

SAYF Worship Journal
SAYMA – Warren Wilson College
June 9-12, 2016

On the weekend of June 9-12, 2016, Southern Appalachian Young Friends met at Warren Wilson College for Yearly Meeting. This is our witness. This is our story.

The night is now falling,
So ends this day,
The road is now calling,
And I must away.

To these memories I will
Hold, with your blessings
I will go.

We came all this way
But now comes the day
To bid you farewell.

I bid you all a very
Fond farewell.

-Billy Boyd

-Laura & Sven

SAYF,

In the interest of being brief, I'll leave you with a few quotes that have resonated with me recently.

“Nothing makes the earth seem so spacious as to have friends at a distance; they make the latitudes and longitudes.”

-Henry David Thoreau

“The road goes ever on and on down from the door where it began. Now far ahead the road has gone and I must follow, if I can. Pursuing it with eager feet, until it joins some larger way where many paths and errands meet. And whither then? I cannot say.”

-JRR Tolkien

Endless love and thanks (and still more love),
Laura Kelley

Dearest SAYF,

Thanks for an incredibly transformative retreat. This weekend meant so much to me. I love you all.

-Ben Gavin

Wizardz4lyfe

Dear family:

I've already told you the story of a terrified kid with blue hair entering a Meetinghouse with a bunch of teens that wouldn't stop hugging him and making him feel happy and confident.

Talking from my experience as an international student, this was one of the most important communities, and one of the essential pieces of my year abroad. The deepness of the relationships and links I've created here with the SAYFers is completely crazy.

I can also say that I really enjoyed spending time and having little talks with the adults of the community, and I love the support that teens and FANs give to each other.

I never thought this could happen, but now I know that I am a Quaker and that's one of the best gifts I have ever received. I am looking forward to attending a Friends Meeting in Madrid (Spain) and, who knows if one day I can be part of a youth group as amazing as this one.

All my love,

Rubén

You know the metaphor of love being poured into people but some people are like buckets that are intact so they fill with love and others are like buckets with a hole in it so the love trickles out? I feel like SAYF is also a patch kit for bucket holes so that all the buckets leave filled with love. Take it and help patch other buckets and then fill them up because the love you've gotten at SAYF will never run out.

With love,

FAN Mary Linda

It is a gift to witness the spirit of cooperation, openness, and support in the SAYF community.

You are looking for and finding "That of God" in each other.

-Dargot

This SAYMA has changed my life. Not only did I get bangs, but I also got 40 friends (and lost 14 of them). All of this happened in the span of four days. I think that's a testimony to how incredible SAYF is, and how amazing the people in it are. I've known everyone in SAYF for roughly 8 days, some of them for an even shorter amount of time and none of them for longer, but each and every person in this community has impacted me in such a positive way. I love all of you so much.

-Gillian

Seeing as this is my very last retreat, now seems like an appropriate time to write my first ever epistle. I just want to thank you for forming me into the person I am today.

All my love,
Jane

Thank you to the SAYFers, their families, and the wider SAYMA community for supporting the SAYF program. As Friends, we say there is the Light of God in all. Nowhere is that more evident than the love shown among these wonderful teens each and every retreat. As a parent, I know that love and support continues between retreats. This is a loving community and we are grateful for each and every one of you.

Love,
Jennifer
Proud FAN

I've heard people say that this SAYMA is different and not as fun, but I believe otherwise. Ya it might be different, but no retreat is like another. SAYF is constantly changing. Ya we are losing 14 amazing people and I'm more sad about it than you can believe, but the rest of us are still here. We are the future of SAYF. It's our time to fill the shoes of being the wise, responsible elder SAYFers. I am still extremely devastated but sitting here watching Julian and Cora handle the epistles makes me very excited to see younger SAYFers rise up and take on new roles. I can't wait to see what even more amazing people you all turn into by your senior year. Graduates, I will think about you forever. You will be talked about, for example: "Hey remember the 2016 graduates? Ya whatta time. Ya I love them so much!"

Your friend always,
Julia Hudson

Dear SAYF,

Sweet Jesus H. Christ on a pogo stick, I'm a senior now, aren't I? It's such a weird thing to think about, finally being one of the ones who will soon leave, instead of being left behind. It's also weird to think that this year's graduates will be gone next year. So many of them were people I looked up to, and thought the world of when I was a newbie, despite them being only 1 year older than me. Just know that I will miss you all, both graduates and returning SAYFers alike.

