

Yearly Meeting of the  
**Religious Society of Friends in Britain**



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Epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting held at the University of York, 30 July – 6 August 2005

(To be read in Meetings)

To all Friends everywhere,

Britain Yearly Meeting, old and young, has gathered across the campus of the University of York, from 30 July to 6 August 2005. We send you our loving greetings as we strive to live as a people of God.

We come together not just to make decisions, but also to support one another, to be challenged, and to see each other's faces – and what love and delight we experience when we connect in this way! Our sessions, plenary and in groups, formal and informal, are enlivened with laughter and music.

There is also tension; sometimes we hurt each other through our actions, words, or attitudes. Acknowledging this hurt is the first step towards forgiveness. We must remember that we can be spoken to, and learn from, anybody within our community of Friends, whatever form their ministry takes.

God is neither the puppet master pulling our strings, nor the patriarch in the sky. God is at the centre of our time together, the life pumping through our arteries, the very ground of our being.

As a people of God we are not just a collection of individuals, we are also a corporate Church. Our structures exist to offer us a clear framework allowing us creatively to



nurture our community, deepen our worship, and support the interaction of our faith and witness.

We have been considering structural changes within our Yearly Meeting. It is a difficult process and we continue to struggle with issues of trust, responsibility, and power in our organisation. However, the exercise is useful as we deepen our understanding of the relationship between our structures, our testimonies, and the divine.

We often search for comfort in our relationships with God, seeking a place for nourishment and security, healing and peace. But we may also experience discomfort, finding ourselves challenged to confront the truth in our hearts and to live and love in ways that are difficult and dangerous. These challenges are on our doorstep as well as in distant lands. All in the world is sacred; not only the things we find soothing and beautiful, but also those things which distress us.

For several years our minutes and epistles to each other have urged us to act to limit the damage we inflict on our environment. Many Friends are working hard to address this, but there is far more to be done as Quaker witness. Our time truly is running out; we all need to make the difficult choices to make a real difference.

We must remind ourselves constantly that all our testimonies are the daily expression of God in our lives. Being a people of God is rewarding – but we must also accept that it is costly. Are we prepared to pay the price?

Signed in and on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting

Peter J Eccles

Clerk