



## IRELAND YEARLY MEETING RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

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To Friends Everywhere,

We send loving greetings from Ireland Yearly Meeting, held at the Dominican Retreat Centre in Tallaght, Dublin from April 13th-16th, 2023. The theme of this year's Yearly Meeting was *Building Community Together*. We were guided by the verse from Hebrews - *let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds*.

The community of Ireland Yearly Meeting could again be enjoyed not only by those who could travel to Dublin, but also by anyone with access to the internet. Friends from all over the world took the opportunity to come along, and some of our speakers joined us online. We heard about the inspiration and challenges faced by Early Friends. They developed strong bonds, due to a great sense of being gathered and held together by the living presence of Christ. Their communities were spiritually refreshed by Travelling Ministers, and Quaker preachers and writers were able to challenge the religious, political and economic injustices of the day in a clear and forceful way.

Too often today, Friends present themselves as a respectable and peaceful people who pose no threat. Modern Quakers may lack some of the prophetic zeal of those Early Friends, but we heard about Quakers who continue to push for change and to address uncomfortable issues. Quaker Connections is a volunteer programme which works with isolated prisoners in Northern Ireland. In Europe, QCEA and QUNO ensure that migration, climate change and peace are kept at the top of discussion agendas.

Promoting and preparing for peace is still a crucially important topic, as the war in Ukraine and other global conflicts continue. Several speakers discussed peace-building carried out by various Quaker and other organisations. As Quakers, we are faced with the dilemma that we hold a variety of views of our Peace Testimony, and pacifism and prayer alone will not stop war.

One Quaker representative on inter-church and inter-faith bodies advised us that in order to foster community across difference we need to do three things - Be there, Be generous and Be critical. Another speaker promoted the need for Christian unity in her talk. Respectful, thoughtful engagement and listening without judgement are vital for building links between those of different denominations and different faiths.

We got excited about the expansion of Irish Quakers' social media presence, and the increase in the number of followers across all platforms shows it is providing a great form of outreach. The first series of Friendly podcasts has been listened to all over the world, acting as a valuable resource for the whole Quaker community, not just Irish Quakers. On Saturday we were joined by participants in the Children's programme, who shared their enthusiasm and artwork with us. Young Friends eloquently expressed their desire to have more opportunities to connect with those in their own age group, take more part in all-age gatherings, and learn more about the business of Yearly Meeting.



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Our public speaker, Harvey Gillman, reflected on communion and community in a lecture entitled *Hospitality and the Pilgrim*. Harvey's various descriptions of himself as a restless nomad, a poet, a seeker, a finder and a linguist made for an entertaining deep exploration of the topic. Exiled from his childhood community, he eventually found his way to a Quaker meeting almost forty five years ago and felt at home. Hospitality for Harvey is a form of testimony, an outward sign of an inward grace, where you offer the home you have found and welcome others in. Spiritual hospitality is an awareness of the interconnectedness of all things. Our lives and that of the earth are fragile, and we must love and nurture each other.

Signed on behalf of Ireland Yearly Meeting

Denise C Gabuzda, Clerk 

Pleasance M Perry, Asst. Clerk 

Hugh O'Farrell-Walsh, Asst. Clerk 