

Friends Southern Summer Events



SENIOR CONFERENCE

Information Pack



Young Quakers aged 15 – 18

**Sibford School, Banbury
18 – 25 August 2012**

WHAT IS SENIOR CONFERENCE?

Senior Conference is a spiritual gathering and a Quaker conference run by and for young people aged 15 to 18, a place of friendship, laughter, and reflection, which builds a strong and supportive community over the course of the week, and friendships that last for a lifetime.

Senior Conference is organised and run by an Arrangements Committee of ten young people, who take on the roles of Clerk, Elder, Overseer, Base Group Coordinator and Entertainments. They are supported in the planning and organisation by a team of adult volunteers. The Arrangements Committee meet each morning during the event to plan the day, run the entertainments in the evenings, organise meetings for worship, and conduct the final Business Meeting. Each year's event is shaped by its Arrangements Committee.

Each morning, breakfast is followed by a short meeting for worship, and a meeting with your base group. Base groups are family-sized groups of young people which meet twice daily to have fun, share ideas and to get to know one another better, and are also facilitated by young people from the Conference. On most days there is then a speaker session – speakers in the past have included author Philip Pullman, activist Moazzam Begg, and peace worker John Lampen. The conference then has lunch, followed by some activities inspired by the speaker. In the afternoon there are workshops, which include sport, a nature walk, creative writing, arts and crafts, mask making, and discussion groups. There are also chances to go swimming, and copious free time. In the evening, there is another meeting with your base group and a whole-conference entertainments session. The day ends with an epilogue (a meeting for worship) and evening drinks – and a desperate attempt to get some sleep before it all begins again! During the week we also have a visit to Oxford, DVDs, and some other special activities.

Accommodation is in single-sex dormitories and there is no drinking, drug-taking or sexual activity during Conference. Smoking is discouraged – and forbidden on the main site – but is allowed in a separate area for those who declare on their medical forms that they are smokers. All boundaries have been agreed by the Arrangements Committee and our experience is that they help to create an open and inclusive community. If you have any questions about this side of Conference, please feel free to contact us – details are given below.

If you would like to know more about Senior Conference, please visit our website at www.fsse.org.uk/sc We also have a Facebook page – search for “FSSE Senior Conference” on Facebook to ‘Like’ us and receive updates.

Here is what some people who have come to Senior Conference in the past have said about it:

‘I enjoyed the friendly atmosphere and sense of community.’

‘Base groups are a great way to get to know a few people very well and really fun!’

‘The best place to reflect, relax, contemplate, discuss, and sort yourself at the end of the summer so you can cope with being thrown headlong back into the real world’

‘I’ve never felt so free.’

SENIOR CONFERENCE INFORMATION 2012

Two adult coordinators (one male and one female) are responsible for Senior Conference, although the Conference itself is planned by the Arrangements Committee, which was appointed at last year's Conference. They are assisted by a team of adult volunteers, all aged over 22. In organising and running its events, Friends Southern Summer Events follows guidelines from Britain Yearly Meeting concerning the safety and wellbeing of those taking part. A copy of FSSE's Child Protection Policy can be seen on the FSSE website www.fsse.org.uk. We require references for all new adult helpers when they join us, and all adult volunteers are required to have current, enhanced disclosures from the Criminal Records Bureau.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss any aspect of Senior Conference with the Coordinators please do contact them at seniorconference@fsse.org.uk. All forms and dietary/health information and payment should be sent to the Bookings Secretary.

Coordinators	Flora May Waterhouse and James Barnard Email: seniorconference@fsse.org.uk
Bookings Secretary	Susie Paskins Email: seniorconference@fsse.org.uk Tel: 07552 921 875
Costs	a) Senior Conference fee £305.00 b) Your travel to and from the venue c) Incidental expenses (pocket money)
Dates	Saturday 18 August (afternoon) to Saturday 25 August (morning)
Venue	Sibford School, Sibford Ferris, Banbury, Oxfordshire OX15 5QL
No of places	88
Age	Must be 15 years old by 1 September 2012 and no older than 18
Theme	Think it possible...
Meals	For all meals there will be vegetarian and meat options. Other dietary needs are also catered for (please indicate any dietary needs on your application form)
Travel	Participants should make their own arrangements for travel to and from the school, but to help we will arrange for a coach to collect arrivals at Banbury Station (there are regular trains from London Marylebone) around 4pm on Saturday 18th and take people back there on Saturday 25th around 2pm. You will get exact times with the final mailing, once your payment has been received.

HOW ARE SENIOR CONFERENCE FEES SPENT?



HOW TO APPLY

- To apply for a place at Senior Conference please fill in an application form. Parents/guardians of participants under 18 will need to sign the form.
- We will need confirmation from a clerk, elder or overseer from your local meeting that you are connected with Quakers. If you are unable to do this for any reason, please contact us.
- **Send your completed form to Susie Paskins, Senior Conference Bookings Secretary** as soon as you can (to find out Susie's postal address please email seniorconference@fsse.org.uk or phone Susie on 07552 921 875).
- **You should apply before 15 March 2012 (early application is advised).** Young people who have been asked to help organise the event have guaranteed places. Priority is given to people from meetings in the South of England (you'll find a list at www.fsse.org.uk). Then we offer places to those who were on last year's waiting list and also to those from meetings where there is no similar event during 2012.
- For applications received after 15 March, any spare places will be offered on a first come first served basis – please contact us as we may have places available.
- If you give us your email address or send a stamped addressed envelope, we will let you know that we've received your form. This doesn't guarantee you a place at Senior Conference. If you do not hear within a week of sending your form, please contact seniorconference@fsse.org.uk

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

- We will write to you in April 2012 to offer your son or daughter a place (or to you if you are over 18) or indicate that they have a place on the waiting list.
- At the same time the Medical & Consent Form will be sent out to everyone who is offered a place. This includes the Senior Conference boundaries – please note that participants are required to sign their acceptance of the boundaries.

