

The Epistle of RSoF, German Yearly Meeting 2015

The morning was grey. But the joy of being together with Friends was great. To be connected despite distances in space and time. Is Mysticism Deed? Is Deed Mysticism?

A wonderful scent of freshly cut celery drifted through the Quaker House. Does the mystical spirit smell of celery? The helpers enjoy the Deed. Our children and the helpers enjoy the soup, the rest of us the odour.

The 85th Yearly Meeting of German and Austrian Quakers took place from the 22nd to the 25th of October 2015 in the Quaker House in Bad Pyrmont. Our theme was "Spiritual Growth". 186 Friends between the ages of 9 months and 93 years were present, including delegates and guests from Georgia, Great Britain, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, Hungary and the USA.

Our community and the bonds between Quakers world-wide as the foundations of spiritual growth were stressed in many of the Epistles which reached us from other Yearly Meetings.

Our Friend Esther Köhring held the Richard L. Cary Lecture with the title "Roots and Wings. The opportunity to grow in the community of Friends". She spoke of the joy of being able to grow within the Europe and Middle East Young Friends (EMEYF) and German Yearly Meeting; wings were her earlier experience, roots came later. "Young Friends are not your future; they are part of our joint present." We can only grow into the Future out of the Here and Now of each one of us, younger or older. The sense of community - amongst EMEYF as within our Yearly Meeting - forms the foundation of mutual trust: both to fly, to attempt new things, and to develop roots, to "become radical" in the original sense of the word. To try new approaches asks for the overcoming of the continual need for a finished product, "not always hearing the song of the birds but always listening for it", and carrying the "Krummelus pill" in our pocket (like Astrid Lindgren's Pippi Longstocking) as a sort of dried pea to keep disturbing us and prevent us becoming too comfortable in our settled Quaker existences. "How can we *be* Quakers without ceasing the process of *becoming* Quakers?"

New attempts: open sessions of our committees, a morning bible study time unit, joint business meetings of Young Friends and the Yearly Meeting, autobiographical contributions.

From inner growth to outward deed: the particular field in which Friends feel moved to act is currently - in view of the special situation of the moment in Germany - assisting refugees. Many Friends work with ongoing initiative and commitment in this area.

Important aspects of our Business Meeting: several years of work by a Literature Group have come to a successful conclusion, and "Our Book" has been published under the title "And what can you say? Views and experiences" (ISBN 978-3-929696-52-3). German Quakers' striving to live in the spirit of love and truth and their various answers to the questions of their time are reflected in this volume.

Then: a new translation and publication of the Journal of George Fox in German has been decided upon. We look forward to its realization.

Further: the Yearly Meeting has agreed on the text of an open letter to the German Chancellor Angela Merkel and to other German and European politicians to express three concerns of German Quakers in the present refugee crisis. Firstly, we support the policy of open borders for asylum seekers and live in the hope that we shall master the situation. Secondly, export of weapons from Germany contributes to the uprooting of refugees. Thirdly, all possible efforts must be made to aid the restoration of acceptable living conditions in the refugees' countries of origin.

We greet Friends throughout the world in the conviction of our mutual trust and unity.

Sabine Alvermann (Clerk)

Neithard Petry (Clerk)