

# WIDER QUAKER FELLOWSHIP, AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

LETTER 131

NOVEMBER 2014

*19 Exeter Place, Rotorua 3015, New Zealand.*

*widerquakerfellowship@quaker.org.nz*

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*Dear Friends,*

*For some time we have aimed to produce three WQF Letters each year. The issuing of an extra one in 2014 has been made possible by financial donations from WQF members – many thanks from all of us!*

*Next month I have to send my annual report about WQF to the Religious Society of Friends Yearly Meeting Clerks. Here is some of the information to be included in Documents in Advance:*

*This year Letters were sent out by email (63) or post (85) in February, May, August and November. Responses indicated that they were well-received. The number of individual members decreased from 164 to 156, mainly due to health problems or non-notified change of address. The Letter was also sent to 13 groups and organisations, and was therefore available to people other than Fellowship members.*

*In this Letter I thought it would be interesting to explore Quaker attitudes to the subject of "Prayer". Do you pray? How and to whom? We were discussing this one day after Meeting for Worship. One member of our group said that if he had a problem he told God about it and then left it to Him to sort out. Another said that he wasn't sure what prayer is. And a third felt that prayer was a matter of focussing your mind on a topic so that you would be ready to respond in an appropriate way.*

*New Zealand Quakers don't use set prayers or liturgy in their meetings. We don't have priests or pastors and any one of us may be moved to provide ministry. This is often the sharing of a personal prayer or reflection. Occasionally it takes the form of a well-known prayer, in which case there is opportunity for deep thought about its meaning rather than a superficial rote repetition.*

*Did you know that New Zealand Quakers have an active Prayer Support Group? This is based in Mt. Eden, Auckland, and meets monthly to hold in the Light those who are in need of comfort or spiritual care. Support is offered to Friends, Attenders and others outside the meeting. A short inspirational passage (called a theme) is distributed by post or email to those wishing to receive it. Earlier this year the Group reported that it was supporting 84 people and had distributed 40 themes. Here is their latest offering:*

***"Come unto me all that labour and are heavy laden." (Matthew 11.28)***

***Know that the dawn always follows the night, with love and hope rekindled.***

*Yours in Friendship,*

Ruth Gadgil.

## Quaker thoughts about prayer

The subject of prayer has exercised many Friends over five centuries. Here are just a few of the many offerings. It would be interesting to hear your comments.

### From Britain Yearly Meeting's *Quaker Faith and Practice 1995*:

"Be still and cool in thy own mind and spirit from thy own thoughts, and then thou wilt feel the principle of God to turn thy mind ... whereby thou wilt receive his strength and power from whence life comes."  
*George Fox, 1658 [2.18]*

"Prayer is not an occasional nod  
 Given in passing to God.  
 It's more like marriage – a closeness of living,  
 A constant receiving and giving."

*Louie Horne, 1987 [2.25]*

"A friend tells me that when she prays for someone she does not so much pray to God for them as for God for them. This seems to me a vital clue about prayer. It is God that the troubled person needs, not our advice and instructions. ... It is God at work, not we ourselves. We are simply used."

*Diana Lampen, 1979 [2.26]*

"Prayer is an act of sharing with God, the Spirit, and not an attempt to prompt God into action. It is a promise that I will do my best, even if what I am able to do seems too insignificant to be worthwhile."

*'Anna', 1984. [2.27]*

"Prayer is not words or acts, but reaching down to love: holding our fellows in love, offering ourselves in love; and being held by, being caught up in love. It is communion, an opening of the door, an entry from the beyond. This is the point where secular language fails, for this cannot be spoken about at all: it can only be known."

*Harold Loukes, 1967 [2.23]*

"Consider now the prayer-life of Jesus. ... On the only occasion recorded in which He asked (in perfect submission) something for Himself, at Gethsemane, His request was not granted."

*William Littleboy, 1937 [2.24]*

"Prayer is an exercise of the spirit, as thought is of the mind."

*Mary F. Smith, 1936 [20.08]*

"Prayer alone can reopen the road to the spirit, blocked repeatedly by busyness, self-importance, self-pity, depression or despair."

*Donald Court, 1970 [20.09]*

### From *Quaker Faith and Practice in Aotearoa New Zealand 2003*:

"I received further clarification from ministry – that when we pray for others, it is not so much asking God for help as standing alongside the person spiritually. For some reason I found this very helpful in relieving my ever-present doubt that I am really doing something that will be of help."

*Gwyn Nonweiler, 2002 [6.32]*

"I pray to keep always within me that awareness that all my actions, even to the turning of a tap, affect the lives of others. Let me be so sensitive to the needs of others and to the glories of your universe that I live as delicately and as harmlessly as possible."

*Betty Fowler, 1979 [6.31]*

**And from other sources:**

“Prayer is the soul’s sincere desire,  
Uttered or unexpressed.”

*J. Montgomery, 1771-1854: Songs of Praise 1950; Oxford University Press*

“Ask God, not to be delivered from the pains of the body, but for the strength to suffer with courage,  
for his love, all that he shall will, and for as long as it shall please him.”

*Brother Lawrence c.1614-1691. The practice of the presence of God. Hodder & Stoughton, London.*

“Prayer fend off indecency and evil. But your foremost duty is to remember God. God has knowledge  
of all your actions.”

*The Koran. Tr.N.J. Dawood. Penguin Books 1991.*

“When you pray, do not use a lot of meaningless words ... Your Father already knows what you need  
before you ask him.”

*Matthew 6.6. The Good News Bible. United Bible Societies, 1976.*

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**Summer Gathering this year will be at Chosen Valley Christian Camp  
53 Turner Road, Ararimu 2579**

**28 December – 5 January**

The theme has the cryptic title “**iQuaker**” which seems to relate mainly to our place in the  
cyberworld. Bring your ideas and be prepared for fun, film-making and some thoughtful  
discussion about the effects of computer literacy and virtual community on Quaker life.  
What will you be able to contribute?

**Final registration and payment date - Wednesday 10 December.**

This can be done online digitally at: [summergathering.ga/register](http://summergathering.ga/register).

For a registration form see [www.quaker.org.nz](http://www.quaker.org.nz)

or contact the organisers at [summer.gathering.2014@gmail.com](mailto:summer.gathering.2014@gmail.com)

or call Trish at **(09) 624 2522**

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***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.***