

LAKE ERIE YEARLY MEETING

of the Religious Society of Friends

Michigan

Meetings

Ann Arbor
Birmingham
Detroit
Grand Rapids
Holland
Kalamazoo
Pine River (Mt. Pleasant)
Red Cedar (Lansing)

Worship Groups

Chelsea
Fremont
Manitou
Tustin

Ohio

Meetings

Akron
Athens
Broadmead (NW Ohio)
Cleveland
Delaware
Granville
Kent
Mid-Ohio Valley
(Marietta)
North Columbus
Oberlin
Wooster

Worship Groups

Circleville
Gallipolis Area
Sandusky

Pennsylvania

Meetings

Pittsburgh

Worship Groups

Erie
Indiana
South Hills

July 29, 2012

To Our Dear Friends Everywhere,

The forty-ninth Annual Sessions of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting were held July 26-29, 2012, on the campus of Bluffton University in Bluffton, Ohio. We were blessed with comfortable, warm temperatures—a welcome change from the extreme heat of the last several weeks. A bit of rain one evening brought some relief for our thirsty earth.

One hundred fifty-three Friends gathered for business and fellowship in the Spirit on the theme of “Finding Our Way: The Process of Discernment.” In Bible study, we followed this theme in such stories as Moses and the Israelites in the desert, and Mary and Joseph after the Annunciation. In worship sharing, we considered how we discern the difference between our will and God’s will. Workshops allowed us to study discernment in real-world issues such as violence and environmental degradation.

Our plenary speaker, Brent Bill of Western Yearly Meeting, captured our attention with humor and personal stories as he invited us to consider an interesting approach to the discernment process. He gave four criteria useful for testing a leading, presented as queries for action: the presence of Beauty, Truth, Life, and Love. Friends carried these queries with them, applying them to challenges both in our individual lives and as a corporate body.

Our Meetings for Worship with Attention to Business were held in a deep, worshipful mode, in which we heard reports from our Yearly Meeting committees, our Quarterly Meeting, national Quaker organizations, and two Friends Schools in our vicinity: Friends School in Detroit (Michigan) and Olney Friends School (Barnesville, Ohio). We welcomed the presence of staff members from Friends General Conference and Friends Committee on National Legislation as they participated fully in the long weekend of worship, business, and play. We were enriched by the visit of Friends from Tsuchiura Monthly Meeting of Japan Yearly Meeting.

In our deliberations, we labored tenderly with one another; our affirmations of each other and our Yearly Meeting body were gentle and Spirit-filled. Several visiting Friends shared with our clerk that they had noticed how the Spirit was moving among us as we conducted our business. This was particularly true as we wrestled with the report from the ad hoc committee on Advices and Queries. As Friends

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expressed both support and concerns, the quality of the silent spaces in the meeting continued to deepen. Creation of our own set of Advices and Queries was a four-year project, developed under the care of a committee bound together by Love in God, with ongoing assistance from Friends across our Yearly Meeting. With the approval of these Advices and Queries, we recognize that it is a living document, and our meeting will create a system for collecting insights to guide us in the future.

We heard reports from our representatives to the sixth World Conference of Friends in Kenya. Their experiences included being “moved and surprised,” finding “concord and conflict,” and witnessing “deep faith and discipline.” They expressed their sincere gratitude for being given this life-changing opportunity. Two other members of our yearly meeting were chosen to fill open places at the conference; both used their gifts in translating to help Friends to communicate and understand better and to listen behind the words.

We were enlivened this year by expanded numbers of teens in our midst, as the high-school teen retreat program met here during our annual sessions for the first time. In all, 34 children ages 2 to 18 came to Yearly Meeting; 17 of these were in the teen retreat program. Many dedicated adults joyfully gave their time and energy to the children’s program.

As our time together comes to a close, we return to our homes and monthly meetings, eager to share Brent Bill’s tools of discernment for finding our way. As you test your own leadings, may you also ask yourself, “Where is the Beauty? How is it True? Will it bring Life? Does it come from Love?”

In Faith and Light,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peggy E. Daub". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Peggy Daub, Clerk
Lake Erie Yearly Meeting