Volume LXIII, Issue 1

Fall 2025

LAKE ERIE YEARLY MEETING

Bulletin

Clerk's Message from Jack Smith

Challenges and Opportunities

Friends, I am pleased to be stepping into my term of service as Presiding Clerk of our Yearly Meeting. When I pondered Nominating Committee's call last year, I felt drawn to exploring how we can learn from each other, as we work to enrich the spiritual lives of our Monthly Meetings—each of which is rich in its own right. Can this happen throughout the year (not only at Annual Meeting) across substantial distances and amid our busy lives and diverse callings? My hope is that Spirit will lead and support us, as we reach.

Even as most of us are insulated from the worst direct effects, we suffer daily from the actions of an Administration that is not led by the Spirit that we invite in and attempt to serve. Tending to the health of our individual spirits has become an even more essential daily practice. We constantly must consider: How am I called to respond, in being faithful to my measure of the Light? I certainly struggle with this every day, and I reach out with love and support to each of you as you do.

But this difficult six months has also brought rich possibilities along with its painful challenges. Many of our Meetings are reporting more newcomers coming to see what Quaker worship may offer them. It seems clear that some of this is driven by fear and dismay at our national direction. How do we respond to these seekers? Welcoming them to worship seems like the easy part. But how do we reveal

and explain our corporate practices and share our individual spiritual experiences and challenges, without becoming "too much?" How do we balance respect for newcomers' personal worship time and space with our responsibility to keep the doors to the full lives of our communities open and welcoming? We have something precious to offer: The practices that continually invite the Divine into our lives. I hope that the Yearly Meeting will support, connect, and enhance our efforts to welcome, to sustain, and to grow in the Spirit.

And this know, that there are diversities of gifts, but one Spirit and unity therein to all, who with it are guided. And though the way seem to thee divers, yet judge not the way, lest thou judge the Lord, and knowest not that several ways (seaming to reason) hath God to bring his people out by, yet all are but one in the end.

George Fox, Epistle 47

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Lake Erie Yearly Meeting Annual Session Epistle
Sixth Month 12-15, 2025

Beloved Friends everywhere: Grace to you and peace from God.

One hundred seventeen Friends from Meetings and Worship Groups in Michigan, Ohio, and western Pennsylvania returned with joyful anticipation to the campus of Ashland University in Ashland, Ohio, for our sixty-third Annual Meeting. Here for our third year, this location feels ever more like home. In-person attendees settled quickly into our daily routine, as our location again provided great support for our business, workshops, worship, and evening activities. New practices helped on-line attendees connect with greater ease for business and plenary sessions.

With the painful separation of the COVID years behind us, Friends were very thankful for this precious time to gather, renew long-standing connections, and welcome newcomers. We showcased a display of "puzzle pieces," each created by a constituent meeting or worship group, that described some of the characteristics we bring to the yearly meeting as a whole. All ages—from youth to adult programming—experienced immediate abundance of Light; togetherness was love beyond imagination. These connections carried qualities of grace, and yet we are thankful for the intentionality needed to lay a groundwork of safety and acceptance. We are dedicated to continuing to build and extend that culture in addition to relishing its fruits.

In many ways, a sense of abundance blossomed among us. We were enriched by the presence and Spirit-led activity of an increased number of children and older young Friends, and one newborn who provided frequent, and welcome, ministry. Our business was completed without significant difficulty or challenge. Our finances remain stable and adequate for our work. Our newly re-formed Peace and Justice Committee reported an active year of work and plans for the next year. Friends responded to calls for Yearly Meeting service for the coming year; cared for our newborn during business and plenary sessions; were generous with donations and gifts of service during our gathering (carrying trays in the dining hall and writing summaries of workshops, for instance); and gracefully adjusted to a bit of rain and minor changes to our schedule.

