

Epistle from Switzerland Yearly Meeting : Herzberg near Aarau.

7th June 2019 to 10th June 2019.

Greetings to Friends Everywhere!

Once again familiar friends gathered from meetings across Switzerland, and we were blessed to receive guests from France, UK, Germany, a Friend from Friends World Committee for Consultation-Europe and Middle East Section from the Netherlands, and from Quaker Council for European Affairs (QCEA)-Brussels. About 40 of us met in the idyllic green surroundings of the Herzberg, in Canton Aarau. We endured every kind of weather from blustering winds, to hot sunshine then rain and cool cloud. Our encounters with each other were as varied as the weather itself. We celebrate this time together to experience the Spirit in learning and fellowship.

At the very outset we acknowledged the death of our faithful friend Connie Arnosti. As we looked at our individual name badges, which she created and looked after each year, we smiled, and were aware that Connie is still with us.

Our theme for the weekend was "Peace Building Today and QCEA." As we focused on coming together and setting the foundations for our gathering we were given two citations.

"I have heard some Friends deny their anger in a silent 'peace' where there is no understanding of each other. Such Friends are angry but by their silence the progress of world peace has stood still. If we are angry we know how wars develop. It does not matter who's wrong. What matters is that we care enough to talk to each other."

SueNorris. 1982. Q.F.and P. 20.68

"If you want peace, you don't talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies."

Desmond Tutu

These ideas brought our attention to the light within, and how we can support each other in extending that light in the world.

Olivia Caeymaex, Peace Program Lead from QCEA, delivered a keynote presentation highlighting QCEA's approach to peacebuilding among EU representatives in Brussels. Then she invited us into a simulation of "quiet diplomacy" in which we were assigned various roles in civil society and diplomatic representations. The role-playing exercise illuminated the challenges of finding unity across diverse agendas.

As in previous years, we invited friends to offer talks and workshops on the theme, and received so many offers that many workshops happened simultaneously. Topics included: conflict resolution within groups, confronting intolerance, peacebuilding with nature, transforming internal anger, and advices and queries on sustainability, among others.

Also in tradition, Young Friends embarked on a special trip and Parker reported the following: "On Saturday we went to the Umwelt arena. It's a combination of a museum exhibition but it's also interactive. I think it was really interesting because I had fun but at the same time I learned new ways to become more environment friendly. My favourite part was definitely getting to try out electric bikes, scooters and segways. And the best part is that we got in for free. If you bring an old phone you get a free entrance. The phone will then be repaired or recycled." Thank you to Ann Fowler and to Jennifer Kaddur for coming up with the idea and

for bringing their children. We really enjoyed meeting Thomas, Timothy and Nadja, Anissa and Hafiz.

Our Meetings for Worship reminded us to be open to new light, from whatever source it may come. At a time of political uncertainty in Europe, when European institutions are under threat, we found some strength and inspiration in Sue Norris's second paragraph:

"How do we become reconciled to each other if we are asunder? All I can say is to go up to that person and say what is in your heart; that their ways are hurting but you still love them. But this takes time and not many people like to look in a person's face and find out who they are. So we miss the reconciliation and do not have the experience - that we *cared*. Given that, then we will know who we are and find relief in tears we all should share. This is where peace starts."

We enjoyed reading Epistles from Friends around the world, and send you warmest greetings, peace and light.

Until next year.

In Friendship,

Switzerland Yearly Meeting