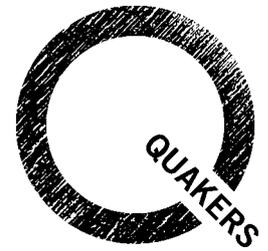


Epistle of Junior Yearly Meeting

held at the Frontier Centre, Irthlingborough

2 - 6 April, 2016



To all Friends everywhere,

From the 2 - 6 April 2016, participants from all over Britain joined the Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) team at the Frontier Centre in Northampton, creating an event of 90 Friends, to explore the theme "*Inner Light: opening and inspiring us?*" in the context of: "What does love require of you; to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your inner light?". We were joined by two representatives from the Methodist Church and visitors from Ireland Yearly Meeting. Throughout the event we welcomed many visitors, including those from Quaker Life Central Committee, Yearly Meeting Arrangements Committee and the Student Christian Movement.

The theme of JYM last year was focused on action, and this year our concept was to explore whether the Inner Light drives us to act and how it does so. This links with the Yearly Meeting (YM) three year arc of: "Living out our faith in the world: our response to social inequality and economic justice." JYM participants have been given the opportunity to be involved with YM to strengthen connections with Friends of all ages, for example the session to create a time capsule for the new Friends House garden. Many young Friends appreciated the experience of feeling involved in the decision making of YM, as this meant we felt we were being respected and taken seriously as part of Quakerism in Britain.

Our spiritual growth was guided by the group worship sessions of Prologue and Epilogue, including a guided meditation and live music. These sessions allowed for the opportunity to speak, leading to a lot of thought-provoking ministry from all involved. Participants felt that the event balanced spirituality and philosophy, allowing us to be rejuvenated after some young people had felt briefly absent from Quakerism. The whole event was facilitated in a state of worship, with silence prevalent throughout.

Following on from brief talks from each of the Arrangements Committee members about what the theme meant to them individually, we welcomed Alistair Fuller from Quaker Life, to speak about 'What is your root? Who holds you to task?' Participants felt that he used accessible analogies to engage with us and our theme, prompting many interesting discussions about 'bringing your whole self'. Other smaller sessions offered participants the chance to be mindful, to centre in silence and to meditate walking a labyrinth. We held a business meeting to discern the question: 'How are we opened by the Inner Light and how might we be moved to speak truth to power?'

Thoughtful and imaginative ministry provoked a discernment process described as 'vibrant and fascinating'. The minute was agreed as follows:

Our Friends spoke of the Inner Light as something constantly present, developing since birth, which is easiest to feel when in the stillness of silence and in the communities at young people's events, where the Light can burn brightly and can open us to inspiration. The Light and truth is felt to be evident through the celebration and exploration of our talents and passions: you should not be afraid of how this light may affect you but let it shine out of yourself for all to see you.

A Friend compared the Inner Light to a door; even if there's no answer at first, if you keep knocking and looking then an answer will be found. Perhaps we should try to be open by keeping looking for own answers. A common theme was the Inner Light as 'that of God/good in everyone', giving all people innate worth. If people can see their light, it can help the acceptance of self-worth and this opens many to feeling able to speak truth to power.

Some Friends felt the Inner Light as guidance: even if we don't understand it at first, hearing others' beliefs/opinions can help us to develop and strengthen our own. Many who spoke thought that the Inner Light gave them confidence to be themselves fully and speak out against society's norms.

Our Friends felt that to speak truth to power it is best to start locally, building up as you go or that by working on our own truths we can improve the world. It was considered that how each of us speaks can be different and that while at first big actions can appear to have a large effect, sometimes the smaller things can make the most real difference – we should have the confidence to speak these things. Although speaking truth to power verbally is important, harnessing the Inner Light to bring your life into line with your values is also and by doing this speaking can be done through living.

A Friend contributed that in order to speak truth to power you must understand yourself and your morals first, letting the Light be a form of self-exploration and a driving force. It is the pure, unrefined Inner Light that is released when we are able to speak our own truths to power.

We hosted guests from Quaker Peace and Social Witness who, alongside JYM team members, facilitated a rotational activity with several different workshops considering the idea of 'We speak truth to power with love', also examining how this can be portrayed in different ways. Paul Parker, BYM's Recording Clerk, led a session focused on 'Our Faith in the Future', specifically exploring the place where 'our deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet', which promoted a variety of lively discussions. We were very grateful for the contribution of our Adult Volunteers, who shared about 'Living out our Quaker faith' through their own personal experiences.

Social activities like the Ceilidh and Scavenger Hunt helped us to create a supportive and nourishing community, where all participants felt able to contribute, bridging the diversity of our roots. There were a wide range of inventive social activities, catering for everyone's needs and comfort. Group games encouraged mingling, creating new and strong friendships. This was developed in Base Groups, which many participants described as a second home or family; special, warm and inclusive. These smaller groups encouraged many to be more confident and involved, across both deep discussions and energetic games.

Participants left the event feeling that they had strengthened their sense of Quaker faith and personal identity and discussed the power of their intentions and influences. Most appreciated that JYM was a welcome break from technology that allowed people to better deal with stresses of life outside the event. Together we discovered that small individual actions bring out greater goods, as the theme was felt to reconnect with the very heart of Quakerism.

As we go our separate ways for now, we are conscious that the world is waiting for our actions from the Inner Light, which can be seen as inspiration and "that of good/God in everyone".

Signed on behalf of JYM 2016 community,



Alice



Kirk

Clerks