We gathered around the theme of "Mending our Nets: The Power of Becoming Whole." Friends, we entangle our lives with others. In so doing, we become a robust whole, like knots of cord becoming a net. This form lets us gather joys and collect sorrows, knowing that none is meant to be dealt with alone.

We considered how we respond to the tears in our nets. How can we transform conflicts in our relationships? How can we become whole in the face of death in our community? In our plenary session, Pamela Haines acknowledged the impulse to throw out the broken and buy its replacement. Though replacement is possible for the material at the human-scale, we are called to a mending ethos. Repair is often the only choice—

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there is no replacement for our Earth or our social net. We have little loving choice but to mend what has frayed. We can darn heels and tie ourselves anew to others in a loving net. It is our mutual responsibility. Mending society relationship-by-relationship is establishing God's Kingdom—it is creation caring for itself. Pamela reminded us not to think only of large-scale rips in our social net, but to tend to mending in our daily actions and choices and our relationships with family, friends, and not-yet-friends. But mending of nets must begin with grieving what has been lost, while also celebrating those sections that remain vital and supportive.

Along with love and connection for each other, we carried constant awareness of the deep gravity of this historical moment—the unprecedented and accelerating erosion of democratic, environmental, and social norms and protections in the United States. We are heartbroken when we consider the consequences of these trends for ourselves and future generations. During our meeting, the crisis provided an opportunity for public witness. Many Friends peacefully expressed our objections at a Quaker vigil on the campus, the local branch of a national "No Kings" rally against autocratic rule, and in worship to hold those who participated in the Light. Our Bible Study sessions reminded us that early Friends also wrestled with despair when they saw the promise of God's kingdom on earth fade into political chaos and human oppression. These Friends learned to look for blessing and spiritual strength "at home" or within themselves, regardless of external trends.

We carry wounds and experiences that diminish our confidence in responding as Quakers to these crises. We are primed with stories of ways our Meetings have not been able to navigate conflict and places where our personal connections have broken and failed us, even with people we knew, loved, and trusted. At the same time, workshops and movies illustrated powerfully how people such as ourselves can model courage and use existing tools to create peace and social change. We hold both this fear and this potential, as well as hard-won personal lessons that guide us towards wholeness: fully experiencing our grief to release old expectations, learning we can love people whose thoughts or behaviors we see as wrong.

We have been recalled to a greater obedience that frees us from worldly obedience—not obedience to scarcity mindsets, individualism, and fear. We can summon personal and collective power to address the world, and claim the irrevocable power to live richly in connection and to love each other well.

Friends, we left this Meeting refreshed and renewed for the Spirit-led work, small and not-so-small, in the coming year, grateful that we will return to Ashland again. We know that you are addressing many of the same challenges that grip us. As your nets rend and fray, we pray that you will share openly your grief, that you will be called to mend, and that you will rejoice in your propensity to be woven into wholeness.

Written for the sake of that Spirit who has moved through

Jack Smith, Jonah Brownfain, Susan Loucks, and Alexa Kay

Signed
Joe Mills, clerk

"But a proud man in power is very mischievous; for his pride is the more dangerous by his greatness, since from ambition in private men, it becomes tyranny in him: it would reign alone; nay live so, rather than have competitors: Aut Cæsar, aut nullus. Reason must not check it, nor rules of law limit it; and either it can do no wrong, or it is sedition to complain of the wrong that it does. The men of this temper would have nothing thought amiss they do; at least, they count it dangerous to allow it to be so, though so it be; for that would imply they had erred, which it is always matter of state to deny."

William Penn, No Cross, No Crown

Highlights of LEYM Annual Meeting

Ashland University, June 12 - 15, 2025

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting's Annual Meeting was held at Ashland University from 12 through 15 June. One hundred and eighteen persons registered, of which 110 came from 16 Monthly Meetings and Worship Groups. Of these, 11 were first-time attenders of Annual Meeting. There were 8 guests representing Bryn Creek MM of the New Association of Friends, Central Philadelphia MM, Right Sharing of World Resources, Community Friends Meeting (OVYM), Sandy Springs MM (Baltimore YM) and FGC.

