

YPP Minute 2019

To all friends everywhere,

From the 24th to the 27th of May 2019, 29 young people met at the High Leigh centre in Hoddesdon, to consider the theme: 'Opening our hearts and mind to transform the world'.

Over the weekend we enjoyed numerous sessions from various speakers which informed us about Quaker outreach projects and various social and economic issues. An opening session run by one of our adult volunteers prompted us to think about how we enact our Quaker ideals in our daily lives, and how much our Quaker faith affects what we wear, the music we listen to, the food we eat and our political opinions. Lee Lester, the Quaker youth development worker for Sheffield and Yorkshire, ran a thought-provoking workshop about privilege. They invited us to consider the ways in which we are privileged, and the ways we are not, in terms of gender, class, ability, age, race, economic status and sexuality. We filled in identity wheels where we realised which forms of privilege we are most aware of in ourselves, and which ones we overlook, we also took part in an activity where we were given 1000 pounds to 'spend' on various privileges we decided on as a group. The need for representation and diversity in what we see in society became clear through these activities. As Lee reminded us, "our society is only as strong as our least privileged member".

Kirsty Philbrick, the Quaker youth development worker for the west of England, joined us to run a session on climate justice. We were able to choose whether the current climate crisis made us feel mostly fearful, sad, angry or powerless and to talk about how we might use these emotions to empower us and take action. Some of us have recently been involved with the Extinction Rebellion movement, climate marches and school strikes. We were encouraged by Kirsty saying that it only takes 1-2% of the population getting involved in a movement for it to have real, tangible effects. During a session on diversity and tolerance we all paired up and conducted assumption interviews, wherein we had to guess things like each other's favourite, music, food, hobbies, place of birth and languages spoken without talking. It was interesting to explore the preconceptions we had about each other and we enjoyed learning more about our friends in the process. We then discovered how many

similarities we share despite our differences by playing Quaker bingo! Small groups gathered in chatrooms on Sunday to discuss issues about animals and climate change, gender diversity, and inclusion. We enjoyed this method of hearing different people's opinions and found the atmosphere really open and non-judgemental.

Eden Grace, the Swarthmore lecturer, visited us on Sunday and shared lots of interesting stories about Quakers around the world, especially in Cuba and Palestine. She reminded us that "trying to change the world is an awfully big responsibility to place on ourselves" and acknowledged that this can discourage us from doing anything. However, she emphasised that it is important to remember that we are all a part of something much bigger than just ourselves, and even the smallest actions by just one individual can set off a whole chain of events. As Eden said, "I don't have to do everything...just the piece that is authentically mine" – we simply need to turn up and be a part of it!

We met in smaller Base Groups across the weekend, and valued these times of connection, reflection and fun. We met in worship in the mornings and evenings, finding the darkness and quietness of epilogues particularly meaningful. We also had lots of opportunities for fun over the weekend, competing in challenges, quizzes and whole group activities, such as Rounders, Capture the Flag, board games and giant Jenga. A particular fever for the card game 'Unable, Unwilling' spread throughout the event! We were also able to entertain each other on Sunday evening and share our many talents, including a perplexing brain teaser, comedy, singing, acting and piano playing.

Over the course of the weekend we have enjoyed opening our hearts to each other and to the issues in our world and feel motivated to open our minds to take action on the issues that we care about, in both public and personal ways.

Signed in and on behalf of YPP,

Freya Stopard English and Benny Froggett