

# Southeastern Yearly Meeting 2016 Epistle

## Loving Greetings to Friends Everywhere:

Southeastern Yearly Meeting gathered in Fruitland Park, Florida, in Third Month 23-27, 2016 with 133 Friends in attendance, including 17 children. The joyous comments about the beauty of our setting by visitors from Quaker organizations, reminded us to appreciate how fortunate we are to meet at The Life Enrichment Center on Lake Griffin. We are ever mindful of the benefit offered us by nature as we worship beneath the ancient live oaks and listen to the ministry of birdsong.

Peacebuilder Bridget Moix delivered the Walton Lecture on our theme 'Active Peace: Friends Ministry of Hope in a Despairing World' in which she shared a framework of understanding to guide us in our peacemaking efforts. In her workshops, YM Friends heard stories of peacemakers from around the world and were led through a series of small group discussions exploring our stories and where we sought the spiritual nurture needed to be peacemakers. Sharing from her extensive life experience as a peacebuilder, Bridget gave us valuable insight into the wealth of peacemaking efforts around the world as well as concrete resources to support our work and witness for peace.

Friends expressed gratitude for the quotes and queries, which gave rise to spirit, led reflection in our worship sharing groups. We delved deeply in personal consideration of the theme 'Active Peace', seeking to recenter and renew ourselves to be strong in meeting the challenges ahead, and to be open to act upon the leading of spirit. We are also grateful to the many Friends who shared their gifts and leadings through a wide variety of informative and inspiring workshops.

Our youth are continuing their climate change work and witness with focus on water issues. They brought forward strategies in which both individual Friends and Monthly Meetings can participate in addressing this concern. Part of this work includes creatively raising donations to support the Field Secretary for Earthcare.

Friends were excited to receive a report from the Field Secretary for Earthcare Search Committee. Having developed a job description and an ad, SEYM is moving forward to fill the position. Friends look forward to fulfilling our commitment to act on climate change.

The Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) report was another highlight of our gathering. Hearing the epistle of 320 Friends from around the world, who gathered in Peru, while seeing their faces, was a touching opportunity to connect with our brothers and sisters from around the world. SEYM Friends mirrored this connection among Friends through our active participation in conversation, study, worship and intergenerational dance and play.

SEYM Friends feel renewed in our call to be faithful and look forward to using what we have shared and learned in seeking to fulfill our call to be active peacemakers.

In the Light,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joel Cook', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Joel Cook  
YM Assistant Clerk, Presiding

## 2016 SEYM YAQ Epistle

The YAQs arrived Thursday night and set up their tent before the storm. The YAQs slept with four mosquitos. Aurelio had a far less peaceful night than Michelle.

Friday morning was very eventful and filled with excitement as the YAQs and the teens climbed the ropes course. Following lunch, the YAQs prepared and presented the work they have been doing with FCNL and other actions. The YAQs are grateful for the strength that the older Friends provide as they continue to make the world a better place. Friday night was spent dancing and having a joyous evening.

Saturday was far more relaxed and spent in reflection. First, the YAQs participated in Worship Sharing where we were particularly interested in the query about faithfulness and effectiveness. Then we participated in a YAQ nature appreciation hike/walk where we discussed pertinent issues. Following lunch, we played Capture the Flag with a very fun/controversial ending. The YAQs then joined the younger Friends to discuss issues that impact us with Bridget Moix. Following dinner, the YAQs were happy to participate in the Walton Lecture. Following the Walton Lecture, the YAQs participated in a game of Bananagrams.

Sunday was spent preparing for our departure. We felt this Yearly Meeting was very reflective and impactful. There is discussion for next year to focus on political action/advocacy and issues for the future.

## 2016 Teen's Epistle

*To Friends everywhere,*

The teen program started out with a bang on Friday on the high ropes course. We enjoyed the challenges of the giant's ladder, leap of faith, and the rock wall. Two Young Adult Quakers (YAQs), Michelle and Aurelio, led a great workshop on their experience with FCNL and inspired us to call our congressmen and write letters to the editors. Friday night we enjoyed dancing with Gary Arthur at the intergenerational dance and listening to the faith and no practice band.

