

Epistle for Switzerland Yearly Meeting, Herzberg, May, 2012

Greetings to Friends everywhere from Switzerland Yearly Meeting, 2012.

Fifty of us, including four children and three young people, gathered as Quakers from all parts of the country to meet on the Herzberg (near Aarau) for the first time. We were also privileged to have visiting Friends from Britain, France and Germany Yearly Meetings.

Our theme this year has been "What canst thou say", part of a quotation by Margaret Fell, quoting George Fox in 1694. The whole quotation goes: "You will say, 'Christ saith this, and the apostles say this;' but what canst thou say? Art thou a child of the Light, and hast thou walked in the Light, and what thou speakest, is it inwardly from God?"

Julia Ryberg from FWCC-EMES was here to lead us in our theme. We started with a worship sharing session on the original text of the theme. In workshops Julia introduced us to various aspects of the theme. We heard from a Friend about his personal spiritual journey to Quakers. Another Friend explained her experience in her ecumenical environments, and another Friend explained how she lives Quakerism in her professional life. We had a playful exercise in answering questions about Quakerism to people who didn't know anything about us.

Liz Scurfield from QCEA, on her last official visit to an Annual meeting, shared with us the achievements of QCEA (Quaker Council for European Affairs) and how Switzerland Yearly Meeting can better participate in the work of this council.

On our last evening we saw the very moving film "Weapons of the Spirit" from the Chambon Foundation. During Nazi Occupation a French pastor and his wife, André and Martha Trocmé, inspired the inhabitants of the small village Chambon-sur-Lignon in Southern France to save the lives of about 5000 Jewish children. Their story is told by one of the survivors.

We had a very moving report from two participants in the World Conference in Kenya. They were very impressed with the wide diversity in Quaker faith and practice worldwide. Over eight days they came to understand what Quakers of very divergent practices have in common. Basic to all of us is the Light in every person, equality, peaceful resolution of conflict, That of God in everyone and openness to new truths. In the end the participants came to realize that we all come from the same root, George Fox, but we have developed in very diverse directions.

At Herzberg we had our horizon broadened, gained new perspectives on Quakerism worldwide and learned how to share our faith with each other.