

This statement reflects the first online meeting of the Young Friends Worldwide for Climate Action, Peace, and Justice series, which focused on the testimony of Truth.

The session started with Detmer Kremer, who works at the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), sharing difficulties with truth as he grew up non-religiously in a religious village. Competing truths were exclusionary, whereas when Detmer found Quakerism, the multitudes of truth could be safely harbored within communities of Friends. This informs how Detmer understands the work QUNO does at the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), where QUNO is the only faith-based voice advocating for scientific integrity and people-centered climate research. As IPCC outcomes are discussed among and must be agreed to by governments, truth becomes negotiated and political, which reveal its power. Detmer ends by sharing that to him truth is a spiritual commitment to include the excluded and to reveal what often and intentionally is hidden. Truth questions power.

Next was Anya who spoke as a British Quaker about three major truths she saw, which she acknowledged are sometimes hard to accept. Firstly, we are in a climate crisis and the west (including herself) are largely responsible for climate breakdown; unfortunately many, including Quakers, are denying this truth. Secondly, people around the world facing the crisis first hand have been warning us of the crisis for decades, but have been continuously ignored. These are the people who have much more of the truth than white middle class people do. She reminded us of how we do not always see the full story or truth: for example, earlier this year Vanessa Nakate, a Ugandan young climate activist, had posed for a photo next to Greta Thunberg but had been cropped out before it was published. Finally, Anya spoke about the need to openly accept not only our successes but also our failures. Anya ended by calling for young Quakers to come together to support and educate one another to build a stronger community to help build our vision for a just world.

After both speakers, those in attendance shared. Common was an understanding that for many, especially Friends in the Africa and Asia-Pacific sections, climate change is already significantly impacting people's lives. There was a collective understanding that truth is not singular: there are many truths. There is a need to listen to those facing the brunt of climate breakdown, who's truths are often not heard and who's truths others could learn from. This connects to truths about power and privilege in the world and among Friends.

Young Friends recognized our personal responsibilities as well as the collective change needed; there was a strong desire to work across our borders and parts of our Quaker family. However, to do this, we also heard the need for a focused aim. This can be powerful both personally and collectively. It is our hope that as we meet again to explore the remaining of the Quaker testimonies, equality, peace, sustainability, and community that this focused aim shows itself to us. In turn we can share it with the rest of the Global Quaker Community. To do this, we share one Friend's powerful reminder that we must find continuous and new ways to fall in love with the earth. This is a call to reflect on our truths, and see if our professed love for our shared planet aligns with our actions.