

PACIFIC YEARLY MEETING

of the RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

PACIFIC YEARLY MEETING, 2003 EPISTLES

Dear Friends Everywhere,

It feel great when we see each other, even once a year. We play Legos. Sometimes we eat together. We play Pokemon and Infinity Warriors of the High Mist, after breakfast.

We like to read your epistles, especially from preschool kids like us. It is great to know each other. We like you a lot. Thank you, India, for saving the tigers. Save the rainforests, please with peanut butter and jelly on top. And a cherry.

The Epistle Committee of PYM Preschool

Epistle from the Lower Elementary Group, PYM 2003

Greetings!

During this week, we created our community in many ways. From the book, Benjamin the Meetinghouse Mouse, we learned about queries. Queries are big questions that we think about. There are many answers, but there is not a single answer that is the only right answer. Every day we considered a question or two about community, from the children's queries. For example: Do I forgive people? Do I apologize? Do I know the difference between tattling and telling to get help?

We also learned new skills with clay. We used three or four different kinds of clay. It was fun to squish it through our fingers. We used eraser clay to make erasers. Jayden, Shea, and Anthony made castle gates and a dragon's cave, plus towers for the castle.

The community dance was lots of fun. Some of us played tag, and there was lots of dressing up. There was a guy in a bathrobe, someone in a tiger suit, and lots of JYM girls in togas made from sheets.

The last thing we want to mention is the book, The King's Equal, by Katherine Paterson. We Love this book. It's about a greedy prince, a kindhearted girl, and a magical wolf. We hope that you will read this book, and that you will love it, too.

Respectfully submitted,
Sydney, Hannah, Robert, Jayden, Sammie, Clare, Grady, Anthony, Shea, and Sam

Upper Elementary

We each made a collage about ourselves. It was easy and hard. The magazine were full of war pictures. Some of us thought the weapons were really cool. But they really aren't, because they're made 9to kill.

There's war on TV, too. There's also violence in lots of video games. Becca came to tell us about studies about TV and violence.

Chris came to talk about the civil war in Colombia. It's scary, because they've been fighting for over forty years.

Barbara told us about poverty in Mexico and doing community service work there, so we built a playhouse for the pre-schoolers.

Ellie showed us polymer clay, and it was great fun. We played "blind leading the blind." One partner led the other. One partner touched stuff to guess what it was.

Elbow tag is fun, because you're running around chasing and getting chased. We learned about each other, about cooperation, trust, and how bad war can be. We had a pretty good week.

The Upper Elementary of PYM 2003

Eli, Tommy, Rose, Richard, Simeon, Lee, Maya, Ian, Lena, Rosie, Lyman

Teachers: Maya and Terry Jo

Epistle from the Middle School Program of Pacific Yearly Meeting 2003

To Friends Everywhere;

The new middle school program at Pacific Yearly Meeting this year was exciting in many ways. We always began our morning program with a Seneca Spirit Circle, physical warm-up, and a temperature reading where we took turns asking for appreciations, concerns, and excitements. After other activities we closed with silence.

This year some of our main morning activities were crocheting granny squares to make vests for young children in Afghanistan. We made collages after interviewing Ernest Bicknell and Joan Rawles-Davis about their life stories. Jennifer Caron came and showed us pictures and told about her work at a toxic waste site near Tar Creek, Oklahoma.

We taught each other games. We learned the Biblical story of the tower of Babel and turned it into a skit for Family night. We held business meetings to plan how to use our time.

In the afternoons we went to the pool, made beads with Ellie Hitchcock, and assembled friendship kits for expectant mothers in Iraq. These kits contain baby blankets, soap, washcloths, a baby hair brush and comb all in a zip lock bag.

We would like to give a big THANKS to our morning teachers, Sandy Farley and Jane Blount, as well as our afternoon leaders, Zac Moon and Michael Eastwood. We would also like to give thanks to Ernest Bicknell and Joan Rawls-Davis who let us interview them, also to Jennifer Caron who shared with us about Tar Creek. Thanks also to the Children Program committee who provided snacks and substitutes (Karen Morgan and Anne Bleile-Kratzer) when a teacher had to be out.

Thanks to the Yearly Meeting for creating a program for us.

From the middle school group, written by epistle committee,
Gracie Sullivan and Kylin Navarro

The middle school group: Lena Bichell, Rosie Bichell, Kat Gore, Kylin Navarro, Bekah Percy, Gracie Sullivan, Rowan "Bob" Torrey-Love

From Junior Yearly Meeting of Pacific Yearly Meeting

To Friends --

Jumbled together, from all parts of the west coast (plus Ohio and France), a community of the young gathered. This would be a group that would trudge through worship, silence, heat, smell, sweat, and grim together for a week that would serve as a “coming-of-age”. Some came with guardians, others with sponsors, and some on their own accord. Regardless of these different backgrounds, each member of the future Quaker society was valued as an equal member of the community.

