

Report about the Meeting in Lia Gard, Norway

SDE 2012 - in LIA GÅRD

*"A retreat House in the deep forests of Norway"
Come into the quiet with the Lord Jesus and rest for a while"*

February 22-27, 2012

And come we did! For most of us, we were brought here by airplane and arrived at the Gardermoen Airport at various times during the morning. We were greeted by old friends and new as we waited for the rest to come and then for the bus to bring us to Lia Gaard.



Our hostess and bus driver were sensitive to our question of a three hour bus ride and offered a stop for refreshments. That was welcomed by all!

Once on our way again, we crossed through beautiful terrain of snowy fields, houses nestled in the woods, and little traffic. We arrived to a warm welcome by SDE members as well as our hosts, Ingeborg and Sigmund Bo. We received our pilgrim card and stamp and a folder with a map of this area. It is so large and there is so much to



see that we needed a map!

After being led to our rooms, some in the main house and some in the Lord's barn, and some in very small cottages scattered around the property, we met for a supper of hearty soup and homemade bread. What a treat after a long day of travel! Just the right thing to warm us and fill us!

Our opening worship



This was in a beautiful meeting room with an amazing well in the middle. Our introduction to one another was through our countries (16 represented) with a song or poem. Not everyone realized this was our task so there was a bit of last minute planning with lots of laughter and good fellowship.

After an introduction into our time together we bade one another good night or gathered in the Lord's barn for a bit of social sharing.

Thursday



Thursday morning found us refreshed with clear skies and warm weather. Our eyes opened to this incredible place on God's earth where we have the privilege to have landed: snow-covered open spaces, vast forests, quaint little brightly colored red cottages, a big white house, a frozen lake, mountains in the distance, and a sense of peace and calm. What a setting! Those of us who were lucky enough to have to go to and thro to the main house for meals, worship, and meeting, got a breath of crisp fresh air right away!

Our facilitator, Virve Tynnemark, brought us to the well and silence as she led us gently into the time together. We greeted each other silently as one in God and then ended with the Lord's Prayer each in our own language. The quiet voices coming from so many parts of Europe united us in a very special way and context.



Our first session: "Going Deeper 1" brought us back to the well and two well-known stories. We were reminded that we were the community that is gathering at this particular well as we sang "Let all who are thirsty come" accompanied by the talented guitarist, Ulla Käll. She shared her gift of music with us throughout the days we shared with one another. Our Old Testament reading was taken from the Book of Genesis, chapter 21, with the story about Hagar and the angel who asked her, "Where do you come from, and where are you going?"

We were then invited to take one of the mugs that were placed around the well and sit with it with these questions: "Did you choose the mug or did the mug choose you? What does it feel like? How do you describe it? What would you like to fill it with? What would you like to keep or pour out? What is it trying to tell you?"

We sat in silence.



Our New Testament reading was from the Gospel of John, chapter 4. It was the story of the Samaritan Woman. We were given a card with the icon of St. Photini, the bearer of Light. The story was acted out to give us a new entry into it. We were again invited to reflect on our mugs and respond to the question, "What is your desire now? What do you want the cup to be filled with?"

We sat in silence.

We shared our thoughts with a neighbor.



After coffee, we were introduced to Lia Gaard by its owners, Ingeborg and Sigmund Bo. Ingeborg gave a lively and very touching report of this farm and its history. You will have to return to hear the story for yourself, but suffice it to say they had a calling to create a retreat center for families and that is what they have beautifully done with lots of prayers, volunteers, love, financial support, and encouragement. After Ingeborg finished, Sigmund reminded us that everything begins with a dream. God has a dream. He said there must have been many praying people here on this land. Our job is to give God what we have and what we are. "Today what we have is enough." They were both very inspiring each in their own way and with their gentle humor. Ingeborg ended by saying we pray to the Lord, "Lord send us the people You want to be here. So you are the answer to our prayers."

We sat in silence.

SDE talk

facilitated by our Chair, Henry Morgan.



This is the 13th meeting and he was able to list all of them! There were 24 participants at the first meeting and today we welcome 60 participants. We honor the principles of spiritual direction in our meetings: support and encourage, provide a safe place, create bonds of deep spiritual friendship. We are a small organization that meets in host countries so we can learn a bit about them. He then asked three longer members to share their reasons for belonging to this group.

Susanne Hoyos, Denmark, replied for her, it was the exchange, praying, listening, and reflective silence that fed her.

Wendela Vuylsteke, The Netherlands, added we are here in God's favor. We are God's laboratory where there is an air of hope and gift of

forgiveness. She appreciates the exercises we do to take back home and the going deeper which she compares as a warm bath. She, too, appreciates going deeper and staying in the silence.

