



Spring Term at Pendle Hill

Dear F/friends,

We came from places as distant as Saskatchewan and as close as Pennsylvania, with divergent expectations, and contrasting goals. Some from Africa were meant to be among us, but they never made it to Pendle Hill due to international barriers beyond their control. Their absence was felt, and their presence was missed. In the ten weeks of the Spring Term, the cohort struggled with health issues, chaos, and exhaustion - but we struggled together. Running through raindrops, we steadied each other while the ground shook with a rare earthquake, and we marveled at the mysterious energy of the eclipse. We held each other, listened to each other, and supported each other. As the world sprang to life around us, in brilliant color, we worked side by side in the garden, in the kitchen, and in the library--sometimes in silence, sometimes in song.

Through classes we took in the library, we learned about the influence of letters, Kingian nonviolence, and the power of community -- work that challenged our intellect. In the art room, we tested our hearts, reframing the question of what we thought into the holding space of what we felt. With colorful paints and papers, as well as word games, we rose to the challenge of remembering how to play. We were reminded of the power we each held to effectuate change. Nudged into often uncomfortable mental and emotional spaces, we waded into intimacy. We learned to whisper love there.

Our spiritual nurturers created space, with tenderness and patience, to sort through the chaos of all that was inspired. The Friend in residence drew us a map of the deeper depths of Quaker practice, while clearness practice had us mapping our own souls. Some of us struggled with when to speak; others with when to stay silent. We floated through our days, wafting to the tune of harp music, tethered by the timetable of meals. We flowed together, and ebbed apart, as needed – with the unspoken understanding of each individual's need for both. At times our outside lives grabbed our attention, but we were always welcomed back, like children returning from play. We applied Dr. Martin Luther King's phrase, "The fierce urgency of now" to consideration of the great amount of work that needs to be done in the wider world, and also, at times, to the looming deadlines of capstone presentations and finished works of art. The issue of how we could each heal the wider world was met with discernment of our ministry and our spiritual gifts. The issue of the work that needed to be completed here was met with patient reframing and continued explanation. Continual reminders that this was our time and our space to do with as we discerned, helped to lighten the burden of expectations.

We ended each day, with the repurposed minutes of epilogue, which often ended hours after it was supposed to, as we lingered in each other's company. This moment was intended to end our day with a short pause for reflection. It sometimes turned into a time for singing, games, questioning, venting, and chocolate.

Let us not forget the laughter; it was abundant and made everything else better. Nor the inspiration; how one idea could skip among us like a rock bouncing on a still lake in moonlight. The love that was shared was the takeaway, each of us hoping to take the seed and plant it at home.

In peace,

The wise woman, the searcher of knowledge, the holder of history, the grower, the trader, the fire tender, the healer, and the balaboosta.