Much love,
Ethan

Dear SAYF,

I said in my last epistle that I would save the sentiment until now, so here it is, through the choked back tears and overwhelming emotions. I love you all, like no group I ever have. You all, each and everyone of you hold such a special place in my heart, a place that I am wondering how I am going to fill once this is all said and done. You all are like family to me, and losing family is never easy. Part of this feels like a funeral in that we are mourning the loss of an era of greatness. But in that mourning and through it all, we hold each other closer than ever, exchange words more meaningful than ever, and journey together into a world of unknown. But what that takes is perseverance, as we must make sure to hold each others hands as we journey from a safe (pun intended) space to the greatest unknown ever. We must make sure that we hold on tight, because if one of us is to trip and fall, we must do as we always have and pick them up. You all have done that so much for me in these last couple years. You have made sure that through all the ups and downs that I came in through better than before. Each and everyone of you, through your hugs and your smiles, your laughter and joy, your uniqueness and indomitable spirit, have made my life is something for the movies. This has all been so special because of the people in it, and you all deserve all the thanks in the world. I am sorry if I have not communicated these words to you each outside of this epistle, as each one of you deserves thanks in your own way, but for now this will do. I love you all like I've known you for a lifetime, and it will be hard going a lifetime without seeing all of your perfect and beautiful faces 7 times a year. I will miss the unconditional love that thrives here, and I will miss leaning on you all no matter what.

As I said last night, this is not the end, but the beginning of a new era. I am going to hold to that statement, and ensure that I do not simply fade away when I get into that van and drive away, but instead work to shine in a new light with you all.

And so, as my final words of my final epistle, I would like to propose a toast:

"To friends who are family, to love in its most pure and wonderful form, and to new beginnings."

I love you all, so so much,

Benjamin "Mama SAYF" Chapman

P.S. I would like to pass on the title of Mama SAYF to Julia H.

SAYF.

Hell doesn't begin to describe this past year. My mind has been so frantic and it took me too long to get help. This retreat feels like such a huge turning point. and despite only being here for 3 days. the time I got to spend with all of you amazing people has left me looking forward to waking up another morning for the first time in a while. Thank you all.

-Callum

“Don’t ever change” is a phrase often spoken at graduations. But having watched the graduates grow & change for the last four years, I want to emphatically support you in the change and growth you’ll find in the next stage of your life...while honoring the steady and confident people you are today.

When you blew out those candles last night and walked off into the darkness with the YAFs, I knew you will become new people, stronger people, and different people in the next year.

And when you return to visit SAYF, I won’t treat you as the person you are today. I will hug you and say, “I love the person you have become.”

Always change!

Love,
Jonah

Dear SAYF,

Allow me to reintroduce myself. My name is Anna Tsomo. When I was 15, I moved away from my hometown in Kentucky, and in doing so, I also moved away from all of you. It was heartwrenching to leave this community, because so much of my identity was built here. In the two years since I’ve still been getting SAYF epistles in the mail. Every time I read them, it felt like the pressures of New York City melted away, and I was transported to moments like this of spiritual silence among the community I love. I want you to know how much you all continue to mean to me. I live literally a thousand miles away, and yet every time I get a phone call from a SAYFer, I feel like I’m coming home again. You are my roots and I am so thankful for that. I continue to be in awe of this community’s ability to connect us, to heal us, to teach us about silence and light and love. When you are fortunate enough to be planted in SAYF, it’s impossible for you not to grow and flourish and change the world. When I was a younger SAYFer, I was scared for this year’s graduation, because I thought I would be losing so many people dear to me. But now I look at the seniors and I only feel joy. Each individual graduate is powerful, important, caring and beautiful in their own way. I feel safe in a world that will be led by you all.

This is goodnight and not goodbye. When love exists as strong as this, not much else matters. You are all welcome in my home in Brooklyn.

Until next year, I love you with all my heart.

-Anna

P.S. I will try my hardest to come back next SAYMA to graduate.

Here are some snippets from my favorite poem about leaving and living and love:

Out of the rolling ocean, the crowd, came

A drop gently to me

Whispering, I love you

...

Return in peace to the ocean, my love

I too am part of that ocean, my love

...

As for an hour carrying us diverse

Yet cannot carry us diverse forever

Be not impatient – a little space – know you

I salute the sun, the air and land,

Every day, at sundown, for your dear sake,

My love.

Anna

Dear SAYF,

I really just have 3 things to say:

1. I'm sorry I haven't been here.
2. Never hesitate to contact me if you need anything. That goes for all of you. My number will be at the bottom of this epistle, and I want you all to go home and put it in your phone as soon as you get the worship journals in the mail.
3. Thank you for all the love you've brought to my life. Thank you for welcoming me back with open arms and smiling faces.

I love you.

