



2013 NEYM Youth Epistles

CHILDCARE EPISTLE

Dear Friends,

The staff and participants in NEYM childcare enjoyed our cooler weather this year and spent a great deal of our time learning and playing outside. Some of our favorite things this year were the slide, our riding toys, and sidewalk chalk. And everybody loved bubbles!

Inside there were lots of things we liked to do too. We loved squishing beans into green playdough to make “chocolate chip cookies.” We loved doing yoga before our naptime. We pretended to be firefighters, veterinarians, parents, and chefs. We really enjoyed playing with trucks and trains!

Sometimes, it was hard for us to leave our parents in this new and busy place. When we were sad, we comforted each other with toys, books, hugs and kind words. When there was a problem, we worked together to find a solution that everyone could be happy with. We loved spending the week together building and strengthening friendships, learning, sharing, and growing.

Thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers who came to support us and to Rebecca Sullivan, our Peacemaker who came to read us a story. We had a wonderful time at Sessions, and we can't wait to see everyone again next year!

-The Childcare Program of New England Yearly Meeting

EPISTLE OF GRADES K-2 OF NEYM JUNIOR YEARLY MEETING

What happens when you take 14 Quakers, ages 5–8, mix them together, add some games, crafts, music and beautiful weather, and let everything simmer for six days? For the K–2 group at New England Yearly Meeting this year, it produced a huge batch of friendship and fun.

We started on Saturday night by getting to know one other and making puzzle people to represent each one of us. We talked a little about our theme, “This Little Light of Mine” and how we would be exploring our Inner Lights for the next several days. During the next few days, we learned about the Inner Light by singing, playing together, and reading books like *The OK Book* and *Ruby the Copycat*. We liked being outside a lot, playing JYM ball, doing crafts and making gigantic bubbles.

Our kindergarten friends came back in the afternoons, where they enjoyed playing Superhero Tag and going to the Bill Harley concert under the tent. In the evening, many of us returned for more fun. One of our favorite evening activities was painting houses that we made out of gigantic cardboard boxes. Another night, we met up with the older kids outside to play kickball and make a giant mandala with different colored beans. Our nights always ended with singing with the whole JYM group at vespers with Kevin Lee.

First and second graders had free time in the afternoon. Most of us loved swimming at the pool and riding our bikes and scooters all over campus. There were also afternoon choices in the big tent. Some of us did yoga or played Capture the Flag.

We were lucky to have a lot of visitors in our mix. Kevin Lee visited on Monday morning. We all loved playing parachute games with him, but our favorite part of the visit was when he gave us rides in his golf cart. The next day, Rebecca Sullivan, the children's peacemaker, came for a visit. We played games and drew pictures to learn more about how to be peaceful with ourselves and each other. On Wednesday, we got to meet two Friends from Cuba who sang songs with us and told us a little bit about their Meeting in Cuba.

Thursday morning we met one last time to say good-bye and thank you to all of our friends, old and new. We are sad to be leaving each other and Yearly Meeting, and happy to be going home to friends and family who weren't with us this week. We hope everyone will come back again next year!

In Friendship,

New England Yearly Meeting Grades K, 1 and 2

EPISTLE OF GRADES 3–4 OF NEYM JUNIOR YEARLY MEETING

We met for a week in sunny Rhode Island. Eight of us used recycled materials and paper maché to create our spirit animals. It was interesting to watch shapeless forms and balls of newspaper grow into our spirit animals. Working through a Quaker process of listening and sharing, we created stories about our spirit animals. We also listened to a story read out loud, *The Quiltmaker's Gift*. We played games outside like foxtail and foursquare. We also worked on a bean mandala. We had a special system of sharing snacks—every day we had new partners, and each partner helped the other get their snack, and in this way we made new friends. Special visitors played with us – Rebecca Sullivan, the children's peacemaker, Deb Humphries, the representative from the Adult Meeting, Steve Correia, a former staffer and our favorite, Kevin Lee.

Your Friends,

**Zika the dog, Sophie the cat, Emma the monkey, Sonia the unicorn Princess
Rainbow, Mary Alice the axlotl, Brennon the Great Horned Owl, Lily the Watercat
Goddess and Desmond the king cobra.**

EPISTLE OF GRADES 5–6 OF NEYM JUNIOR YEARLY MEETING

Dear Friends Everywhere,

We are the fifth and sixth graders of New England Yearly Meeting. Thirteen of us gathered at Bryant University in North Smithfield, Rhode Island. The New England Yearly Meeting theme was "Live up to the Light that thou hast." The Junior Yearly Meeting staff simplified this to "This Light of mine" which came from Caroline Fox and Mathew 5:14–16.

In small groups we made paper lanterns and put lights inside them and made puzzle pieces that represented our Inner Light. The puzzle pieces all fit together to form a big candle.

We did clay meditation with Gretchen. It was calming, quiet and relaxing. We made new rules for the beanie baby game that made it harder and more fun. We joined with people of all different ages to play kickball, capture the flag and made a sand mandala.

