

14th day, Six month, 2009

Greetings to Friends Everywhere,

The Spirit of Love and Light grew among the 145 attenders of the 46th annual gathering of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting at Bluffton University, Bluffton, Ohio, June 11-14, 2009. With the welcome addition of many first-time attendees, we renewed old friendships and made new ones. Our theme of “Reflecting Light: Seeing Ourselves in the Other” gave us a platform on which we could explore together our interconnectedness.

Our plenary speaker, Max Carter of Guilford College, connected historical Quaker work with ‘the other’ in our region to present-day issues of prejudice and peace in the Middle East. He told us about the assistance Friends gave Native Americans between 1800 and 1833 in Indiana and Ohio, and pointed out that the lack of discernible long-term effects of these efforts need not diminish their worth. He also shared moving first-hand descriptions of the situation of Palestinians based on his many years of experience as a teacher at Ramallah Friends School and as a leader of study trips to Israel-Palestine. Despite the dire situation, he finds seeds of hope in the many different groups working for peace within and outside the region.

We demonstrated our connection to the wider world by endorsing the Earth Charter and approving two letters to U.S. political leaders asking them to sign an international treaty banning cluster bombs and urging a ban on the sale of military armaments to Israel while working harder for peace there.

We felt grief over the financial crises that are currently enveloping many communities, families, and individuals, as well as Quaker organizations and institutions, and were moved to make an additional gift to the Friends School in Detroit. We ask ourselves and all Friends everywhere to look at their own situations and consider how they might assist Friends’ work in the world.

We felt joy in deep worship and in seeking unity in our business meetings. Other joyful moments were spent appreciating the myriad gifts offered in a talent show that revealed other, unknown sides of Friends from teens to elders.

The enthusiasm and open-heartedness of our younger Friends gave us comfort and warmth throughout our time together. The supportive love they so freely gave each other reminded us to be open to connections with all those we meet. In worship sharing we heard witness to the value our youth programs have provided over the years. We are committed to revitalizing our high school program and intend to name a new coordinator soon.

As we spent this time together in community we recognized the commonalities that connect us to one another and to many groups of Friends around the world whose epistles this year showed similar concerns. We do see ourselves in the other, and through this recognize the spiritual and earthly ties that bind us in common needs and interdependence.

On behalf of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting,
Merry Stanford, Clerk