

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS)

IRELAND YEARLY MEETING

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To Friends Everywhere

Dear Friends,

We send greetings from Ireland Yearly Meeting, held from 24th – 27th April 2014 at King's Hospital School, an Anglican school on the western outskirts of Dublin. We welcomed Friends from a number of other Yearly Meetings from Europe and the United States, and were very happy to get to know them through worship sharing, bible studies, discussions in special interest groups and conversations over meals.

Our theme was "Faith in Action – Living our Lives According to our Spiritual Experience", taking up the idea expressed in James 2, v. 26, "For as the body without the Spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also". This became the overarching theme for our sessions, which included presentations and reports demonstrating how Friends have put their Faith into Action. Examples include support and care for the elderly in Ireland North and South, the Alternatives to Violence Programme, work by Quaker Service with young people in Ulster, and Irish Quaker Faith in Action's support of projects such as the Palestine Trauma Centre, the Mutoto Education Centre in Uganda and therapy for war victims in Bosnia.

The programme included reports about various Young Friends' activities in Ireland, including Junior Yearly Meeting, which took place 21–24 April 2014 on the theme "21st Century Fox: What would George Say?". In one session, we considered trends shown by the statistics for the Quarterly Meetings within Ireland Yearly Meeting, and began discussions about questions such as possible reasons for falling or rising membership and how we can facilitate the transition into membership for attenders.

In our Ministry and Oversight session, we were moved and inspired by presentations by three Friends on "How do we Embrace Peace in our Everyday Lives?". Each of these three very different personal journeys underscored in its own way the challenges of "embracing peace", and the need to find stillness within if we hope to foster peace in the world around us.

Our Public Lecture this year was given by Ian Kirk-Smith, the Editor of *The Friend* and a member of Ireland Yearly Meeting, on the theme "On Principle, Not Consequence – a Quaker Life in Broadcasting". Ian talked about how his Quaker principles have influenced his career as a journalist and film-maker. His experience working closely with both loyalist and republican communities in Northern Ireland showed him that "every individual has the capacity to love, and to receive love". His work showed him the transformative power of Love, and led him to see that of God in the face of every person he filmed. We found Ian's passion about the intrinsic equality and worth of every individual to be inspiring. The expression of this passion through his life and work shows us that, like Early Friends, we are still able to live lives of service, anchored in the Spirit of Love and guided by principle, not consequence.

We come away from our Yearly Meeting refreshed and convinced of the truth of the final quote from Ian Kirk-Smith's public lecture:

'Those who would have a closer view of the Divine must seek it in a life of love and service.'

Signed on behalf of Ireland Yearly Meeting

Daniel H. Sinton

Clerk, Ireland Yearly Meeting