During the course of the sessions, we heard the reading of Epistles from FWCC World Plenary, New England Yearly Meeting, Britain Yearly Meeting, Ohio Valley Yearly Meeting, and Baltimore Yearly Meeting. Friends also approved an Epistle from LEYM drafted by Jack Smith (Red Cedar), Alexa Kay and Susan Loucks (Pittsburgh), and Jonathan Brownfain (Broadmead).

Memorial minutes were read out during the course of the four days for Allan Conner, Anne Ogren, Catherine McClary, Ruth Zweifler, and Robin Warner (Ann Arbor), Doug Howe and Patrick Reardon (Kalamazoo), and Judy Greenberg (Broadmead). The texts of these memorial minutes can be found in the *Annual Records* for 2025.

Friends enjoyed the plenary session given by Pamela Haines on the theme of "Mending Our Nets: the Power of Becoming Whole." Twelve well-attended workshops were also offered on Friday and Saturday on a variety of topics. Morning Bible study was led by Doug Gwyn, examining the biblical influence on early Friends. These were taken from his book *The Call to Radical Faithfulness, Covenant in Quaker Experience*, which were in turn based on his Bible-Half Hour talks at NEYM in 2016.

Friends also participated in two actions during Annual Meeting. Some Friends held a vigil for Peace in Gaza outside on the Ashland University campus, while others attended a "No Kings" rally in downtown Ashland.

Reports were given by the various LEYM committees on their activities during the past year. The

Advancement & Outreach Committee reported on the three online panels it presented and on the slide show it prepared to show what takes place at LEYM Annual Meeting and to encourage attendance. Ministry & Nurture reported on the Annual Query and State of the Meeting Reports, for which it drafted a summary, and on the successful "Clerks' Chats" it held during the course of the year. Peace & Justice Committee reported on its two-part webinar "Stimulating Do-able Peace and Justice Work in Our Monthly Meetings" as well as sending out information on peace issues to Monthly Meetings. Publications & Archives Committee reported on its work preparing the *Annual Records* and the need for more committee members.

Treasurer Tom Kangas gave his report showing that LEYM is in good financial shape. (See Report on Page 8). Finance Committee present the draft Annual Budget which was approved by Friends. A 2.5% increase is included. The $42 annual assessment to Monthly Meetings for each member will remain unchanged. The Consultation Fund, not having been used during the past year, will be deposited into the General Fund, as provided for at the last Annual Session. Finance Committee proposed, and Friends approved, including reimbursement for the cost of meals when on LEYM business.

There was discussion about LEYM discontinuing the collection of contact information for members of Monthly Meetings. As there was no unity found, the question was referred to the Publication & Archives Committee and the Database Manager for further seasoning.

There were reports from LEYM representatives to other Friends organizations. Marvin Barnes (Detroit), as Presiding Clerk of Friends General Conference, reported on FGC's activities and projects. Bill Warters (Birmingham) reported on AFSC work worldwide. Assistant Clerk Jack Smith (Red Cedar) urged Meetings to become affiliated to AFSC's Apartheid-Free Community. Clémence Ravaçon-Mershon (Erie WG) reported on FWCC and that Broadmead member Jonah Brownfain will be serving on the board of FWCC's Young Adult Friends. Jana Norlin (Grand Rapids) reported on the participation of Latin American Friends at the FWCC Section of the Americas meeting held earlier this year. Cassie Cammann (Ann Arbor) reported on Friends Peace Teams.

Thirteen Young Friends were present and were able to enjoy various activities organized by the Youth & Children's Program.

Friends also were shown a video of Detroit Meeting's progress on renovating their newly acquired meeting house.

