

# South Central Yearly Meeting

*of the Religious Society of Friends in  
Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, & Texas*



Greetings to Friends everywhere,

South Central Yearly Meeting gathered at Greene Family Camp in Bruceville, Texas on Easter weekend, April 13-16, 2017.

This Easter, South Central Yearly Meeting celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup> season at Greene Family Camp. Friends gather in this bucolic setting to find refuge and peace and to settle in the joyous work of our annual meeting. Our location deeply informed our experience. The camp is owned by the Union for Reform Judaism and is filled with the vibrant art of Jewish Children. The wildflowers were in full bloom, and the often-temperamental Texas weather brought sunshine, clouds, breezes and no rain. This allowed nature walks and boating to solidify our connection to the living earth. At night we could see planets and stars in the dark sky.

Our silences were punctuated with birdsong; in evenings Friends gathered in fellowship in the dining hall with instruments to bring music and song, and in daytime children's voices brought smiles to all.

Workshops, mealtimes and meetings around the spacious campus meant long treks between rustic buildings. We brought wheeled vehicles to navigate the campus from babies in strollers to elderly using walker's, younger friends on bicycles, and the wheels on everyone's luggage. Inside the theater, we saw a framed painting of the tree of life which was echoed on an attendee's body.

Cielo Grande Quarterly Meeting brought us this year's theme, "Climate Change, Environmental Racism, Friends' faith and practice: What's the connection?"

This proved timely as planning progressed. Current events echoed these concerns, namely the Dakota Access Pipeline protest. Guests and speakers from Standing Rock, along with many of our own members brought their histories, their expertise and their passions to provide timely, informative and inspiring workshops, home groups, keynotes and panel discussions.

Our faith and practice must remain the foundation supporting our work, as it inspires all peoples who are called to act in community on their shared concerns.

We grow in our awareness of white privilege and its effects, and were called to use this consciousness for positive change. The urgent need to address climate change should inspire our personal choices and our activism when we return to our homes and communities. A Friend who is a water protector encouraged us to stop using plastic straws to decrease our use of plastic and protect marine life. These small individual changes can make huge collective environmental impacts.

Yearly Meeting brought together friends from across Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana; some traveling over 500 miles to spend a few days amongst Quakers. We heard reports from the Friends we send to 10 Quaker organizations and five ecumenical and local activist groups in the states. We saw young hipsters, hip oldsters and all sorts of Friends in between.

Intergenerational relationships are deep and essential to many of us. As mostly convinced Friends from small and isolated Meetings we value this spiritual Fellowship even when we struggle together for right protocol and procedure. Our project for writing our own Faith and Practice was reinvigorated this year, and the committee remained most concerned that we express our uniqueness.

As liberal Quakers in the mostly conservative south we struggle to maintain our presence in our communities. Questions were raised on our relationship with Friends General Conference. Programs that were utilized have faded, although we remain true to the values exemplified by FGC. For us, we need to move past the old paradigms and create new relationships among monthly meetings, our yearly meeting, and FGC that are based on mutual participation.

Seeing our youth program expand this year, as more youth attended and more adults were inspired to facilitate them, was gratifying for all. We will be sure to take this fellowship and our role as protectors of each other and our creation home with us.

## **Young Friends Epistle**

This year we have done many amazing things. We had a lot of fun and a great time. Some of the things we did were our epic boating adventure at Jake lake, where Ryan and Luke attempted to capsize Jordan's kayak, throughout the day we attended a variety of interesting workshops which included the standing rock lecture presented by Cheryl Angel, where she talked about her time protesting the North Dakota Pipeline and some of the protests that she lead. She described how she changed the game from being non-violent to forgiving the police for what they were doing, and how that made a huge difference in the outcome of the protest. Then we also did some team building/icebreaking games with Ben. Later that night we also played wink and spent some time in the game room hanging out.

This year we decided to start our own recycling system, by using a separate garbage bag that one of us will bring home with us. Our hope is to get a recycling system officially installed at Greene Family Camp in the near future.

On Saturday, we started with a peaceful hike around the camp, where we took in the beautiful scenery and Molly got a splinter. Some of us might have taking a nap afterwards but it was necessary to our mental health. After lunch, we ventured to the ropes course (which we helped pay for) and set new time records. Every year we time ourselves and try and do better. Currently the high score is 2 min 40 sec and that was done on the hardest path possible. Some of us went swimming instead of climbing and got to "enjoy" the freezing water.

Next, we'd like to recognize one of our young friends, Crystal Redfield, who ran her own workshop titled, "the friends with different abilities in educational computer game workshop", which is basically a workshop, where she walked through how to make educational video games. She also did a spectacular job MCing for family fun night. Nice Job Crystal!!

Yesterday we improved our skit planning by spending a few more minutes than usual preparing, which is unusual for us, especially after the last couple of rough years we've had. During the show we enjoyed listening to the music and PUNS, after which we spent the rest of the night in the YF room making pizza. Unfortunately, we didn't have any dough this year so we used tortillas instead, which were pretty good. Finally, we wrote our epistle last night with plenty of "energetic" input from everyone, and then being the teenagers we are, we stayed up "slightly" past bedtime playing games and joking around.

Next year we plan to make and sell T-shirts, inspired by the silent auction we had yesterday. The money we raise mainly goes towards helping to pay for the ropes course, which we are the ones to mainly use it. We also hope to bridge the age gap with the elementary kids by teaching them how to roller skate in exchange for the ability to skate ourselves. All in all, this was a great year for reuniting with our old friends and making new ones. We all had a wonderful time and look forward to coming back next year!! :)

## **Junior Young Friends Epistle**

We the Junior Young Friends of the year 2017, would like to thank our Friendly Adult Presences (FAPs) and everyone else who helped make this an amazing weekend. Some things we enjoyed were boating, clay, games and the rope course. However, we would enjoy this more if we had more snacks, swimming time, nap time and better movies. We would also enjoy it if we had more opportunities to gather during the year.

Sincerely,

The Junior Young Friends of 2017