



France Yearly Meeting Novembre 2024 at La Solitude, Martillac near Bordeaux

To Friends from around the world

France Yearly Meeting 2024 gathered in the Domaine de la Solitude (but not in solitude) in Martillac. To be welcomed into a religious community provided a setting that fostered a calm atmosphere, in an area of trees and vines with their autumnal colours. Our theme for this meeting was “Inner peace: going towards others in a spirit of peace and reconciliation.” Some 50 Friends came from all over France, but also from Switzerland, Belgium and the UK. Some Friends also joined us on Zoom. Sadly, there were no children present at the meeting because they needed to get back to school.

The meeting for worship which opened the meeting allowed us to apprehend this inner peace and to feel that it is the same experience of peace that we all have, and which links us together, even if this experience may be described in different terms. This experience of worship sharing gave us room to put into action the Quaker method of discernment, based on listening to others and to the Inner Light. We were able to see the extension of this worship sharing during the weekend, subsequent ministry being enriched by our discussions.

This inner peace is not a state, but a process which is not always easy to attain, but which can be cultivated. We were able to feel this peace in the words used during meeting for worship, a welcoming attitude to what everyone contributes but also in the body language, the calm voices which spoke distinctly, in turn.

The workshops about reconciliation and conflict resolution provided tools for bringing this peace to other people. For example, we were asked to reflect about what a Quaker can do during wartime. These workshops made us feel the difficulties we encounter when we get involved. They also helped us to discover how the collective enables solutions to emerge and to transform the world. We feel that there is a continuity between inner and outer peace, between individuals or between groups. These workshops showed just how indispensable communication, guided by love, is in resolving conflicts.

Even if attaining peace is a process in which we cannot control everything, to attain it we must make a commitment. Peace should not only be a feeling; it is also about taking action to help build this peace. These actions need not be perfect nor fully achieved, because peace can

come as a surprise, like an unexpected consequence of our involvement. However, it doesn't always occur, despite our actions.

These moments of shared peace bring hope and light in these troubled times. Like the pieces of a puzzle which don't apparently fit together, we can construct a unified image, common ground based on shared values and discernment. We also became aware just how much we inspired each other, whether it was during meeting for worship, the workshops, listening to everyone's experiences, but also during the impromptu worship at the end of our fête.

We hope that every Friend who reads this epistle and those Friends who were present during this Yearly Meeting may find while reading this an inner peace that they can bring to their entourage.