**Convenors’ Reflections: April 2022**

There was a quality to this Rep Council that is hard to put into words. It was grounded in our periods of worship. We had time in home groups to focus on the needs of our Quaker communities. Great care went into the presentations. The two epilogues were moving and thought provoking. All these helped to create the conditions so that we could face difficult subjects with honesty and depth.

Alistair reminded us that there isn’t a Quaker community that hasn’t struggled during the last two years – and in our home groups we shared both our struggles and our growth. There is much work to do, and much to support us. We heard about workshops with Woodbrooke, and resources from Quaker Life. We were encouraged to work together with other local Reps and Local Development Workers, perhaps using the RESTORE framework.

Helen Oldridge helped us to explore how we can be radically inclusive and welcoming in an imperfect world where cultural norms insidiously close doors. Our worship sharing on this led to deep and inspiring ministry.

Perhaps, in part, this Rep Council ran counter to those cultural norms. We took time to listen and appreciate each other, and I hope we forgave ourselves for our mistakes. We had a full programme but it was also spacious. Rep Council is evolving, we know there isn’t just one right way, and along with our love of the written word, we used music and pictures, and we shared our stories. We supported each other to face the discomfort needed for change… but none of this would have been possible without the willingness of everyone to come with open hearts and minds. I hope we can offer these same qualities as we bring Rep Council home and engage with our Quaker communities.

*Lynden Easterbrooke*

Over the course of this rep council, I have felt a deep sense of being held and uplifted, in our discussions, our activities and in our worship. Across all of our sessions, we have discovered a willingness to listen to the needs of our communities and to ask ourselves what the person next to us might need, even when that might contradict our ideal way of worshipping. This began for me on Friday evening when we were able to share the places that our meetings are now and the struggles they face coming out of the pandemic. Our epilogue holding Ukraine in the light was an important recognition of the ongoing crisis.

Our Saturday sessions enabled us to look forward and consider what our meetings might need. Alistair’s suggestion that we think of the people around us our teachers and ask ourselves what we are teaching them resonated in a time when so many of our meetings seem to be feeling fractured. In our ‘time together, apart’ the sense of upholding continued and I was very aware of sharing that time with everyone. I hope that feeling of togetherness was present for others too. Helen Oldridge’s session in the afternoon developed into a rich sharing of experiences and our worship sharing and epilogue on giving felt like a wonderful and appropriate close to the day. I would like to thank everyone involved with the planning and delivery of this weekend for all of their work into creating a space that has allowed for such a sense of community and everyone present for their ministry, spoken, written and silent.

*Juliette Chandler*