

2026 South Central Yearly Meeting Epistle

To Friends Everywhere,

Loving greetings from the annual gathering of South Central Yearly Meeting at rainy Greene Family Camp near Bruceville, Texas. We met via Zoom from March 30th through April 1st, 2026, and then transitioned to a hybrid meeting at the Greene Family Camp from April 2 - 5, 2026. 138 Friends gathered in person, including 41 new first-time attenders. We had 9 Friends attend online, including 4 new attenders. Both Friends and a cold front rolled up into camp for the weekend starting on Thursday. Breezes kept us cool and in awe of the rustling spring green leaves all around. Saturday's stormy weather dissipated in time for our Variety Show, much to the delight of intergenerational Friends in attendance.

This year our theme was "Be the Change, Contemplative Action in the World". This theme felt deeply relevant to us and was thoughtfully woven through our worship sharing, workshops, and conversations. In the face of division and hate, we recognize that change must begin within ourselves. Friends felt called to stand against injustice. We sense a readiness for our community to act guided by intentional discernment. Those changes can only arise from our inward, contemplative source of inner Light.

This year, after 15 years of toiling, we adopted a Faith and Practice document of our very own. Countless people have worked under the guidance of the Spirit on this document over the past fifteen years. Friends often grappled with soulful decision-making along sometimes difficult paths toward unity. We are extremely grateful for our Spirit-guided accomplishment here. This vast community effort has led to a document created by a community in unity. However slowly our efforts progressed, that progress now seems to have been foreordained. Having our own Faith and Practice gives us a shared vocabulary with which to speak with each other and the wider world. Its completion also marks a new level of seasoning in our community.

We also passed a minute to change the way we work corporately as a yearly meeting, which will allow us to be nimbler in our decision-making processes and therefore respond timelier to the many needs within and outside our Yearly Meeting community. This was brought forward by our Peace and Justice Forum as a way for SCYM to make decisions as a yearly meeting outside of our annual sessions. This minute lays the groundwork for further inter-meeting communication and cooperation in our future. Many Friends spoke about the depth of comments and Spirit-led conversation throughout all five Meetings for Worship with Attention to Business and how each comment enriched our commitment to Quaker process and the collective discernment process.

Christopher Sammond served as our keynote speaker, highlighting our Friday afternoon agenda. Christopher spoke about the need to open oneself to the leadings of Spirit even when we feel drawn to focus on the immediacy of everyday life. We are called to this perennial challenge, to clear away the superfluity of much of daily life's distractions and the ongoing tragedies in this world and to receive the leadings of the Spirit, listening to the still small voice.

Throughout the weekend we saw that the SCYM community thrives in purposeful intergenerational gathering. For the first time since Covid, our youth programs reached a critical mass. We joyfully had enough young attenders to host both an elementary group and middle-

high group. This reminded us that Quaker youth represent the future in a way that is both compelling and open-ended in the hope and promise they offer.

The children participated in a wide range of creative, educational, and energetic activities over the meeting including Easter egg dyeing, volleyball, lego building, ping pong, plate decorating, nature walks, dodge ball, singing, skit writing, canoeing, pottery making, and cookie baking. The sounds of gentle click of Lego pieces on the floor during Meeting for Worship with Attention to Business helped ground us in our commitment to preserving the future of SCYM through our intergenerational worship. We also saw an increase in participation from Young Adult Friends in this year's gathering which led to many new relationships and connections. Multiple workshops and worship sharing opportunities gave further meaning and substance to a sense of being afloat in a sea of loving kindness.

We have all borne the sorrows that inevitably have accompanied the joys of our individual lives in the past year, all the while witnessing our communities, our country and the world bearing the burdens of senseless violence and bigotry. We know that many of the same in addition to new challenges face all of us in the months and years to come. But buoyed by the Spirit and by the communion of this year's SCYM session, we face that future reinvigorated in hope and in our commitment to daily opening ourselves to the presence of the Spirit. We go forward as a community, knowing by inspiration and by experience that only through Deep Listening can we Be the Change.