

'Witnessing to Hope' – our annual Way of Life gathering

It was a wonderful gathering of those Way of Life Companions and Explorers who were able to attend the annual coming together in person in London on Saturday 27 January. In the spirit of Fritz Schumacher, it was somewhat smaller than past gatherings, but no less beautiful!

The morning early session, led by Barbara, saw us sharing reflections on what we have found particularly troubling over the past year, writing them on cut-up Christmas cards and placing them on a small model of a tree.



Andrew (GC Chaplain) and Deborah (co-Chair) helping with preparations

We then collectively reviewed how the Way of Life was working in our lives, sharing ideas on enhancing our journeys and what other green activities were happening in our communities, with Companions and Explorers being active in, for example, Transition Towns groups and the Wildlife Trust. A particularly active Companions' regional encourager group said the setting up a WhatsApp group resulted in easier and effective communication and setting up meetings. Some regional groups were spread over large areas, so found it difficult to meet up in person, but yet again the benefits of zoom, so clearly realised for the first time by many during lockdown, could still be a very effective way of 'meeting up'. It was generally agreed that groups did need to have someone who was responsible for setting up meetings – and that could be done on a rota basis. And that Companions did not need to stay in an inactive group, but could perhaps join another group which was active outside of her / his region. George undertook to write to Companions with these suggestions.

A guided meditation led by Deirdre drew on a number of resources including a reflection on the ash tree from Dan Papworth's 'The Lives Around Us – daily meditations for nature connection'.

The theme of the day was 'Witnessing to Hope', exploring how that impacted our four spiritual disciplines, with much of the afternoon session, led by Deborah, continuing with the focus on the meaning of active hope which had recently been such a major topic at our GC November Annual Members Meeting and, of course, our January Storm of Hope brochure. We asked ...

Prayer - What is God calling us to do in these post-COP times?

Living Gently - What does this mean for you now?

Public Witness – Is it now time to change how we witness?

Encouragement – How can we keep going, as individuals and collectively?

... with each group concentrating on one of the disciplines. This involved helpful sharing of feelings and thoughts, with some quotes being, from the Prayer group – 'There is nowhere where there is not God', from the Living Gently group – 'Perfection is the enemy of doing good' (meaning that we do whatever we can, and do not judge ourselves harshly at not being somehow 'perfect'), and from the Public Witness group – 'What we need is an ITV drama!'

As with all in-person gatherings, we said together the Companions' prayer of commitment, led by Andrew.

The event closed with an act of contemplation, with us all sitting in a circle and being invited to pick up a stone, sharing what we hope for and placing that stone in what soon became a cairn of hope.



Cairn Circle

Cairn of Hopes

Yes, it truly was a beautiful day, so good to be with others who are on the same path, picking each other up when we stumble, and keeping going in this shared calling to care for God's glorious creation.