



Yearly Meeting of the
Religious Society of
Friends in Britain

Epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting Held at Friends House, London on 1-4 May 2015

Loving Greetings to Friends everywhere,

We have come together with joy, seeing one another's faces and hearing one another more clearly in our new light-filled Meeting House. We have begun a three-year exploration on how we live out our faith in the world. At this particular time with its pressing challenges, we are called to work to identify and understand the root causes of social and economic injustice on our threatened planet. In the face of so much that is wrong in society locally, nationally and globally we need to see beyond despair and find a way 'to turn the world the right way up again'. We are complicit.

What do we do about it?

We need to rethink what needs to grow in the world and what does not. Are we as individuals prepared to make uncomfortable changes to our own lifestyles and work towards a new economic system which may be at greater expense to ourselves?

As Meetings are we giving proper consideration to how we use our resources?

Today in our minutes we have said 'As a yearly meeting we are restless to take corporate action to change the unequal, unjust world in which we live. We are also called to be a community of Friends as a yearly meeting, pushed towards the important things we can only do together. We have a body of experience we can draw on and maintain. We are in this for the long haul.' This is what love requires of us.

In the Children and Young People's programme the response this weekend when faced with the problem of inequality has been far from despair. Instead the response is 'here's how I know I can help and what else can I do?' We are reminded that

willingness to act on what we are individually passionate about is foremost to any movement forward. We must ask the awkward questions and object strongly and intuitively when things are unfair and unjust.

Quaker meetings grounded in worship and loving tenderness can work together to transform our own lives and respond to injustice, poverty and the need for sustainability locally, nationally and internationally.

We are not alone. Others in churches, faith groups, and in wider society, share our vision that the world needs to change. Quaker organisations are already doing much on our behalf: with better financial support more could be achieved. This is a challenge that Friends in Britain need to address.

The Swarthmore Lecturer, speaking on faith, power and peace, reminded us that deep faith is our source of courage and that our power lies in our willingness to be vulnerable in the face of violence and injustice. We also need to recognise power as an obligation of service, not a right to dominate. The light which pushes us to act is the same light that pushes our Friends in other parts of the world. In ministry, we have been reminded of our Friends in Africa, who in recent years have transformed suffering into a force for social change and our Nepalese Friends who are showing such resilience in their current struggle to support their stricken society.

‘Compassion means suffering with.’ If we believe in the light within everyone, doing nothing is not an option. As Quakers we know from experience that we can and do influence social and political change. We should not be complacent. Faithful attention to our leadings, worship and discernment will lead us to find the right way.

We can’t do everything, but we can all do something.

‘Live up to the light thou hast and more will be granted thee.’ (*Quaker faith & practice* 26.04)

Signed in and on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Skidmore". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chris Skidmore
Clerk