PAYMENT & BURSARIES

- Full payment of £305 is due by 30 June 2012.
- **Please make all cheques payable to Friends Southern Summer Events and clearly mark the (or for siblings, each) participant's name on the back of the cheque.**
- It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to ensure that full payment including any bursary from your Local or Area Meeting is paid **by 30 June 2012**. If you need help with the payment/bursary request process, please get in touch with the Bookings Secretary. **FSSE will not contact meetings to collect bursaries on your behalf.**
- Your Local or Area Meeting may well have funds available. The overseers at your local meeting are a good first point of contact.
- Our expectation is that bursary help where required should come from Local/Area Meetings. However, if for some reason this is not the case, FSSE can grant a limited number of bursaries. If you are unsure, please contact us early! It is FSSE policy that no one should be prevented from attending for financial reasons.

SENIOR CONFERENCE EPISTLE 2011

To all friends everywhere,

From the 20th to 27th August 2011, 87 young friends and a team of 13 volunteers aged 22+ gathered at Sibford School, Banbury. Together we explored the theme "Let your life speak" with invited speakers, in small "base" groups, through workshops, fun and games and in our worship.

We began to see how lives speak in different ways: big and small. One life that spoke out against the ways of a nation was that of Martin Luther King Jr., whom our first speaker, Quaker war poet David Roberts, referred to in his talk. David told us how MLK endeavoured to "leave a committed life behind," a wish that resonates clearly with our theme. Conferees were moved by Suheir Hammad's powerful poem "What I Will". It is a vibrant, personal expression of pacifism which shot quickly to international acclaim, illustrating the ability of the individual to have their voice heard.

This message was echoed by our second speaker, Yael Litmanovitz (a volunteer speaker for Amnesty International) in the quote "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness." This proverb reflects how even small acts have great importance so that by merely signing a letter we can help to change our world. The story of Iqbal Masih, an escaped sweatshop labourer of 10 who fought child labour in Pakistan, was one of the stories that prompted us to consider in worship how age and personal circumstance need not be obstacles to putting our faith into action.

Former conferee Sam Walton, a young Quaker activist, invited us to consider what seeds of war exist in our lives and how to remove them. He said that all Friends give witness throughout their lives but different individuals are called to do things in different ways. We must find our own responses to the issues we face. Most of all he challenged us to resist complacency, suggesting that events like Conference do not reach their full potential unless we take what we learn out into the world.

Friend David Shutt explored the way our lives are often shaped by others in his account of a life in politics. As a member of the House of Lords, David is part of historical traditions such as wearing a sword and accepting a title that seem controversial to some Friends. Despite this, his commitment to reform and "social responsibility" seemed to be the greater truth served by his life.

Three of our 22+ team shared how they have acted on the theme. While Tom Duggan, Hannah Rignell and Sally Markwell described diverse experiences, ranging from provocative art to setting up a special interest group, they were united by the conviction that letting your life speak is a matter of attending to what love requires of you. We must try to tackle the challenges of the world without being overwhelmed by them. Their stories showed us how it may be that your life does not speak for you but to you and that sometimes you must stop to listen.

Our lives spoke loudly at the event not only through our growing understanding of the theme but through friendships made and laughter shared. Every day base groups of up to 9 conferees met to discuss, reflect, play games and complete jigsaws together. These groups helped from close friendships in small, trusting communities, each part of the whole conference community. Everyone was also given a Secret Friend who anonymously gave them small treasures like bracelets and witty ditties. There was even a singing, dancing postal service to help with the delivery of such gifts.

The entertainments for the week included activities such as a treasure hunt, Junk Jazz, an open mic night, a talent show, a quiz and a masked ball. Our Themed Meal was also great fun, where base groups arrived dressed as things like washing machines, gametes and a game of Tetris. The 22+ team ran workshops like Origami, Music and Sport, providing another valuable way to socialise and enjoy ourselves. In our visit to Oxford, a peaceful, melodic flash-mob was organised by a large group of conferees. All of these more light-hearted activities helped to release energy and counterbalance the more reflective parts of the week.

Throughout the event, worship helped us grow as individuals and as a community. One reading which touched conferees deeply told the story of Sadako, a terminally ill girl making paper cranes in the hope of recovery in the aftermath of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Songs were played in semi-programmed Epilogues and together we made a "Ministree" – from the branches of which hung ministry written on small paper tags. Conference was shaped by deeply felt ministry which both challenged and supported us.

The event relied upon the love between participants which made Conference a home from home – a safe place in which we could develop. Our challenge now is to let our lives speak more clearly, answering a demanding love of each other and our planet. We will not be bystanders in our own history. We will change the world, any little way we can, whether the change takes place on the global stage or around our kitchen tables. We hope these words help communicate the feelings we are taking home from Conference:

"In the beginning / meets / Dearly beloved / meets / Once upon a time."
(Matt Harvey, *Becoming a Caterpillar*)

Signed in and on behalf of Senior Conference
Calum Montell-Boyd and Naomi Alderson, Clerks