



Yearly Meeting of
the Religious Society
of Friends in Britain

Epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting, held at Friends House, London, 26-29 May 2006

(corrected version - to be read in Meetings)

To all Friends everywhere,

Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts.

Trust them as the leadings of God....*Advices and Queries 1*

Greetings from Britain Yearly Meeting, held at a newly-cleaned Friends House, while it is celebrating its eightieth birthday.

From the start, we have felt a strong sense of common purpose, of abiding in the power of the Spirit. With helpful guidance from our clerks and our elders, there has been a willingness among us to work within our listening discipline, which is not a constraint but a channel to receive the guidance of God.

During this Yearly Meeting, we have tried hard to avoid negative 'murmurings' that would undermine our corporate discipline.

We have returned to the question of trusteeship of Britain Yearly Meeting. Last year we were unable to reach unity on the question of appointing a small trustee body, such were the anxieties about issues of power and trust. The delay has proved a blessing, as we have had time for a thorough threshing of a matter which has profound implications for the life of our community.

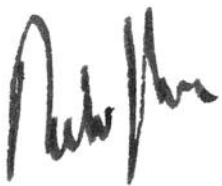
Trust is not something that can be forced; it must be worked on over time. We are thankful for the work on safeguards and accountability over the past year that has enabled us to take the risk of a new way forward. We are now ready to entrust a small group with the specific responsibilities of trusteeship, remembering that these responsibilities are grounded in terms of service, not of power. We, the Yearly Meeting, carry the authority and we *all* share responsibility for our work and witness, whether present in session or not. We commit ourselves to upholding our trustees and all others who undertake work on our behalf - not least by maintaining an interest in it.

Now that we have relieved our representative body, Meeting for Sufferings, of the detailed work of trusteeship, we have freed it to take on a visionary and prophetic role for the life of the Yearly Meeting, to draw our whole community together and to release the synergy we create, to work better for the world.

Committee members and staff of Quaker Peace and Social Witness inspired us with stories of their work. They apply Quaker insights, with patience and quiet confidence, in seemingly intractable situations, through support for international accompaniment, training in nonviolence, in trade negotiations and mediation in conflict situations. Working with those who have been convicted of sexual offences and making modest but significant practical interventions in our political process both demonstrate the importance of building trust. We are painfully aware of the time we have necessarily spent this year on internal matters and of our need to return in future Yearly Meeting sessions to the threats to life on earth and the challenges to our faith.

In cross-age epilogue, we heard how geese in flight share the responsibility of leadership, care for one another in difficult times and help one another to fly. Learning from them, we leave this Yearly Meeting ready to fly, with a new sense of direction and a renewed commitment to cooperating with the loving purposes of God.

'Love is a constant challenge, not a resting place'. (Swarthmore Lecture 2006)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin Ward', written in a cursive style.

Signed in and on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting

MARTIN WARD

Clerk