

Yearly Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends in Britain

Friends House 173 Euston Road London NW1 2BJ
Tel: 020 7663 1000 Fax: 020 7663 1001
Web: <http://www.quaker.org.uk>
Recording Clerk: Elsa Dicks



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To all Friends everywhere,

'He has showed you, O Man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?' (Micah 6:8 RSV)

With a sense of uniting in both our sorrows and our joys we send loving greetings from Britain Yearly Meeting. We gathered in London at Muswell Hill and Finchley Meeting Houses, and at Friends House, from 2nd to 5th May 2003.

We learn from Friends whose sense of witness has taken them to troubled lands. Contested ground is no less an issue now than it was in the time of Jesus. We need to be united not only through our sorrow but through our love, not only through our mistakes but through our courage. By forgiving and seeking forgiveness we recognise that we are not outsiders to the conflicts, but part of them. We pray for the light to show us our shadows, in order to accept our own share of the responsibility for the pain and suffering. By striving to understand each other we deepen our perception of the truth: truth, like peace, is a process - and reality is many-sided. *'Faithfulness does not mean that we will all see or articulate truth in the same way or in the same place'*¹. We are reminded to seek truth, spirit, and reality behind apparent differences. For all of us there is a pilgrimage of discovery.

Let us consider our welcome to the stranger. We can do more to make our meetings communities of faith in which there is a true spiritual home. Whatever our age or experience, we have much to learn about openness and generosity. We must continue to listen. Nothing is more important or precious than giving our time. Every encounter lays us open to change and thus allows us to grow. We must be courageous and take risks. We have to be brave enough to give our own answers and to share our spiritual journeys as well as our everyday lives. It can be difficult to put what we feel deeply into words. All of us can practise expressing our spirituality. A stumbling answer from the heart and faithfulness in ministry can speak more powerfully than any pamphlet.

¹ *Eleanor Nesbitt, Swarthmore Lecture 2003*



In John's account of the last supper Jesus told the disciples: ‘ *“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.....I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.....I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit ...”*’ (John 15:12-16 RSV). All are called to live in the power of the resurrection. We discover these are not just words of theology, but the experience of the heart. This year we have explored what this might mean to us.

Each of us needs to make the testimonies our own. In worship, in action, in witness, we seek to be love at work in the world. We each have our part to play. In stillness and in worship we joyfully proclaimed our peace testimony. By recognising our achievements we gain strength to continue in our ministry.

We cherish the time we spend together in the business of our Yearly Meeting. Rejoicing in the laughter, the discipline and the deeply grounded ministry we carry with us a sense of faith-affirming community.

Signed in and on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting

Peter J. Eccles, *Clerk*