

## **Dankesrede an das Twinning Committee während unseres Dronfield-Besuches am 17.09.2016**

Dear friends,

25 years ago the first Bürgerfahrt from Sindelfingen to Dronfield took place and this year it is the 8th time that a group of Sindelfingen citizens has come here.

Many things have changed in the course of the time: We are a new generation (new but not young!) of responsible persons but what touches me most is the fact that an uncountable number of friendships between Dronfield and Sindelfingen citizens has arisen since then.

Twinning towns make a vision real: It is the vision of living in freedom and democracy in a peaceful and tolerant Europe with people getting to know each other beyond all borders and barriers. I would even go further: It is the experience of having come as a stranger and having left as a friend.

Today we have arrived at a point when European contacts are no longer self-evident. But in spite of all complications under which Europe is suffering we believe that if we want to change something for the better we must begin with ourselves in the small world of our communities.

And that is what we have done!

This time it was up to you to give us an example of your lovely cities and your beautiful countryside. We very much enjoyed being led to extraordinary places like the Cutlers Hall , Eyam or Haddon Hall.

We were impressed by the great effort that had been made to restore Dronfield Barn and you always took care that there were a few minutes left for a cup of tea or coffee! There were not only fascinating new experiences which you offered us but we were also given lots of opportunities of getting into contact with one another.

In the name of Ute and on behalf of the whole Sindelfingen group I want to thank you with all my heart for your overwhelming hospitality. We are especially grateful for this wonderful evening where so many members of your Twinning Committee have committed themselves to spoil us with a wonderful meal and programme.

We are looking forward to returning the favour you gave us by your hospitality in 2018 – but before we'll meet at the Straßenfest when, as I have heard, Karen's choir is planning to come.

I don't want to finish without mentioning Uli Fritz. He was the founding chairman of ISPAS and a driving force of the partnership which has now been lasting for 45 years. He wanted me to tell you that he is with us in his thoughts and emotions and he proposed a toast with which I'd like to end:

**TO TWINNING , TO FRIENDSHIP !**