

Baltimore Yearly Meeting Faith and Practice Revision Committee Proposed Advices, Queries and Voices

Peace: Advices

Since its founding over 350 years ago, the Society of Friends has testified to the worth of every individual by refusing to participate in war. We repudiate war because it violates the primacy of love, destroys lives that God has given, and tears the fabric of society. Members of our Society have traditionally refused to serve in the armed forces. The Peace Testimony is, however, more than a mere refusal to participate in war. Fox's assertion that he "lived in that light and power that takes away the occasion for war" and Woolman's advice that we "examine our lives to see that the seeds of war are not contained therein" firmly establish connections between this and other testimonies. As we work for peace in the world, we search out the seeds of war in ourselves and in our way of life. We refuse to join in actions that lead to destruction and death. We seek ways to cooperate to save life and strengthen the bonds of unity among all people. We work to create the conditions of peace, such as freedom, justice, cooperation, and the right sharing of the world's resources.

Our faith calls for us to be fully present to the person before us. History has shown that when a future outcome, however noble, seems of greater worth than the human being before us, any means, any atrocity, is possible. To work for peace without being divisive, we need to work out of a place of faith, truly trusting in the movement of the spirit. We need to bring into God's light those emotions, attitudes and prejudices in ourselves which lie at the root of destructive conflict, acknowledging our need for forgiveness and grace.

Peace is the state in which we are in accord with God, the earth, others, and ourselves. We know that true, lasting peace among us flows from unity in the life of the spirit.

Peace: Queries

What does it mean to live in the virtue of that life and power which takes away the occasion of all war?

Where there are hatred, division, and strife, how are we instruments of reconciliation and love?

How do we communicate to others an understanding of the basis of our peace testimony?

As we work for peace in the world, are we nourished by peace within and among ourselves?

How do we think of those we believe have harmed us or others? How does our way of thinking about them affect our spiritual lives?

Peace: Voices

Our work for peace must begin within the private world of each one of us. To build for man a world without fear, we must be without fear. To build a world of justice, we must be just. And how can we fight for liberty if we are not free in our own minds? How can we ask others to sacrifice if we are not ready to do so?... Only in true surrender to the interest of all can we reach that strength and independence, that unity of purpose, that equity of judgment which are necessary if we are to measure up to our duty to the future, as men of a generation to whom the chance was given to build in time a world of peace.

Dag Hammarskjold, UN Press Release SG/360 (22 December 1953)

I told [the Commonwealth Commissioners] I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars...I told them I was come into the covenant of peace which was before wars and strife were.

George Fox, 1651

BYM Proposed Advices, Queries & Voices

George Fox did not say that he believed war to be wrong, or that in his opinion brute force never settled anything; he went straight to the heart of the matter and said that he "lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars." To uphold such a testimony involved a dedicated life. The Quaker peace testimony is more than a repudiation of war, and more than a denial of the use of force; it is a way of life to which we must be faithful in small things as well as in great, in our human relationships, our business and social activities, and in the life and witness of our meetings.

Elfrida Vipont Foulds, 1981

We are too ready to retaliate, rather than forgive, or gain by Love and Information. And yet we could hurt no Man that we believe loves us. Let us then try what Love will do: For if Men did once see we Love them, we should soon find they would not harm us. Force may subdue, but Love gains: And he that forgives first, wins the Lawrel. If I am even with my Enemy, the Debt is paid; but if I forgive it, I oblige him for ever.

William Penn, *Fruits of Solitude*, 1682

A good end cannot sanctify evil means; nor must we ever do evil, that good may come of it...it is as great presumption to send our passions upon God's errands, as it is to palliate them with God's name...We are too ready to retaliate, rather than forgive, or gain by love and information. And yet we could hurt no man that we believe loves us. Let us then try what Love will do: for if men did once see we may love them, we should soon find they would not harm us. Force may subdue, but Love gains: and he that forgives first, wins the laurel.

William Penn, 1603

We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fighting with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretense whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world. The spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it; and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the spirit of Christ, which leads us into all Truth will never move us to fight and war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world.

From A Declaration from the Harmless and Innocent People of God, Called Quakers,
presented to Charles II, 1660

We actively oppose all that leads to violence among people and nations and violence to other species and to our planet. Refusal to fight with weapons is not surrender. We are not passive when threatened by the greedy, the cruel, the tyrant, the unjust. We will struggle to remove the causes of impasse and confrontation by every means of nonviolent resistance available. We must start with our own hearts and minds. Together, let us reject the clamour of fear and listen to the whisperings of hope.

From A Statement on Peace issued by New Zealand Quakers, 1987

Universal peace is an active movement toward the oneness of all humanity and the realization of the Kingdom of God on Earth. The Testimony for Peace is not an artificial appendage to our faith, which can be dropped without injury to the whole. Our central faith requires that we should proclaim, in deed as well as word, that war, with the whole military system, is contrary to the spirit of the God whose name is Love. The same spirit must animate our business and social relations and make us eager to remove oppression and injustice in every form.

From Minute 79, London Yearly Meeting, 1912

Why are we here? If I understand the message of God, his response to that question is that we are to take part in the creation of the Peaceable Realm of God. Again, if I understand the message of God, how we take part in the creation of this realm is to love God with all our heart, our mind and our strength and to love our neighbors and enemies as we love God and ourselves. In its essential form, different aspects of love bring about the creation of the realm.