We had visitors from Cuba and we taught each other songs. We went to a concert given by Susan Stark and the kids got to sit on stage. Some of us prepared coffee house acts and the rest got ready to watch. Dan, a new staffer, came every morning to sing and play guitar. Some of us would have liked to be more active than we were.

We want to thank our 5–6 staff, Kevin, Gretchen and the people who helped organize the JYM program, including Betty Ann.

Our time here was peaceful, awesome, phenomenal, amazing and glory filled.

It was too short.

New England Yearly Meeting Grades 5 and 6

EPISTLE OF NEYM JUNIOR HIGH YEARLY MEETING

To Friends Everywhere,

Our group of 30 junior highers gathered at New England Yearly Meeting from Saturday, August 3 to Thursday, August 8, 2013. The theme for Junior High Yearly Meeting (JHYM) this year was “Stepping out with the Light you have.” One way in which we explored the theme throughout the week was an artistic project involving old shoes that reflected our own stepping out. Our coordinator, Gretchen Baker-Smith, created a large circle of 40 shoes in the JHYM space. We all meditatively walked in a circle around the shoes and chose one shoe that spoke to us. We approached the project with great creativity and freedom by drawing on them, cutting, pasting, taping, sewing, attaching, gluing, ripping, and tearing them. This activity took the form of a covered worship, and the boundless love, focus, and creativity in the atmosphere made a deep impact on the entire community. We all could not believe when an hour and a half had passed when it felt much, much shorter.

We also had a panel of adults speak about their experiences with following their leadings. Panelists followed their leadings into a variety of situations including running a Buddhist monastery, visiting peacemakers in Iraq, knitting to support different social charities and even using a lobster boat to block a delivery of coal to a coal plant. Some found themselves facing legal action, social ostracism, and other unforeseeable circumstances. We learned that leadings are often hard to discern and challenging to follow, but if one has the courage to follow them, the result is rewarding regardless of the consequences.

Acknowledging that the use of the campus library is a privilege that we all appreciate, a set of guidelines was created in order to cooperate with the library staff. The guidelines were a success and the library staff not only thought we were all very well behaved, they were amazed by our pro-activeness and couldn't believe we were leaving on Thursday. The fact that we were able to inspire the library staff with our commitment speaks volumes to the tremendous community we are all a part of and how powerful the Quaker process is when put into practice.

Kevin Lee, who's retiring this year as coordinator of the elementary age group, JYM, visited and taught us how to not let our lives be too cluttered with seriousness. While speaking to us, he surprised us with several props that varied in silliness and sentimental meaning. In that spirit, we

played some of our favorite games like Big Wind Blows, Foursquare, and JYM Ball. A couple of nights through the week we had a lounge where people played Magic cards, listened to music, and beat each other's high scores on our own *Dance Dance Revolution* game. We also had a craft fair, body art, water games and an ice cream social. Overall it was a productive, fun, and inspiring year for JHYM and we can't wait to meet again next year.

Yours in De-Light,

Junior High Yearly Meeting, NEYM sessions 2013

EPISTLE OF NEYM YOUNG FRIENDS

Dear Friends Everywhere,

On August 3, 2013, 55 Young Friends met at Bryant University in Smithfield, Rhode Island as part of the New England Yearly Meeting Sessions to explore the theme, "Live up to the Light thou hast and more will be granted thee." We explored the theme through various programs on recognizing leadings, examining nonviolence and learning how to express ourselves through story. A panel with five speakers of various ages told us about their experiences with leadings that have been integral to their lives. The messages and the leadings ranged from individual to national to international callings covering topics from racism to peace and environmental activism.

On Sunday the wider YM community came together to celebrate and appreciate the ministry of Kevin Lee, the Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) retreat program founder and coordinator for the past 25 years. Over the past year, Kevin has felt that his leading has shifted away from coordinating the JYM program, and is retiring this fall. This program moved many YFs, as Kevin had a meaningful effect on their lives, and they have great love and respect for him. Through his ministry within the JYM program, he planted the seed that grew into the current YF community. He recognized and nurtured our gifts. For those involved in the youth programs of NEYM, Kevin Lee has been an integral part of allowing them to live up to the Light they "hast".

This Light showed itself through our acceptance of unexpected challenges. We had planned a trip to Scarborough Beach for Tuesday morning. After waiting for about an hour, we discovered that the busses we had hired were not actually going to show up. Instead, we went to the Bryant University faux-beach, also known as a soccer field. There, we engaged in many activities, such as: playing cards, Ultimate frisbee, banana speed-eating contests (record: 11 seconds!), sleeping, relaxing, talking and group reading aloud. This experience reflected the theme. YFs demonstrated their Light by not complaining about the busses, and we were given more Light through the opportunity to be together and present. When the pool opened, many YFs went there for swimming and ended up spending time with members of our older and younger communities, sharing playtime together in the pool. We recognize this opportunity wouldn't have been available to us if our original plan had been actualized, and we are grateful for the time we spent together.