This year we welcomed many new people of all ages to SEYM and we enjoyed getting to know them personally. We look forward to welcoming them back next year and anticipate sharing many more laughs. With intergenerational capture the flag we all got to have fun, work together as a team and try to win a super fun game. It was great watching the little kids running for the flags and it was great (for some people) to watch Hoyt run with the flag and win (sort of). Getting to know the little kids made the gathering great. It was really fun to eat meals with them, teach them how to make bracelets, and play games with them.

How good was the food at SEYM? Turns out it was pretty good. All of the food was catered by the wonderful Life Enrichment Center staff. We ate an assortment of delicious foods, such as the lasagna and Cuban sandwiches as well as a ton of options for our vegan and vegetarian members. Meal times were also a fun time to get to know everyone in the youth program.

Saturday morning began at worship sharing led by Susan Taylor, which we loved. In the afternoon, we went to a workshop on the environmental effect of prisons. There, the teens and others learned about the prison ecology project and the campaign against toxic prisons and in support of eco-prisoners. Later that night we enjoyed playing bananagrams and other intergenerational games during snacks. Several of us attended a discussion for Friends with identities like queer, trans, polyamorous, bisexual, nonmonosexual, lesbian, straight, gay, *really* gay, and "getting gayer all the time," where we learned more about each other and share stories, ideas, and favorite ice cream flavors. We learned that friends have very diverse fashion styles and they can represent deeper meanings.

Before the Walton lecture, Bridget Moix, the Walton lecturer, came to talk to the teens and some young friends. It was really cool to hear how she got involved in peace activism in the Quaker community and talk to her about issues we were passionate about in the Quaker community. The Walton lecture this year taught us about six stones/steps to active peace. We were able to relate to the stories and examples for each stone even though the project book after the second stone (projectors have no defense against stones).

Last year at yearly meeting we decided we wanted to work on environmental issues surrounding water. At this year's gathering, this broad topic manifested into a bracelet project. The teens started making bracelets for Friends to wear home as a reminder to help the environment. The bracelet making served as a great way to get to know Friends of all ages. We designed a card with ideas of action that varied in level of involvement. The level of involvement was represented by ocean zones where the top layer of the ocean had easier actions and the actions got more involved as you went deeper. We are also donating the proceeds from the bracelets to the new earth care field secretary position in our yearly meeting. We encourage you to also take environmental action in your community!

Sincerely,

the SEYM Teens

(Kate Sundberg, Lis Sundberg, Vincent Cosomano, Vincent Cobbs, Andre Ajabshir, Sara Humphrey, Ezra Merleaux)

## 2016 Junior & Young Friends Epistle

We conquered our fears by jumping off a 30' pole - The Leap of Faith - and were caught by our friends. We climbed a rock wall and worked together to climb Giant's Ladder.

We made bee hotels out of bamboo to encourage pollination. One even had wifi. We played Capture the Flag, Wildcraft, Banana Grams, croquet, and Frisbee. We watched a movie called "Akeelah and the Bee." We did chalk drawings, did crafts, and played piano.

Those of us who couldn't go on the ropes course were disappointed, but we got to listen to Cathy Gaskill tell a story about Harriet Tubman and Deborah Sampson.

We met and played with dogs Blue and Doc. We made and renewed friendships. We (barely) survived a big storm. On Saturday evening, we danced. We did animal yoga and came up with an ostrich pose. Several of us made bulls-eyes in archery.

We talked about the Good Samaritan and shared stories about when we had done a good deed or witnessed a good deed.

Sincerely,

Audrey, Brendan, Bronwyn, Hoyt, Kemisha, Kiran, Leo, Lily and Priya, and Aaron, Cassie and Lena