

## Switzerland Yearly Meeting 2013 Epistle

To all Friends everywhere

Loving greetings from Switzerland Yearly Meeting. We gathered again this year in Herzberg, near Aarau in Eastern Switzerland, and welcomed visitors from German Yearly Meeting, Britain Yearly Meeting, Europe and Middle East Section of Friends World Committee for Consultation, the Quaker United Nations Office and Quaker Council for European Affairs, as well as our own adults and children.

The main focus of our business sessions this year has been to complete the process of restructuring our Yearly Meeting functions. We have struggled to find Friends willing to take sole charge of clerking our Yearly Meeting, so have changed to having a clerking team with shared responsibilities. Many of our functions that were previously carried out at a national level are now the responsibility of local Meetings. We are aware that we need to further consider the causes of the need for this restructuring – the declining number of active members and the need for greater spiritual depth in our Quaker community.

We have seen glimmers of inspiration when considering Friends young and old. We have lost a number of dedicated and knowledgeable Friends in recent years and feel their absence, but have also been heartened by those Friends who continue their work and carry forward our traditions. We have been reminded of the power of a person who sincerely seeks to walk in the Light and that every one of us can be God's instrument if we listen to our calling. In a session that explored the question "How does our faith community support younger Friends to live in the Spirit?" we heard many ideas. These are often simple, such as inviting younger Friends to our homes, asking them what items they would like discussed at Meetings for Worship for Business and specifically inviting them to Yearly Meetings and other gatherings. We do not need to provide all their spiritual needs ourselves – other Quaker groups and Yearly Meetings may have enriching experiences for our younger Friends. It is important to see all members of our Quaker community as valuable in and of themselves, not because of their age or other feature.

Christopher Daniel Hatton from Woodbrooke-on-the-Road spoke to us powerfully about his experience of prophecy and the Christian Peacemaker Teams. He reminded us that we can speak truth with power as well as to it, but must always do so in love. The powers of this world are fallen, so our role is to raise them up again before God. He also challenged us to consider how far we would go to follow our leadings. Would we go to prison for our beliefs? Would we invite a homeless person or a drug addict in for tea? How radical is our hospitality – who are we excluding from our table? We should be careful that our comfort and our fear do not stop us from reaching out to all people, and instead consider how our privilege allows us to "get in the way" of injustice. The price of the peace we have in Europe is often paid by the poor and non-white, but in the Peaceable Kingdom we seek, no-one shall be excluded from Christ's table.

| Herzberg, 20 May 2013