

# WIDER QUAKER FELLOWSHIP, AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

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## THE SHEEP ON THE HILL

I want to tell you a story.

In May I attended the 2019 Yearly Meeting at the Quaker Settlement in Whanganui. It is a lovely place. Behind the homes and community buildings of the settlement there are pasture fields, ponds, and many plantings of trees and bushes on the hilly land.

The Yearly Meeting sessions took place in the area of the community buildings called the Quiet room. The chairs were arranged to form most of a circle with the tables, microphones and the area for the speakers to one side.

On the Saturday morning we sat down in the Quiet room after morning tea to hear presentations from Christchurch Friends of their experiences around the tragic attack in the mosque.

From my seat I could see through the opposite window to the hill behind the building. As I prepared myself for the presentations I noticed a few sheep on the hillside. Gradually most of the sheep wandered out of my line of sight and by the time the speakers were being introduced only one remained. That last sheep lay down under a tree with its head facing the buildings below it.

The session was interesting and at times very moving with many stories including of those directly affected by the tragedy.

Throughout the sheep stayed on the hill and only got up and wandered away when the session finished.

And that is my story.

How do we react to interesting happenings, was this one just a coincidence? I was left shaking my head and thinking, 'What just happened?' The sheep was really there. It did lie down when the session started and got up when it finished, so it wasn't a vision or an induced hallucination.

Many years ago, 1985 I think, British Quaker Gerald Priestland spoke to an audience of Quakers and others in Hamilton, about 'other worldly', religious, and/or mystical experiences. He said that a survey had shown 50% of people had had one or more of these experiences.

I don't remember any more of the talk but it affected me because we don't normally talk about these things. You would almost think these experiences weren't for ordinary people until you find out they are.

Another consideration which added greater depth to my thinking about this recent experience, was the prevalence of sheep and/or lambs in Christian iconography. As Quakers we don't pay much attention to the symbols that are common in Christian stories and church decorations, but they are out there and have an effect even on secular people.

In Christian iconography sheep/lambs are often considered together with meekness, innocence and with peace. The lamb lying down with the lion is the picture of peace. Christ is associated with the lamb as the sacrifice. And in the 23rd psalm we have the followers of the one God as the sheep and God as the shepherd.

Sheep are also found in the stories of many other faiths and in folklore as well.

In the book *The Shamans' Guide to Power Animals*, it says that some of the powers of sheep are restoring balance in your life, and helping to remove negative karma.

I was also left wondering about this experience because, unlike other interesting experiences I have had, I was not in any kind of emotional state. If anything I was calm and a bit bored. I wasn't looking forward to listening to Christchurch problems yet again. The session, however, as I have said, turned out to be very interesting and thought provoking.

The YM minute reflects the meeting's reaction to the presentation:

#### Minute 11 Christchurch Mosque Attacks

We have heard moving testimony from Christchurch Friends about their experiences at the time of the massacres in the Al Noor Mosque and the Unwood Islamic Centre. The impact had parallels with the earthquakes in being sudden, unpredictable and violent. We were inspired hearing the testimony of forgiveness of Farid Ahmed at the National Commemoration Service. We recognise that there is a continuum of racism from casual to lethal and are encouraged to address our own and that of others. We are challenged about what it is we have to do and asked the question 'in a year what will happen?', We were offered a Muslim whakatauki: "The one who is not your sibling in faith is your brother in humanity."

We are called to match the inspirational leadership which has been demonstrated by our Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern.

As an individual going into the Quiet room that day at YM I may not have been emotional but the entire country, including me, was still in an emotional state following the tragic attack at the mosque in March. The minute reflects the emotional state of the gathered Friends.

The sheep on the hill, if it was indeed a mystical occurrence, may have been a sign directed at all of us not just something interesting for me to query.

Yours in friendship

Carril Karr

***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 Meeting for Worship. The purpose of the Fellowship is to reflect Quaker life and thought.***

***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.***

*If you wish to make a donation to the WQF—*

To make a donation on line, the YM Kiwi bank account number is 38 9001 0669022 02

Be sure to put your name and that the donation is for Wider Quaker Fellowship in the reference spaces.

For a tax donation certificate email: [ymtreasurer@quaker.org.nz](mailto:ymtreasurer@quaker.org.nz) with the amount and date of the donation and your name and address.

Kiwi bank is stopping accepting cheques soon so if you don't do internet banking you will need to deposit any donation directly into the YM account at a Kiwibank branch.

## *For your information—*

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### **World Quaker Day – Sunday 6 October**

Quakers around the world are invited to celebrate the 6th annual World Quaker Day on Sunday 6 October. The theme is *Sustainability: Planting Seeds of Renewal for the World We Love*. See the website [www.worldquakerday.org](http://www.worldquakerday.org) for resources, ideas on how to get involved and to share stories.

#### **Summer Gathering 2019-2020**

Summer Gathering, with the theme “Kindness to ourselves, others and the planet”, will be held at YMCA Wainui Heights Conference Centre, Wainui Bay, Banks Peninsula from 28 December to 3 January. Full information and the registration form is on the Quaker website: [Activities/Summer Gathering](#).

### **Quaker Settlement events**

#### **Peace Tax Seminar September 20 - 22**

This seminar will provide an opportunity to consider why we might be led to find a way not to have our taxes used for military spending; then to consider the history of War and Peace Taxes, and focus on how we can work towards a Peace Tax in Aotearoa New Zealand. Quaker and non-Quaker participants warmly welcomed. Facilitators Edwina Hughes, Deborah Williams and Stephanie du Fresne. Edwina and Deborah

will also function as resource people. We will also have a resource person from the NZ Alternative think tank which has researched and put forward a proposal for a Conflict Prevention Unit within the New Zealand Government. The closing date for registration is 13 September – not 6 July as printed in the brochure. Contact Marion Sanson [marionbsanson@gmail.com](mailto:marionbsanson@gmail.com).

#### **Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) Advanced Workshop September 27 - 29**

An opportunity for anyone who has completed a Basic AVP workshop to experience the next level. For more information on AVP see <https://avp.international/>. The workshop will be facilitated by trained AVP facilitators. Contact Christine England [syntonychris86@gmail.com](mailto:syntonychris86@gmail.com)

#### **Treaty Issues Seminar October 11-13**

Join the Treaty Relationship Group in a weekend of presentations, discussions and working sessions designed to update and enhance participants’ understanding of what Te Tiriti/The Treaty of Waitangi means, its status, likely developments and possibilities for action. Facilitators: Treaty Relationships Group. Contact: Peter Watson [earlyyearstoys@gmail.com](mailto:earlyyearstoys@gmail.com) Costs of attendance at this seminar will be covered by QEF for those who have not received this funding for another seminar this year.

#### **Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) Training for Facilitators November 22 - 24**

This workshop is for people who have completed AVP’s Basic and Advanced workshops and are passionate about AVP, open to learning group facilitation as part of a team, and using experiential education methodologies. It provides an introduction to co facilitation of AVP workshops, to be followed by apprenticeship while co-facilitating with mentoring and support from more experienced co-facilitators. Contact: Marion Sanson [marionbsanson@gmail.com](mailto:marionbsanson@gmail.com).

Online registration is available at <http://www.quakersettlement.co.nz/seminars/> or contact Quaker Settlement, 76 Virginia Road, Whanganui 4500, or email: [settlement@quaker.org.nz](mailto:settlement@quaker.org.nz)