

Attachment E Epistle

June 14, 2009

To All Friends Everywhere—

We came to Warren Wilson College for the annual gathering of the Southern Appalachian Yearly Meeting Association (SAYMA) on a beautiful weekend in June to focus on the theme: Spirit Woven in Our Lives: a Tapestry of Light. There were 151 adults, including 7 registered Young Adult Friends (YAF), 19 attending the Junior Yearly Meeting and 45 participating in the Southern Appalachian Young Friends (SAYF) program. We represented many of our Monthly meetings and worship groups and were enriched by the presence of Friends visiting from New York, Baltimore, and Canada Yearly Meetings as well as a friend living in El Salvador and representatives from AFSC, FGC, FCNL, Quaker House in Fayetteville, William Penn House and Quaker Institute for the Future. Each individual came to SAYMA with our own thread of experience, each a unique texture, color, and thickness.

While here, our individual threads were woven together into a collective tapestry. Grounded in worship, the threads of light and grace guided our time together. A look at the tapestry shows many different patterns and experiences. For some friends SAYMA was a new experience, for others, this was a comfortable return to family. We sat down with new and old Friends and conducted business with them. With the assistance of our Faith and Practice Revision Committee, we struggled with the language and ideas that express our experience of God in community and our right relationship to government. Often, we got to know people from our own meetings better at yearly meeting because of the ample time for worship, discussion, and fellowship. We explored ways to support and integrate Young Adult Friends into the life of our Yearly Meeting. We worshiped together, learned new things in a varied offering of workshops, were called to action in the political arena, engaged in the important work of committees, sang and danced together, relaxed and socialized, ate good food, and laughed with one another.

When we leave, we each take our thread back to our own monthly meetings and worship groups, changed and invigorated by it's presence in the collective tapestry here at SAYMA. The things we take with us are both tangible and intangible. We take with us techniques for conducting business meeting, new knowledge about current environmental and political issues, new ideas for conducting clearness committees, the experience of extended worship, and ideas for inreach and outreach. On an intangible level, we take new connections and relationships with other members of SAYMA, an invigorated recognition of the light woven among us, new understanding, and a centered calmness coming from our time in worship together.