

Peace

By Barbara Childs, Okehampton Quaker Meeting

Whenever I make my own Christmas cards I stamp the words "Peace on Earth" inside each one. Peace on Earth can mean many things including the absence of war but it can also mean peace much closer to home. A mother cuddling her baby is one of the strongest images of peace for me. I have been lucky enough to have experienced that peace both with my own children and when visiting others. The sense of calm, peacefulness and love is almost tangible. Maybe that is why the nativity scene is so popular on Christmas cards.

As Quakers we are encouraged to listen to the promptings of love in our hearts and to trust them as the leadings of God. There can be few promptings of love stronger than that which prompts mothers to pick up their babies and hold them close. Yet there are writers who offer help to new parents and specifically discourage them from giving such comfort to their little ones. Parents are advised by these writers to let their children cry so that they can learn to fall asleep on their own, even if the mother's instinct is to pick up and cuddle her child.

How is this a religious reflection? Religion is about the whole of life, Christmas is about Jesus being born as a baby, we say "love came down at Christmas". One of the more simple ways of showing that love is to listen to the voice which says, "Give the baby a cuddle". I feel we should question those who suggest that mothers ignore the promptings of love in their hearts.

Okehampton Times, 20 December 2012

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