This statement reflects the second online meeting of the Young Friends Worldwide for Climate Action, Peace, and Justice series, which focused on the testimony of equality. We heard from two Friends. Firstly, Zenaida, based in the United States and working with the Quaker voluntary service, and Epa, based in Uganda, East Africa.

Zenaida spoke of environmental justice as an issue that can be compared to racial justice. They assert that when the virus hit the United States they became very worried about vulnerable communities in their hometown Boston. Worried about peoples’ access to food or ability to pay rent, they organized some folks on social media and began meeting to talk about and deliver what the community needed. They also explained how they went on streets to demand justice following police brutality. Zenaida expressed how inequalities, disproportionately among communities of color, have worsened during COVID-19. This also is the case with climate change and environmental racism. Scarcity is a tool of capitalism. The earth has more than enough resources for all of its inhabitants, yet marginalized communities lack resources whereas others have access to excess. Their desire is for a redistribution of money, land, and goods to our most marginalized communities in order to be better to the earth and to our people. Equality, for Zenaida, is being called to action to take care of our people. Thus can be overwhelming, but by turning to worship every morning they gain clarity for the next step.

Epa spoke about the work he does with farmers in East Africa to help them adapt to the effects of climate change. He related the effects of climate change to the Quakers’ testimony of equality which puts emphasis to the fact that all people are equal in the eyes of God. Climate change is jeopardising food security in Africa and other developing countries. Agriculture is one of the most vulnerable sectors to climate change, and smallholder farmers in African countries are especially vulnerable to climate shocks. Epa stressed that climate change is real and its effect on agriculture is already being felt by farming, fishing and pastoralists communities. Epa noted that even though Friends believe that all people are equal in the eyes of God, in reality the world is largely unequal. Climate change exacerbates inequality, with the biggest burden going to smallholder farmers in the developing world. Epa’s belief in equality of all human beings before God, guides his work of helping farmers with information and building structures for sustainable food production and consumption in East Africa. Epa shared that equality is an ideal that we ought to fight to achieve. Climate change is a catastrophe making it harder to achieve equality. Equality needs the genuine efforts of all of us to act.

We then heard from Friends across the four branches. Some young friends are still looking for how they can tackle the issue of climate change. Friends expressed that the world is facing a crisis of climate refugees and that climate action comes from climate injustice. Friends shared that seeing God in everyone means we see and improve our listening skills which will hopefully help us move forward. Highlighted was the idea that climate action, peace and justice are interconnected and are about our whole world. We concluded that authenticity is important to action, Quakerism helps to give us authenticity in our witness and climate action work. One of the things we could do as a young group of Quakers worldwide could be to create more space for regular zoom calls to speak about our spirituality and lead us on to more action to build the world we want to live in. We look forward to exploring how to do this further in workshop three.