

Epistle of the German Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends Meeting in Bonn 2-5 October 2014

We greet Friends around the world from the 84th German Yearly Meeting, held 2-5 October at Venusberg in the city of Bonn. The gathering brought together 170 persons, including 35 children and young people, as well as 13 delegates and guests. The theme of the gathering was “What canst thou say – what can we say?”

This year commemorates the beginning of two world wars, and now, even as Germany marks the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, earthshaking, bitter conflicts and their ominous consequences once again overshadow our gathering. We see our pacifist position challenged and remind ourselves of our peace church roots. Through the Alternatives to Violence Project, Quakers have been able to work toward a more just and peaceful society for the last twenty years. We are thankful for the work of these Friends and glad that we as a yearly meeting can contribute in some small way.

Neithard Petry, a Friend who has worked in international cooperative development, gave this year’s Richard L. Cary lecture. The lecture carried the title, “What can I say? Thoughts of a religious-philosophical Do-it-Yourselfer.” Neithard invited us to fix our view on the joyous and hopeful signs of humanity’s development toward less violence. He made clear how a dedication to the common good, grounded in primordial faith and joy in living, can free up energy. We can trust that our actions – even if we are only “baking small buns” – will bear fruit. The “tools” for this work are mindfulness, moral principles, reason and faith in being led by a “Greater Wisdom.”

We perceived that new confidence is growing out of our quest for a new orientation in our common peace work.

We heard excerpts of twenty-one epistles from Friends in different parts of the world and wished for more personal exchange with all Friends in a world that is growing closer together. In shared responsibility for peace, justice and preservation of Creation,

we send hearty and friendly greetings,

Sabine Alvermann (Schreiberin)

Horst-Dieter Breuer (Schreiber)