



Epistle from Britain Yearly Meeting

Held at Friends House, The Frontier Centre in Northamptonshire, and online from 23 to 26 May 2025

Dear Friends everywhere, we send you our love and greetings.

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

What is your message of peace for the world?

What brings you a sense of inner peace?

To explore these questions, around 1,000 Quakers met at Yearly Meeting this weekend as an all-age community. We are encouraged that for many this was their first time at Yearly Meeting. The contributions to our discernment from the thriving young people's programmes have lifted our hearts, as have the gurglings of the infant with us in our worship.

Recent Yearly Meetings have focused on Church Governance. We now see ways forward, as we develop structures that we trust will help our shared discernment. This year's agenda is firmly rooted in our historic peace testimony, and we have asked ourselves deep questions about what it means for us today. We have listened in hope, and have opened ourselves to new learning, trusting in the leadings of the Light.

We are reminded that the central message of the New Testament is one of love. We are called to challenge tyranny; and to love everyone, even those who do bad things.

This is an anxious time for the world, even more so now than when we met last year. We have been challenged to welcome, accept, and nurture the radical peacemaker in ourselves and in others. We have also explored how we, as Quakers, address violence and conflict in our communities.

To help our discernment, we have seen a film about the different ways in which Friends are called to bear witness to our Peace Testimony. We have also heard prepared ministry from a number of Friends, including those who have seen violence and oppression at first

hand while giving service in Palestine and Israel as human rights observers. Reflecting on what we hear and read about each day has inevitably stirred deep and painful emotions.

We have spent much time praying about the situation in Gaza. Quakers have a long tradition of speaking truth to power. We have done some heart-searching and some heart-breaking, and our discomfort contributed to deeply gathered worship. We have been moved by the Spirit to speak out. We urge Friends to read the full minute, which has been written in love for all those affected.

This year's Swarthmore Lecture, *A Testimony of Community*, has nourished our discernment. We have spent time in worship considering how we live together in our various communities; there are many things we might do to build peace within them. The work begins by finding peace within ourselves.

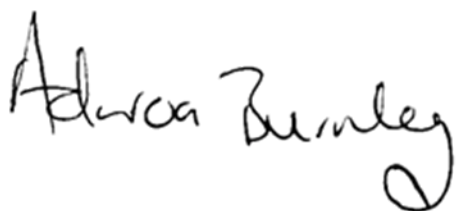
The promptings of love and truth in our hearts are pushing us to step outside our privilege, comfort and security. Can we do this in a spirit of adventure and joy? How radical can we be while retaining tenderness and not doing harm? We each have a different appetite and capability for radical peacemaking; we can all contribute.

We recognise that to secure lasting peace we must address the complex causes of conflict, including poverty and hunger, injustice and distrust, fear and disempowerment. To create a fairer world, we must get better at sharing. In doing this work we remember Jesus' advice to his disciples to be "as wise as serpents, as gentle as doves" (Matt 10:16).

As a final shared activity, many of us who were in London have taken advantage of being together to stand in silent worship around Friends House. We held signs which had messages of hope for world peace on the outside and hopes for personal peace on the inside.

This Yearly Meeting has been one of great joy at meeting each other in the spirit, deep sorrow at conflict in the world, and determination to live out our Quaker witness.

Signed in, and on behalf of, Yearly Meeting

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adwoa Burnley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'A' and a decorative flourish at the end.

Adwoa Burnley, Clerk.