

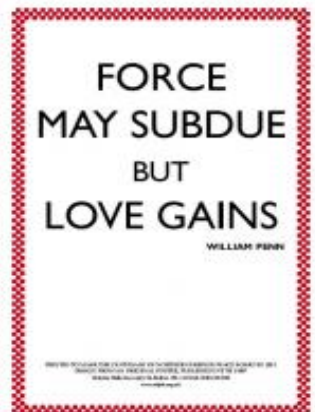
Building the conditions of peace in challenging times

'What we can't do alone we can do together'

Challenges

We are in this world together but the way we are living is not sustainable. Economic inequality, our use of the finite resources that feed our consumption, and our production of waste continues to grow. Our dependence upon fossil fuels, which drives dangerous climate change, doesn't diminish. Wealth, concentrated in the hands of a powerful few, is at the expense of people and planet, and the resulting inequalities can fuel conflict.

On top of this, the UK continues to export weapons to regions devastated by armed conflict, and to spend millions on nuclear weapons. The interests of those whose power comes from the control of diminishing resources are protected by ever-more costly military and other technology as a mistaken means to building security.



The UK's political system at the national level is stretched and its processes have been found wanting and in need of change. Civil discourse is fraught with difficulties, fed by and feeding deepening levels of division and mistrust in public life.

In communities across the country there are people living and suffering from the consequences of the politics of austerity, inequality and an economic system that is not working. Those not regarded as belonging sufficiently firmly on these shores struggle with the stress of not knowing, or needing to prove, their right to even be here. Many of these are also on the receiving end of hateful words and actions, fuelled by growing levels of xenophobia and other types of bigotry.

We are called to live 'in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars'. Do you faithfully maintain our testimony that war and the preparation for war are inconsistent with the spirit of Christ? Search out whatever in your own way of life may contain the seeds of war. Stand firm in our testimony, even when others commit or prepare to commit acts of violence, yet always remember that they too are children of God.

Bring into God's light those emotions, attitudes and prejudices in yourself which lie at the root of destructive conflict, acknowledging your need for forgiveness and grace. In what ways are you involved in the work of reconciliation between individuals, groups and nations?

Are you alert to practices here and throughout the world which discriminate against people on the basis of who or what they are or because of their beliefs? Bear witness to the humanity of all people, including those who break society's conventions or its laws. Try to discern new growing points in social and economic life. Seek to understand the causes of injustice, social unrest and fear. Are you working to bring about a just and compassionate society which allows everyone to develop their capacities and fosters the desire to serve

From the Quaker Advices and Queries

An alternative way forward

We believe that there is a moral imperative to change from a society driven by economic growth – which puts ever greater pressure on the planet's resources – to one that recognises that all people have the same rights to security and that we must live in harmony with one another and with nature.

Sustainable security means ensuring a secure future for all, based on tackling the causes of conflict and insecurity: understanding the real threats and how they can be dealt with.

We know that some conflict is inevitable. We know too that we can choose to develop and promote a better understanding about how current ways contribute to causes of conflict, and in how we respond to and deal with this.

We must recognise this moral imperative and work together, responding in words and in actions to create sustainable security for all.

Positive change is happening...

People across the world are seeking and developing new ways of doing politics, of making change happen, of caring for one another, of defining ourselves in relation to one another and in relation to the planet...

- from the international nuclear weapons ban-treaty, to nonviolent rebellion against inertia on climate change, and to radical action to support those seeking sanctuary,
- from civil society groups to new media, networks, alliances and movements,
- from the local to the international,
- from politicians to members of our own communities, young and old.

What does love require of us?

The way forward is not always easy but we can each play a role in building a different way forward and, laying foundations for cooperation and peace.

We need to be willing and ready to join in common cause, acting in solidarity, challenging injustice, and empowering those whose voices are not heard.

We can be both prophets and reconcilers, speaking out and taking a stand when necessary, whilst also being ready to listen.

We can support each other, taking action with and for those who are vulnerable and those daunted by the magnitude of the task.

We can promote and support nonviolent approaches and policies aimed at tackling the roots of conflict in society and globally.

We also need to find ways to engage with those with whom we disagree – nurturing, learning and building the skills needed for this challenging task.

***‘Together, let us reject the clamour of fear
and listen to the whisperings of hope.’***

From a statement of Quakers in Aotearoa/New Zealand, 1987

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