

After the referendum, regardless of the outcome, there will be many people in the UK and elsewhere feeling hurt, angry and disappointed. The role of the media and many politicians in framing the debate has too often been very negative; passionate assertions have been presented as credible predictions, untruths have been used as if they were fact (in spite of frequent challenges), and fears and prejudices have been stoked up in support of competing agendas.

As Friends concerned for peace, we can unite in affirming the importance of equality, respect, integrity in public life, and environmental sustainability as key foundations for peace. We can also affirm our commitment to internationalism and to cooperation between nations and peoples, the basis on which the EU was founded. Global challenges require responses at all levels, from local to international. Cooperation is not always easy or straightforward, but in linking across cultures, national boundaries and languages, violent conflict is made less likely.

We know that, for these and other reasons, many Friends are committed to the European Union and to the UK staying within it. We also know that Friends have real concerns about the EU as an institution, and in particular by how it is shaped by the less positive influences of multinational trade. We aspire to a Europe whose security is based on mutuality and care for the marginalised and vulnerable, rather than on militarism and fear of the other.

Whatever the outcome, we as Quakers want and need to be ready to engage with our neighbours, in our communities, between nations and across Europe as a whole in challenging policies, practices and structures that work against the building of peace, and in promoting those which sustain and nurture it.

“Let us then try what love will do.”

William Penn