October 10th, 2020
Friends World Committee for Consultation
Young Friends Worldwide for Climate Action, Peace, and Justice

This was the fourth session of the Young Friends Worldwide for Climate Action, Peace, and Justice Online Workshop Series. This time, we explored simplicity, and how it has influenced young Quakers to act for a sustainable world.

We had a chance to hear from two speakers; Clara from the FWCC sections of the Americas and Reza from Indonesia, in the Asia West Pacific Section of FWCC. We then split into zoom breakout rooms and had discussions reflecting on the words of our speakers, and asking how we feel the Quaker testimony of ‘simplicity’ informs our own lives.

Firstly, we heard from Reza, a Friend in Indonesia. Reza talked about how the idea of fasting inspired him that living within our means is possible to save the planet and the future generations from the scourge of climate change. It is important not to take more than we need.

We then heard from Clara. Clara expressed how her simple actions are motivated by policy and systems change. She has organised a petition against oil drilling and she has understood how important it is to use lobbying to influence policy change. She expressed that it is within the powers of everybody to lobby, but that not many people understand that they have that power. She learnt about her own power to lobby from her time with the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) in the US.

Clara expressed her thoughts on how global consumerism influenced, by a capitalistic mindset, is the root cause of the current global climate crisis. Clara said we can’t expect policymakers to solve all our problems. Our economic system is harmful and complicated because we live harmful and complicated lives. To address climate change, we must live simpler lives. Clara gave an example of no electricity night per week that her family adopted since her childhood. This is an example of living a simple life for climate health. Clara was under no illusion that ‘no electricity night’ is a quick fix solution to global climate crisis on its own, but it is a spiritual practice that helped her to be comfortable with using less. And this in turn can be a powerful counterbalance to our over consuming societies.

We then moved onto our breakout rooms to meet with one another and explore and simplicity further. Our break out rooms reflected on how our simple lives are influenced by our Quaker values. These values, if shared by more, could lead to more sustainable lifestyles and a healthier planet. We recognized that on the one hand that living a simpler life could be seen as ‘giving up’ on things or missing out, but instead, we saw the truth that leading a simple life could be seen spiritually rich.

Overall, stories from young Quakers around the world are a revelation that simplicity is possible and can be practiced as one of the ingredients to drive climate action for peace, equality and justice. We heard from Friends in the ‘developing world’ that they felt frustrated that larger pockets of the work who are producing more emissions are not taking responsibility. We thought that it is important to note that where the planet wins, we all win because simplicity is not just about ourselves but it’s about our planet and the future generations.

Finally, we reflected on the community we are building through sharing our stories and being led by our faith. One the three aims of our 5 part series over 10 weeks, was to build a community of young Quakers around the world interested in climate action, and in session it was a joy to recognise we have begun to do that. We look forward to
the last workshop which will be geared towards forging a way forward for climate action for peace, equality and justice.