

## Epistle for 2016

of the Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa New Zealand Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri

Held at St Cuthbert's College, Auckland, 15 18 July 2016

*Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa, greetings to Friends everywhere.*

Our Yearly Meeting gathering 2016 opened with mihi/greetings, worship and the honouring of our ancestors including the volcanoes that form the land here in Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland.

What is it to be a Quaker? We talked about how our Yearly Meeting can help us to drink from the stream of Quaker spirituality and learn to become everyday prophets. We are working towards our Yearly Meeting structure strengthening the spiritual life of our local meetings. We have grappled with how to hear the calling to flourish in the ministry and the call to service. We are still threshing how best to apply our resources to living our witness within the wider world, using our heritage to support our activism and our mysticism at all ages. We aim to shift our attention to discernment and spiritual growth while living our social testimonies. What does God require of us?

Our monthly meetings are impassioned to continue our important work of peace-making and acknowledge the needs and concerns of young people in our society. We had the privilege of being joined by our Junior Young Friend's from their gathering. Along with Young Friends they helped shape our deliberations. Our Quaker lecturer, Marian Hobbs and other speakers inspire us to be faithful in our responsibility to hold ourselves, our leaders and our politicians accountable to the challenges that face our planet and our communities. We need to advocate on issues from disarmament to climate change. We are a community dedicated to equality - how do we speak plainly to meet the challenges of inequality in our own community and worldwide?

We heard from Ōtautahi/Christchurch meeting who continue to move on from the earthquakes five years ago. They have moved into their newly acquired Meeting House and are feeling a fresh energy emerge. Whanganui-a-Tara/Wellington Friends are fundraising for the earthquake strengthening of their Meeting House.

Our developing diversity was woven as a thread through the meeting with regular use of Te Reo, our indigenous language and hearing the successful development of an app to develop parenting skills, initially targeted at the Pacific Island community but available for all families. This was made possible with one of our Quaker Peace and Service Loxley grants.

We sow seeds and we trust that they will blossom in unexpected ways. Often we wonder how effective we are being, but are aware that weaving the fabric of our community relies on organised activities such as gatherings, at the Settlement and elsewhere, as well as fortuitous growth from unexpected meetings, social media and personal journeying.

Murray Short

Clerk