

Epistles  
June 18, 2007

To Friends Everywhere:

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting Friends met at Bluffton University in Bluffton, Ohio, June 15-18, 2006. We rejoiced in our record-breaking attendance of one hundred sixty-nine Friends and visitors with whom we shared much hearty laughter, nurturing food for our bodies and spirits alike. We joined together to consider the leading of the Spirit in our worship and prayers, in doing the work of the Yearly Meeting, in renewing special friendships, and in welcoming first-time attenders. We were especially aware of the lack of presence and gifts of those Friends who were not with us due to death, health or other obligations. We also enthusiastically welcomed those Friends making their gifts available to Yearly Meeting and celebrated the growing numbers of energetic younger Friends and toddlers.

Our schedule this year was deliberately designed to allow for both personal and corporate spiritual practice and authentic listening. Our workshops gave us opportunity to examine how we heal, live, act, celebrate, grow and are moved by Faith. Friends were enriched and encouraged by Michael Wajda's message of "Expectant Listening," which will serve to assist us in recognizing when and how God is speaking to us personally. Friends found Michael's open, descriptive sharing of his experience with expectant listening most pertinent at this time of challenge in our rapidly changing and violent world.

Electronic technologies are proving to be an efficient way to hold community. A Friend from an earlier time visiting us today would marvel at the sound of an occasional wireless telephone or the sight of Friends at keyboards and monitors at all hours. The quality and quantity of our books, publications and correspondence would certainly invite commentary in an early Quaker's journal. As contemporary Friends, we are a rich blend of tradition and modernity.

We continue to discover and rediscover. Two of our young Friends have traveled to the World Gathering of Young Friends near Lancaster, England, and some hope to travel to Costa Rica in the spring to explore Friends' history there. Older Friends, too, have been building bridges in their experience at FWCC gatherings. Perhaps these are metaphors for deeper spiritual discovery among all Friends and perhaps a manifestation of God's continuing revelation.

Even though we value and rely on long-standing Friends' traditions and process, we are reexamining some of our Yearly Meeting structure. In the nurture of our monthly meetings, we have over many years addressed queries which may become part of our own Faith and Practice. We have renewed appreciation for continuity. Again, as experienced Friends pass, we are dedicating more effort to records and archives and to fostering the collective memory within the Yearly Meeting.

Even as we looked inward, we were reminded repeatedly by our visitors from the African Great Lakes Initiative, Friends Peace Teams, Friends World Committee for Consultation, and Friends Committee on National Legislation of our place in the wider Friends community. The efforts of these groups are living examples that our testimonies for peace and social and economic justice remain firm.

We have gathered, we have worshipped, we have worked, we have learned and we have celebrated during our gathering. We trust that we have grown and are stronger in spirit as we return to our home communities. We pray that we continue not only to listen, but to heed.

On behalf of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting, Michael Fuson, Clerk

### **From the Infants and Toddlers**

We saw cars and motorcycles and the car show.  
We played with bubbles.  
We found bugs.  
We saw the moon in the middle of the day.  
We listened to all the birds.  
We saw the ducks and sang a duck song.  
We made new friends and played with old friends.  
We cried, we laughed, we sang, we danced with the grownups.  
-- and now we're really tired. See you next year.

Infant and pre-school leaders: Susan Jeffers and Joyce Balderston  
Youth: Jabiri Crotser-Crowley, Carl Dierauer, Casey Lockledge, and Gabriel Mott

### **From the Early Elementary Group**

The elementary group went on a treasure hunt, looking for items to make dioramas. The dioramas showed each person's secret, quiet place where he/she could feel safe, and listen to God, and talk to God.

We went for another walk to the farmers' market where we got birthday cake and shared it with the upper elementary group. We saw crawdads under the bridge and different birds. We had a sharing project with string. We gave our string to others who enjoy activities we enjoy, and then traded strings with others with similar interests. This showed how we start out as individuals and become a community, each of us changing a little by knowing others.

Early Elementary Leaders: Tim Damon and Conleth Crotser  
Youth: Timor Betzer, Serenity Crotser-Crowley, Eric Dierauer, Evan Heritage, Dyani Sinnett

### **From the Upper Elementary Group**

We are the Upper Elementary Group.  
We are all special.  
LEYM is a community.  
We are part of the community.

We are the Upper Elementary Group  
And we are here to show you  
Who we are and what we do.

Spencer likes playing jazz piano.  
Andrew likes playing video games.  
Nora likes making finger crafts.  
Louis - Louis likes to act.  
Nicholas likes studying animals.  
Amani likes running games.  
Sebastian likes reading — a lot!!

