

Report to York Area Meeting

Name of event	QPSW Spring Conference
Date of event	1-3 April, 2016
Your name	Sally Read
Your Meeting	Harrogate
Why did you accept nomination?	I want my Quakerism to be more alive and more socially relevant, and therefore hoped to find out what is happening in QPSW.
Who ran the event?	QPSW: 2 members of central committee (Rhiannon Rees and Heather Brunskell-Evans) and several members of staff
What was its purpose?	To inform Quakers about the work of QPSW and inspire us, and to take this inspiration back to our meetings.
How was it structured?	A residential weekend at the Hayes conference centre, Swanwick. The timetable included plenary sessions and workshops. There was plenty of time for conversations and lots of worship; both separate worship sessions and worship built in to workshops and other sessions.
What did you learn?	<p>I learned about the enthusiasm of many Quakers for changing the world. Another way of expressing this would be to say I saw how the spirit is moving amongst Quakers; and this was very encouraging. A number of the young Quaker staff members spoke of “working towards the kingdom of God” which I found both startling and exciting.</p> <p>We heard about the work of QPSW on economic justice and sustainability, peace campaigning, conciliation and climate justice. We heard from people who had served as ecumenical companions in Palestine and as peacemakers in Britain and other parts of the world.</p> <p>It was good to think about the distinctive Quaker characteristics of QPSW’s work. These included being led by the Spirit both through the processes of collective discernment and through individuals’ experience of the Light. Quaker work tends to be long term and collaborative; community-building rather than competitive. As Quakers, it belongs to all of us. One worker spoke of how refreshing it was to work “under a Quaker banner” and not have to be constantly making one’s case for relevance or competing for funding. As someone who works in a small charity encouraged to adopt a “business</p>

	<p>model” (sell your services, see partners as competitors, constantly measure outcomes) I could see how wonderful this was.</p> <p>One piece of wisdom which had a big impact on me was an encouragement to <i>not</i> “ask what the world needs” but to do what “makes us come alive”- and this will <i>be</i> what the world needs. I guess this presupposes a willingness to seek what it is that the spirit is guiding us to do, but it also guards against over-activity or misdirected business, I think.</p> <p>I also learned that I felt at home with Friends. Having time to talk, a purpose and a shared enthusiasm felt encouraging.</p> <p>I was challenged to think about how I personally, and how we as local meetings, support and uphold the work of QPSW. Most of the members of staff were wise in seeking support through a number of measures but they all need holding in the light. I wonder how we can best keep ourselves informed and feel moved to uphold and encourage one another in our work, our activism, our ministry; in however we are acting in the world.</p>
<p>What can the Area Meeting learn?</p>	<p>There are 2 areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>How do our meetings support the work of QPSW?</u> <p>Having come back asking myself what makes me come alive (see above) and how we can support one another (or how <i>I</i> can be more involved with caring) and the work of QPSW in a way which is lively, I read the editorial in April’s Quakevine and the extract from QF&P which describes loving care not as something we do but as a process which binds us together. So, I suppose the question is about how to engage with the process of caring for and about QPSW and Quaker activism.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. <u>What might God be asking us to do to engage with peace work, economic justice, climate justice etc?</u> <p>These are questions for us individually and collectively, of course. And we may be doing all we can, or all that God is asking of us. But perhaps as we engage with question no 1, new light will be shed on question no 2.</p>