

Worship Sharing 11/17

Living the Testimony of Peace

In our individual lives, the peace testimony leads us to accept differences as an opportunity for loving engagement with whom we may disagree. This love can often be expressed in creative, nonviolent resolution of the disagreement. When we encounter people of sincere religious conviction profoundly different from our own, that love can also be manifested by acknowledging the sincerity of the other while faithfully expressing our own convictions.

The peace testimony also leads us as individuals to consider seriously our employment, our investments, our purchases, our payment of taxes, and our manner of living as they relate to violence. We try to become sensitive to the covert as well as the overt violence in some of our long established social practices and institutions. Friends wish to avoid, for example, benefitting not only from the manufacture of arms or the excessive use of natural resources, but also company practices that do violence to employees, consumers, or the natural world.

SEYM *Faith and Practice*, p 57

“I told them... that I lived in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars.”

George Fox 1651

“We may reflect on the condition of a poor, innocent man, who by his labour contributes toward supporting one of his own species more wealthy than himself, on whom the rich man from a desire after wealth and luxuries lays heavy burdens. When this labourer looks over the means of his heavy load, and considers that this great toil and fatigue is laid on him to support that which hath no foundation in pure wisdom, we may well suppose that there ariseth an uneasiness in his mind toward those who might without any inconvenience deal more favourably with him. When he considers that by his industry his fellow creature is benefited, and sees that this man who hath much wealth is not satisfied with being supported in a plain way—but to gratify a wrong desire and conform to wrong customs, increaseth to an extreme the labours of those who occupy his estate—we may reasonably judge that he will think himself unkindly used.”

John Woolman, *A Plea for the Poor*, 1763

How does living “in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of all wars.” speak to our condition in these times?

Friends have generally not seen the path of living the peace testimony as a path to compromise. How can we manifest the love that acknowledges the sincerity of the others while faithfully expressing our own convictions?

At rallies we often hear “No Justice No Peace!”. How does an understanding of the peace testimony that not only denies war, but includes the presence of economic and environmental justice speak to our condition?