

Epistle of the Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa New Zealand, Te Hāhi Tūhauwiri
held at the Quaker Settlement, Whanganui, and online, 18th – 22nd May 2023

Greetings in love and peace to Friends everywhere.

In Whanganui, in the peaceful setting of the Quaker Settlement, 61 Quakers gathered, and were joined by 33 online. After a purely online Meeting last year, we found joy in building community within this blended structure.

The purpose and process of Yearly Meeting formed the focus of a preparatory day. Guided by our revised Quaker Handbook, we considered listening to one another in depth, seeking a Spirit-led way forward embodying the gifts and experiences of all, and being ready to be surprised by the unity which emerged. The book's guidance on careful adherence to Quaker process led us forward into our opening discernment session. The benefits of our preparation time fed the spirit of Yearly Meeting.

Linked online with Friends up and down the country including groups from several Meetings, our all-age worship on Sunday provided a time of tranquillity. Within our theme of unity with the natural world, we heard readings and other spoken ministry, and enjoyed the creative art work and greetings from the children.

In harmony with our sense of place, a local Friend, Keith Beautrais, opened Yearly Meeting with a greeting recognising our involvement with and dependence on Papatūānuku (earth), Ranginui (sky) and Tangaroa (ocean), under the care of divine power. We recognised the mana (authority) of the tangata whenua (people of the land), especially Ngaa Rauru and Tūpoho, the Māori people of this area. Later Keith provided an inspiring view of the incorporation of indigenous wisdom in the management of Te Awa Tupua, the local Whanganui River, following the extensive destruction of the area by colonial exploitation. In 2017 the River was given legal status as a person (a world precedent), and Māori were recognised as 'people of the river'. All involved remembered and honoured the elders who had engaged in a century-long struggle. We were impressed that young people were actively involved in environmental restoration. We need to draw on all our strength to give our young people hope.

Throughout our time of discernment in a spirit of worship, we sought to listen to one another with love and tenderness, and to be aware of the consequences of our decisions. Periods of silent worship offered fresh depth. Topics which stirred emotion, and which called for centred listening, were the future of our national residential and study centre (the Settlement) and the vulnerability of relationships of trust and care between us.

We also sought for faithful leadings as we considered our ongoing peace and service witness, and topics related to administration. These included the balance between our expenditure and our reserves and the ways in which our website can be enabled to support our spiritual and community life.

The Rainbow Quakers, now a Yearly Meeting group, read to us a statement of commitment and inclusion, *Walking in the Light under the Rainbow*. The statement has arisen from fresh awareness of those in our country and worldwide who differ from conventional expectations of gender and sexual orientation. After months of development and discernment between a drafting group and our Monthly Meetings,

our Yearly Meeting has adopted the final text. In emerging from this session, we were greeted by a double rainbow in the sky overhead.

Acknowledging the value of our young people deepening their Quaker experience, we agreed to support representatives, including Young Friends under 35 years of age, to the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) global plenary, to take place in South Africa in 2024.

We welcomed our FWCC visitors, Marj Angalot (Bohol Worship Group, Philippines), Abhay Wilson (Bhopal Yearly Meeting, India, speaking online), Ann Zubrick (Australia Yearly Meeting) and Adrian Glamorgan (Secretary, FWCC Asia West Pacific Section, also online). We learnt of the interweaving of Friends in our Section in mutual friendship and support, and of the multiple ways in which Friends witness to our testimonies. We heard how Meetings and small groups in Asia engage in relief and reconstruction work, faithfully uphold their worship inheritance, and how deeply they value links with other Friends. We have been invited to balance grief and gratitude as we work for a future with hope.

Treasuring our connection with Friends worldwide, we recall the words of Philadelphia Friends in 1683:

Oh, remember us, for we cannot forget you:
Many waters cannot quench our love,
Nor distance wear out the deep remembrance
Of you in the heavenly Truth.

In peace and friendship,
Anne & Alistair Hall
Yearly Meeting Co-Clerks

Epistle of Junior Young Friends Camp 2022
Quaker Settlement, Whanganui, 9 – 15 October 2022

Mehemea ka moemoeā ahua, ko ahau anake.
Mehemea ka moemoeā tātou, ka taea e tātou.

If I dream, I dream alone.
If we all dream together, we can succeed.