On Monday morning, we were invited to participate in the Adult Business Meeting. We enjoyed seeing the process of business meeting firsthand. At the same time, we struggled with the focus on smaller matters, as we felt that the financial crisis that NEYM is facing may have been a more pressing concern. The financial plan that was proposed during the meeting will continue to affect the YFs over the next few years, and we hope to help discern a process for successfully sustaining the YM in the long term.

We closed our week together with a YM-wide Coffeehouse and a YF/YAF dance party. The Coffeehouse is a variety show for the entire community, with many traditional and well-loved acts such as “When the Saints Go Marching In” (which includes a conga line) and the Disruptive Behavior Committee (a group of YAFs who take simple Quaker songs and create Metal versions). We also enjoyed watching relatives of our YFs participate, whether siblings singing or parents rapping. After Coffeehouse, we danced together until the early hours of the morning in celebration of our week.

In the Light,

The Young Friends of New England Yearly Meeting

EPISTLE OF NEYM YOUNG ADULT FRIENDS

“He said to them, ‘Whoever has ears, let him hear. There is light within a man of light, and he lights up the whole world.’” —Gospel of Thomas 24.

To all Friends everywhere:

From August 2–8, 2013 New England Yearly Meeting Young Adult Friends gathered in Smithfield, Rhode Island at Bryant University.

This Sessions continues our work from recent years of YAFs feeling, following and supporting leadings in our members. In the last several years, YAFs have taken on large responsibilities within our broader NEYM body. We also called on YAFs to make our presence as active and integral members of New England Yearly Meeting felt in the wider community by nominating YAFs to NEYM Committees. We want to be recognized not as a token presence, but as full-fledged members of this community.

YAF Rachel Stacy, having delivered the annual Weed Lecture at the Beacon Hill Friends House, brought her presentation to the YAF community. She spoke of ecology in our time and the metaphor of Gospel Order, and the implications of modern science and philosophy in understanding nature and conflict. We were blessed to have her deliver this talk and lead a lively conversation following the presentation.

Rebecca Sullivan, the Sessions Children’s Peace Maker, visiting NEYM from her recent work in Atlanta, led us through a discussion based on our personal experiences of living in, or experiencing, intentional community. Rebecca just completed a year-long fellowship with the Quaker Voluntary Service that fosters social activism and intentional Quaker community.

Tom Hall, pastor of Smithfield Friends Meeting, delivered a crash course in biblical narrative, ranging from the book of Genesis to the Gnostic Gospel of Mary Magdalene. He also drew on sources from the Jesus Seminar investigating the historical accuracy of the Gospels. Tom gave us an unexpected glimpse of one pastor’s approach to scripture.

On Tuesday evening, YAFs kidnapped Young Friends graduates while disguised as trash-eating raccoons and/or their trash. In our evening of fellowship with these rising YAFs, we discussed topics such as our personal plans for the next year, and what we have most recently eaten out of the trash. We also began a brand new tradition for our outgoing YAFs. Older Adult Friends,

disguised as Older Adult Friends, violently abducted Will Jennings-Hess, who is graduating from YAFs to be more available to his work with the wider Yearly Meeting. He will be dearly missed from YAF programming.

For over two decades, Puente de Amigos has sown the seeds for bringing Cuba Yearly Meeting and NEYM into active spiritual partnership. Last year, six YAFs traveled from Sessions to Cuba YM to share their ministry and fellowship. This week, Cuban and Bolivian Friends visited our Sessions and re-emphasized the importance of this new connection between these YAF communities divided by geography and politics. YAFs were invited to participate in an upcoming Quaker Youth Pilgrimage to Bolivia and Peru—the first of its kind in the history of Friends World Committee for Consultation. Our YAF community has a strong and deeply felt leading that it is time to nurture our blooming relationship with Cuban YAFs, and recognizes that this process requires greater investment from YAFs.

During our business meeting, we used worship sharing to explore ways we can serve and actively include YAFs with parental responsibilities. We feel that this is an integral step forward for the YAF community to grow and to support young Quaker families in this Yearly Meeting.

YAFs recognized the significance of this Sessions' financial discernment and the evolving strategies for financial stability. YAFs stepped up to participate in the financial planning, and in the budget discussions of the broader Yearly Meeting. We recognize that having a sustainable financial plan is critical to the spiritual and temporal health of this community.

Anyone who wandered into YAF gatherings this weekend may have witnessed worship by the pond, outdoor games, affinity groups, labyrinth walking, Alma Sánchez-Epplers' concert, group singing, mad-libs, or Spanking Yoda. A few Friends visited a lake for an afternoon in the sun.

This Sessions, the various leadings of YAFs to do work in the wider Yearly Meeting drew us in and out of the YAF circle more often than in years prior. Despite this, we feel that the spirit within our YAF community has life and direction.

“When you come to dwell in the light, what will you do?” —Gospel of Thomas, 11.

– | **END** | –