

**Virtual Holiday School 2020 Epistle**  
**Written by Kate Harty, VHS Participant**

Since the founding of Yorkshire Friends Holiday School in the year 1933, it has taken place in Yorkshire for young Quakers every single year. Until this year. Due to the global outbreak of Covid-19, it was with heavy hearts that Holiday School in York had to be cancelled. However, a Zoom equivalent was held during the same week, from the comfort of our homes. This was Virtual HS!

Starting on Sunday the 16th of August, Virtual Holiday School began with fun introductions and the classic Gum Tree dance, before moving into Zoom breakout rooms in our nest groups for the quiz. This was a great ice breaker for the nest groups, as well as an excellent opportunity to talk to old friends again.

The following morning began with Meeting for Worship at ten o'clock. Then came the session, held by HD and Abigail. We split into small groups, first with four people, then six, then ten, and each time, we had to find one thing in common between everyone and one thing that was different about us all. It gave us a unique perspective on everyone and we got to know one another throughout the process.

Activity groups were held in the afternoon, where we had a choice of various fun filled activities organised by the Stu Hels and the staff. The groups included video group, games, craft, drawing, a talk by Jac, The Rag online newspaper, and the classic Room 42, which became Zoom 42. For an hour in the afternoon, we either drew pictures with Elspeth, made music videos over Zoom or asked philosophical questions ranging from "should the world go vegan" to the most important question of all: "which ice cream flavour is superior."

Each evening we held epilogue over Zoom. This gave us the opportunity to reflect on the day and to unwind before bed. After epilogue, there was unstructured time for chatting and games and a small group stayed on to chat and play games during this time.

On Tuesday, actor and writer Yasmin Khan-Cheema joined us for the session, showing us her short film, *Letterbox*. The film follows a young Muslim woman who is determined to go to the Glastonbury Festival, even after her mother refuses to let her. It gave us an insightful view into how we perceive and interact with people by our first impressions of them. It also featured the strong bond of friendship, something that all of us at HS identify with.

The final session, on Wednesday, was run by Elspeth, where we wrote a small piece about what Holiday School meant to us. These are going to be compiled into a booklet that will be available at HS. Some of us described our first time going to Holiday School, anxious and nervous. Others talked about their favourite memories of HS. Each of us had a unique memory of what Holiday School means to us, but all echoing the loving and accepting community that it is.

At the end of the session, the Stu Hels announced the dress up theme for the evening social: Holidays! With the use of virtual backgrounds, we could be creative by adding snowy mountains or sandy beaches to our bedrooms. At the social, we joined the Zoom call to find a group of tropical

sunbathers, a handful of skiers, some lost tourists and a banana. The last social of Virtual HS went very well, with games and dances organised by the Stu Hels.

While we couldn't meet in person this year, Virtual Holiday School still allowed us to reunite online and to enjoy a few days together. It was a new experience for everyone, and the staff and Stu Hels stepped up to this expertly, providing an action packed couple of days, adapting dances and games to suit an online platform. A huge thank you to all of them for organising and running it so well this year among all the unknowns.

Now, at the end of Holiday School, we must say goodbye to our HS family again, but we know that we will always be part of this loving community. Goodbye, until next year.