

22/03/19 Time for reflection: sustaining our Meetings and ourselves

How are we? As we face potential change in our structures, how are our Quaker communities sustaining us and being sustained?

Zoe Prosser, our Local Development Worker, has led us in a period of worship sharing, considering the questions:

How are we feeling about our Quaker community?

How are our Quaker Meetings being sustained?

Zoe spoke to us about some of the things she has seen through her Local Development Worker role. It is important to acknowledge that there is a lot of mourning going on, through the loss of dear and loved Friends and through the changes that we see, with potential loss, in our Quaker community (for example the closure of Woodbrooke Quaker study Centre). We can show tiredness, be overstretched, and worry about questions like “who will do the job?” and “what will happen if no one does it?” The weight of the “should” is being carried – in the sense of feeling that we should all be doing more to uphold the community. This can all be dispiriting.

We know that communities can be many things at once: both a respite and a burden, and showing both hope and fear. A worry comes as we see the importance of what has been built up that we don't want to lose. We live in a time of fear; for our communities, our world, our planet. This can be reflected in our meetings too, so we have to be responsive to each other.

But here is a lot of hope in our communities as well. Clear successes have happened: younger Friends are coming in, there is rejuvenation of Local Meetings; new people are joining us following the pandemic. There are new ways of doing things; new ways to connect to each other in a spirit of worship.

Everywhere she looks, Zoe sees signs of Spring. During our time of worship sharing together this was echoed by Friends, giving instances of the hope they see and how inspired they are being within our wider Quaker community. Having this sense of hope underpins where we are together: times move on but change doesn't always mean loss. We may have lost Woodbrooke as a centre, but not as a learning resource, and it can come to Scotland to help us. There are more groups working for positive change: people are rising with a vision of what we hope for. Friends spoke of being so grateful for the support given in our communities, by others with us who are engaged with our meetings, working groups and out in the world.

We do have struggles in adapting to change, but we are looking at it head on, taking advantage of what is possible by taking responsibility for our future together. We have flexibility, as has been seen how we use new opportunities like Zoom. We look after each other and share our experiences. There is growth all around us, despite our difficulties. Today we recognise that we can be a community of transformation as we look to adapt to the change all around us. It won't be easy, and there will be challenging and questioning. But we have each other. We need to think through how we do things, but we have the resource of each other to draw upon. Younger Friends inspire us and show us ways forward, and the rest of us can nurture them in turn.

We thank Zoe for giving us the space to recognise the positives that we have as well as understanding those things we need to work to. We can do that together.

The flowers are coming up all around us and we do have hope.