



## **France Yearly Meeting October 2022, Domaine de Lazaret, Sète and Congénies Quaker House**

### **Epistle**

To all our Friends throughout the world:

This year we spent a weekend together in a spirit of exchange and communion at the Domaine de Lazaret in Sète by the Mediterranean Sea. We gathered with the purpose of exploring how we can open ourselves up to the Inner Voice and ways in which we can be guided by the Spirit. This gathering was made special by the fact that it was followed by events held in Congénies to mark the bicentennial of the Congénies Quaker House.

In connection with our theme, we invited David Lorimer, author and lecturer, to speak about his vision regarding the Spirit and ways in which we can connect with It. His rich and complex presentation highlighted how powerful a force love is and that *we must know ourselves in order to know the Spirit*.

In addition, we were introduced to accessible practices for rendering ourselves available to Divine inspiration. There were physical exercises to enhance awareness of the body and its relationship to the Inner Light. We also experienced "flow state" by engaging in creative tasks. Finally, we practiced deep listening as a way to better feel our connection with each other.

*To be known by others requires profound knowledge of ourselves.*

The current geopolitical context in Europe led us to a discussion of peace on the continent. For this occasion, we invited representatives from EMES-FWCC, QCEA, Friends House Moscow, and QUNO to give presentations. Through these, we learned of various actions being taken by European Quakers, notably in response to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. We are inspired by the Spirit-led actions of these different organizations. And our thoughts are with them and our Friends in Eastern Europe, who have been agents of aid and peace during this time of conflict in Europe.

The question foremost on our minds was, *how can we continue following our peace testimony in times of war?*

Upon arriving at the Quaker House in Congénies, we were warmly welcomed by our Friends in residence as well as by others from the local community. What a joy to find ourselves together in this charming place replete with history for the occasion of its bicentennial! A lecture given by Patrick Cabanel to an audience of 120 Friends and local residents plunged us into the history of the

Protestants of the region. This along with presentations by Jean Paul Chabrol and Edouard Dommen made clear the spirit of resistance and resilience demonstrated by these 17th century Protestants. The first French Quakers in particular were led by the Spirit to confront violence with nonviolence.

*The power of the Spirit can manifest itself anywhere, even in the face of adversity.*

A panel discussion that brought together several Friends from France and one from Quebec made clear the necessity of creating more French-language content and of strengthening ties amongst Francophone Quaker communities around the world. We were also reminded that *the spiritual life of each individual is essential to the construction of a Quaker community.*

*It is the individuality of each person that enriches the collectivity.*