What exactly was it that we learn during this week of bonding with our closest comrades? We learn the process and spirit of Quaker life and its meaning to our generation. Through plenaries and worship, we found within ourselves the Light that can carry us through the rest of our lives, if we so choose. Maybe it wasn't something that was simply interjected into one our hectic yet effective business meetings; maybe it was something that could only be understood in the enlightening and precious silence. Still, climbing through rough edges with your peers satisfies a spiritual hunger deep within yourself.

The growing process can be symbolized as a multi-story edifice. Each floor has its own focus, but is connected to the store (or household) goal as a whole; the building is ever protruding upward. We came together in our informative interest groups, on the sandy beaches, inside the comfort of our dorms, on the dance floor, and during the cacophony that was running/sweating/screaming capture-the-flag epidemic. Your journey with your companions and your goals, during the week, are a mere pit stop in the quest of your life, treat every experience as such.

In all the week was a success. The new were readily embraced by the surviving, who were eager to share what experience they had gathered in past years. Even through set-backs, such as the closing of the Palomar Lounge, the glue held us all together and carried us through. It was this very matter that was the focus and energy of the group. In addition to paving the way for the future of the meeting, we also took some time to patch some holes we'd made. We are, all in all, human. As some of the elders of JYM left for Young Friends and beyond, they leave an essence that will never be forgotten and cannot be replaced.

To Friends Everywhere,

The Young Friends of Pacific Yearly Meeting came together in August, 2003 for the annual PYM gathering. New Friends and old ones participated jointly in many of the traditional Young Friends activities, which brought us together as one.

After brief introductions and a few fun games, we experienced our first of many sleep-deprived nights. The days that followed brought exciting activities such as an evening trip to the beach, a capture the flag game with the Junior Yearly Meeting, a dance DJed by some of our Young Friends, late night card games, swimming in the pool, and a talent night.

Never before has there been a PYM without some challenges; we faced our share this year. Early in the week we discovered that a member of our community, Paul Ruhlen, had passed away in the last year. We worshipped together in honor of his life and the joy he brought to ours.

As in many years past, the Young Friends felt a degree of distance from the greater PYM community. We continued an ongoing discussion about the importance of maintaining and strengthening our community of Young Friends while also participating in the life of the greater Yearly Meeting. We found difficulty in balancing our involvement with the Young Friends community and the Yearly Meeting as a whole. This was a challenge that we faced both as a community and as individuals.

Spurred by the request of JYM, the Young Friends decided to bring back the Respectful Relationships discussion after an eight-year hiatus. This discussion provides a safe space for open and honest dialog on the difficult topics

of sex, drugs, alcohol, and most importantly respect for self and others. The JYM committee's decision to bring the program back was based upon the emphatic testimonies of Young Friends who had experienced the program years before.

Our week ended on a positive note. The last evening included a celebration welcoming those JYMers who will be joining us as Young Friends next year. This was followed by "spontaneous" worship by the fountain. We are looking forward to reconvening soon at Sprit and Light gatherings throughout the year and again at PYM 2004.

In the Light,
Young Friends, Pacific Yearly Meeting, 2003

Kate Newlin, YF Clerk

To Friends Everywhere,

Pacific Yearly Meeting met at the University of San Diego, August 4-9, 2003, in an urban setting, overlooking Mission Bay, on the north bank of the San Diego River.

During one plenary session, Laura Magnani spoke to the query "Given the despair many have felt in world affairs this last year, how has the spirit worked within you to nurture your spiritual needs and to nurture the spiritual needs of others in your meeting community?" At another plenary Jennifer Caron spoke movingly of her experiences working at the Tar Creek Superfund Site in Oklahoma. These ministers called us to be present with our despair at a nation and a world that seem to have lost sight of the common good and are in immanent danger of destruction. We were invited to fully experience our despair, pain and grief. Through these we are connected to God, creation and one another. This connection can bring us deep joy and the impulse to move in accordance with Divine will for the redemption of the planet. The unity of our various work for peace, justice, and the restoration of the Earth is obvious, and we hope in this way to live our testimonies, not merely profess them. We pray for courage to assess the costs of continuing to do business as usual.

As we shared our spiritual lives with each other, we realized that we long for the birth of Spirit into the world as action. We found the courage and energy to labor deeply with each other. Many more Friends than expected attended Bible study groups with the theme "Waging Peace: Biblical Perspectives on War, Peace, and Justice." Many interest groups wrestled with how to turn this session's spiritual insights into practical actions.

One important question was whether year-round staff for PYM would further our witness. Friends from PYM, along with AFSC staff, General Secretary Mary Ellen McNish, and Paul Lacey, clerk of the National Board of Directors, discussed the work of the AFSC and relationships between local and national AFSC programs. Junior Yearly Meeting Friends and Young Friends touched many with accounts of their spiritual journeys and their participation in interest groups and other activities of our community. A peace vigil in Balboa Park with San Diego's peace community provided an opportunity for witness on Hiroshima Day.

As we leave this particular place to return home, we take with us a sense of unity of the earth and its inhabitants and an urgent desire to bring our community back into the kind of union with God that was the basis of the beginning of our religious society.

Shan Cretin,
Clerk, Pacific Yearly Meeting