



Yearly Meeting of the
Religious Society of
Friends in Britain

Epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting Held at Friends House, London on 27 – 30 May 2016

Loving Greetings to Friends everywhere,

British Friends of all ages, and visiting Friends from around the world, have gathered in London for our second of three Yearly Meetings looking at 'Living out our faith in the world' and have experienced a great depth of worship.

We reminded ourselves where we ended last year, with a call for equality and action. We were inspired by hearing an epistle from Junior Yearly Meeting (JYM) and news of projects undertaken by individual Friends, local meetings and area meetings. We all, adults, children and young people, have considered how we use our gifts, how we recognise, test and support concerns, and how we work with others.

Taking so much time to consider the concept of Spirit-given gifts has brought us to a point of deeper understanding. What makes something a gift of the Spirit is not the gift itself but the way in which it is used.

As written in Corinthians: 'There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of service, but the same Lord. There are varieties of activity, but in all of them and in everyone the same God is active. In each of us the Spirit is seen to be at work for some useful purpose.'

(1 Corinthians 12:4-7 *Revised English Bible*)

Even our brokenness and burdens, which may change our lives in deep and challenging ways, can become gifts.

How does the Light push us into action? Quakers have a long tradition of testing concerns in local, area and yearly meetings. Testing a concern may challenge not just the leading of one Friend, but the commitment of the whole Meeting and lead to growth for everyone. Through the right use of this process we can support our Friends in their callings.

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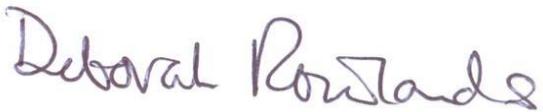
We have heard inspiring examples of Friends living out their faith. Friends had the opportunity to see a play about Ada Salter's outstanding social and political work a hundred years ago. Some Friends described their own personal journeys of acting under concern.

Our Swarthmore Lecturers shared their experiences of Quaker peace work in Central and East Africa. Although we heard the words of both we were deeply saddened that Cécile Nyiramana was prevented and Esther Mombo attended alone. They spoke of using and adapting existing peacemaking tools. Some of the causes of conflict they see, such as poverty and inequality, are present in our own society. Sustainable peacebuilding begins with individuals working within their local communities.

Our working with others and "movement building" will be the theme of our next Yearly Meeting. We have been challenged to consider whether we ought to be a prophetic voice crying in the wilderness, like John the Baptist, or take direct action in collaboration with others.

The problems we face are big and urgent and we may feel as if we are standing at the edge of all we know. However, if we have faith and trust in our leadings, when we take the next step together, either we will find earth under our feet or God will give us wings.

Signed in and on behalf of Britain Yearly Meeting

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Deborah Rowlands". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Deborah Rowlands

Clerk