

Building Our Communities with Love and Tenderness

Theme for 2023 Baltimore Yearly Meeting Annual Session

Whoever hears my words and acts on them is like the wise person who built a home upon the bedrock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house. And it did not fall. For it was grounded on that rock. But those who hear me and do not act on these words are like the foolish person who built a home upon sand. - Matthew 7:24-26

“Our life is love, and peace, and tenderness; and bearing one with another, and forgiving one another, and not laying accusations one against another; but praying one for another, and helping one another up with a tender hand...”

-Isaac Penington to Friends in Amersham (1667)

In building our communities, individuals are like irregular stones with many different shapes and sizes and sometimes jagged edges. For Friends, neither dogma nor hierarchy are mortar to bind these stones together. How do we fit ourselves together to become whole?

What is the foundation on which we build our communities to help them withstand storms? Do we give regular attention to repair areas weakened over time? Do we see how our communities and their foundations are affected by the strengths and weaknesses, cures and cancers, and successes and failures of other communities to which we belong or to which we relate?

Then, on that foundation, how do we build our communities? First and foremost, it is a labor of love. We draw on Spirit’s love and tenderness for us and share that love and tenderness with each other. Without that, the communities we build fragment and fracture. With it, we come closer to the Blessed Community. In ways we can scarcely imagine, the Blessed Community provides a warm and welcoming spiritual home that has just the right place for us all. It nurtures our healing, our growth, and our capacity to reach out to others to share the blessings we enjoy. It equips us to give witness to the Truth, Justice, and infinite Love of God that can heal and transform the world.



Stacked Stone Sphere, Devin Devine, 2017
Brookside Gardens

*“He drew a circle that shut me out-
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle and took him In!”
-Edwin Markham*