In the evening, Friends gathered for various social activities including Birds of a Feather, picture puzzles, music – even dance – and several movies including "Citizen George" about Friend George Lakey. Friends were able to view and select from a collection of Quaker books offered for sale, including those of our Plenary Speaker Pamela Haines and our Bible Study leader Doug Gwyn. The food and conversation were plentiful in the dining hall and the weather cooperated.

It was another successful Annual Meeting made possible thanks to the hard and faithful work before and behind the scenes of the Arrangement & Site Committee. Thanks also to LEYM Clerk Joseph Mills, Recording Secretary Peggy Daub, and Assistant Clerk Jack Smith, who is stepping up as the new LEYM Clerk. See you all next year, **June 18 - 21, 2026**, at Annual Meeting at Ashland University!

LEYM Annual Meeting 2025

Photos by Barabara LeSage & Christopher Faarrand

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting Financial Report
For Annual Meeting 2025

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting
Financial Report for Annual Meeting - June 12 - 15, 2025

Income	
Registration fees collected net of discounts, scholarships, and online registration system and payment processing fees	20,948
Donations (cash and gifts-in-kind)	2,680
Net earnings from book table	94
Other miscellaneous income	235
Total Income	23,957
Expenses	
Ashland University conference center charges Includes: $5K venue rental, $9K lodging, and $11K meals	24,852
Honoraria for plenary speaker and workshop presenters	1,406
Youth and Children program (supplies, activities, t-shirts)	1,269
Other incidental expenses	100
Total Expenses	27,627
Net Income <Deficit> prior to subsidy from General Fund	(3,670)
Subsidy from LEYM General Fund	3,715
Annual Meeting Net Income <Deficit>	45
Annual Meeting Fund - Balance as of June 30, 2024	2,955
Net Income <Deficit> from Annual Meeting June 2025	45
Annual Meeting Fund - Balance as of June 30, 2025	3,000

Holland Meeting

The Holland Quaker Meeting (Holland, MI) has been enjoying a surge of energy and activity. Since spring 2025, our weekly meeting has experienced an uptick in attendance, with our current weekly average at about a dozen people. This is almost double of how many were gathering about a year ago.

With the added energy of new attenders, two newly recorded members, a new clerk, and the reflection on LEYM annual queries, the Meeting elected to create some new documents and signage reflecting who we are and why we gather. Taking the energy of defining ourselves, the Meeting elected to host a booth at the Holland, MI Juneteenth celebration .

In and between meetings for worship, we have been attending and supporting a number of events, such as Pride, CROP Walk, No Kings, Hands Off, and many more (Picture: Holland Quaker asking ICE not to take the person). We remain vigilant to promote peace and attend to good trouble.

Julie Luedtke, Clerk, Holland Meeting

Hollanders take to River Avenue to express frustration, disgust with Trump administration

Cassidey Kavathas
Holland Sentinel

'Hands Off': Protestors gather along River Avenue in Holland

What it Means to be a Quaker

Ann Arbor Meeting holds an open discussion on "What it Means to be a Quaker" on the First and Third Wednesdays of the Month at 7:00 pm.

"This is an open discussion for both new and old members to learn and discern together on issues about how Quakerism impacts our spiritual practices and the way we live our lives. For new people, this is a place to ask questions about things that are not immediately obvious about our spiritual community. For other members, it's a place to explore something which has been on your mind or heart, where you wonder how other Friends might help you see clearer."

Members of other Meetings are invited to participate by going to https://tinyurl.com/AAFM-Zoom

A Note from your Database Manager

One of the bits of information I ask Meetings for every year is their average attendance for worship. I thought it notable that every single Monthly Meeting and Worship Group I spoke with – with the exception of one small group – revised their numbers upwards. Something is going on, and we're a meaningful part of it!

