

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting

Religious Society of Friends

Monthly Meetings:

Akron
Ann Arbor
Athens
Birmingham
Broadmead
Cleveland
Delaware
Detroit
Grand Rapids
Granville
Kalamazoo
Kent
Mid-Ohio Valley
Monongalia
North Columbus
Oberlin
Pine River
Pittsburgh
Red Cedar
Wooster

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting
Held at Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio
Sixth Month 11-14, 1998

To Friends everywhere:

Grass and trees are greener in mid-June (11-14 June 1998) than in any other season, but the weather can be temperamental in western Ohio, where Bluffton College is located. First, sunshine welcomed Lake Erie Yearly Meeting Friends from Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Then, heavy thunderstorms caused streams to overflow, nearly swallowing the tents where some of our participants were staying. Fortunately, no one was hurt by the floods. Spirits remained as high as the water level.

Several special guests enriched our annual sessions. Amparo Acevedo from Guatemala and Helen Weigel from Wilmington Yearly Meeting represented Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), while Marian Beane and Bruce Birchard came from Friends General Conference (FGC) to present long-range plans and to discuss FGC's future in its second century. Marian and Bruce introduced Verne and Shirley Bechill as co-clerks of the 1999 FGC Annual Gathering that will be held within our yearly meeting (at Kalamazoo, Michigan), and spoke of this yearly meeting's work in helping to host that gathering. Mary Ellen Chijioke, curator of the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College, guided us in the preserving of LEYM records. Elizabeth Cave, an English Friend, organized the intergenerational program of poems, music and dancing.

Demos gracias a Dios por su amor y por su amiga Amparo. (Let us give thanks for God's love and for God's Friend Amparo.) Thanks to FWCC's program of "north-south" visitation and a quartet of interpreters, we were able to welcome Amparo Acevedo from Chiquimula, Guatemala, the Assistant Clerk of *Junta Anual Iglesia Evangélica Amigos de Santidad* (Guatemala Holiness Friends Yearly Meeting). We felt truly blessed to have had Amparo in our midst as she set an example by her dedication to spreading Jesus' teachings through all of her interactions with LEYM. Amparo taught us all, children and adults, Guatemalan songs, games and stories. She spoke about Guatemala's struggle to become a peaceful society after decades of war, and shared the Christian work of Chiquimula Friends.

George Fox said, "Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come, that your carriage and life may be preached among all sorts of people, and to them; then you come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone." The theme of our annual meeting this year, "Answering That of God in Every One," came out of our yearly meeting's concern over the hurt, anguish and perceived insensitivity which arose from the use of the Underground

Preparative Meetings:

Indiana

Worship Groups:

Albion
Chelsea
Erie
Fremont
Holland
Manitou

Railroad game at several Quaker gatherings.

We began our journey towards the spiritual work of this year's yearly meeting by asking each monthly meeting to respond to a sampling of queries on racial concerns that had been prepared by FWCC's 15th Triennial meeting, held in Kaimosa, Kenya in 1982, as they appear in the 1985 Pacific Yearly Meeting *Faith and Practice*. Each monthly meeting faithfully attempted to be truthful about recognizing and confronting racism as we still may find it in ourselves and in our Quaker groups.

Many LEYM Friends continued to prepare for yearly meeting as they participated in a May 1998 FWCC regional gathering, held in Ann Arbor, Michigan, at which Johann Maurer spoke to the theme, "Communicating in Conflict." We asked ourselves, "Do our real or perceived differences pull us away from the Light in which we live, thereby causing conflict?"

Paul Ricketts, a Friend, a former AFSC board member, and a member of the Fellowship of Friends of African Descent, brought us further along this journey. He asked us through his plenary speech to be aware, to be sensitive to, and to care about the struggles of those who still must ask for a sense of equality and still have to explain what it is. He recounted stories of racism as he has experienced it, within Quaker groups and gatherings, urging us to be aware that, in many ways, Quaker "people of color" still feel unequal, marginalized and frustrated. As he reminded us by quoting Mark 6:1-4, many times Jesus' leadings put him in conflict with his faith community. This was not an easy speech for Paul to make. We are grateful to Paul for his spiritual courage in bringing us a message that needs to be heard, even when it does not necessarily bring us comfort.

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting's Peace Committee recommended, and the yearly meeting endorsed, the "Statement by American Religious Leaders: Ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty." Members were also asked to personally approach their Senators and urge them to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. The statement and the list of senate signatories will be used by Friends Committee on National Legislation in its lobbying efforts in favor of this treaty. Further, both the Peace Committee and the yearly meeting affirmed one member's witness in Hebron (West Bank, Palestine), working with Christian Peacemaker Teams.

