



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, as Covid-19 and clear evidence of global heating have reminded us. Our way of life is not sustainable. Economic inequality, over consumption of finite resources, and damage to precious habitats, continue to grow.

Our dependence on fossil fuels drives dangerous climate change. Wealth, in the hands of a powerful few, fuels conflict and inequality. The interests of those who seek control of diminishing resources are protected by ever-more costly military and other technology as a mistaken means to building security.

The UK continues to export weapons to regions devastated by war, and spends millions on nuclear weapons. This is at the cost of genuinely seeking peaceful outcomes to entrenched violent conflict or acting on international commitments to take steps to nuclear disarmament.

The UK's political system is stretched and its processes have been found wanting and in need of change. Civil discourse is fed by, and is feeding, deepening levels of division and mistrust in public life, with legitimate dissent now threatened by restrictions on public protest.

Across the country people are living and suffering from the consequences of inequality and an economic system that is not working. Immigrants and refugees struggle with the stress of not knowing, or needing to prove, their right to be here, even when fleeing war.

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 must change from a society driven by economic growth – putting ever greater pressure on the planet's resources – to one that recognises that everyone has the same rights to security, to live in harmony with each another and with nature.

Sustainable security means ensuring a future for all, tackling causes of conflict and insecurity: understanding real threats and how they can be dealt with at their root

Some conflict is inevitable; war is not. We can choose to develop and promote better understanding about conflict, without recourse to violence.

We must work together, responding in words and actions for sustainable security for all.

Positive change is happening...

- new groups, networks, and initiatives for change continue to form, from the local to the international, from conscientious politicians to members of all communities, young and old.
- there are growing political and social movements against inertia on climate change and nuclear disarmament.
- communities are taking radical action to support those seeking sanctuary and to address the harm caused by racism in society and in our relationships globally.

What does love require of us?

To help build new ways forward, laying foundations for cooperation and peace.

To be willing and ready to join in common cause, act in solidarity, challenge injustice, empower those whose voices are silenced.

To be both prophets and reconcilers, taking a stand when necessary, but always ready to listen.

To support each other in taking action with and for vulnerable people and those daunted by the magnitude of the task.

To promote and support nonviolence and policies aimed at tackling roots of conflict in society and globally.

To find ways of engaging with those who disagree – nurture, learn, practice and build the skills needed for this challenging task.

Resources to support you in learning and in taking action are available through our website at: <http://nfpb.org.uk>

***‘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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