

To Friends everywhere,

The open and friendly landscape around *Nordiska folkhögskolan* welcomed us after the pandemic and the war we are now experiencing in Europe. The people who created this place saw indeed “the Light in the crack,” that Leonard Cohen sings about in his thoughts-provoking poem “Anthem” which the young people gifted us, in the epilogue on the first night. The lines from the song that have resonated with us are: ‘Forget your perfect offering, there is a crack in everything, that’s how the light gets in’.

Many expressed joy at being able to gather again in person but we were still grateful for digital connections enabling Friends from a distance to join with us for some of our sessions.

Quakers have the capacity to gather into silence and explore, creating a culture of trust and safety. A Friend who was delayed expressed their surprise at encountering such a Gathered (or Covered) Meeting so early in our weekend. That trust enveloped us in many ways during our time together: including the experience of being *in* the earth – not *on* the earth – together, in each meeting for worship as well as in our meetings for clearness.

In addressing the theme for the gathering, “Seeking a Quaker Spirituality for our Times” Alistair Macintosh suggested that the task for us Quakers today is to practice holding “hospitable spaces” before the new and uncertain situations we frequently face.

We have been reminded that meeting for clearness is a cornerstone of Quaker practice. We had the opportunity to experience this in small groups, in which a chair for silence was included in the circle. We affirmed that “deepening the question may be more important than answering the question”.

One of the interest group topics was related to being a pacifist today rather than a passivist. How do we experience the war deep inside us?

The most valuable parts of life are being destroyed in the natural world, both for animals and humans. The soil and the air we breathe is being taken from us. War is a system that removes our free will and independence. War is also about what happens when a piece of land which has been destroyed is to be re-

established and rebuilt and wounds are to be healed. This takes time and work must be done to put all the small parts together by working for peace at all levels. With a Quaker outlook on life, we can be torchbearers when hope for peace fades.

Another workshop encouraged us to ask questions about how we tie our spirituality to our work with sustainability. In this process of approaching right relationship with animals we might begin by acknowledging all the animal products fulfilling a quiet place in our homes before considering what we are possibly called to do.

With all this in mind we were invited to consider how we might use each day in a blessed way, asking: “do I see what I am called to do?”

Eleven-month-old Sanni’s vocal ministry has spread joy in the gathering over the whole weekend. The older children and young people had their own program. Alistair shared an ancient Celtic story about the value of sharing; even if it comes at a cost, it may still be with the right thing to do. Creativity formed a significant part of the activities, and the children and young people enjoyed many opportunities to walk and play together – forming new friendships without being hindered by language differences.

Faith is a way of life. We ask ourselves as we leave: “What was awakened in you?” “What will you bring back to your worshipping community?”

A blackbird calls. Another responds. We are walking together in pilgrimage.

In peace and gratitude,
Nordic Yearly Meeting Gathering
30 June - 3 July 2022