We rejoiced in, and were deeply grateful for, the spirit-led process of finding unity among ourselves on the difficult and deeply personal issue of sexuality and same-gender relationships. We held each other in the Light as we reaffirmed LEYM's minute #17 from 1993, recognizing "as our brothers and sisters, gays, lesbians and bisexuals." We give thanks that prayerful listenings of those concerns within our Ministry and Oversight Committee and our yearly meeting brought us together in a deeply gathered meeting.

On behalf of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting,

John Howell, Clerk

Pre-School Epistle

The preschool program would like to thank the parents of Meaghan, Amani, Emmett, Miranda, Trevor, Justin, Sam, and Brittany for sharing their children with us for the past three days. We have played, read stories, gone swimming, and taken walks together.

We give special thanks to all of the Friends who have shared their time with us. It has been a wonderful experience to get to know Adriana, a Bluffton College student from Bosnia.

We hope that these children have felt at home in Lake Erie Yearly Meeting and will continue to be a part of our group.

Respectfully,

Joyce Balderston

Elementary School Epistle

We traced pictures of ourselves and added things that we like or are good at — that of God in us.

We made candle holders with people moving cheerfully over the earth.

We did a play called “Horton Hears a Who” by Dr. Seuss.

We learned that a person’s a person, no matter how small. We *all* are important.

We found out that if someone says, “You’re the biggest blame fool in the jungle of Noel,” it might not be true.

We went swimming. It was fun because there were friends in the water.

We learned a Spanish song from Amparo, our Guatemalan Friend.

We played “Kick the Can” every night. It’s fun finding places to hide.

We made an English language game and flash cards for Spanish-speaking people in America.

Our children’s meeting for worship got flooded out.

The 1998 LEYM was a weekend of singing, dancing, storming, and fun.

Intermediate School I-pistle

(Note: the “I” in “I-pistle” stands for “Intermediate.”)

Everyone in the intermediate group arrived Thursday night. The next morning, breakfast included a good assortment of cereals, but there was much room for improvement in the quality of the prepared foods.

We joined our families for meeting for worship.

We saw a duck that we had met last year. She was nesting in the same spot. She had laid at least a dozen eggs.

We did some exercises and wrote some “Mad Libs.”

Later in the day, we made candle holders with Gretchen. Then we went swimming at Twin Lakes. We caught 18 crayfish in a rubber boat. We pushed each other off the dock until someone told us that we could not do that. *Bummer!*

That evening, we were rushed inside by some scaredy-cat parents who couldn’t tell the difference between a rainstorm and a tornado. Some of us played popcorn kernel

poker; others watched the Bulls/Jazz game. Still others enjoyed doing some more crafts with Gretchen.

On Saturday morning, something out of the ordinary happened. When those of us who were staying at the Bren-Dell dorm got up, we saw that the whole campground was flooded and that some of the tents were sailing away. We were scheduled to have meeting for worship at the Peace Throne but we couldn't because it was under water. We had meeting for worship inside with the adults.

After lunch, we watched a video called "The Long Walk Home." It was a good movie about the Montgomery, Alabama, bus boycott; it starred Whoopi Goldberg.

Then we started to work on this "I-pistle" and went swimming again.

After dinner, we had intergenerational activities. They included singing, dancing, and games, and also a play. One of our "Mad Libs" was read. Then, most of us played "Kick the Can" with the elementary kids.

On Sunday morning, we wrote some more "Mad Libs."

High School Epistle

Dear Friends,

In the Spirit of the Light, we gathered to form the High School program at Lake Erie Yearly Meeting, June 11-14, 1998, at Bluffton College in Bluffton, Ohio. We started out our weekend together by welcoming new members to our group.

On Friday, we visited the Mennonite Memorial Home, where we met a Quaker resident, a 97-year-old woman, and a "vivacious grandmother." After lunch, some of us learned the value of accepting differences through the video "Ordinary People," while others surfed the net to gain ideas about the still-being-formed LEYM web page. After a great time swimming at Twin Lakes, we returned to talk and play a game called "Elephants and Giraffes" with Amparo Acevedo, our Guatemalan visitor, and her interpreters Beth Joy and Erica. Following dinner, because of thunderstorms, we joined the younger groups for games, crafts and snacks, after which we joined the adults for friendly Quaker discussions while watching the Utah Jazz beat the Chicago Bulls in Game 5 of the NBA playoffs.

On Saturday, we participated in meeting for worship with the adults and listened to the plenary speaker, Paul Ricketts. He talked about the problem of racism within the Religious Society of Friends. Once again, we settled into meeting for worship and received the leadings of Friends about acknowledging and removing racism among Quakers. After discussing these topics among ourselves, we again logged onto the World Wide Web. There, we visited the web sites of various Quaker groups, including those of yearly meetings from all over the world.

Among our activities that afternoon, we built sand castles and got caught in a rainstorm at Twin Lakes. Intergenerational activities, followed by games outside until dark, completed our recreation. The end of the night brought popcorn and socializing.

All in all, we had a great time, and we look forward to next year.

In the Light,

The 1998 LEYM High School Gathering