

Epistle of Ireland Yearly Meeting, 2015

To Friends Everywhere

Dear Friends,

We send loving greetings from Ireland Yearly Meeting, held from 9th – 12th April 2015 at Dromantine Retreat and Conference Centre, near Newry, Co. Down, Northern Ireland. We were pleased to welcome Friends from a number of Yearly Meetings from Europe and the United States. Our theme was “Knowing God’s Creation”, accompanied by the verses from Proverbs 4:11–12, “I have taught you wisdom and the right way to live. Nothing will stand in your way if you walk wisely, and you will not stumble when you run.” We explored this theme in our sessions and activities, including worship sharing, bible studies, special interest groups and the showing of two films made by Irish Friends.

In our Ministry and Oversight session, three Friends reflected on the nature of Truth and the meaning of Truth in their own lives. The earliest Quakers called themselves “Friends of the Truth”, and now we are challenged to faithfully seek the Truth, although finding absolute Truth is beyond us. In moving presentations about Christian Aid, particularly projects in Brazil and Kenya, Sheila Reaper-Reynolds and Caroline Simpson challenged us as stewards of God’s creation to care for all our brothers and sisters, and to dare to believe that it is possible to eradicate poverty with a more just distribution of resources.

Concerns brought by individual Friends and Meetings were considered and tested by the Yearly Meeting. In a session focusing on sustainability and respecting the Earth, we heard about a concern of a Cork Friend to develop the cross-border biological, ecological and geological Foinse Project, to which we agreed to give our support. Friends from the West and Southwest of Ireland brought their concern about the possible use of the Shannon Airport for military purposes, in contradiction with the official neutrality of the Republic of Ireland, and this concern was upheld by the Yearly Meeting.

A session dedicated to the nature of membership – something that is currently being discussed in many Yearly Meetings around the world – generated a wide range of thoughtful and creative ideas.

Our Public Lecture was given by the scholar and author Alastair McIntosh of Glasgow Meeting, on the theme “To Become the People of the Cross: Climate Change, Violence and some Meanings of Creation in our Times”. Alastair argued that the consumerism that drives climate change exerts violence against God’s creation, in contradiction with our Peace testimony. He also proposed a vision for the meaning of the Cross: the love of God was so great that he preferred to allow himself to be killed than to kill, making the image of Christ on the Cross a supreme symbol of non-violence.

We come away from our Yearly Meeting ready to meet the challenge of learning to see God’s creation in everyone and everything, and to nurture all of God’s creation in whatever ways we feel called – through giving, action and prayer.

Signed on behalf of Ireland Yearly Meeting

Daniel H. Sinton

Clerk, Ireland Yearly Meeting