

Epistle for 2014

of the Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa New Zealand, Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri

Held at Kiwi Ranch, Curious Cove, Tōtaranui (Queen Charlotte Sound), 23rd - 26th May 2014

Dear Friends,

Loving greetings to you all, everywhere!

In our opening worship we were reminded of our gifted name Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri (the faith community which stands shaking in the spirit) as the wind whistled up the cove, through the bush, and rattled the building.

In preparation over half the gathering made space and stillness in a silent retreat in the day leading into Yearly Meeting. We were invited to deepen our breath and pace our step through Contemplative and Zen meditation, and create an open place to welcome those coming to join us off the boat and welcome the Spirit among us. Over 60 Friends from all Monthly Meetings and Young Friends ventured by launch to the bush-clad remote location for our Yearly Meeting.

Understanding that growing points occur not only at the tips of a plant, but also along the stem and branch and at the roots, was an image offered by the Clerks in their State of the Society address. They asked: do we need to look at the talents we have been entrusted with and consider how we have been using them, thus to bring creativity to our service?

Our Christchurch Friends began their story with slides of the proliferation of street art in their devastated city. Their frustrations and sense of powerlessness in their dealing with bureaucracy continue to exhaust and deplete them on a daily basis, yet hope and energy still remain.

As we moved into further sessions our testimonies came to the fore and challenged us as to how we put our concerns into action. The upcoming one hundred year Gallipoli commemorations bring a new light to our Peace Statement of 1987 and how it could be a focus for our response. We were exercised in how we might do things differently in discussions about nurturing our children and young people and meeting our own educational and spiritual needs. We also asked ourselves: how can we make our Testimonies to integrity, simplicity and sustainability real and visible within our society and in the wider world?

In the opening words of the 2014 Quaker Lecture *Standing in this Place*, we were again reminded of a sense of place and time. Sydney Parkinson, a Quaker botanical illustrator, was on board explorer James Cook's first voyage into the Sounds in 1769, and the introductory speaker's mentor, John Rangihau, an influential Māori leader, gave a lecture here at Curious Cove some 50 years ago. The four speakers spoke from a place of understandings distilled from deep and varied experiences as they grappled with our relationship to Te Tiriti (Treaty of Waitangi) partners in social, historical, institutional and personal settings. Together they explored opportunities for Pākehā to work for justice for indigenous people through political and social change in very different ways on a day to day basis.

All the while in sessions we were constantly aware of where we were as the sounds of the surrounds permeated our ears and vision and in ministry we were asked:

What can we hear but cannot see?

Feel but not control?

What touches each of us differently?

Can change the course of our path?

It is the wind. It is the wind.

It is the Spirit. It is the Spirit.

Elizabeth Duke & Elizabeth Thompson, Co-clerks

Pākehā = New Zealanders of European descent, sometimes applied to all non-Māori New Zealanders