

LAKE ERIE YEARLY MEETING

of the Religious Society of Friends

Michigan

Meetings

Ann Arbor
Birmingham
Detroit
Grand Rapids
Holland
Kalamazoo
Pine River (Mt. Pleasant)
Red Cedar (Lansing)

Worship Groups

Chelsea
Fremont
Manitou
Tustin

Ohio

Meetings

Akron
Athens
Broadmead (NW Ohio)
Cleveland
Delaware
Granville
Kent
Mid-Ohio Valley
(Marietta)
North Columbus
Oberlin
Wooster

Worship Groups

Circleville
Gallipolis Area
Sandusky

Pennsylvania

Meetings

Pittsburgh

Worship Groups

Erie
Indiana
South Hills

July 28, 2013

To Friends Everywhere:

Lake Erie Yearly Meeting gathered in Bluffton, Ohio, July 25-28, 2013. We celebrated our 50th anniversary with the theme “Growing in Grace,” by sharing stories of our past and continuing to envision our future. Throughout the weekend, we shared the stories of those who have gone before us. These stories of Friends’ lives and faith strengthened our own as we considered how to live our faith more fully.

At our annual Memorial Meeting for Worship we held in the Light the inspiring lives of a number of Friends who died in the previous year. Their faithfulness and unique gifts helped build a yearly meeting community that continues to nourish us. We learned sobering things about the wartime experiences of some of these Friends that we wished we had known while they still lived.

We gathered in a plenary session to hear the stories of four of our members who lifted up the history of our yearly meeting from the perspectives of a young adult Friend who grew up in the yearly meeting, a Friend who has anchored the children’s program for 19 years, a former clerk who helped found the yearly meeting, and a former clerk who led the Meeting through a divisive and tender issue. Each of them spoke in their own way about our blessed community, the “village of becoming” that is Lake Erie Yearly Meeting. They reminded us of some precious stories, among them:

- The child who sat inside the chalk drawing of the whale, during the story of Jonah and the Whale, and replied when asked what he thought the story was about, that “Jonah didn’t do what God said to do so he got put in time out.”
- The time, while we were still meeting at Olney Friends School, when a group of our children bounded joyously up to a silent, Conservative meeting for worship singing “This Little Light of Mine,” and were met with glorious smiles.
- And a Friend’s reminder that “...at the end of the day we appreciate and accept each other. We try to work through our issues in a loving way. And I can’t think of a more beautiful form of Grace.”

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Following the plenary, we had an experience with yarn that our clerk thought would help us experience our connectedness while walking in an orderly fashion to the next activity. Instead, the yarn was messy, tangled, and difficult to walk with, a metaphor for our life together. But everyone cooperated well and stuck with it, in spite of its difficulty. We were faithful to the journey. And we had fun doing it! We eventually worked our way to the dining room where we discovered an awesome and inspiring 18 foot long timeline illustrating highlights from our 50 year history. Hanging above the timeline were 17 tee shirts made by the youth over the years, each illustrating a theme of LEYM's annual sessions or one of the youth retreats.

The celebration of our community included identification with the communities in which we live and with communities around the world. During our annual sessions we received a report from the eighteen participants of LEYM's first work camp. The group shared their experiences working in a Habitat for Humanity Restore and a soup kitchen in Lima, Ohio, a distressed city twenty miles from Bluffton. Members of the yearly meeting expressed their desire to incorporate service experiences into the life of our yearly meeting on a regular basis.

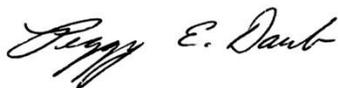
We were led to express our concern for the suffering of Israeli, Palestinian, and other indigenous people and the need for a just agreement regarding lands that Israel has occupied, illegally, according to international law, since 1967. We approved a minute calling for Friends to join a boycott of products made in Israel's illegal West Bank settlements and to divest from companies that support Israel's military occupation and repression of the Palestinian people.

We have also been sadly aware of the challenges faced by Indiana Yearly Meeting and Friends School in Detroit. We hold all those affected in Love and Hope as they face these challenges.

Our meeting united to offer a traveling ministry to our monthly meetings and worship groups that is focused on authentic speaking and tender listening, lifting up hope, encouraging faithfulness, and testifying to the transformative power of the gathered meeting. We look forward to stronger bonds of connection among us, and the fruits that will be harvested from this ministry.

Over the course of our time together, our hearts were lightened, our souls refreshed, and our spirits exercised. As we share this portion of the story of our "crucible of community," we pray that your spirits will be tendered and nourished, that your stories will be remembered and will inspire, and that the Spirit of Love and Light may weave the tapestry of our religious society more closely together, drawing us into a greater unity.

On behalf of Lake Erie Yearly Meeting,



Peggy Daub, Clerk