

South Central Yearly Meeting Friends, March 28-31, 2013

Greetings to Friends Everywhere,

One hundred fifty-six Friends from Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas met at Greene Family Camp in Bruceville, Texas to share in the workings of the Spirit. For the second year, we explored the Quaker testimonies. Last year we came to understand how the testimonies flow from a person's relationship with the Divine. This year we examined the ways in which the testimonies are revealed through our lives, drawing on the experiences of SCYM Friends.

In preparation for Yearly Meeting, Friends from Bayou Quarterly asked SCYM Friends to send in personal stories of how we live the testimonies. Many Friends shared their experiences, and their responses were presented by a panel of readers at Yearly Meeting. The stories demonstrated that many paths offer us the possibility of living faithfully. Friends incorporated the testimonies in their jobs, volunteerism, service in the Quaker community, and every day activities. For some, the traditional Quaker decision to affirm rather than swear was deeply meaningful in the context of school, the courtroom, and a naturalization ceremony for new citizens.

A key component of our experience was participation in Home Groups, in which we worshipped and went deeper into topics. Many of us found this practice emotionally and intellectually satisfying. We got to know each other as we discussed how we experienced Quaker values, how we conceived the different testimonies, and what challenges we faced in living them.

Earlier, members of the Oklahoma/Arkansas Quarterly expressed an interest in Quaker Work Projects, particularly those involving Adult Young Friends. In response, SCYM invited Byron Sanford and Mike Gray, from William Penn house, to discuss their experiences with work camps and service projects.

We learned that for work camps to be successful it is necessary to develop an ongoing alliance between the Quaker group and community members, so that

both groups participate as equals. The discussion stimulated thought on the possibility of doing service projects within SCYM territory.

SCYM sent representatives to FGC's New Meetings Project consultation. Their report triggered a lively debate of the relative importance of supporting small struggling meetings versus starting new meetings. Friends admitted that we are not caring for small meetings adequately.

Our keynote speaker, Gray Cox from Acadia Friends Meeting in Bangor, Maine, spoke from the heart about the Quaker Institute for the Future (QIF), discussing work the Institute is doing. He introduced the idea of Meeting for Worship to conduct research. He encourages the practice of Peace as an activity to cultivate a culture of peace in place of the existing culture of conflict. He concluded by leading the group in singing a three-part round that included a verse, humming and animal noises of all kinds, which Friends enjoyed tremendously!

We appreciated updates provided by staff from FGC, AFSC, William Penn House and FCNL.

We had a variety of workshops on various topics including presentations by three SCYM authors. George Michael Payne wrote a book on World Peace, Nancy Pyle wrote three children's books, and May Mansoor Munn wrote a novel set in Palestine.

The children had a lot of fun, some even taking the initiative to create their own skits. The activities concluded with the traditional Easter Egg Hunt.

We return to our Meetings refreshed by the Spirit but conscious that we must find ways to support the many small meetings in SCYM through our efforts and with the help of resources from larger Quaker organizations.