

NELSON RECOGNISED MEETING NEWSLETTER

Quakers - the Religious Society of Friends – Aotearoa New Zealand Te Hahi Tuahauwiri

March 2021

Spiritual Thought

To know kindness, you must first know sorrow.

Naomi Shihab Nye

News of and for Friends

Catherine would like to share her house: fully furnished, warm, sunny room in my quiet, peaceful home, 12 minutes walk to town. Organic property. Suit independent full time student/ working female who is considerate, responsible and has a sense of humour. \$190 per week, plus share power. Sharing with the owner who is a retiring, Dance/Yoga teacher.

Gwen missed the meeting to discuss 'Quaker Ways' and hopes we will do it again sometime. She spent a large part of that weekend at a 'Noho' held for Maori language students at NMIT. Gwen feels the class members are becoming good friends through their time together, all striving for a more equal Aotearoa.

Joan Cameron has settled into her delightful room – in her son's house on Princes Drive. Since walking is difficult for her, perhaps someone could phone her and arrange a short visit – with a chance to gaze at the amazing seascape.

Elizabeth has been away tramping the Routeburn and took the opportunity to visit Dunedin Meeting for Sunday Meeting for Worship where several people sent their love to Joan, who was a member there for many years.

Margaret and Clive hosted our Summer Gathering on Sunday 14th March and all 20 or so who attended had a marvellous time. The weather was perfect, the flowers were lovely, the fruit trees looked healthy and well laden. The hosts were kindness itself. The food was superb – it would have won awards if we hadn't scoffed it all.

Lizi is caring for her little dog, Uku, who is in severe pain at the moment and Lizi would like us to hold them both in the light.

DIARY OF EVENTS:

Wednesday March 17th 7pm – 9pm: Home Discussion Group. John and Anthea's home. Topic: What motivates you? All welcome

Wednesday April 7th 7pm Quaker Meeting House 30 Nile St.:
Becoming Friends, sharing spiritual journeys. All welcome

Sunday April 11th 10am Family Service Centre 27 Talbot St.
Motueka: Monthly Motueka Meeting for Worship. All welcome.

Sunday April 11th 12 noon, Quaker Meeting House, 30 Nile St.
Nelson: Meeting of Peace Action Nelson. All welcome.

Deadline for next Newsletter

Our Newsletter is a way to share our lives – to help build our Quaker community. Thanks to everyone who has sent contributions. Please consider sending in your news, a book review, a quote that speaks to you.... Send newsletter items to Christine Gillespie at c.gillespie@xtra.co.nz. [The cut-off date for items for the April newsletter is Friday, April 3rd, 2021.](#)

Words and Silence by Jan Marsh

A group of Nelson Friends gathered after Meeting for Worship on Sunday 7th March to talk about ministry, reflections, and vigils. This workshop was organised by our Pastoral Care team to respond to some questions from Friends.

We talked about the difference between meditation and Meeting for Worship, especially in that, while meditation techniques might be useful for centring they are not the goal. In Meeting for Worship, we are waiting for the voice of God from within or without, a sense of Spirit or insight, depending on how each Friend experiences it.

A very apt question about 'promptings' led to fruitful discussion of the ways in which Friends might feel the urge to minister. It was explained by one Friend as like the feeling you get when a group are taking turns to speak and as it goes round the room, getting closer and closer, your heart begins to beat faster, and you might feel your breath tighten. The prompting to ministry is like that feeling of 'it's my turn to speak'. Others noted they first think 'no, I don't want to say this' before feeling 'but I must', while others who have not felt any particular sensation wondered whether ministry was perhaps not for them.

The form ministry could take is not restricted just to words – song, perhaps dance, a reading, the overall behaviour of the meeting, even a joke could be ministry. We wondered whether some Friends speak in tongues and whether that would communicate sufficiently to be considered ministry.

We pondered the distinction between standing to speak about something personal and having a message for the Meeting as whole and concluded that it comes down to intention – is it to gain sympathy or express irritation or is from our Higher Self or the Spirit and meant for the benefit of others?

The context in which Quaker practice developed is noted. We are given guidelines, not rules because 'the letter killeth but the Spirit giveth life'*. At the time of George Fox and the early Quakers it was very clear that religious rules had been used to torture and kill and Friends wanted to get away from that.

Reflections, sometimes called 'almost ministry' occurs after Meeting when Friends talk briefly about what has been on their minds. We felt this was more informal, 'down a cog' from Meeting for Worship, and gave an opportunity to get to know each other 'in the Spirit' and even to practice giving ministry. Not every Meeting has a reflection time and not everyone likes the practice but in Nelson we have done this for many years and mostly feel the benefit. We were divided over whether it was a time to open a discussion or whether each reflection should be separate as with creative listening.

When it came to vigils, such as on the Church Steps to commemorate Hiroshima and Nagasaki and ANZAC day, there was a strong case made for these to be silent. Not everyone agreed, as a vigil is about bearing witness and is not inherently silent, but it was noted that laughing and chatting detracts from the solemnity of the occasion. We will discuss this further when preparing for the next vigil and will need to consider how to involve non-Quakers who join these vigils.

Notes made in Lizi McLeod-Taepa's beautiful calligraphy were distributed. They are additional to the discussion and not a record of it because they were prepared earlier. The depth of the workshop came from the spontaneous and open-hearted contributions of the Friends who took part.

*from the introduction to Advices and Queries by the elders at Balby, Yorkshire 1656

Bees were better

By Naomi Shihab Nye

In college, people were always
breaking up.
We broke up in parking lots,
beside fountains.
Two people broke up

across a table from me
at the library.
I could not sit at that table again
though I did not know them.
I studied bees, who were able

to convey messages through dancing
and could find their ways
home to their hives
even if someone put up a blockade of
sheets
and boards and wire.
Bees had radar in their wings and brains
that humans could barely understand.

I wrote a paper proclaiming
their brilliance and superiority
and revised it at a small café
featuring wooden hive-shaped honey-
dippers
in silver honeypots
at every table.

Our Programme: below is a reminder of the different activities each month.

First Week of the Month: Sunday: Meeting for Worship, 10.00–11.00am

Wednesday: Becoming Friends, 7.00 pm – 8.45pm

(Alternate Even Months) Sunday: Business Meeting 12.00 pm

Second Week of the Month: Sunday: Meeting for Worship, 10.00–11.00am

Third Week of the Month: Sunday: Meeting for Worship, 10.00–11.00am

Wednesday: Home Discussions, 7.00 pm – 9.00pm

Fourth Week of the Month: Sunday: Meeting for Worship, 10.00–11.00am

Children are welcome at all Meetings for Worship. Activities will be provided for them.