

# RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS) IRELAND YEARLY MEETING

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To Friends Everywhere

We send warm greetings from Ireland Yearly Meeting, held from 20<sup>th</sup> -23rd April 2017 at the High School, Rathgar, Dublin. The theme of our Yearly Meeting was a quotation from Mahatma Gandhi “*Live simply, so that others may simply live*”. This theme was reflected in many of our sessions and special interest groups covering sustainability, ethical investment, tax justice, peace witness and the need for an inclusive society. We also tried to bring it forward into the practicalities of our meeting by requesting more local/organic produce, simpler meals including more vegetarian options and by considering the sustainability of our gathering.

Our Eco Quakers Committee reported on the progress made by individual meetings in developing Sustainability Plans. Our Investment Committees are bringing forward strategies to align our investments with our commitment to be sustainable by divesting of fossil fuel shares and considering positive social investments.

In response to a request for more spiritual reflection during our Yearly Meeting, we commenced each day with 30 minutes of silent worship in plenary session. We also met in small groups at the end of each day to reflect on the day’s proceedings. We continued, as in previous years, to facilitate worship sharing and bible study groups in the early mornings and candlelit worship in the evenings.

In our Ministry & Oversight session, the topic was “Feeling Alone”. We were deeply moved to hear the stories of Friends’ loneliness at particular times in their lives and how they came to an acceptance of being alone. We were encouraged to be sensitive to the situation of friends and to listen. The words of our Lord from Isaiah 41:10 “Be not afraid, I am with you” brought – and continue to bring – comfort to Friends.

Our Public Lecture, given by Rachel M. Bewley-Bateman, was entitled “*The way, the truth and the life – what does this mean for us today?*” Rachel took us on a journey through history, tracing the origins of Quakerism and the impact of this on her personal journey. We reflected on the importance of truth and integrity as part of our Quaker witness in the world.

We welcomed visitors from a number of other Yearly Meetings and worship groups and sought to look outside our Yearly Meeting. We heard about the important work being done on our behalf internationally by the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) and by the Ecumenical Accompaniers in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI). Our Welcoming Refugees Group organised an information and discussion session on “*A new life – an inclusive society – insights into enforced migration*” which included speakers from Syria and Afghanistan. We heard that some refugees feel like trees that have been uprooted from country to country and they need our welcome and friendship to help them settle in.

As we reflect on our theme, we realise that it can sometimes take longer than we wish to introduce all the changes necessary to “Live simply”, even though some of these changes may be simple. We are reminded that the challenge is as much a spiritual call as a material one and that our vision of sustainability must extend beyond our meetings to our own lives, our families and our communities. “Vision without action is merely a dream; action without vision just passes the time, but vision with action can change the world” (Joel A. Barker).

Signed on behalf of Ireland Yearly Meeting

E Heather Bewley

Bairbre NicAongusa

Clodagh Davis

E. Heather Bewley  
Clerk

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