

EMEYF Spring Gathering 2018

Moyallon, Northern Ireland

To all Friends everywhere,

This Easter, 37 adult Young Friends and 2 mini EMEYF members, aged 2 and 5, have gathered in Moyallon Centre, Northern Ireland (25th March to 2nd April) to recharge our Quaker batteries.

Our concerns of a rise in nationalism and closing borders in Europe encouraged us to meet in a place where we could be physically close to other young Friends in order to explore the theme of Community.

We heard from local Friend Simon Lamb about how Ireland Yearly Meeting, so theologically diverse, has never divided. This has been a powerful reminder of the possibility of continued unity amongst Friends in our section and worldwide.

Our week has held spaces for friendship and deep worship; the silence holding together our busy, interesting, inspirational programme.

We heard from David Morton of Quaker Service N. Ireland about Friends' reputation for offering a neutral helping hand which allows us to carry out our service in the world. After installing a portacabin in Long Kesh (the Maze Prison) during the Troubles, Quakers offered visiting wives of people in prison a non-judgemental space. Catholics and Protestants were, and are, able to sit side by side whilst their children play together. Quaker service continues today at Quaker cottage, high on the mountains of Belfast. Two roads lead up to this small white cottage from the north and west of Belfast, bringing mothers from both sides of the Peace Walls together.



Our walk along the Belfast Peace Walls

How do we create intentional community?

Back in Moyallon, our own Quaker service involved laying new gravel in the grounds of the meeting house. Viele Hände, schnelles Ende!

In Drogheda, Ireland Junior Yearly Meeting welcomed us with hearts and minds prepared for a warming lunch and windswept wander. We explored their theme of integrity, with one Young Friend making the connection between this and our theme of community:

“To me, integrity is about recognising internal conflict with(in) me, and realising how good I am at deceiving myself. Part of this path towards integrity involves making myself vulnerable to others, which leads me to acknowledging my own failings. This vulnerability is simultaneously a key ingredient of building relationships and deeper community”.

We are inspired by the trust that people have had in our integrity as Quakers in the past. We can't rest on this. It's our shared joy and responsibility to continue this as the next generation.

Exploring the EMEYF archives, we are touched by how our own experiences are echoed in the letters we have read. They are so familiar; they could have been our own.

After our week together we are recharged, ready, and freshly inspired. We look forward to reforming our intentional community again at our annual meeting and Spring Gathering in Russia 2019.



Easter Sunday sunrise