



IRELAND YEARLY MEETING

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

Quaker House Dublin, Stocking Lane, Dublin, D16 V3F8

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To Friends Everywhere

It is with uplifted hearts and minds that we send our greetings from Ireland Yearly Meeting 2025. Given the theme of our gathering: 'A Learning Community', it was apt that Friends' School Lisburn, celebrating its 250th anniversary as a community of learners, should be the location for Friends from across Ireland and beyond, in person and online, to meet and share together.

James Nelson, who gave our Public Lecture on the subject 'Quakers, learning and education – using the future to rethink the present', reminded us that we are all teachers, and we are all learners. And, over the three days of our gathering, from 25th to 27th April, through listening, activity and discussion, we discovered just how much scope there really is for us to learn from each other.

That learning takes many different forms but what emerged over Yearly Meeting was a number of common threads. Listening to others' voices was seen as key. Michael Eccles, Executive Secretary of Friends World Committee for Consultation, Europe and Middle East Section, told us how over the course of a week's visit to the Friends' School in Ramallah it was by listening that trust was gradually built up and he was able to learn first hand of the devastating impact of the war in Gaza. There are fears over how children's education is being disrupted and Michael described the lengths that teachers go to in order to ensure that pupils have a safe learning environment.

The 2025 Swarthmore lecturer, Emily Provance, speaking from her 6 years' experience as a Travelling Friend demonstrated how the resolution of conflict surrounding a Kenyan woman accused of financial impropriety only took place after all involved had taken the time to listen to the woman's life story. Only by deep and long listening were understanding and a just resolution possible.

Shane Whelehan of Quaker Service illustrated the listening and collaboration the charity is involved in as it looks to develop service in North Belfast, using the voices in the local community to help discern where there is unmet need. In Geneva, the Quaker United Nations Office provides a space where Diplomats from many countries can engage in off the record over dinner conversations, listening and learning from each other in a quiet, non-judgemental space.

Over the course of the weekend, we were called upon to listen as well. We had asked representatives from the Quaker Schools in Ireland about what we could do to support their schools and in a practical session they identified a number of steps that we can take to support and promote the Quaker outreach that our schools provide. What we have learned through listening we now need to put into action.



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Our focus in our session with Alison Tarpey-Black from Britain Yearly Meeting was on how we can support our Meetings to thrive. We were uplifted listening to the positive story that Alison told, considering how we might make ourselves more visible and be more flexible in our practices to, for instance, attract young families who have so many calls on their time on a Sunday morning.

Alison reminded us that this period of global disruption really is the time to reach out to the many young people who are looking for answers and to show them that this is not the world that we wish them to inherit. The Society of Friends, she told us, is as unique today as it was 400 years ago; a group of both contemplation and action.

There was a large and vibrant gathering of Young Friends at Yearly Meeting and we were reminded of how much we can gain when we create space for their guidance and leadership. They prompted all of us to action with a Meeting for Worship for Movement and an interactive session in which we played games, got competitive, tried to collaborate, engaged in inspiring debate on topics from pacifism to the death penalty and simply had fun. Young Friends also led a candlelit Epilogue raingame on the first night. It was with delight that we partook in this shared exuberance!

As we listened and learned from each other, what was produced was a sense of encouragement and hope as we look forward. It was appropriate that James Nelson should have focused in his public lecture on how we think about the future. James suggested that the readiness to think differently as we look ahead opens each one of us to transformative learning, releasing us from our previous assumptions and freeing us all to think and act in new ways.

As a learning community we are guided by these words:

'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free' John 8:31-32

Signed on behalf of Ireland Yearly Meeting,

William Haire, Clerk

Elizabeth Dickson, Walsh, Assistant Clerk

Clodagh Davis, Assistant Clerk

Susie Harty, assistant in writing the Epistle

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