



# Address to the Peace Camp at RAF Lakenheath, Lakenheath Alliance for Peace

By Paul Parker on 23 April 2025

Good afternoon everyone, and thanks for being here. Especially thanks to those who have spent many days, weeks or even years opposing this place, what goes on behind these fences and gates, and what it stands for.

I want to say a few words about why we, as people of faith, should care about what is happening here at RAF Lakenheath. Because as a Quaker I am here as a person of faith. And the reason I am here is because of my Quaker faith and what it teaches me. There are many reasons to be concerned, even angry, about what is happening here. These are mine:

I grew up in the 1970s and 1980s, in the shadow of the cold war. We knew that a nuclear war was possible, and we even talked about what we would do with the four minutes we'd have, between knowing a bomb had been launched, and the moment of certain annihilation. I won't have been the only child having nightmares about it, back then. And I know that many of us have been protesting nuclear weapons and militarism all along. Quakers have resisted wars and weaponry since our inception in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and we have resisted nuclear arms ever since they were invented.

Things eased for a while when the iron curtain fell. It felt like the world relaxed. And until now, that four-minute warning still hasn't sounded, and I'm grateful for that, so far.

But the world today is not safer than it was then.

The longer I live, the more I realise that we are living at the intersection of a whole series of linked crises. We are living through a time of great global instability, with powerful nations jockeying for position once again. We can see deep cracks appearing in the multilateral system of mutual accountability put in place after the Second World War and the global mechanisms that have, however imperfectly, kept the peace, more or less, since then. We can see weak leaders failing, again and again, to prioritise peace, justice and equality in the face of militarism, rapaciousness and greed. We can see a world losing confidence in democracy and accountability as the best way we have yet found to protect us from tyranny and exploitation; and we can see the world's leaders exploiting that to cling to power and project their own strength.

At the same time, far more than we could see in the 1970s and 1980s, we understand that we are living on a planet where our climate is breaking down. Where the rains don't fall when they should. Where, when they do fall, they fall to such an extreme level that farmlands are destroyed, not refreshed. Where glaciers are melting and sea-levels rising. Where the continuing extraction and burning of fossil fuels is destroying our chances of protecting our planet and the people and creatures which live on it. Where war and militarism are key drivers of climate breakdown and environmental degradation, and the public money spent on them distracts from climate goals we all know we need to reach.

And we see a crisis of inequality. A world where a tiny number of wealthy men can outspend half the world's population. A world where the interests of the many are sidelined in the interests of the few. Where the world's resources are increasingly taken from the poor and passed to the rich. And where force, repression and war are used to protect those interests.

And yet our instructions are to love one another.

Our faith helps us to face the chaos and pain in the world with love and hope. It anchors us in a community where we can find the resilience to take action for a sustainable and peaceful world. Our practice of silent worship allows us to discern the deepest truth we know - and to live according to that truth.

In responding to the question "What does love require of us?" we recognise that we have responsibilities in our relationships to each other and also to the natural world.

Love calls us to build a sustainable and peaceful world. This is not just about opposing war or calling for climate action. It is about how we live well together on this planet, from the local to the global level.. It means resisting systems built on relationships of extraction, exploitation and violent control of each other and the living world. It means striving instead for loving and just relationships. And it means using our understanding of harm caused to facilitate repair.

Love calls us to work for peace. Peace is an active process and we work for a 'just peace': for a world not merely defined by the absence of violence but by the flourishing of equality and justice. We work for good relationships at every level – from the interpersonal to the international – and believe peace can only be brought about through nonviolent means. To build a peaceful and sustainable world, we need international disarmament and the redirection of military spending and production towards activities that help regenerate life on this planet. Our history of peacebuilding work tells us that patient investment in constructive ways of addressing conflict – such as conciliation, mediation and diplomacy – works.

So we pray for a world where everyone has access to clean air and water, healthy soil, healthy and affordable food and a safe place to call home, and where resources can be governed and shared by the communities they sit within.

We pray for a world where military spending and production is reallocated to support the creation of and respect for these rights.

We pray for a world with freedom from want and indignity as well as freedom from fear, built over the long-term through collective global efforts to address the causes of insecurity, such as poverty and discrimination.

We pray for a world where conflict is addressed through peacebuilding approaches and constructive action to transform the root causes of conflict, led by local communities.

This place behind us symbolises so much of what is wrong. Let us pray too for the persistence to continue to work for its removal. For the wisdom and vision our leaders need to make that happen.

As we move into a period of silent worship together, let us pray, together, for peace. In the silence you may find yourself prompted to offer a prayer, a reflection, or a commitment, out loud. And at the shaking of hands which will conclude that time of worship, let us leave this place, recharged and renewed by our faith to take action for peace, for justice, for equality, and for the future the world needs.

Let us now settle into a time of worship together. Thank you all.