



May 10, 2022

To the Pendle Hill Community,

From its founding in 1930 Pendle Hill was organized around a residential student community. Many have felt the absence of this signature program and we have been greeted with great enthusiasm as the first students since 2015. We are grateful to the entire Pendle Hill community for their commitment, thoughtfulness and efforts to rebuild and relaunch this program.

Drawn to Spring Term 2022 for different reasons, we arrived here from Baltimore, Washington DC, Lansing, San Francisco and France.

We were welcomed with potted daffodils on our dormitory desks and weeks later replanted them under a pear tree in the garden. Over our ten weeks we walked the trails, photographing and sketching the sights of spring on campus.

We arrived here after two years of the COVID pandemic. Our immersion in communal living was a dramatic change from the isolation we had been living through, where communication took place primarily online.

Five days before the beginning of our program, Russia invaded Ukraine. Graphic images of war on our digital devices surrounded us and was a backdrop for our time here.

Our program was based on the three-part Benedictine model of work, study and prayer. We trusted the related structures and processes designed to challenge us physically, intellectually and spiritually.

Work

We were assigned to the garden as our primary workplace. For ten hours each week we worked the beds outside and inside the high tunnel. We transplanted raspberry bushes and harvested seemingly endless amounts of spinach. We foraged for fiddleheads and dandelion greens. The garden was a total body experience including composting, planting, hoeing, weeding, broad-forking, and weed-whacking. We also each had daily dinner chores involving meal prep, set-up and clean-up. Contributing to the community in this way helped us appreciate the kitchen staff's ethos of food as ministry.

Study

Our classes met for 15 hours a week. We began by examining our personal faith by exploring spiritual calls and leadings. Class time included instruction, discussion and some intense personal sharing. From these personal reckonings and openings we were challenged to remain faithful to the promptings of Spirit.

With an emphasis on the history and methodologies of nonviolence, we studied the lives of social justice rebels, helpers, advocates and organizers. We learned more about the sometimes-hidden victories of disability rights activists and reflected on LGBTQ movements. We also considered how we can effectively and faithfully address climate change, especially within our religious communities.

In other course work, we explored of the Gospel. We discussed the radical nature of Jesus's message and how that message has been corrupted over the last two thousand years.

We also had weekly classes in woodworking. We refurbished four benches in the shop, and in the process learned to use hand and power tools, apply finishes, and learned about the complexities of the craft.

Finally, the art studio was a classroom and a sanctuary for us, where we could be safe and brave in our creative explorations. Each week we had a group activity followed by time to pursue our individual creative projects.

Prayer

Together with staff and visitors ranging from four to sixty people, we wore masks as we worshiped in person in the Barn every day. We were always accompanied by more than one-hundred attendees on Zoom. As has been true for many other Quaker meetings since the COVID pandemic began, hybrid worship created both challenges and gifts. We ended most days with an epilogue for which we took turns convening with poetry, music, stories, and worship.

Community

We've seen how living, working, spending time in classes and sharing all our meals in nearly continual proximity to each other can be a shock to our individualism. Each week we gathered in community meetings and community social time where boardgames encouraged a little bit of competition and a lot of laughter.

The people of Pendle Hill nurtured us with their knowledge and passion. They taught us about native plants, patiently got us to try out power tools in the woodshop and demonstrated how making art can be a spiritual experience.

Drawn for different reasons, our spiritual paths intersected and often ran parallel, while also taking solitary turns for reflection, personal exploration and quiet. In our free time, some of us visited Philadelphia and nearby towns, worked on our own art and woodworking projects and studied in the library.

Our conversations over meals, in the garden or walking the campus were great gifts. At times we felt overwhelmed and worked to adjust our official schedule to welcome a few more hours of downtime for reflection, rest and the demands of our 'outside' lives.

We are honored to be part of rebuilding a program where students learn though hands-on experience in a community where they are intensely and lovingly immersed in the faith of Friends.

We are departing campus with great appreciation and we are honored to have been welcomed into the Pendle Hill community. Our experience leads us to faithfully believe that the resident student program will continue to advance Pendle Hill's mission to inspire a world of peace with justice by transforming lives.

Spring Term 2022 Resident Students:

Jay Jonah Cash
Karen Okeafor Hooker
Barbara Price Monahan
Janice Thomson
Susan Russell Walters