

Epistle Summer School 2014

To all Friends everywhere,

On the 16th of August 2014, at Saffron Walden Friends School, 67 young Quakers, aged 11-14 and 23 staff volunteers came together to investigate the theme of 'Equality and Inequality'.

Throughout the week, different speakers came to talk to us, each representing different aspects of the theme varying from gender inequality to refugees. They were all fascinating. Conteh, the refugee from Sierra Leone provided us with a first-hand experience of being a refugee and gave us a lot to think about and discuss.

One of the highlights of the week was the Refugee Simulation; it was run by the staff team with the advice and help of Conteh. It helped us experience a little of what it's like to be a refugee.

Every morning and evening, we gathered for Meeting for Worship and epilogue. There was some interesting ministry and these meetings gave us an opportunity to come together and reflect on the day. A couple of epilogues were held outside which allowed a different atmosphere to grow around the group.

While the theme was explored over the course of the week, there were also many other activities including trips to Cambridge, Saffron Walden market day and Saffron Walden Maze, and staff ran activities on site including some World Cup games, and a Scavenger hunt. During free-time swimming and table tennis were available. Some of the favourite evening activities were the Barn Dance, Entertainments, and the Futuristic Disco which had music chosen by the young people.

Base Groups have always been an important part of Summer School. They help people socialise outside their general friendship groups and help make those new to the event feel included and less nervous. After each speaker session base groups would meet and reflect on what had been said and discuss the theme. Several of the base groups prepared items for Entertainments at the end of the week.

Overall, Summer School has been a great experience for all the young people here and one they will all remember for life. It's an amazingly welcoming and friendly community where everyone is included and accepted. Part of this is the wonderful practice of Secret Friends, where young people and staff members alike send and receive small gifts and notes anonymously throughout the week. They help make everyone feel loved.

At the end of the week in the business meeting it was decided that the theme for Summer School 2015 would be 'Quakers in War'

Signed in and on behalf of Summer School 2014

Gwendolen Da Sousa Correa and Andrew Liu-Gavin, Clerks

Thomas Sutherland and Bianca Rawlinson, Elders