

Dear Friends all around the world,

Let me tell you a story about 50 Friends from 11 European countries (Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Poland, Slovenia, Ukraine, United Kingdom) and Australia. They met in the city of Budapest, Hungary and online to celebrate the first time they gathered from start to finish as the Central European Yearly Meeting. They even enjoyed some vegan birthday cake.

This story is about us, the youngest Quaker Yearly Meeting in Europe. We are basically newborns so we have the difficult task (and also the privilege) to define ourselves including membership procedures.

Ben Pink Dandelion gave a lecture about the key threads of the Quaker way and described what has changed over time and what has stayed the same. The following day we were encouraged to find answers in ourselves about what drew us to Quakerism, what could we do to deepen our spiritual life and what practical steps could lead us in this direction.

Kasia Kaczmarkiewicz shared with us a moving excerpt of her work regarding the archiving project about the nearly 30 year old history of Central European Gathering accompanied by a slideshow of photos from over the years. Tracey Martin from the Quaker Council for European Affairs gave us an interactive presentation about how they work, Irena Marušincová told us about her thesis regarding Feuerstein's method and we also had an interest group about the Image and Likeness of God. We did not forget to call attention to the climate emergency thanks to Arne Springorum and Pavel Marušinec.

We gathered for a two hour long Meeting for Worship, we had a silent walking worship and as every year we enjoyed singing together. One night a storyteller enchanted us with tales of Hungarian and other folklore.

We received greetings from Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation and Britain Yearly Meeting, Scotland General Meeting, Ireland Yearly Meeting, German Yearly Meeting as well as from distant individual Friends. We felt held in the Light by Friends spiritually supporting us from afar. We welcomed representatives from German Yearly Meeting and Britain Yearly Meeting. We are looking forward to seeing each other again next year in the Czech Republic (Litoměřice or Litomyšl), but even before that some of us will meet in Prague at our World Plenary Meeting Hub.

Stories accompany us during our whole life, we are living history at this very moment. CEYM started and grew strong as Border Meeting, Quaker Spring Regional Gathering, and Central European Gathering and we are grateful to the Friends who came before us. Now it is up to us to continue gathering and growing as Central European Yearly Meeting.