

Epistle from the All Poland Gathering of Friends, Poznań, 10–12.11.2023

Dear Friends,

On the 10th November 2023 we gathered at the Poznań Evangelical-Augsburg Parish in a charming part of the city. There were almost 30 participants at the gathering – Friends from numerous regions of Poland as well as guests from Germany, Czech Republic and the United States. They were arriving and leaving – some to be at the gathering at least for one day. Others sent cordial greetings, since emergencies prevented their arrival in person. We had a feeling there are many of us.

We received Quaker greetings from EMES and CEYM, later we heard news from Polish groups as well as from the Quaker Europe, including its closest part – Central European Yearly Meeting encouraged us to check possibilities offered by the youngest Quaker yearly meeting.

What seems to touch us most deeply today is the war – both in Ukraine and in the Middle East – and the situation of migrants at the Polish-Belarus border. We spent much time expressing personal feelings on this topic, yet we regret not all of us had opportunity to share their thoughts. The words we heard were full of sorrow, helplessness, confusion, but also of stoic belief – maybe hope? – that war is only a stage of evolution, which we have to survive as humans.

Meeting Turtle MacDermott (aka Żółwik – in Polish) and her speech on „Friends Peace Teams” was very inspiring for us. It gave us opportunity to realise the diversity of Quaker activities and it seems some of us were inspired to search new forms of commitment in peace and effective ways to support the victims of various conflicts.

We also learned – thanks to the lecture by Jurek Jańczak – how science, including the latest discoveries in cosmology, can be connected with Quakerism.

Zbyszek Kaźmierczak’s speech on disintegrated identity of Quakerism caused a bit of controversy, but it was also an opportunity for many of us to express their most inner beliefs. Some feel they don’t need any religious creed, some feel the need to formulate one. We were also urged to look deep into ourselves during a meeting led by Pavel Marusinec – we spoke of why we do what we do, i.e. why we are Quakers.

The most intense and longest consideration was about the legacy left to us by our Friend Lyn Atterbury. He had lived in Piła since 1998, attended meetings for worship in Poznań and passed away at hospice in Puszczykowo in April 2022. We have decided to donate the money to help migrants at the Polish-Belarus border.

Meeting other Friends was a spiritual uplift for us, and we could feel the community spirit during the Meetings for Worship, Worship Sharing, Meetings for Business, delicious vegetarian and vegan meals, making music and guided roaming the city filled with crowds celebrating Saint-Martin-Day. We are looking forward to the next gathering of Polish Friends with special joy, as it will take place for the first time in the Upper-Silesian Metropolitan Area.