

Epistle from the Joint Nordic Yearly Meetings' Gathering, 2013

To Friends everywhere

The four Nordic Yearly Meetings of Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland gathered together from 27-30 June 2013 at Backagården, Höör, in the lovely Swedish county of Scania. We were 121 in number, including 23 children and youth and 17 guests and representatives from abroad.

We have enjoyed being together as a community, fruitful conversations, new and renewed friendships and deep stillness and silence. During our Epilogues we have listened to Welsh songs with guitar accompaniment, and an ad hoc Quaker choir singing two of the choirmaster's own compositions. A group of Elders from the four Nordic countries gently guided and upheld us throughout the gathering.

The theme of the gathering was *How do we nurture our Meetings for Worship and our relationships with each other?* Two Friends had been invited to share their reflections on the theme with us.

After an initial period of worship, *Stephen Collett* from Norway began by asking us the following question: *As Friends, how are we called to engage in Eldering and Pastoral care?* The Spirit finds us when we sit in Meeting and in prayer, and leads us to connect with each other. It has a prophetic message; the continual re-birthing of the Spirit. It leads us towards the world that we may mend it. We are called to live in sympathy with the creation.

Stephen continued by indicating that we need each other in pastoral care and support. We are not members of a silent study group that like to meditate together! We are all part of the eternal and the immediate presence. God is eternal and immanent. I AM, was the message to Moses in the desert. Or, in the words of George Fox: "You have no time, but this present time".

As Quakers we believe that we – like society – can improve. But this requires practice and discipline. Following the leadings of the Spirit does not make life easier, but prepares us for greater service. Life becomes more interesting, more vital. In this process we have to be willing to be fashioned. God "crafts us between the hammer and the anvil". This can be painful.

In her address, entitled *How do we nurture our relationships with each other and with God?* *Sue Glover Frykman* talked about her personal experiences and the inner journey that these had given rise to. Her story was punctuated by pauses, which gave Friends time for personal reflection.

Sue's journey began with the discovery that she had strayed away from God and, as a result, was out of balance. She sought the answer in the stillness of worship and in retreat. There she found that closeness to God could be shared with others: by holding them in the Light, by being held in the Light and, not least, by holding herself in the Light.

How can we share our deepest beliefs with others? Her answer was: by being willing to tell them about our own experiences and our Quaker faith. God is at work in our everyday lives. “Do not hide your light under a bushel”.

A particular source of joy during the gathering was being with the children and the young people who, through creativeness, play and serious consideration, explored various aspects of Quakerism. They also played an active role in the gathering in different ways, for example by giving each of us a ♦ ‘secret’ Friend, photographing and interviewing older Friends.

The young people have prepared future ♦ ‘confirmation candidates’ for what it means to be ♦ ‘affirmed’ in the Quaker way.

Our togetherness has shown us that our differences are strengths, and that we are called to grow together.

Friends assembled at the joint Nordic Yearly Meetings’ Gathering, 30th June 2013

The Epistle from the Children and Youth Group at the Nordic Yearly Meetings’ Gathering, held at Backagården, Höör, Sweden, 27–30 June 2013.

| Svenska | Norsk | English |
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| Vi har lekt rött grönt ljus | Vi har lekt rødt grønt lys | We have played red light green light. |
| Vi har jobbat med temat gemenskap | Vi har jobbet med temaet felleskap | We have worked with the theme Community. |
| Vi har ritat och målat och jobbat med lera | Vi har tegnet og malt og jobbet med plastelina. | We have drawn and painted and worked with clay. |
| Vi har haft föreställning och utställning | Vi har hatt forestilling og utstilling | We had a presentation and exhibit. |
| Vi har hemliga vänner | Vi har hatt hemmelige venner | We had secret friends. |
| Vi har varit i skogen och hört på ljud | Vi har vært i skogen og hørt lyder | We have been in the forest listening to different sounds. |
| Vi har intervjuat kväkare | Vi har intervjuet kvekere | We interviewed Quakers. |
| Vi har haft epilog | Vi har hatt epilog | We have had Epilogue. |
| Vi har varit på utflykter | Vi har vært på utflykter | We had outings. |

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| Vi har hållit på med modellera | Vi har modellert med plastelina | We worked with plasticine. |
| Vi har lekt katt och råtta | Vi har lekt katt og mus | We played cat and mouse |
| Vi har smugit i skogen som indianer och lekt olika lekar | Vi har sneket rundt i skogen som indianere og lekt ulike leker | We snuck around like indians and played different games. |
| Sue och Irma (storpudel) var på besök och berättade deras historia | Sue og Irma har vært på besøk og fortalt deres historie | Sue and Irma (standard poodle) visited us and told their story. |
| Vi har fått nya vänner och träffat gamla vänner | Vi har fått nya venner og treffet gamle venner | We have made new friends and met old friends |

Isak, Bendik, Johannes, Maria, Ingvil, Mathilde, Ellen, Michelle, Eivind-Andreas, Ella, Adrian, Wilfrid, Waldemar, Thomas, Karen, Linus, Livia, Ylva, Emilie, Erik and Nina in the children's group.

James, Hanna, Emilie and Monica in the youth group.

The children and youth have written the Epistle themselves in three languages!