Elemer Vizi, Hungary, finds the open space for the Spirit of God where he can listen to God's spirit. For him, it is a coming home with a common language. SDE nourishes and enriches him.

From there, two former and one present host was asked to share.

Ligita Ryliskyte, Lithuania, began by saying that she was able to share the traditions of Lithuania and the impact of the meeting opened the doors for more cooperation from the Roman Catholic priests in the seminary which was very unusual.

ZsuZsanna Laczko from Hungary said for her, the fact that we prayed for peace for her country was very meaningful. She had to get help from others because at that time she was the only Hungarian with SDE. That also introduced them to this program.

Marjatta Malmberg from Finland talked about the long distances from one another and you give the best you can. It is also helpful to see things from your friends' eyes.

Astrid Håland Wee from Norway said it is too early to tell, but to get this meeting to function they had to contact different groups to help out. That made themselves known in a new way.



We then broke for lunch. We ate a lot here and sometimes we wondered if we had gatherings between the meals or meals in between the gatherings or meals and gatherings together. The food was delicious and for this lunch we were treated to a Norwegian specialty: Hakk (reindeer meat in a sauce and Veiled farmer girls for desert (made with apples, curd or cream and a crispy topping of toasted bread), both very delicious!

After lunch with some resting, some talking, some exploring, some cross country skiing, some watching and waiting, we met for our

workshops:

Wendela Vuylsteke: Climbing the Mountain, a visual meditation

Visual exercise with group: First, we will sit with eyes closed in silence. Then very slowly sentence by sentence, I tell a story about a road where you are walking. You smell the flowers, you feel the sun on your arms and you are walking happily and free. Then the road is becoming a path and a little bit more difficult, etc. This is a spiritual journey and it can be very helpful to people to understand their own paths of life, to embrace it, even to enjoy it, and to experience that that path is guided by the Holy Spirit. After the story, we have some silence to reflect on your own, later in pairs, and finally we end in the group.

Tore Laugerud: “Contemporary spirituality as a challenge for spiritual direction”

Spirituality has become a key word today. Some people hold that there is a spiritual revolution going on where belief in a personal God is giving way to a subjective and individualistic spirituality of life. Others claim that it is not that simple. There is a hunger for God in our innermost being that cannot be swept out, and that can easily be brought to the surface by relevant spiritual direction. For many, however, religious authority if sounded in our self-experience, and at the same time on an experience of the ecological and holistic connection of all living and existing creation. In creating their own view of God/outlook on life, people feel free to choose and put together pieces from all available religious and spiritual sources. Some are deeply wounded because they have been exposed to a condemning Christian presence. Many are skeptical to mainstream Christianity which they regard as a fixed dogmatic system, being an obstacle to all human and spiritual evolvment. In the workshop, we will explore how people find existential spiritual meaning today, and how this presents a challenge in spiritual direction. Positively we will ask how people with a background in eastern religiosity and new age spirituality should be directed spiritually to experience the triune God as the true author of life.

Ingeborg Bo: Family retreat, a challenge—a joy

I will first tell about the background of this work, then make a powerpoint presentation of a family retreat, then present an example how to use a symbol and at the end open up for talks and questions.

Ingvild Rosok: “The spirituality of the double commandment”

This workshop offers some reflections on Karl Rahner’s radical view on love. The Jesuit Karl Rahner was one of the most influential theologians in the 20th century, and his reflections on love were quite disputed. He claimed an essential unity of God and the love of neighbor. This love requires a total abandonment to the other as well as to God, but it also highly values human love. I ask what follows from such a view on love when it comes to spiritual direction. How conscious are we of the different aspects of love, the resources and the costs? After my presentation, we will share experiences and talk about various approaches to the topic of love.

Una Agnew: “The Divine Forming Mystery at work our Lives”

Adrian van Kaam’s (1920-2007) formative theory relates to the practical task of becoming a Christian in the fuller sense. He favours formative over informative thinking; the latter overgiven to conceptual knowledge, issues and analysis which often have little bearing on the art of living itself. Formative spirituality aims at teaching the art of graced unfolding of the human self in Christ. Van Kaam’s formative field of relational and interactive energies points towards a comprehensive awareness of how our lives are being graced and formed in daily life. The five poles of energy that constitute each one’s formation field emerge from a central pre-formation pole, the Divine forming mystery and the eternal Trinitarian dimension that undergirds life and world. And so it is that life unfolds towards its ultimate goal. Living in awareness of our manifold formation energies prepares us for a state of “consonance” when all our energies resound together in harmony with the Divine forming Mystery. The workshop closes with a formative awareness exercise.

