



Epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting

Held at Friends House, The Frontier Centre in Northamptonshire, and online from 1 to 4 May 2026

To Friends around the world

Loving Greetings to Friends everywhere

Gyfeillion annwyl ym mhobman, anfonwn atoch ein cariad a'n cyfarchion.

Battered by the certainty of some of those around us, we seem to live in a world polarised by conflict and fear. The world around us appears even more frightening and unstable than it did last year, and yet we experienced deep joy at being able to come together.

Almost 2,000 Friends registered in advance for Britain Yearly Meeting (BYM) May 2026, including 100 children and young people at Friends House and at the Frontier Centre in Northamptonshire. Over 600 registered online and almost 400 attended for the first time. We gathered around the themes:

What unites us as a spirit-led community in a divided world?

As a Spirit-led community, how can we handle conflict well?

We heard about overwhelm and helplessness, and a feeling that what we each are able to do is not enough: our hearts are resonating with the cry of the earth and the earth's people in pain.

A Friend shared their experience of the recent Earthcare Gathering where they came to understand that listening and upholding the witness of others is an important Quaker ministry. The Salter Lecture investigated the multiple moral catastrophes in the Middle East. We must work for "the just and equal and safe future where every life is precious and dignity belongs to everyone". The Recording Clerk summarised recent work relating to the right to protest in the United Kingdom.

Change, which can bring a sense of bereavement, as well as renewal, is coming to Quakers in Britain. We enacted structural changes to BYM. As we laid down Meeting for Sufferings after 350 years, we heard the Testimony to the Grace of God as shown in the life of Meeting for Sufferings and the many changes it weathered in its lifetime. We feel excited about the evolving landscape and look forward to the next session of BYM in Manchester and online in July. The draft of our new book of discipline will be with us in November, with a variety of resources to help us contribute towards a further draft, which

will make it our own. We are reminded that the book itself is not our faith, but that unmediated access to the divine is the most important thing for British Quakers. We became aware that our spiritual language over the weekend showed a return to our roots. Maybe we are becoming more comfortable with living with the tension between theistic and other language. We shared a greater willingness to hear the meaning which underlies our words.

In the Swarthmore Lecture we were reminded that we are still living with fundamental and productive tensions which have existed since the beginning of Quakerism. We have heard from a minute of Junior Yearly Meeting that we need to hold differences tenderly and distinguish between acceptance, which comes as a result of being authentically yourself, and belonging, which is the result of shared values. Our children's and young people's groups worked on co-operative artwork on bridge-building and led us in singing "Building Bridges" in all-age worship on Sunday.

We feel in our bodies the pain of conflict. Embodiment can also sometimes be how the Spirit convinces us of the way forward.

We need to let go of certainty, the certainty that we know the answer. We need to let go of the outcome, and let the Spirit move: Friends who were in Friends House meeting room will long remember the improvised cheerful hymn-singing when the Zoom sound failed. Can we be open not only to this kind of gentle wind, but also to the storm that sweeps through and blows down trees, leaving room for new seeds to sprout? Let us hold spaces which are safe not just for the still small voice, but also for the wind, the storms, the power that makes us uncomfortable and which stirs us to action.

Do we still have the power to turn the world upside-down? Let it be so!

Signed in, and on behalf of, Britain Yearly Meeting

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fred Langridge', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Fred Langridge, Clerk

