

Spiritual Formation Program Report, June 2025

The LEYM spiritual formation program has been growing in terms of the number of participants in our retreats and in local groups. We are aware of local groups in eight of our monthly meetings. These groups are using a variety of structures to provide spiritual support for each other.

Traditionally, the spiritual formation year has begun with a retreat in the fall and ended with a retreat in the spring. In between the two retreats, local groups meet regularly to support each other in their spiritual life, often focusing on spiritual practices. Recently, we added a three-hour January online session providing an opportunity for a mid-year check-in.

The theme of the fall 2024 retreat was mysticism. Don McCormick facilitated the retreat with Ellerie Brownfain as his companion. Thirty-six people from nine monthly meetings attended the retreat held at Weber Center in Adrian, Michigan. During the retreat we considered basic concepts of mysticism, theistic and unitive mysticism, and mystical experiences in Quakerism. We ended the retreat by considering the creation of a vision of the role of mysticism in the future of Quakerism. The activities of the retreat included large and small group activities.

We followed our tradition of giving time Saturday evening for meeting in local groups to plan for the coming year. The book table provided resources for local groups to consider in their year-long spiritual formation sessions.

On January 25, twenty-seven of these Friends joined together on Zoom for a three-hour retreat in which we shared information about our local groups and participated in two different breakout groups. In the first we described what being part of the spiritual formation program does for us in our daily lives. In the second, we considered the following queries: Is there spiritual work that you are specifically focused on? In what areas and in what ways is the group nurturing and supporting you? In addition, participants shared how they have intentionally explored mysticism in new ways since the fall retreat. In our closing session, participants shared that they had deep spiritual experiences in their small groups.

We ended the year on May 3 when twenty-two Friends joined together for the spring retreat hosted by Broadmead Friends at the Victory Center in Toledo. During the retreat Don helped us explore, through a set of queries, how we experience mysticism as individuals and in community. All participants were invited to stay for Sunday morning worship with Broadmead Friends followed by a potluck hosted by the meeting. Sunday afternoon, Don led a workshop on writing one's spiritual autobiography.

Friends attending the spring retreat were led to set a regular meeting time to continue to explore mysticism and mystical experiences and to support each other in the journey. Friends will meet on the third Thursday of July, October, January and April from 7:00 - 8:30. The Zoom link can be found in the LEYM calendar found at leym.org.

Planning for the next year always begins before the current year ends. We are delighted to report that our facilitator for the 2025-2026 year will be Michael Wajda. The theme for the year's retreat will be "Where Next on My (Spiritual) Journey?" The fall retreat will be held September 12-14 at the Weber Center. Attached is a copy of the brochure giving details of the retreat. Hard copy brochures can be found at our table in the display area. Please take brochures with you to share with others in your monthly meeting.

Members of the spiritual formation committee are Ellerie Brownfain, Valerie Groszmann, Barbara LeSage, Olwen Pritchard, and Sally Weaver Sommer. We are looking for new committee members. If you are interested in serving on the planning committee, please contact one of our current members.