Tēna koutou Friends,

Junior Young Friends' Camp was held at the Whanganui Quaker Settlement this year. This spiritually-rich whenua is lathered with greenery and community; our relationship to this space has been as much a part of our learning and growth as our relationships with the people around us. Everywhere we explore here contains a

clear abundance in life and light, from the infrastructure built by older Quakers to the young ducklings that met us each day. Being situated in one of the oldest towns in the motu, and being established decades before our birth, we are constantly reminded during our time here of Quaker history in Aotearoa and of what is being passed down to us as young Friends.

During our time here, we have had the joy of taking part in various activities that gave us prime opportunities to practice our Quaker values. We participated in service at the settlement and for separate organisations like the *Grumpy Old Men Enterprises* and *Prisoners Aid*. Experiences in nature included collecting flowers and foraging food, and biking and walking around the settlement and surrounding area. Learning was a large part of the camp, making food and drinks that we did not previously know how, making beeswax wraps and paper-bag books, plentiful amounts of knitting and crocheting, as well as being given a tour of Quaker tapestries that display Quaker histories. For most of us, many of these experiences were entirely new and not things that we would have ever done at home, but they did teach us lessons that we can use in our lives past the camp.

We are glad to say that throughout the duration of this camp we have all found not only new Friendships, but friendships as well. Each of us has a very bright and unique personality, which has created a remarkable concoction of interesting conversation and adventures. It can often be isolating as Quaker teenagers, especially in towns where we may be the only one of our kind amongst our meeting, so being able to share experiences and ideas with each other helps us to feel more at home in our faith and community. However, it is not only our fellow Junior Young Friends that we have made fulfilling connections with, but also with our kaumātua. The stories of established Friends have an ongoing presence all around us, in a sense of how the past practically and spiritually effects the present; being able to hear these stories directly from the people that lived them has been ātaahua in many ways. The lessons they have taught us have furthermore been mīharo beyond words. Community is endlessly important – a message that we have expressed and had reflected back to us by those around us.

A highlight of the camp has undoubtedly been our meeting some kaumātua about our visions for the settlement. This included hira discussions about our collective aroha for this whenua and community, as well as constructive criticisms that showed testaments to our individual characters in humorous ways. The deep listening that occurred between people of numerous generations and backgrounds, all of whom share common values and faith, gave room for many openings within all of us. Something ātaahua that came out of this was this our new name for what was previously called the “Zig-Zag track”, a track on the settlement situated just beyond the Garden of Peace, home to our new hipi friend Tama. We have decided to call this track the Tere track, meaning to travel, be swift, or fast. In great Quaker fashion, this was a unanimous decision which we look forward to being implemented. It is an excellent marker of our time here, and one which doubles the amount of Māori track names on the settlement.

We thank the people and the land that have facilitated our experiences in their generosity and aroha. We look forward to our future adventures in the community

and to using the lessons we have learned in our everyday lives. Aroha mai, aroha atu, aroha nui.

Epistle of Junior Young Friends Camp 2023

Wellington, 15 – 21 April 2023

JYF this year was held in Wellington from the 15th to the 21st of April. We did lots of varying activities from rock climbing to visiting Matui/Somes Island. On the first day of camp we made paper bag books to hold our memories and later played games to get to know each other. The next day we rose early and got ready for Meeting for Worship with everyone from Wellington Quaker Meeting. Later that day we headed down to BenchSpace Woodworking Shop for our service project, which we made planter boxes from palettes for an apartment complex so they can grow vegetables. Later that night we had a gun violence discussion with Michelle and Pippa. They showed their experience with gun violence. We toured Parliament, travelled the cable car and wandered through the Botanic Gardens and the city. We visited TePapa more than once. On Matui we saw beautiful little blue penguins and geckos. We also played the most Quakerly game of Mafia and it was fun. We did watercolours, walked and some went swimming. The last night we had a great concert, played our tuna fish can banjos, wrote our Epistle and our affirmations for each of us. As to next year the most important thing is being together but prefer both some city time and some nature time.

Each of us shared some of the highlights of the week...

- Seeing birds we don't often see,
- Being in the rain,
- Doing things we don't usually do,
- Getting connected to nature,
- Feeling connected to each other,
- Meeting new people who have different stories
- Stepping out of our comfort zone,
- Learning about our environment,
- Getting close with our Quaker family,
- Creating TikTok's with friends
- Finding new places to explore,
- Long laughs.
- Being prime minister for awhile,
- Great photos for our memories
- Late night swimming,
- Seeing people I have missed seeing,
- Holding a gecko.
- Playing Mafia,
- In the press room of Parliament,
- Matui/Somes Island

Loved it all!