A Minute from Granville Friends Meeting

Granville Friends Meeting (Quakers, Religious Society of Friends) feels deep concern for the thousands of federal workers who have abruptly lost their livelihoods in the recent indiscriminate mass firings, and for the loss of the valuable work they do. We recognize that sudden and unexpected job loss coupled with the high and rising costs of necessities including food and housing may seriously impact the health and welfare of these federal employees and their families. Likewise, the sudden and unexpected curtailment of the services these federal workers have provided will result in harm to vulnerable populations at home and abroad, as well as cause negative economic consequences in our nation and increase risks to public safety and environmental degradation. We provide three examples here, but hold in mindful concern all federal workers and their families and all peoples negatively impacted by these mass firings.

The dismantling of USAID and the programs it administers will deprive U.S. farmers of an estimated $2 billion in sales, among other harms. "According to a former deputy assistant administrator at USAID's Feed the Future program, the agency purchased 1.1 million metric tons of food from U.S. farmers and ranchers last fiscal year, including sorghum, corn, beans, rice and vegetable oil, for distribution to 45 million people in need of emergency food and acute nutrition assistance in 35 countries". [1]

Mass firings of 2,300 employees from the Department of Interior including 1,000 National Park Service staff, as well as cuts of 3,400 from the U.S.

Broadmead Monthly Meeting Friends Fall Retreat

October 24th - 26th 2025

Retreat Theme:

Forging Ahead Through Changing Times In Our Community

Presenter: Shulamith Clearbridge & Paulette Meier

Topics will include:

How do we support one another through these changing times?

How do we support one another through the grieving process?

How do we as a community show up and reach out to one another through times of grief and loss?

About our facilitators:

Shulamith Clearbridge is a member of Swarthmore Monthly Meeting near Philadelphia. She has taught workshops and classes for organizations, institutions, continuing education programs, and the general public. She has led workshops and retreats, Quaker Meetings for Healing, and adult education programs meetings around the country. Shulamith has an M.Div, for which her book, *Finding God: Prayers & Spiritual Practices from Many Traditions*, was her thesis. Shulamith is a writer and an interfaith spiritual director. You can reach her at clearbridge@fastmail.com.

Paulette Meier is a member of Community Friends Meeting in Cincinnati and a semi-retired public schools educator. As a singer/songwriter, she has a long history of activist singing in the struggle for peace and justice. She produced an award winning CD, Come Join the Circle: LessonSongs for Peacemaking. In 2004, Paulette received the Artist in Residence Award at Pendle Hill and spent nine months there deepening her knowledge of Quaker history. In 2018, Paulette was invited by Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in England to conduct two weekend workshops there, which led to 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!

For further information contact Olwen Pritchard at 419-358-2954 or Linda Dangelo 908-642-3571 to register. The deadline is September 30th, 2025.

Forest Service will make it difficult to adequately manage and protect these valuable national resources. Hiking trails and facilities such as visitor centers will deteriorate. Wildfires will cause greater destruction for the lack of trained firefighters. These agencies were already understaffed; prior to the workforce cuts, national park operations staff had already fallen by 20 percent since 2010 according to the National Parks Conservation Association, while cuts to the U.S. Forest Service represent 10 percent of its workforce.[2]

Initial mass firings of nearly 600 employees at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) followed by the dismissal of another 1,000 employees puts us all at risk by disrupting the network of meteorologists who detect severe weather threats and provide early warnings of earthquakes, wildfires and other natural disasters.[3]

As Quakers, we seek a world that recognizes that of God in every person; a world that offers every person the opportunity to fulfill their potential. The mass firing of federal workers disrupts the ability of these workers to fulfill their potential, it robs these hard-working employees of dignity and respect, and it drives negative economic and health consequences for them and their families. Because of the complicated and sometimes hidden connections that exist among people—connections showcased in our examples—the mass firing of federal workers is likely to cause harm to everyday Americans and disrupt the important work and services of the government.

