

SDE Berget 24-29 April 2024 - Reflections

Wednesday 24th

Travelling can be exciting but sometimes full of apprehension. Will everything work out, timings, connections etc.? People coming from different places, all over Europe and even the USA. Some of us felt heartened by encountering friendly familiar faces on the train from the airport to Rättvik. And then again at the retreat house of the Berget community, our home for the next five days, set on a hill overlooking a lake and amid the Swedish forests. All was well prepared for us with even a mid-afternoon snack waiting. Afterwards we could settle into our rooms as more people arrived. Then finally supper where lively conversation was clear evidence of the joy of reuniting and renewing friendships.

The theme is Gratitude. The introductory session saw us laying symbols of our gratitude on the centre table of our meeting room. No time for individual explanations, but each symbol certainly carried a wealth of personal meaning cherished by its owner. A most moving occasion. And new potential members were given a special welcome.

And then the customary social to round off what for many had been a busy and long day. We savoured the various goodies from the countries from which we came, a time for putting on some weight, but more importantly for vigorous conversation which for some went on till quite late.

This was clearly a day of reconnecting.

But sleep called this writer and another day is waiting.

Thursday 25th

Centering prayer and bodywork began the day. Fabio reminded us of how important it is to be NOW and HERE, otherwise we are NOWHERE.

Morning Prayer and breakfast were followed by Una's talk on "Going Deeper".

The stories of Jacob's ladder and the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan women at Jacob's well remind us of how vital it is to be attentive to the present moment, both for ourselves and our directees as we cooperate with God's grace in the task of "soul-making", to coin an Irish expression. Christopher opened what for most of us must have been new territory by telling of the development of spiritual direction in the Free Churches of Sweden. Spiritual Direction is a "descant" which accompanies and enriches the mission of the church. The focus is not so much on "When were you saved?" but on "Are you yet living in Jesus?", the nurturing of a living faith professed at our baptism.

This was already proving to be a full day with so much to digest. But it was to be even fuller with the first part of the AGM in the afternoon. Lehel delivered his Chair's report, his final one before standing down. He expressed his gratitude for all the support he had received during his time of office. Looking back over the enriching aspects of the past, he also expressed some concern about the future, the uncertainties prompted by the wars in Ukraine and Israel/Gaza, the fact that some members are less active because of age. But there had been many positive developments such as the Members' Days and the Masterclasses, evidence of how advances in digital media were making so

many previously unimaginable things possible. It was only fitting to show our appreciation to him for his smooth, gentle, unruffled chairing of SDE over the past three years.

The treasurer's report is vital to every AGM and Teemu assures us that all is basically well even though a large number of administrative fees are still outstanding. So we were all content to approve his report.

The question of places and modalities of future meetings is difficult.

Suggestions were made but no conclusions reached yet. Work in progress.

It seems that this meeting is the twenty-fifth. So it's a sort of Silver Jubilee year. Maike lucidly took us back through the formative years, most important for those of us who have joined SDE much later. Equality, respect and tolerance are fundamental principles within an atmosphere of open listening and sharing. But SDE is not a "museum of first ideas". If such ideas are still relevant, they need to be renewed, but we must ask how the Spirit is leading us now.

And finally we were able to express our gratitude by joining together in the eucharist, presided over by Aija. How moving to mention aloud the names of those to whom we are grateful for their guidance on our own spiritual paths! And of course supper and social to round off a day which needs much digesting.