

Southeastern Yearly Meeting

of the Religious Society of Friends

Epistle 2023

Loving Greetings to Friends Everywhere,

Southeastern Yearly Meeting gathered for its 59th sessions from Forth Month 5th through 9th Days. The meeting sessions were hybrid, allowing Friends at a distance to join with those in person to conduct Yearly Meeting business. In-person, we met at the Dayspring Conference Center at Parrish, FL. This was a new location and facility for us. Our in-person gathering was full of joy and laughter.

145 Friends gathered for our sessions; 108 in-person (88 adults and 20 youth) and 37 on-line. We were also joined, on-line, by Friends from the Havana (Cuba) Unprogrammed Worship Group. The short virtual visit by Friends from Cuba, with a message from Alejandro Castellanos, the Clerk of the Worship Group, was a source of great joy. Alejandro expressed hope for the day when we can meet together in-person at Havana. We look forward to this day, also.

We welcomed Friends from other Yearly Meetings and Friends organizations, including FGC, FCNL, Right Sharing of World Resources, AFSC. It is a joy to meet with Friends beyond the borders of our own Yearly Meeting.

Our theme this year was “Deepening at the Root: Tending the Source of Our Worship & Witness.” Christopher Sammond brought us the Walton Lecture and two (2) retreat sessions. The retreat sessions gave us the opportunity to experience deep listening to each other and the Spirit, to share deeply with each other, gaining skill in tending to the Source. Opportunities for worship, fellowship, and workshops offered us further ways to deepen our spiritual lives together.

Our Yearly Meeting committed to maintaining our Field Secretary for Earthcare position by changing from a program supported by separate donations to part of the general administrative budget.

Togetherness
Unity
Boldness
Flowing
Like the murmuration of starlings
Love
Rabbits and raccoons at worship
Snakes sunning
Spirit moving

Sometimes one despairs that one has lost their way
We are not alone
We have not bowed to Baal
We are all the beloved

We are all the wounded and the healed
The lost and found
The betrayer and the Savior
The persecutor and the persecuted
Children of the Light we are still here
Our hearts are of one accord
Our steps move as one
Yet each has its own rhythm
Our dance in the river of Life

Blessings and Peace to You All in Light
Southeastern Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Southeastern Yearly Meeting

Youth Epistle 2023

Dear friends,

We want to share our experiences at the SEYM yearly gathering of 2023. This year, the theme for the youth and young adult program was the natural world that we live in.

On Thursday, we started out with an inter-generational zombie apocalypse workshop, where attendees could express and share ideas on what they would do in the case of an apocalypse or natural disaster.

Friday morning, we took part in an activity that focused on how the five senses can be emphasized and heightened in nature. We also spoke about the importance of acknowledging all senses, instead of focusing on just 2 or 3.

We then went on a canopy walk while using this knowledge to be increasingly aware about what we see, feel, touch, taste, and hear. Once we were back at the youth center, we had a lot of fun constructing seed balls that would be beneficial to all gardens.

Later on, many of us enjoyed a high ropes course that challenged us mentally and physically. We practiced understanding the differences between the danger your body thinks you're in, and the danger you're actually in. One of the instructors, Erica, also urged us to look at how we want to be supported by others, and to remember the importance of asking friends the same question to best suit their preferences.

During the high ropes course, everyone also practiced learning their limitations of how far they can go before hitting a healthy place to stop. We learned how much challenges are based off of mental strength as opposed to physical strength.

After reconvening, a member of our youth group hosted a talent show available to anyone who wanted to participate and share their gifts with the community. There were many interactive acts, including laughing yoga and hand-held dancing/singing as a group to feel connected.

After the talent show, there was a welcoming campfire that many gathered around and enjoyed. Meanwhile, young adults and youth clerks met and discussed if a Quaker stance on abortion should be taken by the FCNL, and why.

In the early Saturday morning, youth group members partook in a healthy worship meeting that prompted thought about many topics surrounding nature. We then began our business discussion, where we formed committee groups that nominated next year's clerks, wrote the epistle, and discussed potential activities for future meetings.

We ended by having a youth centered discussion with a representative from FCNL in regards to the Quaker community's stance on Abortion. Soon after, those who wanted to go canoeing had lots of fun in the cove, practicing communication and teamwork.

We then gathered to play a friendly but intense game of capture the flag, after which we ate and played board games. Lastly, there was an LGBTQIA+ affinity group for anyone who wanted to join.

On Easter Sunday, we reflected on our time together, and wrapped up with a fun and engaging Easter egg hunt!