

# WIDER QUAKER FELLOWSHIP, AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

LETTER 139

NOVEMBER 2016

19 Exeter Place, Rotorua 3015, New Zealand.

widerquakerfellowship@quaker.org.nz

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Dear Friends,

Greetings to you all at this very busy time of year. November seems to be the month when everyone is thinking about the coming holiday season and the things that have to be done before it arrives. And gardens claim attention too, as plants once again take advantage of the warmer weather and the spring rain.

At our Yearly Meeting gathering in July (it seems a long time ago now), Quakers reaffirmed their unique spirituality, the foundation of their action as a recognised community.

Spirituality defines the nature of any faith-based group – what is it that makes Quakers different? Well, we know that the Spirit is everywhere around us and in us, connecting everything. We don't need priests and liturgies to channel it to us. We rely on its presence as the Inner Light to guide all our actions, and we know that discernment is best achieved with fellow worshippers in an atmosphere of silence and simplicity. That is why we care so deeply about peace.

Many people have difficulty with the concept of spirituality. It is beyond religion, although religious practice enables us to recognise and work with, rather than against, the essence of truth in our busy world. I find it comforting to know what others have to say about the Spirit and its influence, and have included a sample of their wisdom below.

Yours in Friendship,

Ruth Gadgil.

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## Spirituality

“As Friends we commit ourselves to a way of worship which allows God to reach and transform us. We have found corporately that the Spirit, if rightly followed, will lead us into truth, unity and love: all our testimonies grow from this leading.”

Britain Yearly Meeting *Quaker Faith and Practice* 1995: 1.01.

“There are as many ways to God as there are men to seek him, and we need them all. The particular merits of Quakerism are simply that it is blessedly free from dogmatic accretions which are utterly irrelevant to today's problems, and it is non-exclusive; it does not claim to be the only repository of truth.”

Geoffrey Hubbard: *Quaker by Convincement* 1985.

“Friends had asked the Maori Language Commissioner to suggest a Maori name for our Society. He proposed the name Te Haahi Tuuhauwiri, which can be rendered as ‘the faith founded on the inward spirit moving us’. We consider this name to be a beautiful gift.”

Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa New Zealand 1993.

“... spiritual sensibility is available to all people in whatever society; this religious sense may appear in the form of churches of every kind, but the capacity for spiritual knowledge is universally found, and exists more fundamentally in people than in institutions.”

Jean Hardy, 1988.

“The Maori has ever recognized an immortal element in man, which he styles the *wairua*. Indeed, he may be said to have held the theory of the tripartite nature of man – body, soul and spirit.”

Elsdon Best, 1924.

“The level of knowing that we experience from connection with consciousness or *nous* is entirely different [from] the argumentative, dualistic world that we live in. It’s a kind of quiet, compassionate, non-opinionated certitude, unlike the arrogant certitude our culture celebrates. Even though we may not be able to verbalize it, we know things calmly and deeply, as truth. We don’t know what it is we know, but what we do know is that we are somehow okay; in fact, it is all okay in its foundations and direction. God is the great I AM in which everything – including me – has its being. My *I am* is a sharing in the one great *I AM* ... this consciousness is freely available, even and especially to children. It requires no training or special talent. ... Mature spirituality teaches us how to enter into the reality of that which we are encountering. ... God is no longer just *out there*, but equally *in here*. Until that transference takes place and you know that it is God in me loving God – God in me worshipping God, resting in God, enjoying God ... we remain in religion instead of actual faith experience or faith encounter.”

Richard Rohr, 2016.

“So I would wish that spirituality be no longer seen as a superior form over and against the world in which we find ourselves. Rather I see spirituality as a deep attending to and communion with Spirit, fleshed out, embodied, incarnate even, in this beautiful, sacred, scarred and polluted reality of which we ourselves are a part. Spirituality is beholding with love this world in which we find ourselves.”

Harvey Gilman, 2009.

“The divine presence within provides guidance about how to live in accordance with God’s will; this often involves doing things differently from the cultural norms. At first this guidance is primarily about specific aspects of personal and communal life. As God becomes more and more clearly the center of life, however, individuals and communities receive Leadings of the Spirit that are about doing God’s work in the world, in matters both small and large.”

Marcelle Martin, 2012

“Throughout Quaker journals we find frequent reference to the absence of inner peace as a sign that some ‘concern’, possibly to undertake a journey [or] engage in some effort for social reform, had been laid upon the individual... It is not essential that the undertaking be successful for inward peace to result. It is only necessary that the individual feel that he or she has done all that they are able to do to carry out the requirement... God only demands that we live up to our capacity.”

Howard Brinton, 1948.

*“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control ... (Galatians 5:22-23).*

I like this scripture ... it is a reminder of the comfort and solace and renewal I can find in my connection with spirit.”

Ruth Steven, 1999: *Quaker Faith and Practice in Aotearoa New Zealand 2003*: 3.11.

The way to hear the language of the  
Spirit  
is to be within;  
it is often slow of utterance  
unless we are willing and obedient;  
the quicker we are to hear  
and active in obeying,  
the readier and oftener  
it speaks to our instruction ...

Samuel Neale, 1771.

Some of you know this holy,  
recreating Center of eternal peace and joy  
and live in it day and night.  
Some of you may see it over the margin and  
wistfully long  
to slip into that amazing Center  
where the soul is at home with God.  
Be very faithful to that wistful longing.  
It is the Eternal Goodness calling you to return Home.

Thomas R. Kelly, 1941.

“Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Trust them as the leadings of God whose Light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life. ... Cherish that of God within you, so that this love may grow in you and guide you. Let your worship and your daily life enrich each other. Treasure your experience of God, however it comes to you.

Britain Yearly Meeting *Quaker Faith and Practice 1995*: 1.01.

**Summer Gathering 2016/17  
will be at Vertical Horizon Christian Camp,  
Everett Rd., Inglewood, Taranaki  
29th December 2016 to 4th January 2017**

**Theme: “Mai i te maunga ki te moana  
From the mountain to the sea.”**

If you are interested, please phone **Eileen Gundesen: 06 755 0605** or email [sumnergathering2016@gmail.com](mailto:sumnergathering2016@gmail.com)

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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.***