

To all friends everywhere

From 18<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> August 2018 58 amazing young people and 23 inspiring adult staff members came together at Leighton Park School in Reading to explore the theme 'Quakers Changing our World'.

Throughout the week different speakers came to talk to us about the theme. We had Naomi Iliff, a Quaker from Reading tell us about her work visiting prisoners and the impact prisons have on people. MEP Jude Kirton-Darling spoke about politics and the importance of being a fish swimming against the tide and finding others to push together with. Activist Sam Donaldson asked us "what makes you happy?" and "what breaks your heart" to help us find our Quaker path in life. Emily Parker inspired us as she went to volunteer in a medical clinic for refugees in Greece and showed us photos and increased our awareness of refugees and the conditions they have to endure. Sahdya Darr from Quaker Peace and Social Witness made us think about inequality, prejudice, privilege and what it means to be an ally. Finally Tobi Wellner from Turning the Tide led a very active workshop on solving conflict with non-violence.

Other highlights of the week included DIY crazy golf, a Christmas themed disco, a crafty quiz, Barn dancing, a world cup challenge and a 'banging' fete. We particularly enjoyed the staff life lines session and found it inspiring to hear the adults share the challenges in their lives and show us that we can also get through difficult times and grow.

Base groups are really fun, you get to know different Quakers and interact with people you wouldn't normally interact with and make good friends. We played games and discussed the speakers and had a chance to talk to the speakers in person and ask questions.

Meeting for Worship and Epilogues were really a nice time to reflect on the days. One of the staff members helped us to feel calm using our breathing which helped us to settle into the deep silence. It was very peaceful with good ministry from young people and we enjoyed musical contributions from the staff.

Overall Junior Gathering was really fun and exciting. We love how there are no fake people here and everyone joins in with shared Quaker values and you can build real friendships that last. We can be ourselves here, more than some of us feel we can in our day to day lives.

At our young people's business meeting at the end of the week the theme of Modern Equality was decided for Junior Gathering 2019.

Signed in and on behalf on Junior Gathering 2018,

Bisi A and Matthew G (Clerks), Katie F and Adam Sa (Elders)