This is what we do at LEYM. (skit)  
We play games that involve teamwork and cooperation.

We meet and make new friends.  
We see old friends.

We take walks in nature - and cross the swinging bridge.  
We help one another.  
We share snacks.  
We learn about community.

Upper Elementary leaders: Peter Crowley and Angela Suarez  
Youth: Louis Suarez, Nicholas Suarez, Andrew Riley, Sebastian Betzer, Amani Crotser-Crowley, Spencer Keashly, Nora Sinnett, and Sam Spry

### **From the Middle Schoolers**

Dear Young Friends Everywhere,

Greetings from Lake Erie Yearly Meeting at Bluffton University, Ohio. The Yearly Meeting theme was “Moved by Faith Within Community.” While here, we were moved by the Spirit by jumping forward and running backwards at the track field. While at the track, we discovered faith in that we could win and found a competitive community in our mini-Olympic events. It felt good to go swimming at Twin Lakes with the fish after being hot and sweaty. Speaking of fish, some of us felt like fish out of water when we were folk dancing. During the dancing, we found a strong sense of community with everybody working together.

We were also moved by listening to David Bucura talk to us about Rwanda and life there for students. We learned that many poor people don’t have water, and how in Africa and most of the world, school is a privilege, not a right. We thought it was sad, and some of us felt selfish by comparison. We now are more appreciative of all the things that we have that others don’t have because we took them for granted and now we are more aware of what we use. While learning about Quaker schools, in Rwanda, El Salvador, and Bolivia, we found out that most school uniforms are blue, except in El Salvador, where they are red. Outside, the schools did not have much playground equipment.

We took joy in strawberry picking. We picked about 2 1/2 buckets of strawberries to share with the community surrounding us. We liked worship sharing. It was a good way to relax and interesting things were shared, but we did not like waking up early. We played some cooperative games including a blind game, teaching us to trust and have faith in the people/person leading in front of us as we moved about our community. We found community at dancing, at mini-Olympics (that was a competitive community), in picking strawberries together, and in cooperative games. We found faith at the track, and also we had faith in many various games. Throughout the weekend, we found faith and community here at Lake Erie Yearly Meeting.

Middle School leaders: Joe Mills and Clemence Mershon  
Youth: Brady Connor, Jessie Cooper, Brittany Crotser-Crowley, Meaghan Diffenderfer, Tori Pearson, Jody Pratt-Harrington, Will Smith

### **From the High Schoolers** (presented with rhythm and guitar chords)

This weekend started with joyous reunion, though not so joyous, since one of us had not yet arrived.

We went on a quest to the community market in search of DVDs, offering chances to bond and reach consensus.

We returned with giant icy Pops, 2 DVDs and joy.

We had a rousing round of Apples to Apples, which became less rousing, so we watched Narnia on a tweenie weenie screen, allowing us to bond as we were drawn closer together, literally.

We woke the next day feeling musical, and so we sang, badly. We realized that the bad singing didn't matter as much as the fact that we sang together.

We knotted and then unknotted successfully.

We broke the knot and ascended to the third floor where we listened with rapture and intrigue to John Barrie's tales of lush forests, awesome culture, amazing Quaker presence and coffee & cake in Costa Rica.

Then we fell from our high as we took in our dietary options. We wondered how it could be worse, and some said it could all be doused in vinegar.

We swam and it was good.

We ran to the showers & plenarized. "Did anyone hear what he said?" "We think it was about listening."

Together we walked the line & tried to sing Johnny Cash, badly again.

We went to the farmers' market in support of local community & our stomachs. We also went to the Thrift Store.

Then Kri talked to us about Young Quakes.

Then we went swimming & had group meditation & discussed interesting fruits & their lives. We came home an extra crispy shade of Red.

We contra-danced, which was more like a circle dance. Then we started a singalong, this time not badly, which helped us branch out into the larger community.

We disappeared into the dark and played sardines. We met a security guard who was concerned about our vinegar-doused friend. We did not see our friend Erin, who was dubbed "Erin the unfindable."

Then we played Apples to Apples, in a last attempt to meaningfully combine nouns and adjectives, kinda like this epistle.

High School group leaders: Paul Burkander and Becca Sommers

Youth: Katie Braun, Psyche Castro, Erin Diffenderfer, Zach Ford, Hannah Lelle, Christa Pratt-Harrington, Shannon Pratt-Hanington, Micah Sommer