

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting
Sixth Month 17-20, 2004

To Friends Everywhere:

We welcome you from the 2004 gathering of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting held at Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio. We are surrounded by fertile farm fields and many of us have a distinct sense of place here: the motto of our Mennonite hosts emblazoned about the campus, "The Truth Makes Free"; the faint but lovely aroma of the linden trees.

The theme of our gathering has been "Integrity: Growing Wholeness From Our Roots." Early Friends spoke frequently and fervently about Truth. We find that a central aspect of integrity continues to be how to speak honestly about our experience. Building on this, our plenary speaker, Michael Birkel of Earlham College, said, "Integrity means to be engaged in the world.... [It] takes us to the wider world.... [It is the] expression of our gathered hope for a transformed world."

Michael Birkel emphasized that integrity has inward and outward dimensions. "We expect the spirit to transform us as individuals and then to guide us to go out and transform society." We saw both these dimensions echoed throughout our gathering. In workshops and our plenary we examined how we draw nourishment from our roots in the Bible and the experiences of early Friends. We explored how discernment of leadings is essential to a Truthful life.

Many of our workshops exemplified the outward witness called forth by inward discernment. We heard about the work of Friends House Moscow and Friends' witness to the U.S. Congress upholding the rights of Native Americans. We listened as our earthcare committee described how "the dream drives the action." We discussed how integrity is fostered in our families.

The future of our Society is rooted in our youth, and we were joyous to hear of the growing success of the high school program of our Yearly Meeting. We were also inspired to hear of the sense of hope, expectation, and achievement surrounding Friends School of Detroit, a racially and economically diverse school in the heart of urban Detroit. Friends School seems to exemplify another comment of our plenary speaker: "By practicing integrity we can be agents of hope for one another.... Integrity can be an agent of social change."

In Lake Erie Yearly Meeting it is our practice each year to compose a query for consideration by our monthly meetings. As must surely be the case in other Meetings, these queries are usually the result of a careful and deliberate search for clearness. This year, as we appeared to be reaching the end of such a process in our committee, one Friend spoke and offered a complete alternative. As a young tree takes root and thrives in carefully prepared ground, so the rightness of this query grew in our hearts and minds.

How long, oh God, how long must we remain complacent in our spiritual and physical relationships with earth and sun which sustain us? How may we alter these relationships in a restorative way?

On behalf of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting,
Sally Weaver Sommer, Clerk

Pre-School Epistle

Dear Friends,

The pre-school group at LEYM included newcomers Lily Herold and Noah Fox. We were joined by Samantha Keyes Sunday morning.

We decorated shirts, played with play dough, finger painted and created many pieces of art work.

Early Elementary School Epistle

We are a growing group of friends. We talked about growing and looked at things growing around us. We drew life-sized pictures of ourselves to show how big we are now, so we can see how we change.

We visited a farm where we fed chicks and ducks, looked at nesting hens and petted sheep and goats, and planted tomato plants. We saw a lot of corn growing on the way to the farm.

Saturday morning we visited the farmers' market. It was cloudy and cool and there were no strawberries. We ate peas and cinnamon rolls.

After the market we flew kites. Amani said, "It's like walking a dog, only up in the sky." Serenity's kite flew up on the first try. Sam made his kite come down, and then soar back up again. We lay in the grass and watched the kites fly, and watched the sky turn blue.

Then we knew we could go swimming again. The lake was deeper than we remembered, because of all the rain, but it was just as much fun.

We look forward to coming together next year to see how we've grown.

Serenity, Amani, Andrew, and Sam

Upper Elementary School Epistle

We made a hotel Thursday night, called Future Mania. We did not have many customers at first, but many more came later.

We made special designs that we could put on our T-shirts and window designs. We also put the designs that we chose on the stained glass windows.

We went to the track and we ran around the track. We cheered on a lady who ran 2 miles. We jumped on the "squishy thing," and we cheered her on.

We went swimming at the lake and the lake was flooded so there was hardly any beach. There were lots of children shoving each other off the dock.

