



12 April, 2009

To All Friends — Worldwide,

We gathered at the Florida United Methodist Life Enrichment Center, Leesburg, Florida for the 47th Southeastern Yearly Meeting for worship with a concern for business, on April 8-12, 2009.

A breeze was at our backs this year, bringing visiting Friends from afar to help us discern and be faithful to the winds of the Spirit:

*The wind blows where it pleases;
you can hear its sound,
but you cannot tell where it comes from
or where it is going.
So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.*

—John 3:8 *The New Jerusalem Bible*

This year the Walton workshops and lecture were given by Mary Ellen McNish, General Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee. Her topic dealt with the hopes and struggles of her life, of the American Friends Service Committee, and of the Society of Friends. Both insightful and at times disturbing, the breadth of Mary Ellen's faithful service in the light was clearly evident and is an example of Rufus Jones' exhortation:

Love won't do it without the human hand and the human heart. —Elizabeth Watson, 1980

In the discussion that followed, working for Compassionate peace was compared with working for a Just peace. Either way, "*Do not hesitate to stand with the oppressed.*" —Elizabeth Watson, 1980

This year's agenda also included a reopening of the Friends United Meeting affiliation concern after a two-year respite for seasoning and prayerful consideration. We were blessed and thankful for the presence of FUM's General Secretary, Sylvia Graves, throughout this week and wish to publish here the minutes agreed upon in our closing plenary session:

Lyn Cope was minuted as standing aside from approval of the first minute as she considered it unnecessary repetition:

09YBM11: With regard to the following language from SEYM minute 07YBM15 approved two years ago:

"If at the end of the two year period our membership is not in unity to renew the relationship, SEYM will permanently lay down our membership in F.U.M.," we are in unity that one yearly meeting session's discernment cannot be directed by another, and that Yearly Meeting 2009 is not bound by that 2007 directive. We cannot be bound by the action prescribed in that minute, as we realize that discernment, being a corporate process, cannot be held in default from a discussion which was unresolved in its own time. Our discernment about affiliation with FUM is an ongoing process, and needs to

acknowledge continuing revelation. It will be discerned when the Spirit has led us into unity.

09YBM12:

With regard to the worshipful process in which we have engaged this year in order to discern our way forward, including meetings of the ad hoc discernment committee as well as business sessions at this yearly meeting, the results are incomplete. We moved with an intention of not letting this issue drain the energy of our gathering, and so allowed that other concerns and Yearly Meeting business have their allotted time. We did hear strong witness to feelings of pain and abuse brought on by the existence of the FUM Personnel Policy. We also heard a call to wait with fresh patience in order to let us try what love will do. We heard a call for engagement being the way of conflict resolution. We recognize that our body is fatigued by our engagement in this issue. We are both frustrated and blessed in our efforts to resolve the issue, and we will need to find time to do so. Until then, our formal membership in FUM will remain suspended. SEYM fully supports and values the spiritual gifts of our gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer Friends, and we are in unity that we do not accept FUM's existing personnel policy. We will contribute to selected FUM projects, and we will continue to support observers to FUM gatherings and to welcome visitors from FUM among us. We seek to maintain a loving relationship with Friends United Meeting.

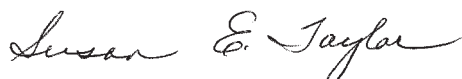
Throughout the week, workshops were plentiful, the weather sensational, and our children wonderful. The Wee Friends' presentation of Jack and the Beanstalk—a Quaker perspective—was as charming as our Teen Friends' upcoming ProNica trip to Nicaragua is inspiring. Early worship by the lake began each day with the reaffirming presence of the Spirit.

As our First Day session closed and we sat in open worship, we were mindful, and we wish to remind you, dear reader:

*That the only security is love —
the love we have given
and the love we have received.*
—Elizabeth Watson, 1980

Our business complete,
Our worship ended,
Our service begins anew.

In God's love,



Susan Taylor, Clerk

Epistle Committee: Peter Ackerman, Mimi McAdoo, Rolf Hanson,
Ann Sundberg, and Steve Kinney



SOUTHEASTERN YEARLY MEETING OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS
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Southeastern Yearly Meeting

Middle and Teen Friends/Jr. Yearly Meeting Epistle

April 8- 12, 2009

This Wednesday we convened for the Junior Yearly Meeting. We started our Help Increase the Peace workshop, or HIPP, by designating the gold room as a no put-down zone. On Thursday, we talked about what we define as violent and nonviolent acts. Continuing our HIPP workshop, we discussed different ways of handling and reacting to potentially violent situations. Then during the river crossing game, we collaborated with each other and practised team working skills. Later, we discussed human nature and whether all of us are inherently violent. On Friday, our focus turned to transforming power. However, we first listened to Cathy Gaskill relate old memories of her father at Fisk University and his quartet with Bayard Rustin. Afterwards, we participated in a game of Jailbreak and, during discussion, utilized the gathering statement: "the weirdest thing I ever ate was..." That afternoon, we held a fish bowl with the adults and learned about their views on legalization of drugs. During the fish bowl, we were asked questions to do with our views on our peers. These questions later came into play when the representatives from AFSC, Tim and Darlene, told us about counter recruiting. Saturday, we talked about prejudice and discrimination. Later, those of us joining the Nicaragua trip convened and were advised on what to do and definitely not to do. That afternoon, those of us not going to Nicaragua, hipped and hopped as the Easter Bunnies for our younger Friends. That night, we finished HIPP and proceeded to convene our Meeting for Worship with concern for Business and nominated two clerks, David Hersh and Zach Loomas. We decided our theme for next year will be world cultures. That night, or rather this morning, teen movie night ended. Throughout this Gathering, we have collected donations for the Nicaragua trip by selling our home-made goods such as cake-in-a-cup and strawberry jam. Those who participated in this exciting venture are quite proud of their progress of \$611.00 fund raising for the trip with the help of Davida Johns.

Young and Wee Friends Epistle, SEYM

April 8-12, 2009

The young and wee Friends, though small in number, were a closely knit group. Through creating puppets and scenery for their play, as well as rewriting a story to use Quaker values, they explored the testimonies of stewardship, community, and simplicity.

Signed: Catherine, Karen, Tor, Lis, Kate, Christi, Ann, Alina, and Keiran.

