



Religieus Genootschap der Vrienden

**Epistle from Netherlands Yearly Meeting
Held at Natuurvriendenhuis De Bosbeek, Bennekom
10-12 May 2019**

Dear Friends all over the world,

Warm greetings from the 2019 Annual Meeting of the Dutch Quakers, gathered in Bennekom. We met in a wooded area and with much courage discussed the following theme: Being Quaker NOW.

We considered the following questions:

- How are we Quaker in our everyday lives?
- How do we teach newcomers what it means to be a Quaker, or do they naturally grow into it?
- How can we modernize our Quaker terminology?
- How do you imagine a vibrant or lively meeting?

Our Friend Jan de Winter spoke about how our organizational process can be a barrier or a stimulus. One of the answers to the above questions could be, according to Paul, "the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life". Or, to our former Prince Claus, who said: "Throw off your tie when it pinches."

On one of the evenings we played a creative game with penetrating questions. The game can be used in meetings to raise issues in a relaxed manner, such as slow decision making and using newer terminology (for example "Silent Meeting" instead of "Meeting for Worship" and "Conversation from the Silence" instead of "Worship Sharing").

This epistle was co-written by Emiel Westra, 10 years old. Together with the other children present, he enjoyed playing with clay, jumping on the trampoline and playing chess. Being occasionally in the presence of adults informs the children of the customs and insights of Quakers. During the evening the children provided the refreshments and built the campfire. The proceeds from the sales table this year go to the support of refugees in Calais, France (with whom some Quakers from the Netherlands are very involved) and to the Am'ary Play Center at Ramallah.

The ongoing work on our Quaker Faith and Practice has sometimes had difficult periods. But now, after the work is almost done, and as we are working towards our first publication, we realize that "the perfect is sometimes the enemy of good". As a solution we

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call the printed version a “time-bound” document, and there will be a website version that will be a living document which we will continue to enrich.

Through our EMES representative we heard the report about the Am’Ary Play Center at Ramallah, which is now going through a difficult time. This has been a concern of the Dutch Annual General Meeting for many years, which we continue to support. Another long-standing concern of ours is QCEA (Quaker Center for European Affairs) which has been offering its services, including silent diplomacy and peace education, to the institutions of the European community for 40 years. In this way, together with the Dutch Quaker Aid Fund, our small Annual Meeting is involved with the world around us.

We have noticed how important it is to deal with our conflicts in a Quaker way and how we can support each other in the emotions that those conflicts can evoke. We have felt very connected with each other in this.

We send our loving greetings to all Friends around the world.

In Friendship,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "M. Tjallingii". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Marlies Tjallingii,
Clerk Netherlands Yearly Meeting