Our teacher Steve brought in some artwork that he got from the Internet. We watched a movie and there was a mad person at the end. We drew designs all over Steve's shirt. There were pigs swimming in the lake and he was one of them.

When we went swimming I got onto the dock. Steve or Zack pushed me off the dock.

I made a collection of leaves on a poster for 4-H. And I made a family tree and some stained glass for the window.

I made a sand crab at the beach.

I found a dead crawdad and put it on Noah's sand crab.

We found cats in the bushes by the greenhouse. There were at least 7 kittens and the mother. They were really timid. Someone found a bag of cat food and we spread it to get the cats to follow. Some of the kittens were hurt and only the mother would let us pet her. We identified a cat who was fuzzy and white and we called her Fuzz Ball.

Ian Lore, Meg Diffenderfer, Brianna Edgerton, Jody Pratt-Harrington, Brittany Crotser Crowley, Sara Turner, Bradie Conner, Noah Hogan, and Sydney Keyes

Middle School Epistle

This year at LEYM we, the Middle School class, learned about integrity. Integrity means to do what you believe, and keep at that belief. We discussed integrity when we learned about Jesus and the three temptations. We also talked about how integrity affects our lives. We watched a movie called "Finding Nemo," where we talked about how the characters show integrity.

We also learned that the conscientious objectors in World War II refused to fight. While refusing to fight these COs improved the lives of people who were mentally ill. They desegregated the federal prisons. We also learned how COs volunteered for risky medical experiments.

We helped the community by making sure the ice cream at a local coffee shop wasn't poisonous, by eating some. With the arrival of three more people, our class played soccer and played with a parachute. After that, we had to go to sleep.

Saturday morning, we drew some interesting pictures and took part in an auction. We were auctioning off different things or events that could happen to you in life. The things you bought demonstrated what means the most to you.

Later we had a fun time at the nature preserve. Before we left Bill Hummon hunted us down and took a few pictures of our group. We came back from the nature preserve and ate lunch. We then talked about the civil rights movement and how integrity played a part in it. We ate dinner and attended the ice cream social. Our group watched the high school skit and all of the youth joined in a game of Kick the Can.

Shannon Pratt-Harrington, Will Smith, Julie Cross, Monica Edgerton, and Jessica Warmke

High School Epistle

Skit of an Integrity Anonymous meeting

Zach: I'm Zach. I have been clean for three months.

Group: Hi, Zach.

Micah: This is the Integrity Anonymous meeting; the NA meeting is down the hall.

Zach: Oh, okay. Thank you.

Abby: Hi, I'm Abby. I've been integrifull for 17 years. [claps] I can honestly say that this weekend I did not go on a nature walk and participated in "the process." Thank you.

Psyche: I've been integritis for 3 days. I can honestly say that I have gone on no nature walks and I have been sleep deprived. My sponsor Jim came and spoke about the Christian Peacemaker Teams which filled us with integritive thoughts and hopes. Thank you.

Two Erins [in unison]: Our name is Erin. We have been integri-fied for one month. We honestly made masks that looked just like us – NOT! We quietly sat in meeting for worship, and can truthfully say we didn't go on any nature walks.

Micah: My name is George integritationisatonalised for I've gone on lots of nature walks, and went to every meeting for worship. I slept through the ice cream social, didn't play any mafia games and have never been God.

Erin: Is your last name Bush?

Lea: I have been integrigorious for 2 days. I was inspired to be integrifull after hearing Michael speak. I went on no nature walks, and I cleaned up with integrity. Thank you.

C: I have been integratious for 3 weeks. No, I did not go on any nature walks. Pat helped me find my integrity talking about FCNL. I napped for integrity on the dock, and then I was burnt, and then . . . I was picalized by apple cider vinegar. I went to Mexico which is all brown except for the colorful martinis. . .

Psyche: It's margaritas, and AA is down the hall.

Group recites the "integrity prayer": Integrity is the honor that comes from honesty and kindness while being strong enough to openly stand and live by what you believe.

Erin Diffenderfer, Psyche Castro, Zach Ford, Erin Hogan, Abby Pratt-Harrington, Micah Sommer, Lea, C, and 3 more