**Convenor’s Reflections 30/10/2022**

Maybe it’s never the right time. We’re emerging from a pandemic, and we’re bruised. Our world is deeply unjust. How can our Quaker faith and Quaker communities make a difference?

This weekend we shared what’s happening in our meetings – our difficulties and what is good and growing. We came to learn and explore, hoping to leave inspired, with resources to strengthen and nourish our communities.

When Judith Moran talked to us about Quaker Social Action, what shone out to me was the warmth and inclusion they offer to the people they work with, and to each other. I loved the sight of people sharing food they had cooked together, the laughing, happy faces. I was inspired by the group’s concern for justice, their compassion and belief in dignity for homeless people, for young carers, and for asylum seekers. I was struck by the way their work evolves over time, responding to changing needs.

In the afternoon, we heard about four more projects rooted in Quaker faith and community. Each has taken a different direction, but all are linked in their belief in listening to Spirit… listening to God… to show them the way. The Experiment with Light gives us a process through which we can listen and be led. The Quaker Roots group feel compelled to protest against the Arms Trade. The Pity of War project shows us how an artist and a group with a concern can create a powerful image of the utter desolation of war. We are each given our own path to walk, and what is wonderful is how they come together.

In the Rookhow workshop, Sue Nicholls told us how, starting with a Threshing Meeting, a group concerned about a Meeting House in need of renovation could transform it into a thriving and sustainable Quaker hub. They offer a welcome to families, respite and woodland healing for mental health groups, for people recovering from addictions, and for refugees. I was struck by how full of joy Sue was. She told us she loves the land she works on, her family have benefited from it for so long. It seems she’s found her spiritual home.

In her talk, Judith told us “Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you.” There were spaces in this gathering for Friends to be unplugged. We could share lunch and chat. We spent time together, apart - going for a walk, or resting. We had social and creative opportunities, and epilogues to end the evenings. All these gave us an opportunity to relax and recharge so that when we came together in worship and in our groups, we connected deeply with each other.

No, it’s never the right time. We’re bruised, and feeling under-resourced, but the Spirit calls us to take one step at a time. We can work together, and care for ourselves and each other along the way. A Friend described the atmosphere of this Rep Council as “fizzing with energy.” I hope we can share this sense of energy as we bring the inspiration of this weekend to our Quaker communities. I hope we can share the joy.

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