

Epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting held in Coventry at the University of Warwick

29 July to 5 August 2017

To Friends everywhere

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.
(James 2:26)

We send loving greetings from Britain Yearly Meeting gathered in community.

This is the third year in which we have explored our theme of Living Out Our Faith in the World; this time we have considered how we work with others to make a difference and build a better world. We have been delighted by the presence of Friends from other Yearly Meetings and visitors from other churches and faith groups. They have helped us to recognise the way bonds form between different communities for the common good, and to value the richness which comes to us when we welcome diversity in our meetings.

Since our last Yearly Meeting our nations have experienced increasing uncertainty and insecurity. Inequality has become vividly apparent. We are distressed by the trashing of our planet, and angry at the greed, ruthlessness, violence and lies which blight the lives of so many. “What do you mean, says God, that you grind the faces of my poor?” (Isaiah 3:15) In this fractured world, how can we respond? What does Love require of us?

We ourselves are part of the problem. Many are too rich. We damage the land, the sea, and all living creatures. We are stealing the future. Change is urgent. We need to recognise our own selfishness and privilege: to be changed ourselves, to live as if the Kingdom of God were already fulfilled.

Throughout our Gathering we have heard examples of Friends' work and involvement in the world as Meetings and as individuals. We are reminded that we all find different ways of being faithful. Inspired by the Fox Cubs (3-5-year-olds) we have worn the ribbons which they gave us to share their concern for hungry and homeless people.

When we engage with the brokenness of the world, one of our tools can be our willingness to listen: to the vulnerable, to each other, to those with whom we disagree, and to the leadings of the Holy Spirit. This will enable us to work alongside others powerfully, telling the truth of what is wrong in the world. Sometimes listening will lead us to stillness, at other times to practical action. In all things the Spirit will direct us.

Working with others gives us strength. Their insights may lead us to see our own shortcomings. We can also hold conversations with those in positions of authority and influence.

Ours may be a supporting role. We may be called to comfort and uphold, to practise small kindnesses, to admit our own weakness, and to undertake practical tasks which enable others to act. Sometimes being there is enough.

Action may demand courage. This may mean taking part in public protests or acts of disobedience. We may be led to challenge rooted injustices and to use our energy to bring about radical change. Jesus overturned the tables of the money-changers in the temple. He taught that the blessed community was formed of the poor, the hungry and those suffering loss or persecution. (Luke 6:20-22)

When our call is clear, we need discipline to test it, and faithfulness to carry it through without counting the cost. May God give us strength and grace to be instruments of change.

Therefore, dear Friends, wait in the Light, that the Word of the Lord may dwell plentifully in you. (Qf&p 29.19)