

## Quaker Life Rep Council 26<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> April 2019

### “Building Inclusive Quaker Communities”

As usual Woodbrooke was full, literally to overflowing, (some reps had rooms at the nearby Baptist College) with around 100 reps from all areas of England, Scotland, Wales, Rep Council Central Committee and Friends House Quaker Life staff. The weekend was very well organised with plenty of opportunity for chatting informally as well as discussions and worship in small “home groups” and in full sessions. There were also workshops on various aspects of the main topic.

The theme was **diversity and inclusion**, which will also be the theme for Yearly meeting this year.

Keynote speaker Edwina Peart asked **are we gatekeepers or gateways?** One monitors and possibly restricts who comes in, while the other opens to all. Sometimes it is necessary to control who comes in, but we need to be aware of the boundaries we set. Diversity can be positive if we are aware of difference and use advantages in a positive way. She introduced three Friends who might have posed difficulties for some on grounds of Race, Gender, Age, Education/class/lifestyle. All spoke movingly of the difficulties they had encountered in some circles and how bias which is often unintentional and unconscious can feel to the receiver.

There was much during the weekend on the subject of **unconscious bias**. We are all guilty of this. We often have no desire or intention to hurt and are unaware of the many ways in which we are conditioned to make assumptions and judgements about a person without really knowing them. A Quaker booklet **“Owning power and privilege”** has some useful suggestions for action in this respect.

A selection of clips from various sources shown on screen on Saturday evening provided moving and relevant examples. I recommend everyone to look at Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie “The danger of a single story” on [www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com) –July2009 and Yassmin Abdel-Magied “What does my headscarf mean to you?” on [www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com) – 2015. If we are to become fully inclusive we need urgently to address these issues. The examples gave me some surprises!

Overall a thought provoking weekend on a topic relevant to all of us.

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Link to Quaker booklet:

<https://quaker-prod.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/store/6d94d334d4cdd158fbc8e21906be4cccb83bdf74cb2fbdaf97c523a98f45>