This was the third session of the Young Friends Worldwide for Climate, Peace, and Justice Workshop Series. We explored the Quaker testimony of Peace in relation to climate action and justice. There was a visible feeling of togetherness and strengthening of the network across young friends worldwide. We heard from two speakers, Young and Holly. The workshop started with prayerful music and reflected on our workshop theme in small break-out rooms.

Holly reflected on her upbringing as a quaker as a foundation to appreciation of the testimony of peace. Her work is focused on the arms trade due to its influence on politics, the power of the lobbies and huge spending on arms that would better be spent on peace building and ending violence. Her work with Peace Direct and Stop Fuelling War inspired her to get involved in protesting the arms fairs in London and Paris. These demonstrations demand more investments in peace initiatives rather than spending a fortune on the arms industry. Holly commended on work that is being done in Geneva by Quakers in the area of human impacts of climate change, human rights and refugees, peace and disarmament, and sustainable and just economic systems. She stresses that it is important to connect the work done at local levels to the work done by Quakers in the multilateral system by organisations such as FWCC and QUNO. The most important thing to remember when looking at peace, justice and climate, is that all are connected and upheld by systems of government that are unjust.

Young is from Burundi and a worshipper from the Burundian Friends Church, Africa Section. He argues that the testimony of peace calls us as Quakers to act against war or any form of violence. He reflected on the ethnic violence in Rwanda and Burundi, both countries whose populations are over 70% Christian and are supposed to preach peace and justice. He believes that peace can be redefined by Quakers to promote peace and reconciliation. Young is passionate about sustainability and believes that everyone is responsible for the future. Every decision that we make has a direct impact on future generations and on our planet. Burundi and other East African countries are among the most vulnerable countries to climate change. For instance, in 2019 heavy rainfall affected thousands and displaced almost 13,000 people and caused over 45 deaths in Burundi. Young believes that the actions that we ought to make for climate justice are more a kind of inner decisions to personally be responsible for the world we want to live in. Knowing that our actions may have an impact on other people known and those unknown to us, Quakers are called to act honestly and responsibly towards building a better planet.

Participants’ reflections put emphasis on the importance of daily actions which cumulatively can make a huge impact. There is also a feeling of empowerment because of the unity that emanates from faith and belief in the similar universal values like peaceful societies for all. It is also frightening that not all people are taking climate change seriously in their countries. Nevertheless, young friends across the globe believe and agree that climate change is real. Action is all we need and this begins small, and by reaching out to those in need.