast majority of our newest members and attendees have joined within the last two years, a silver lining to the heartbreaking and stifling COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, it is with great joy that we were finally able to experience our first annual, community-wide reunion (“gathering”) this summer, from June 23rd - 25th, 2023, in Oakland, California. Today, we are pleased to share with you our epistle from our June 2023 Ujima Friends Meeting First Annual Gathering, attached below.

Peace & Blessings,

The Ujima Clerking Team
ecumenicalhope@gmail.com

WORD TO THE PEOPLE

Community, Witness, Africanity
The Ujima Friends Meeting First Annual
Gathering,
June 23-25 -- Oakland, California

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God”

John 1:1

As June wound down in 2023 adults and children gathered, twenty strong from points north and south; east and west, yearning to touch and be touched, to see and be seen

by the sweet reality of each other’s presence.
To become flesh through sharing,
And singing, and praying and dancing and just being together at last,
In a one-room storefront
with powerful murals of protest dancing in bright colors on the walls
we revisited the Word that affirmed our collective being
and declared our commitment.

It began with a dinner of tofu and oxtails and Jamaican peas and rice,
our senses immersed in the aromas of ancestral cuisine
family style, our style, filled, overflowing,
we readied to explore community, witness, and Africanity.

♪ *Wade in the water, wade in the water children, wade in the water, God’s gonna trouble the waters.* ♪

Community: come unity,
an invitation to bring space for all.
Connections without boundaries,
imbued with particularity,
Black and Quaker and African and Black,

In our virtual community,
frustrations and joy often sit side by side
Virtual holding gives way to physical holding
with joy and with love
Community exudes through waves of light and sound
even through the little boxes –
Spirit Transcends

♪ *I need you, you need me – we’ll all a part of God’s body.*
You are important to me, I need you to survive. ♪

Doing business in a Quaker church
we witnessed by committing, and recommitting,
committee-ing and more committee-ing:
(Which ones, how? Let’s be faithful, let’s be patient, let’s be ready)
ready to move in Divine time among the people
“Juneteeth-ing” by the universal call to justice

♪ *What a fellowship, what a joy Divine leaning on the everlasting arms...* ♪

Africa is born in us,
born in us triumphant.
We shared how we overcame the distortions
of color struck families,
and the demonization of our mother Africa, her wisdom and beliefs.
Celebrating our African names and retentive jewelry, quilts,
and dress,
bearing witness to the transformation
from pain to promise,
observing the expansion of family
we emerge with a non-western
sense of divinity and personhood,
an “un-individuality”
revealing us to ourselves.
Ubuntu connectedness: “I am because we are. We are because I am.”

A Saturday dinner of Ethiopian delights fed our bodies,
the Word made poetic fed our souls
declaring the beauty and power of love and family.
We were and are a strong people.

♪ Joy bells, joy bells ringing in my soul.♪

Sunday Reflections: Spirit is not finished with us.
She gave us the courage to show up,
The Word hiding in our hearts.
She is faithful to our faithfulness.

♪ Lord my life to you I bring. May each song I have to sing.
Be to you a lovely thing, *IN YOUR TIME*. ♪

God is indeed doing a new thing....Ujima Friends Meeting
...Ase, Ase, Aseo



February 20: Quakerism 101 - “Faith & Practice”

February 22: Deadline for submitting workshop proposals for Annual Meeting.

March 1: Deadline for LEYM Query responses.

March 9: LEYM Representatives Meeting will be held online.

March 15: Submissions for Spring *Bulletin* due.

March 21: Quakerism 101 - “What do Quakers Believe?”

May 15: Due date for State of the Meeting reports.

May 16: Quakerism 101: “Quaker Organizations”

May 18 : Green Pastures Quarterly Meeting Spring Gathering.

May 30: Deadline for all committee reports and advance documents.

June 13 to 16: LEYM Annual Meeting, Ashland University, Ashland, Ohio.

June 30 to July 6: FGC Annual Gathering, Haverford College, Haverford, PA.

July 1: Due date for Meeting Statistical Reports.

July 30: Submissions to next *Annual Records* due.

LEYM Committee Clerks, 2023-2024

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

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Save the date: March 16, 2024:

FWCC/Americas Section Meeting Online

All Friends are Welcome to attend
Theme: Living the Spirit of Ubuntu.
https://fwccamericas.org/_wp/event/section-meeting-2024/