Connor Dooley

Dear Seniors,

I don't think any of you will understand how much you have done for me. You all have shown me how to be myself and that there's nothing wrong with who I am. You all have given me more love than most people get in a lifetime. You are some of the kindest and most caring people I know, it's as if love and kindness radiate off of you. The thought of this magical place without you is just unbearable.

Love you forever,

Emma

Eras are a weird thing to end. All at once, everything you thought to be undeniably true about your world is inverted, and you are left with the bricks and beams of what once was a mansion, tasked with building it all again. In the senior journals, every written word was like a sledgehammer, obliterating the tacky wallpaper covered walls of my beloved SAYF mansion. And in a way that's scary, but in another way it's inexplicably beautiful. We are left with the gifts the seniors dropped in our laps and we are privileged to be able to use those gifts to resuscitate our community after this devastating loss. I don't know how or when I got to being where I am, except that I did it with the gifts handed down from this amazing group of people. I have learned, gained, laughed, cried and loved with every one of you. And while no words can truly quantify my gratitude, I can do my best.

I love and admire every last one of you, you unique, scruffy, ragtag group of beautiful idiots. Thanks for the ride, it's one for the books.

Love,

Levi

Oh SAYF,

I've always known this day would come, but it came so much faster than I was expecting, and I'm at a complete loss of words. While it's so sad to leave this amazing community that I have been a part of for the past 6 years, it surprisingly feels like the time is just right for me to move on. So many changes in my life make me feel as if college is the right place for me, and as much as it pains me to say so, SAYF would no longer feel comfortable or fit in to my new life. Regardless however, I will still miss each and every one of you with all of my heart, and I'll think of this amazing community every month when there's a retreat.

I'm positive that the group of younger Nurturers will do an outstanding job planning, leading, and nurturing everyone at all the retreats of the future.

To all my fellow (recently graduated) seniors: it's been a trip for sure. I've had an amazing time at all the retreats thanks to y'all (and you other SAYFers too, I guess 😊).

Not much else to say other than I love you and I'll see you all at Earlham when you come and visit the squad!

Asa

SAYF,

HERE I AM. GRADUATED. NO LONGER OFFICIALLY A SAYFER. I MADE IT – WE MADE IT – TO THE POINT THAT I HAVE FEARED AND HOPED FOR. THE WISDOM AND GROWTH I HAVE GAINED FROM EACH OF YOU FEELS LIKE NOTHING ELSE BUT A BLESSING. IN A COUPLE MONTHS, I'LL BE A THOUSAND MILES FROM HOME. BUT I KNOW I HAVE HOMES IN EACH OF YOU AND EACH OF YOU HAS A HOME IN ME. WHATEVER THE FUTURE BRINGS, I DON'T THINK THERE COULD HAVE BEEN A BETTER WAY TO PREPARE THAN SAYF. I LEARN SO MUCH FROM Y'ALL EVERY DAY I'M WITH YOU. YOU ARE UNFORGETTABLE. AT GIRL SCOUT CAMP, THE CLOSING CAMPFIRE SONG WHICH ALWAYS MADE ME CRY WAS CALLED, "MAGIC." ONE LINE READ: "MAGIC IS THE LOVE THAT STAYS, WHEN GOOD FRIENDS HAVE TO LEAVE."

STAY MAGIC, Y'ALL. MUCH LOVE FOREVER,
WYNNE

Looking back on this year really reveals how much I feel like my SAYFing experience has changed. Back in middle school I was always able to come to retreats. Now that I'm in high school and I have Saturday classes (don't ask) I'm not able to come to retreats nearly as often. Even though this is really disappointing to me, I feel like it has made me become even closer to this community that I love. I cherish these moments that I have with you all and in my last two years I'll be trying to come to even more retreats.

-Miles

Light



is Life

Josh and I see it in all of you

~~ANONYMOUS~~
[A series of vertical, rounded rectangular shapes, possibly representing a list or a set of data points.]

Josh

~~(Please say if I spelled it wrong)~~

To all SAYFers, all of which are lovely, I love all of you so, so much, and I can't wait to see you later. That goes for the seniors too. Even though you are graduating, I will still manage to see you at some point. My bad, graduates. I can't forget Ruben. So graduates, you have served as an inspiration to me and I want to become a mixture of all of you.

Unconditional love from Laura
Forgiveness from Dee
Integrity from Charlie
Stedfastness from Guthrie
Confidence from Merrick
Level-headedness from Connor
Unbelievably friendly from Ruby
Honesty from Jane
Infectious laughter from Sven
Dad qualities from Asa
Friendship from Ben G.
Enthusiasm from Ruben
Kindness from Wynne
The ability to stand for what's right from my brother

I love each and every one of you and I wish you the best of luck. This is not a goodbye, it's a see ya later.

With love,
Henry Chapman