**Convenors’ Reflections 16/10/2021**

**Lynden Easterbroook:**

For me, this Rep Council has shown that we are in both the saddest and the most hopeful of times. We heard about the loss and grief that so many Quaker communities have experienced. We talked about our fragility as we struggle to find our way forward in a changing world. So, where is our hope? For a start, our communities are coming back together, with a broader spectrum of ways to connect, even if that choice brings its share of confusion! Alistair and Marilyn outlined the outcomes of the Rep Council review, and there is hope there. We’re going to continue to meet twice yearly, and one of those weekends will be in person. We will have Local Development Workers to help us to integrate learning and growth in our Quaker communities.

And then there is our world. We’re living in an unjust world where not all are made welcome, and there is a global climate emergency. As Quakers we recognise that there is an urgent need for action, at a time when we might feel least equipped for it. So, can we see signs of hope here too?

Edwina outlined how we made a clear progression from our first statement on inclusion in 2017, to Yearly Meeting Gathering this year when we committed to becoming an actively anti-racist community, welcoming our gender diverse Friends, and committed to faith-based action for climate justice.

We looked at what kind of communities we need to be to live our commitments well. We spoke of moving beyond welcoming others into “our space”, to seeing ourselves as walking through this world, listening to Spirit, opening our boundaries and including all. A Friend said we’re welcoming people not into our space, but into God’s space.

Alistair introduced us to the RESTORE framework, and we looked at how we could use this to listen to each other, to heal from the trauma of recent months and build safe, resilient communities, able to live out our Quakerism in the world. In many ways we’re just beginning this new stage of our journey together, but my sense is that our vision is true, and we are going forward with hope.

**Juliette Chandler:**

What has been on my mind about rep council today is that we have come together from a wide range of places, with a variety of experiences, sorrows and joys, and yet have created an atmosphere that has felt empathetic with room for hope.

Edwina’s session this morning asked us what kind of a community we want to be in order to live our commitments as a yearly meeting well and we acknowledged the vulnerability that this takes. We recognise that we are in a place where we need to learn in order not just to welcome everyone to our meetings, but to open our communities to radical change in order to listen deeply to the needs of each of us. In my worship sharing group many of us found gaps between where we feel we are and the work we feel called to undertake to deal with the climate crisis, but that supporting and listening is just as vital and necessary a part of sharing our inner light.

This afternoon, Alistair spoke to us about acknowledging losses, and I found particularly impactful the phrase that what emerges won’t be the same as what was there before. We have been experiencing our faith in a pandemic for more than a year and a half and this comes with grief for ways that we worshipped and joined together as a community that may not be possible for many of us for some time. Alistair encouraged us to be careful with our own hearts while we take the time to reflect on what we are going through together.

At the beginning of our event we asked ourselves what we were bringing to rep council and I feel that each of us has brought incredible kindness for each other, which has shaped and been felt throughout our time together.