

Epistle of Switzerland Yearly Meeting, Quaker, May, 2026

To all Friends everywhere, we Swiss Quakers send our greetings from Montmirail where we met for our Switzerland Yearly Meeting between the 30th April and 3rd May 2026. Montmirail translates as Lookout Mountain, and it became for us a place from which other lights became visible:

On a clear, fresh, full-moon evening in the beautiful Swiss Seeland. Thirty of us. We could hardly recollect where our theme had come from – “Being inspired by Other Lights” – until a friend effortlessly grounded it: “Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come?” (Quaker Faith and Practice, Advice and Query 7). A more secular interpretation of our theme would be “How to Thrive in Troubled Times”.

Silence and Inspiration.

A Zen friend spoke of reconciling the living self and the observing self – leaving more space for the pure experience of smell, moment, gesture, sunset. Attaining calmness, achieving joy little by little through the effort of simply being here. Desert Mothers and Fathers practice, hidden for centuries, taught us centering prayer with a mantra – Kyrie Eleison, or, as described by an evangelical christian “whatever works”. We live in a noisy world. Silence may not only be emptying but with a mantra, might displace the noise with something greater.

Silence was described as a secure space which could be used each morning as a potential dam against the flood of the day’s ideas. On the same note of silence, we were reminded of Mother Teresa’s response when asked about her way of communicating with God: “I don’t say much – I mostly listen.” And how does God respond? “He doesn’t say much, He mostly listens.” Silence is the space you hold open for an answer that may not become audible in our time frame. We heard about silence as a radical expression of trust. Silence can be our basis as a call to action.

Another Friend shared about the reality of finding silence in another person’s absence. Being invited to Shabbat repeatedly after her mother’s death – with no expectations, just sharing the joy of being together in a holy space in difficult times. Some Friends echoed this episode. Finding trust in not understanding. Overcoming difficulty by going through. Don’t struggle against yourself. The brighter the light, maybe, the easier to hold silence. Inspiration literally means breathing in.

We were cautioned against the Bella Vista syndrome. Namely, staying in the place with the splendid view, which paralyses us – where we lose the ability to walk, and work further.

Quaker work & personal callings.

In another session, we learned more about the work of Quaker international organisations. We are grateful to the representatives from QUNO (Quakers United Nations Office), EMES (European and Middle Eastern Section) and QCEA (Quaker Council for European Affairs) for their attendance. E.g. one worker shared in personal terms how she no longer could bear working in the asylum system directly, and chose to influence the underlying policies instead,

hence working the long game. Another person's mantra: If you suffer, I suffer – hence I must act.

Other Quakers told of their inspiration that gave rise to their callings. One friend spoke of not separating life and work, but embracing them as a unity. Living a life undivided. The result was not his will, nor a simple assessment of needs; it was being open and receptive to all the little signs along the way and accepting them as guidance and calling. Working twelve to fourteen hours a day, three hundred and sixty days a year – the inner light being a source of energy and joy – and ultimately a place of belonging for himself and others. When asked about the relationship between facilitated death and the hospice, he said as long as human needs are catered for, the wish to exit will disappear.

Another Friend spoke of his calling to establish an organisation to plan for the end of life. He invited us to embrace death as a friend. How do we prepare for the end of life? How do you hold the fear working towards an open horizon? His attitude? Things will manifest; we are still in tension, in conflict, so what? Do what you can do and influence what you can change. I have faith in what I am doing, he said – playing the long game. Add pragmatism, knowing the right way will open – we only have to play a part.

Our own inspiration from the weekend.

Quaker process is slow. Frustrating. But we know that it works. One business session was inspired by the Quaker principles of “Speaking Truth to Power” and on the fundamental equality of “That of God in Everyone.” So we wrote a letter to the Swiss Federal Government, revising, reworking – the tension between diplomatic encouragement and concrete call to action. We invite you to read and share our letter which is attached.

Being inspired by other lights and nourishing our own light, is a way to thrive in troubled times. From this hill, we send you our brightest greetings.

In the silence that speaks, and the love that listens –

Your Friends at Montmirail