



Friends World Committee
for Consultation
WORLD OFFICE

How does God call us to act?

An Online Conference with Friends worldwide (22.02.2020)

A Transcript from Speaker Four – Esther Mombo

HEBREWS 10:24: LET US THINK ABOUT EACH OTHER AND HELP EACH OTHER TO SHOW LOVE AND GOOD DEEDS

Greetings,

My name is Esther Mombo and I serve as lecturer and director of international partnership and alumni relations at St Paul's University, Kenya. I am delighted to participate in this online conference, on a timely topic of sustainability and what part Quakers play in creating a sustainable future.

I was in Kabarak in 2012 conference, speaking about salts and lights of the world among Quakers and I have followed the (PISAK) 2016 minutes on living sustainably and sustain in life on earth. Both conferences call us to action in terms of our environment.

- How can we talk about sustainability in a context that is riddled in many challenges? The destruction of the soil, forest, water and air are a reality and politicized in many contexts.
- How can we talk about sustainability in a context where the language of racism, sexism, tribalism is a reality for many?
- How can we talk about sustainability in a world where the family and community are broken down no longer a space for enriching life but at times a space for destruction of life?
- How can we talk about sustainability, in context of corruption and scandals for governance?
- How can we talk about sustainability, in a context where the income gap between the rich and the poor is widened every day? The gap between the countries in the north and the countries in the south, is widening? When the minorities are more than the majority economically and when it is even in terms of social amenities?
- How can we talk about sustainability, in a context where there is the growth of militarism and war? Different forms of violence, but especially violence against women and children. How can we talk about sustainability, in a context of religious scandals where the vulnerable are gullible to all forms of teachings, in the name of God?
- How can we talk about sustainability in a context where our young people, facing high rates of unemployment turn to drugs and alcohol in view of finding peace?

If sustainability means to avoid depletion of natural resources in order to maintain ecological balance, and if it means maintaining an economic growth and from a religious angle, it means growing and living a healthy spiritual life. What is it among Quakers that can help us contribute to a sustainable future? Quakers are known in the world, for their teachings particularly the peace testimony and other aspects of social justice. So how can we bring this, to be an ideal in a broken and painful world?

Allow me to say a few things about sustainability as I see it in this context.

- First, I want to argue that sustainability is to recognize that the earth is God's and all that is in it, because God is the creator of the world. God is the creator of us human beings and has made us stewards of this earth to care and tend for the creation and that is our role.
- Sustainability therefore as Quakers means that we embody a spirituality of creation, and accept that all that has been given to us through creation including our relationships are sacred. And if they are sacred, then we accept that we challenge those issues that destroy these relationships especially those that we have named above; aspects of race, aspects of ethnicity or tribalism, aspects of sexism or classism all that destroy life are things us as Quakers we need to challenge because of our teachings of peace, and our teachings of social justice.
- Sustainability means to embody the spirit of getting in touch with earth; engaging with issues in the society to grow people.
- Sustainability does not mean we withdraw from the earth become ascetics, but it calls us to engage with the earth so that we are earthly useful not earthly useless.
- Sustainability means that we engage with the earth to bring about healing and wholeness to those that are broken within our society.
- Sustainability means that we pass on the knowledge about life and its goodness as given to us by God to others.

A few months ago, I lost my mother and to commemorate as a family we planted trees, from the three year olds in the family to the sixty year olds. We took a day to plant trees in the compound. We were planting trees knowing trees are life, trees are a source of water, trees are wealth, trees embody much more than we see. As adults, we marked this event and it was over, but for the young ones it has remained memorable aspect for them. For my niece Maria when I meet her these days, she reminds me that she planted trees at Granny's home it is an event that she talks about with joy and happiness. She is very excited that those trees are growing and when she goes next time to visit she will find them to be big trees. Because of that I take time to discuss with Maria the importance of trees. We talk about trees as sources of water. We talk about trees as sources of clean air. We talk about trees as memory, and particularly, memory of her grandmother. *My niece becomes one of those who will sustain the future because she has participated in planting and understanding what trees are about.*

Through embodying a spirit of sustainability, we can take time to think about each other and to help each other as a text from Hebrews tells us. (Hebrews 10:24).

And by thinking about each other and helping each other, we do this through action so that we are not only hearers of the word, but also doers of the word as well.