



Kvekersamfunnet

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Norway

To Friends everywhere

Norwegian Friends were gathered for their 2016 yearly assembly from June 23rd – 26th in the town of Kragerø, by the sea. We were 77 participants in all, of whom 22 below the age of 20. Our theme this year was *Making peace locally with the help of the Alternatives to Violence Project*.

During our first business session we remembered Friends who have died during the last year and heard greetings from home and abroad. Our epilogue that first evening was to learn Dag Hovda Sture's new song *The Wave*, which he has written especially for this year's assembly. We sang the song on several occasions during our gathering. We shall remember this line: *We need no interpreter between us and God; he who sings within our minds. See his spark in others.*

Friday morning we woke up to Brexit after the referendum in Great Britain, and we were gripped by the many challenges this decision may bring. During business that day we approved the accounts and a budget for 2017, and discussed how peace work may be shown in the budget. We also made provisions for continuing the work on our Norwegian *Faith and Practice* as part of the process towards our 200 year anniversary in 2018.

After lunch we worked in three interest groups. Stephen Collett led a group on *Conflict as a gift*, Penny Heymans on *Compassionate communication* and Lars Verket on *Mindfulness*. The rest of Friday was dedicated to AVP. We enjoyed practical and entertaining exercises for all ages (from 6 months to 89 years). The basis for AVP consists in positive confirmation that we are all good enough and important, focusing on communication, listening, community building and how to deal with conflicts.

The Saturday morning sky was brilliantly blue and we all looked forward to our visit to Jomfruland. Before we left we worked in three interest groups, one on *Contact with refugees and asylum seekers in our local communities*, one on *Quaker engagement in Palestine/Israel in general and Gaza in particular*, and one on *Sustainability in our everyday life and communities – challenges from Peru*.

We made a trip to Jomfruland in two comfortable boats winding their way between islands and skerries. We enjoyed our packed lunches and many of us seized the opportunity of a refreshing wade or swim. Some also took a walk to Jomfruland Lighthouse, or past the pebble beach to see the oldest ash tree in the Nordic countries.

On our return we joined in the annual meeting of Quaker Service Norway and saw the documentary *Reconciliation in Burundi* by Øystein Rakkenes. During the social evening after dinner we saw a documentary from Palestine / Gaza, and we sang and played some more AVP games.

During a short business session on Sunday morning we started preparations for the Nordic Yearly Meetings' gathering in 2017. During Sunday Meeting for worship, two of our young people chose to confirm their membership in the Norwegian Quaker community.

Every morning offered early meeting for worship or some mindful exercises. Our days together were characterised by cheerfulness, delightful reunions, play and conversations across all ages. We leave our YM assembly with a desire and a commitment to make a difference in everyday life, in our own lives as well as in others'. Even if we are few we have many testimonies to share.

In Friendship
Stephen W Collett, YM Clerk