



To Friends everywhere, who have received a faith and a relationship with Spirit as precious as ours:

Greetings from Lake Erie Yearly Meeting (LEYM).

On 6th Mo. 13, 2024, one hundred sixteen Friends of Michigan, Ohio, and Western Pennsylvania, along with visitors from other states, gathered in Ashland, Ohio, for our annual meeting. First, we acknowledged our present: new and returning Friends broke bread together and, in conversation, caught each other up on our own monthly meetings, personal lives, and news of absent Friends. From the beginning, the intentional planning of the program committee encouraged us to go beyond our familiar social circles.

Second, we acknowledged our past: we once again found ourselves on the campus of Ashland University, whose facilities provided a comfortable setting for Friends to learn together, commune with one another, and listen for Spirit's will. We also appreciated that we were by no means the first to benefit from this place, recognizing the Kaskaskia people, this region's first inhabitants.

We learned from our plenary presenter, Friend and singer Paulette Meier, how to practice an *outpouring of Spirit*—this year's theme—through plainsong and chants. Her practice of setting Spirit-imbued quotes from early Friends to a *cappella* chants had practical origins: when set to melodies, she found the task of remembering these words much easier. But, her practice soon grew into a meditative process itself. We experienced that, gathered in song, Friends' minds are in touch with their bodies; our spirits are bound to one another; and we feel connected to the wisdom of earlier Friends.

One of the many chants we were invited to sing in her plenary and subsequent workshop was excerpted from George Fox's Epistle #19:

"Keep within. And then they say, 'Look here or look there is Christ,' go not forth, for Christ is within you. And those who try to draw your minds away from the teaching inside you, are opposed to Christ. For the measure's and the light of God is within, and the pearl is within, though hidden." (1652)

Friends, we began each session of our worship with attention to business with an Epistle from yearly meetings the world over. Your words of news and of well-wishes inspired us as we looked within ourselves, asking how we can be a host to an outpouring of spirit.

We established a tradition of setting aside time to ask Spirit for LEYM's purpose in the next year. Admittedly, that's a big ask. But, through some structured sharing, we could discern the weightiest issues on our collective hearts.

Our concerns were diverse: for example, growing meetings expressed difficulty integrating new seekers into our practices of worship. Other meetings haven't seen much growth but were heartened that their community felt truly gathered.

Our session was graced by an abundance of volunteers, whose work caring for children, moving furniture, assisting in the dining hall, and countless other functions made this experience available to all Friends, across the spectra of age, ability, and experience.

Eleven young Friends attended. The older group visited the Ohio Reformatory museum, and our youngest Friends asked how we yield an outpouring of spirit from nature (and played together at every available moment). The compassion of our youth programming and childcare volunteers was palpable.

Friends, Lake Erie is energized. Our format and sense of purpose has been transformed by the Friends who do the Yearly Meeting's work, especially our outgoing Clerk. After our final night, celebrating the 400th birthday of George Fox, we hunger for more. We are filled with Spirit. And, we want you to feel its outpouring from our hearts.

Written for the sake of that Spirit who has moved through

The Epistle Committee:

Flo Friender,
Wink Covintree, &
Alexa Lake

Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Susan Loucks". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of a vertical line.

Susan Loucks,
Presiding Clerk