Tom Fox

Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

BYM Proposed Advices, Queries & Voices

...There have been a number of times that I have been in some real or potential danger - at peace actions, working in the ghetto, or confronting irrational or violent people. In those times I have not been without fear, but I have never since felt the fear I felt when I first made the commitment to give up reliance on violence to protect me. I believe that when I became convinced of the peace testimony, I was given a leading which, in effect, immersed me in terror and the stuff of violence so that I could know my condition and work with it. I was tested and strengthened in conditions of safety before I was ever tested in real conflict.

Paul Lacey, *Leading and Being Led*

The activist who seeks explanations based on outer facts declares that our restlessness is due to the terrible state of the world at present. If we could just get the outer world in order we could then feel inward peace. But perhaps he has not the whole truth, perhaps the more fundamental difficulty is with our inward world. As long as there is inward chaos, all outward actions will be contaminated by this chaos. In such a case all that we do will promote rather than allay confusion. We seek to bring peace in the world when there is no peace in our hearts and as a result we infect the outer world with our inner conflict.

Howard Brinton, *The Quaker Doctrine of Inward Peace*

When speaking of "direct action for peace," I am often told that one must never do things that make men angry. Now for many years I had the idea that this was true, and a basic part of nonviolent resistance. But I am no longer of this opinion. It is true that, when one is resisting an evil, one should do it without anger on one's own part. The manner and spirit in which a protest is made is of paramount importance. But one should be straightforward, frank, and clear, and not evade issues because they are controversial and people are touchy on them.

Wilmer Young, *Visible Witness*

May we look upon our treasures, the furniture of our houses, and our garments and try whether the seeds of war have nourishment in these our possessions.

John Woolman

We cannot have peace if we are only concerned with peace. War is not an accident. It is the logical outcome of a certain way of life. If we want to attack war, we have to attack the way of life.

A.J. Muste

When Joseph Hoag in 1812 was pleading his peace principles a man in his audience said, "Well stranger, if all the world was of your mind, I would turn and follow after." Joseph replied, "So then thou hast a mind to be the last man in the world to be good. I have a mind to be one of the first and set the rest an example" (Hoag's Journal, 1861, p. 201).

Howard Brinton, *Ethical Mysticism*

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins;
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nation,
To bring peace among brothers and sisters,
To make music in the heart.

Howard Thurman

Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense. Under the clouds of war, it is humanity hanging on a cross of iron.

Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953

BYM Proposed Advices, Queries & Voices

If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.

Nelson Mandela

I hope...that mankind will at length, as they call themselves reasonable creatures, have reason and sense enough to settle their differences without cutting throats; for in my opinion there never was a good war, or a bad peace.

Benjamin Franklin

I do not want the peace which passeth understanding, I want the understanding which bringeth peace.

Helen Keller

We must be prepared to make heroic sacrifices for the cause of peace that we make ungrudgingly for the cause of war. There is no task that is more important or closer to my heart.

Albert Einstein

The vision for wholeness and peace, which shines like a beacon of light through the Old Covenant, gives us important insights into Christian simplicity. This theme is wonderfully gathered up in the Hebrew word shalom, a full-bodied concept that resonates with wholeness, unity, balance. Gathering in (but much broader than) peace, it means a harmonious, caring community with God at its center as the prime sustainer and most glorious inhabitant...We are in harmony with God – faithfulness and loyalty prevail. We are in harmony with our neighbor – justice and mercy abound. We are in harmony with nature – peace and unity reign.

Richard J. Foster, Freedom of Simplicity, 1981, 30-31

How shall we as Quakers sustain ourselves as a people of peace in the midst of worldwide war? By living in that covenant of peace which was before wars and strife were ... by living in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all war. It is not our Quakerism, or our pacifism, or our knowledge, or skill, or emotion that overcomes hate and violence. We shall surely fail if we become proud of our virtue and traditions and become vain in our witness. We shall fail if we think the power that may move through us is our own. The power is not ours, it is God's. This is the foundation of what we must do in our testimony of peace in this time of war. The foundation is faith in the power of God's love to transform us and our society and to bring justice to the poor and the oppressed. Our task is to act, as best we understand what we are led to do, in obedience to that power.

Mary Lord, 2002

But we must do more than stand the waterspouts which break over us and rage around us. Our task is to bind up the brokenhearted, to be a cup of strength in times of agony, to set men on their feet when the foundations seem to be caving in, and to feed and comfort the little children amidst the wreckage of war and devastation.

Rufus Jones, Rethinking Quaker Principles

Therefore we proclaim this peace testimony to us and our people in love and responsibility before God. It calls on us to object to everything which leads in the direction of war, preparation for it, or supporting it. Our faith challenges us whether to allow ourselves to become a divided people swept along by the stream of mistrust and fear, arrogance and hatred which produces tensions in the world; or whether by our own decision, confidence and courage, we can become a bridge linking those elements which promote truth, justice, and peace.

From German Yearly Meeting, 1948

War leads to a vicious cycle of hatred, oppression, subverse movements, false propaganda, rearmament, and new wars...We call on people everywhere to break this vicious circle...to substitute the institutions of peace for the institutions of war. Let us join together throughout the world to grow more food, to heal and prevent disease, to conserve and develop the resources of the good earth, to the glory of God and the comfort of man's distress. These are among the tasks to which, in humility...and in faith in the power of love, we call our own Society and all men and nations everywhere.

World Conference of Friends held at Oxford, England, 1952