Thus the Granville Friends Meeting holds in the Light of God these workers, their families, and all connected peoples. We call on our three branches of the Federal Government to work cooperatively to build a society that supports all people, and a government that enables everyone the opportunity to fulfill their potential and provides the government services needed to support the well-being of all people. In particular, we ask the government to reinstate fired federal workers and permit them to resume the important work and services they provide.

References:

[1] https://www.agweb.com/news/policy/politics/usaid-dismantling-what-it-means-farmers-and-ag-research
[2] https://www.npca.org/articles/6680-how-the-new-administration-s-actions-will-affect-national-parks
[3] https://abcnews.go.com/US/job-cuts-noaa-impact-weather-forecasting/story?id=119511461

Spiritual Formation Retreat

September 12 - 14

Weber Retreat Center
Adrian, Michigan

If you wish to deepen your spiritual life, you are invited to join the LEYM Spiritual Formation Program for 2025-2026. It kicks off with an opening retreat in September 2025 and ends with a closing retreat in May 2026. Through the retreats and participation in a local group that meets regularly throughout the nine months, participants create a close faith community for spiritual growth, mutual support, and encouragement. These groups provide a structured, supportive place in which each member can discern the leadings of the divine and prepare to follow.

Michael Wajda
Facilitator for 2025-2026
A member of Goshen MM (Philadelphia YM)

Michael is an active Friend who has travelled widely among Friends, leading retreats, giving talks, and helping to strengthen the spiritual life of Meetings and Friends.

Michael delivered the 2006 plenary address at LEYM, *Expectant Listening:Finding God's Thread of Guidance*, which has been published as a Pendle Hill pamphlet.

For More Information:

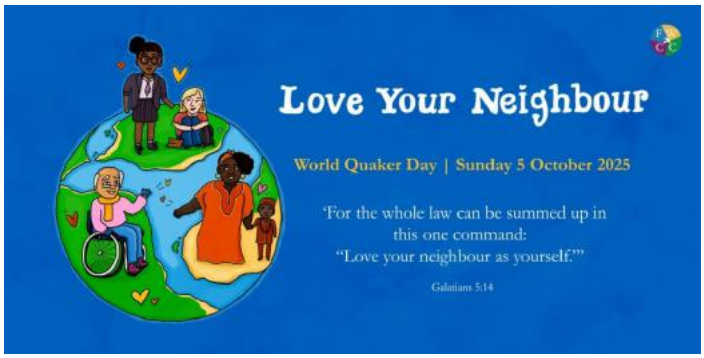
Contact: Sally Weaver Sommer
sallyweaversommer@gmail.com

Website: leym.org/spiritual-formation-program-description

LEYM Calendar 2025

September 6-7: Cleveland Meeting 100th Anniversary Observance.
September 12-14: Spiritual Retreat, Weber Retreat Center, Adrian, Michigan.
October 3-5: Fall K-12 Youth Retreat, Kirkmont Center, Zanesville, Ohio.
October 24-26: Broadmead MM Fall Retreat, Weber Center, Adrian, Michigan.

For more details, check the Calendar page at https://leym.org/calendar/



To find your nearest or farthest Quaker meeting or Friend's Church, follow the link to the FWCC Section where you are located: Europe and Middle East, Asia West Pacific, the Americas, or send an email to the Africa Section at https://fwcc.world/.

There are also many online Quaker worship groups around the world which you can join too.

Fall Youth Retreat

The Fall K-12 Youth Retreat will be held **October 3-5** (6:30 pm Friday - 11:30 am Sunday) at the Kirkmont Center in Zanesfield, OH (near Bellefontaine).

K-12 youth as well as their families are invited to join in. Please register and direct any questions to Diane Mott, Clerk of Youth Retreat, by September 10 to mottfam45@gmail.com or 419-419-8339

LEYM Committee Clerks 2025-2026

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

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All Friends, mind that which is eternal, which gathers your hearts together up to the Lord, and lets you see that ye are written in one another's heart. *George Fox, Epistle 24*