



A Quaker Message to the 2016 Welsh Assembly Elections

As Quakers we are compelled by our faith, and its translation into practice, to take responsibility for the governance of our country. We cannot blindly accept things as they are but question, and keep alert to and questioning of the way decisions are made and enacted.

So we encourage our politicians to respond to problems of injustice, suffering, oppression and ignorance, where they exist, in search of a more peaceful and equal society. We challenge them to remove those destructive attitudes that conceal us from one another; compassion should flow *'like a river and righteousness like a never-failing torrent'*. (Amos: 5.24)

We realise however that we, and those of other faith and non-faith communities, may contribute to the problems that challenge us. We should not be beguiled into thinking that we have no role in the political process. We do need to remain vigilant in respect of what we do ourselves and what we ask of others.

For those now seeking election to the Welsh Assembly this year we would ask that they uphold and promote:

- practical, achievable pragmatic solutions to issues and problems, which are founded on sound research, and not based on simplistic ideological imperatives which may cloud humane and balanced judgment.
- being open, honest and transparent in their deliberations, encouraging co-operation and understanding where there is antagonism, and being willing to admit failures when these become apparent. Power is service to the community and not something to be pursued for its own sake.
- the value of a diverse society for all in Wales which has been and continues to be enriched by other cultures, creeds and languages.
- the protection and preservation of that which is unique to Wales and which gives us our identity.

- community solidarity that can be a transformative tool. Recognise the resource that exists in people, in their strengths and abilities to be advocates and to identify solutions to issues and problems.
- economic policies which ensure that all benefit whilst also ensuring the sustainability of life in all its forms. The resources of the world are not infinite nor for us to waste and dispose of recklessly.
- an educational system that is responsive and imaginative. One which motivates and enhances the worth of every child and young person, whilst preserving an element of choice which balances communal needs with those of the individual.
- provision of adequate housing so that every home is truly a place of safety and nurture. People must be able to access services for assistance and support when needed.
- an accessible health and social care service that draws upon professional values and inputs whilst remaining sensitive to public concern when changes, which are inevitable, cause uncertainty and unease.

The Welsh Assembly is an invaluable institution. To date, it has often, and in a spirit of friendliness, found a way to deal with pressing problems inherited from the past, recognising that there will be differences over how best to resolve these. It has proved to be innovative and responsive. These are essential characteristics of the Assembly that those seeking office in 2016 should cherish and promote.

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“We are all the poorer for the crushing of one person, since the dimming of the Light anywhere darkens us all.” Michael Sorenson

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