Ligita Ryliskyte: “Facing Experience of suffering in Spiritual Direction”

In relationship to spiritual direction, I want to present five paradigms for understanding evil (as proposed by theologian Susan Nelson) and to explore how these deeply embedded theological frameworks affect our ability to listen compassionately to the suffering. This workshop will appeal to some radical suffering endured in the Eastern Europe during the communist era. In the course of the workshop we will attempt to identify our own Theodicies” (the way we ‘reconcile’ the presence of evil with God’s goodness) and, thus, to grow in freedom of meeting the other on his/her own ground.

From our workshops we rushed to our Evening Prayer, a beautiful time of song, scripture, silence, and prayer.

After an afternoon of spirit and mind nourishment, we came to feed our bodies with another amazing spread set out for us with love and care.

Our evening ended with an option for bed or a bit of social time with others in the Lord’s Barn.

Friday!



We awoke to an amazing gift of God. The sky was lit with all the shades of red over the horizon: a sight to behold. No camera could capture the wonders of this canvas of contrasts: snowy whites, glowing reds, majestic browns, and hints of blues. Our Creator was truly creating with joyful abandon! What a gift we were given!

We were welcomed into morning worship with blessed quiet, gently words of God’s love and care for us, “Trust in the Slow Work of God”. “Where in your life do you feel impatience?” “Take a look at your life. What are your experiences with the

slow work of God?”

The passage from Teilhard de Chardin, SJ: “Hearts to Fire” fed our hearts and slowed us down. And the prayer by Thomas Merton in: “Thoughts in Solitude” reminded us of the Eternal in our midsts.

Breakfast again, a spread of marmalades, oatmeal, meats, cheese, breads, veggies, milks and yogurts, berries, etc. It is truly amazing and if you are there early you may eat at the window that views upon the birds having their breakfast, one with nature, dare I say a bit of the Garden...?

After our fill of God’s good bounty and blessed hands of preparation and cleaning up, we left for “Looking for the well with living water”. We were invited to “Taste and See”, to “let the Creator lead the creature”. And that we did with curiosity, a sense of the unknown, but always knowing we were not alone. We were on a kind of mystery tour! We were given a map and the instructions that we did

not have to go each station, but could linger or stay as we were moved. We met pilgrims along the way, we had our mugs, we stayed at a certain point or rested briefly and felt the tug to move on.

Ten stations were prepared for us:



- Water and Tree (Jer. 17:7,8),
- Water and Baptism (Rom. 8:3-5),
- Water and Source (James 3:11-12),
- Water and Clay (Jer. 18:1-6),
- Water and Washing (John 13:3-10),
- Water and Wine (John 2:1-11)
- Water and Rock (Ex. 17:2-6),
- Water and Garden (Isaiah 58:11),
- Water and Money (Isaiah 55:1),
- Water and the Woman (John 4: 1-26).

At the sound of the bell we were called back together to share our experiences: a time of reconnecting, telling stories, and insights.

And of course, our journey ended at coffee, tea and cakes! What a journey, what a time of wandering, what a blessed time of reconnecting, being led.... Before breaking for coffee, tea and cakes, we ended our session by singing, "Let all who are thirsty"



We have been blessed with a visitor, Leif Gunnar Engedal, who came from the Theological College in Oslo, to inform us about the Norwegian Soul, not a topic to be taken lightly if one considers Norway's recent history and drama which spread throughout the world in shock and prayer. It was a very informative, integrative talk which we greatly appreciated and which led us to reflect on our own countries and how we are experiencing similar developments. We are for the most part in a time of change in faith, in economy, in family. Again, a question, "Where do we go from here?" Is this a common theme we are hearing more and

more? Where do we go from here? We are pilgrims, moving, praying, in hope. There is still a cohesion that still exists. Do we dare believe that God is that cohesion...

Silence...always silence in transition...take time...give God a chance....breathe deeply...listen to the spirit of the living God...

And guess what!!!! LUNCH!!!! Delicious food, delicious conversation, delicious Presence....

Beautiful, going deeper in body, mind, and spirit. We are truly being fed and living into the rhythm of our lives in Christ, we are one body...

Break, cross country skiing or sort of, a bit sticky snow, rest, walks, talks, listening, silence, watching, breathing, being...

We gather around our watering place laden with fresh coffee, warm pots of tea, and sweets. There was conversation, silence, sitting, being in the Presence as pilgrims meeting here.

