

NORWAY YEARLY MEETING 2019

To Friends everywhere

Our 201st yearly meeting was held from 27-30 June 2019 in the beautiful surroundings of Telemark at Seljord Folk High School. Participants ranged in age from one-half year to over ninety. The theme for the yearly meeting was "with heart and mind prepared". This deals with making ourselves more fully aware. What are the things that strengthen us in life, that give life meaning, that raise our energy? The answers we give tell us a lot about our values.

We are challenged by the strong activism on climate shown by high school students this spring. Their clear language inspires us to rediscover and reaffirm our Quaker voice. These issues relate closely to our testimonies. For Friends, creation is holy and the damage we cause defies the sacredness of life. This foundation has led Quakers throughout our history to address overriding issues, and we were early proponents for the preservation of nature and protection of climate. The experience of life as holy can be a distinctive contribution of Friends on environment-related issues. There is a close relationship between this work and our longstanding concern for peace and human rights.

To have our hearts and minds prepared is to meet life with openness and wonder. We must preserve "the joy, the spark, the spectacular" in life, and at the same time conserve ourselves with slowness – breathing in and breathing out. If our load is heavy, we can take some of the stones we carry out of the pack to build beacons. Humans are a part of nature, everything is connected and inter-dependent in this web of life. If we are to take care of our world, we must live more simply. In group activities in nature we practiced activating the senses through listening to birds and feeling the grass and trees. Through the "experiment with light" we experienced coming closer to the great unity we are a part of.

We have shared thoughts on ways we might organise ourselves better to strengthen our fellowship. How can we help to create more spaces for meetings and strengthen our support of each other? Throughout the gathering we have appreciated fellowship across the generations, with youth groups contributing strongly to activities and perspectives. Being together with so many children and youth gives us inspiration and hope for the future.

Seljord 30th Day, 6th Month, 2019

Hanne Hognestad
Clerk