

WIDER QUAKER FELLOWSHIP, AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

LETTER 135

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Dear Friends,

I'm pleased to be able to tell you that I've been appointed as WQF Clerk for a further three years. We must be doing something right!

Currently our Fellowship includes 184 members and groups. Of these, half wish to receive the Letter by email and "Hard" copies are posted to others. The average cost for photocopying and posting each Letter is \$115. The Religious Society of Friends in Aotearoa/New Zealand covers the cost of three issues per year – production of the fourth Letter in 2015 has been made possible by donations from WQF members. Thank you!

Quaker thoughts about ageing in the last Letter brought a number of responses and it seems right to share some of this contemporary wisdom.

Yours in Friendship,

Ruth Gadgil.

WQF attitudes to ageing

"As I said recently to another woman ... I recognise that my body is ageing, but my mind is growing in wisdom."

Shirley Freeman.

"I particularly like this Letter. I do enjoy the freedom of ageing, the choices and the ability to see from afar. And grandparenting is such fun. All this makes up for the slowness and forgetfulness that I try so hard to be friends with".

Wilma Davidson.

"This Letter has such deep meaning and a trip cord for those of us who are 'getting older'. I have just sent it on to the group of Friends who are in my epistle and letter group ...".

Patricia Macgregor.

"I have just turned 60 and am beginning to realise that life is moving forward at great speed and that if I am to make the most of the years to come I need to live in the 'now'. However, from my perspective there is something missing in the newsletter ... In Sweden Yearly Meeting, and even in my own Worship Group, we have members who are in their 70s, 80s and 90s, many of who are in vigorous health and are serving or willing to serve the YM in some capacity. They want to continue to be part of our Quaker community,

but are finding it increasingly hard to be so. Why? Because they are now hard of hearing and find it extremely difficult to keep up with the conversation when we gather socially together or when we gather for Meetings for Worship for Business. I have become much more aware of the need to be inclusive – and for us to speak up, loudly and clearly, when we meet.”

Sue Glover Frykman.

"We never grow old in spirit and for me this is the time when we are able to put together our experiences in life and discover the wisdom and giftedness of life. However, our physical nature changes as we chronologically grow and so with our capacities. There are remedies to cope with these changes, perhaps we could start learning and using sign language as we speak so that those hard of hearing can follow what is going on aside from using hearing aids or maybe allow the oldies to group together for them to become at home with each other and from time to time mingle with the rest. For me, old age is a gift where the young ones can mirror for themselves the beauty of life."

Maria Rosario.

“Thanks for this Ruth. It is timely. Did you find any helpful quotes about the process of giving up your home? Looking at the process our oldies ... went through, it seemed that wherever possible people did not readily choose to move at all, and even if they did , to younger members of the Meeting it seemed (from our ignorant standpoint) to be too late.

Have you found anything on “Circles of Care” which Elva Day made known to me?

As Linda Wilson said: ‘We don’t want to interfere, but sometimes not offering means that people don’t know what help may be available.’

There are spiritual issues for the people concerned and these impact on the Meeting as a whole when a much loved Friend in her mid-nineties is having such a struggle to accept help, to let go of independence, to even recognize her need.

We, the carers need our sources of strength too.

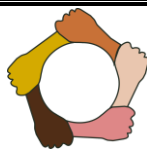
Must away, [my] Support Worker is already sitting outside in her car ...”

Marilyn Woolford-Chandler.

“... our elder members are failing in energy, and dying. This is a natural part of the lifecycle of all organisations and isn't to be feared. After all, God is on the job.”

Nelson Recognised Meeting (2015).

Well, in response to points raised by Sue and by Marilyn, here are a couple of offerings that could be helpful :



Steps to Creating a Circle [of support]

From: <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/pages/Creating-a-Circle-of-Support>

Decide who to invite. (Circle members are not paid to be there, it is **voluntary!**) The focus person has a great deal of say about who to invite. Create a list of individuals committed to change, who believe in the focus person, and who would be committed for the long haul. Members can be neighbours, family, community members, fellow church goers, or members of clubs. There are no limits, but be selective. Invite those people who are willing to take a chance and avoid the people who are skeptical or unsure of change.



Alan Reynolds brings a set of small flags to Meeting.

Anyone with a hearing problem can take one.

Raising it means "Please speak louder and more clearly".

And our final word comes from *Advices and Queries*:

"Every stage of our lives offers fresh opportunities. Responding to divine guidance, try to discern the right time to undertake or relinquish responsibilities without undue pride or guilt. Attend to what love requires of you, which may not be great busyness.

Approach old age with courage and hope. As far as possible, make arrangements for your care in good time, so that an undue burden does not fall on others. Although old age may bring increasing disability and loneliness, it can also bring serenity, detachment and wisdom. Pray that in your final years you may be enabled to find new ways of receiving and reflecting God's love."

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.