AGM - First part

(The minutes of the AGMs are a separate report written by the secretary, in due time in the Members-department)



We sang HAPPY BIRTHDAY to Elemer (37, but don't tell anyone!).

Clair Ullmann and Lehel Leszai checking the current minutes said they would look over the minutes being taken.

Dates for Malta: April 17-22, 2013 so mark your diaries and begin saving.

Special gifts (without the details) for Johan and Claudia for a stellar job for the web site, Susanne for member of the exec.

Committee, Tim for Secretary, Henry for Chair, and Raili for persevering. Excellent jobs all around and many praises.

Silence..

Reflection and then breaking into 4s or 5s to share thoughts on:

1. What do I value about SDE? Why do I come?
2. What would I like to change?
3. My vision of the future of SDE.
4. Do we need a web site?
5. Current Mission Statement? Need to revamp? Comments

Evening Prayer and beginning of Silence

Guided meditation on who we are with the help of an onion and reflection questions led by Susanne CSJ

Supper

SILENCE

Saturday

Morning Worship was led by Peter Ball with us calling to the Spirit in the words of the hymn, Come, Holy Ghost. Our reflection was guided by words from Scripture and we ended with the beautiful and moving hymn, "Come down o Love divine", a perfect way to begin the day.



During the silence, we were invited to visit the chapel of St. Photini and have a cup of something warm in the little cottage with the minister who was keeping things warm for us. We were also invited to visit the Christmas Chapel and stop by the Pannekakehytta for a prayer and a special pancake prepared by Sigmund. Both visits were very meaningful as was the getting there. Did you see the lollipop tree? Did you see the animal tracks? Did you see the sun playing on the snow with varying shades of shadows; did you hear the silence, the sounds of the wind, the voice of God? What a blessed and refreshing time this was. One pilgrim wrote, "My visit to the pancake cottage and the experience there was a Eucharist of another kind—truly inspirational." There were surely other very different experiences of the day that perhaps are too holy to mention.

Our Silence ended with a warm-hearted, smiling Ivana guiding us into the evening Eucharist. We sat in silence, we listened, we sang, we prayed, we were nourished with the Presence of the living God, and were deeply blessed. Ivana shared part of her day of silence with us in the story about cross country skiing with Litiga and their surprise at seeing rather large animal tracks, fresh ones, in the snow!

After supper, we were treated with a concert by Ellen Marie Tangen, a goat farmer and folk singer who lives in the next valley. We not only heard beautiful music in a beautiful voice, but also learned a bit about her life as a goat farmer of 120 goats with new ones being born at this moment. It was a delightful time and brought us even more in touch with the Norwegian soul. THANK YOU, Ingeborg for organizing this.

Many returned to the Lord's Barn for more conversation and just enjoying each other's company.

SUNDAY

After a good night's sleep, we awoke to another incredible painting in the progress by our Creator! The sky was being lit with even more hues of red for this holy day!

We met at 9:30 to break out into our triads and regrouped for lunch. The triads are meant to give ourselves to each other as spiritual directors.

Many were quite surprised to see that lunch was a bowl of soup (it was delicious), and tacos and bread. Perhaps we have been trained very quickly what to expect! We were quickly told that a feast was being planned for the evening, so this is to sustain us just so we can fully enjoy what is to come. And it did!

In the afternoon we continued our AGM which is reported elsewhere.

Our closing Eucharist

was led with grace and harmony by Arne Sand. It was very moving and poignant especially because of the meeting we had just finished.

Our evening meal was indeed a feast! Reindeer stakes, delicious sauce, potatoes, vegetables, and a special treat, homemade coffee ice cream for desert. We enjoyed this meal fully and thanked the staff for their care of us over the last days.

Because we had some unfinished business of the earlier meeting, we decided to reconvene for a bit more time in the meeting room which we did. Again this is reported elsewhere. At the end of the meeting, we blessed the new committee members. Those that were not exhausted and had already packed for leaving on Monday gathered one last time to be together in community.

Monday

This morning was very different. The sky was definitely a snow sky with the typical colors and shades. In the distance across the lake [could see the snow had begun to fall lightly. After breakfast and more good-byes and thank yous, and promises to stay in contact the bus travelers with their luggage climbed aboard to head for the airport. More conversation, more laughter, more quiet reflection of the days just past, thoughts changing from Lia Gard to what is awaiting us in our home countries, and many prayers of thanksgiving, praise and love.

See you in Malta, I hope and God willing!



Clair Ullmann, Austria/Texas

Members of the New Executive Committee:



Maike Ewert
chair person



Susanne Hoyos
secretary



Raili Heikinheimo
treasurer



Josep Bullich
member