

**SAYF Worship Journal**  
February 2023 SAYF Nurturing Retreat  
Swannanoa Valley Friends Meetinghouse

***On the weekend of February 17-19,2023 the Southern Appalachian Young Friends met at Swannanoa Valley Friends Meeting. This is our witness. This is our story.***

Dear SAYF,

I didn't realize how nice it is to be a nurturer until this retreat. I was scared it would be all business meetings and financial plans (that might be steering, so I can't speak for all the meetings, but the nurturing meetings felt like answering queries as a group, and introduced me to a fun side of planning and nurturing the community (yes the other parts are fun too)). I realize now that it was silly to think the quaker community aspect wouldn't be there, and I'm relieved to be disproven. (I'm aware that was all very confusing, sorry). In summary: I'm grateful to nurturers for showing me it's not as hard as it seemed, and for helping me with physics. Thanks to all, hugs to those who want them, Sage

West Knoxville Nurturer's Retreat

I love sipping my birdsong and listening to the coffee. In English class, we talk about communion as a literary symbol - anytime characters have a meal together, it signifies trust and kinship. Rue and Katniss sharing food in *The Hunger Games*, for example, is a type of communion Suzanne Collins includes to show readers a significant shift in the relationship between the two 'contestants'. I think sleeping next to someone is the same idea - characters never sleep well when they feel unsafe, and tossing-and-turning in books (or life) is almost always an indication that something feels wrong or unfamiliar. All this to say, despite the infamous lack of sleep at SAYF retreats, I rarely feel on-edge. It is comfortable to sleep in a big window-fired room in the woods with you all, and familiar to drink sleepy coffee in the mornings and scarf down the warm brownies at 11pm. We make a good community! And as excited as I am to graduate and move on to new communities, this one will always play a huge role in who I am as a person. I hope that as nurturers, we keep making this a safe community for people to join and grow up in.

Those are all the feelings I can gather into a coherent paragraph right now, so (taking a leaf out of Oliver's book) here are some of the things I want to remember from the weekend:

- Wandering around the neighborhood chatting to Teo
- Mixing brownies with Elli
- Chatting about phones and parenthood w/ my Dad + Sage
- Jennifer and I's mutual adoration for Roobos and Earl Grey
- Mason shivering across from me in the circle right now because they refuse to wear adequate clothing for the weather

and lastly, all of you planning a graduation for me. It was very kind of you all to jump in and make me feel like that was important, so thank you. More than being said goodbye to, I want to be able to say my goodbyes, and I appreciate being able to do that even though I won't be able to come to SAYMA.

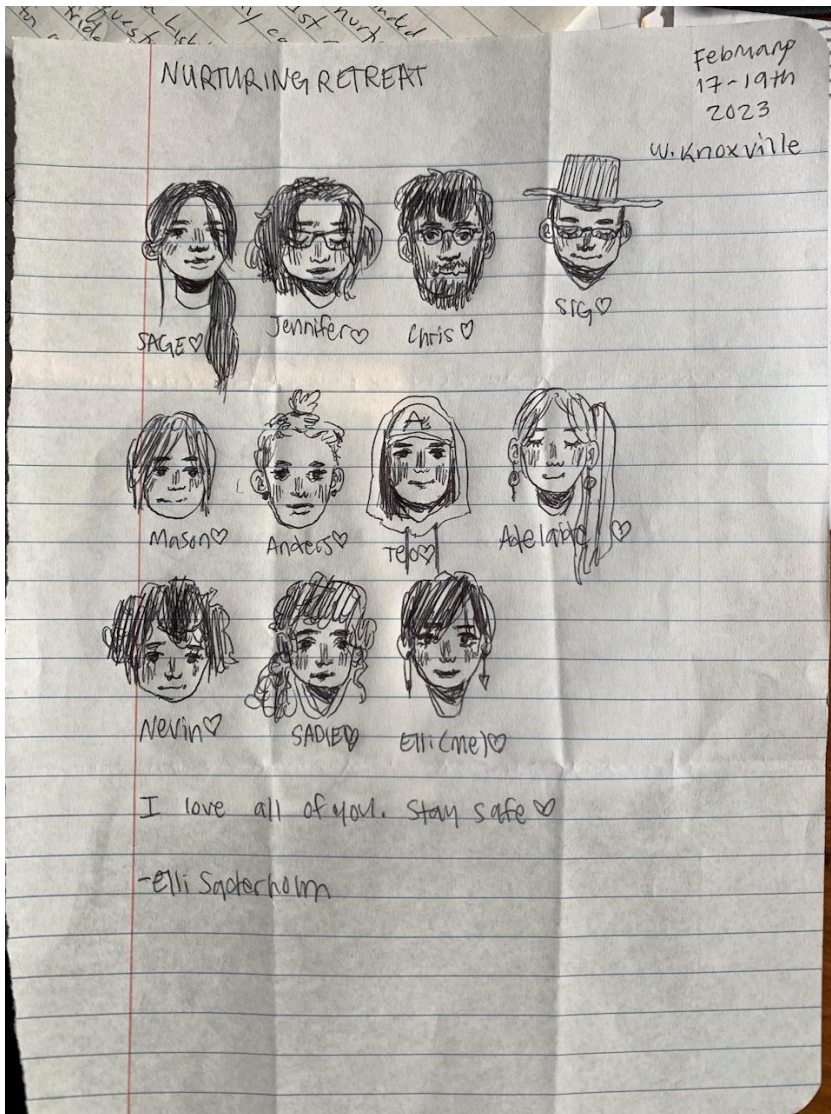
With love, Sadie

Dear SAYF,

I wrote a long, disjointed letter but decided it wasn't well seasoned. To sum up, thank you all for showing up, and making SAYF this unique and loving community. We aren't perfect, but we keep listening for how to be authentically and radically loving. Love you all, Chris (FAN)

Half of you are new to me this Nurturing retreat. That means I'm new to half of you. It's the same loving community with some differences. A less formal Opening Circle. Fewer of us (Zoom is a mixed blessing). Maybe still some rebuilding going on? But the similarities to the past outweigh the differences. The spirit and the spark remain. More growth lies ahead. This is a Good Thing!

- An OG  
(Thanks, Teo!)



Dear Friends,

From the start I have been reminded of what it takes to nurture and be nurtured in this community from the 1st query to the fiasco of losing my car key this morning. I have felt held in Light with every hug and every question, "Did you check in the fridge?" Thank you for your care - your nurturing me into calm and holding my anxiety with me. I am glad to be here to write in this journal though - an unexpected pleasure of the "lost-key" event.

I am sharply aware of this moment of transition - the last nurturing retreat for 3 of you. And the 1st for 4 of you. Perhaps more should have been done to ceremonially "pass the torch." But Quakers are light on ceremony and I am only now feeling like I missed an opportunity to mark this moment - although it isn't really mine to mark...it is ours to experience together. We will remember this moment in August when we are again remade. "Our" history is long as the binder of Nurturing Minutes shows us, and nothing is truly new...but offers an opportunity to look at it anew. With fresh eyes and open hearts. This is how SAYF is and has been and will be...And I will miss how it has been even as I rejoice in how it is and look forward to how it will be.

All my love is yours in this moment. Jennifer ~ SAYF Steering Clerk  
February, 2023  
West Knoxville Friends Meeting