

WIDER QUAKER FELLOWSHIP, AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

LETTER 127

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Dear Friends,

First of all, a big “Thank you” to the WQF Members who sent contributions of money to help with the production of these letters. We have arranged for receipts to be sent by the Religious Society of Friends Yearly Meeting Treasurer so that donations will be eligible for tax rebate.

Last year my Monthly Meeting organised a residential weekend in Tauranga. In the evening Esther Malcolm-Cowley gave a talk about the Alternatives to Violence programme which has been supported by New Zealand Quakers since 1992. During the following discussion someone asked “What is a Quaker?” We expected a simple answer, but found ourselves in a brainstorming session, with many perceptions offered. Quakers are known to be a very diverse group but things that we have in common soon became clear. Perhaps the most important of these was considered to be our personal relationship with the Divine and our belief that there is that of God in every person, including ourselves. We try to respond to the Inner Light, the promptings of love and truth in our own hearts. We also try to respond to George Fox’s challenge – “*You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this; but what canst thou say?*”

We try to work for peace, rejecting the use of violence and respecting our environment. We also value integrity, simplicity and equality. Actually we are seekers, looking for wisdom wherever it is to be found, in order to solve life’s problems.

The 2013 Quaker Lecture

One of the highlights of our Yearly Meeting gathering in Waikanae in July was the presentation by Jeanette Fitzsimons of her lecture entitled “***Enough! The challenge of a post-growth economy***”. Jeanette is described as an environmental activist, university lecturer, researcher, writer, parent, grandparent, farmer, musician, and for 13 years co-leader of the NZ Green Party in the national parliament. She has worked on climate change, energy, transport, sustainable land use, organic farming and farm forestry and has now retired to a small organic farm on the Coromandel peninsula.

Jeanette is not a Quaker, but the message in her lecture fits well with our testimonies to simplicity and equality. She believes that continuous economic growth is not possible; that although our current consumerism is not sustainable, life can still be good if we plan for and achieve a steady-state economy.

Constant increase in demand for food, buildings, roads, bridges, manufactured goods, transport systems and i-pads cannot be satisfied without constant depletion of resources. We inhabit a finite planet and Jeanette believes that these resources will not last. She asks us to share what we already have in a more equitable way, and to use what we already have more efficiently. Her first move would be to reclaim the \$600 million of government revenue that is used to subsidise advertising in New Zealand. A willingness to say “I have enough now; the rest is for others, or for nature” could usher in a future that is congenial, prosperous and ecologically and socially rich.

The lecture has been delivered 10 times to hundreds of people in centres throughout New Zealand. The Religious Society of Friends has produced printed copies of the text, and these are available from Quaker Book Sales at 38 Parkdale Drive, Whanganui 4500, or by emailing quakerbooks@quaker.org.nz. The price is \$8.00.

You may not agree with everything that Jeanette says, but her ideas are certainly worth consideration.

Yours in Friendship,

Ruth Gadgil.

More thoughts from Yearly Meeting 2013

Equality does not mean sameness.

If you want equity of outcome you may need inequity of input and process.

Act like a survivor, not a victim.

Knowing about things that are trivial can lead to things that are eternal.

Do we make crumbs or do we act like a magnet?

Established structures should be a trellis on which we can grow, flower and fruit.

Generation Zero

We've heard about the Baby Boomers - and now a new name has been invented to describe young people of today who are concerned about the future of the planet. The concept of Generation Zero arose from a group of hopeful young Kiwis who participated in the 2010 UN Climate Negotiations in Cancun, Mexico. They returned home convinced that global leaders wouldn't be able to make the necessary changes without a substantial push from those who have inherited the problem and are going to be exposed to its consequences.

Jimmy Green, an active member of the Young Friends Quaker group, is a spokesman for Generation Zero. He describes their aspirations in this way:

"We want ourselves, and our children, to benefit from fossil-fuelled progress rather than suffer because of it. We have the ambition to build a smarter, healthier, more connected New Zealand, and make it to zero net carbon emissions in our lifetimes.....Generation Zero is an organisation that is youth driven, inclusive, fun, and gives people a chance to step into leadership."

The intention is to take the message in a speaking tour to 14 centres nationwide, and to make climate a big issue on the electoral agenda in 2014. Politicians have been interviewed, submissions made and thousands of young people have been brought together in hui, training sessions, speaker events and through online messages. In order to continue these activities more financial resources are needed and applications are being made for grants from sympathetic bodies. If you would like more information, or feel that you can support their efforts in any way, please consult their website: www.generationzero.org.nz

Summer Gathering, 28 December 2013 – 5 January 2014

Wairarapa College, 83 Pownall St., Masterton.

This popular event, held in a different centre each year, offers daily Meeting for Worship, organised morning sessions (reflective, active, creative), morning crèche for pre-schoolers, afternoon interest groups, evening epilogue, home groups, New Years Eve celebration, New Years Day excursion, arts space, camp concert and time to relax.

The theme this year is *"Patterns and examples – weaving patterns to nurture the earth, its people and its future."*

For information and registration contact Jessica Bukholt-Payne, Ph 04 389 8995 or email summer.gathering.nz@gmail.com

The Wider Quaker Fellowship is an association of persons of diverse backgrounds who wish to have ties with the Religious Society of Friends without necessarily being in its membership, or who, through isolation, illness or some other circumstance are unable to attend a Monthly Meeting.

Any person who finds the fundamental Quaker testimonies and the Quaker way of life, with its emphasis on sincerity and simplicity, compatible with his or her philosophy of life is welcome to join the Fellowship. A request to the Clerk will ensure enrolment as a member.