

**The Radical Heart of Quakers – Whanganui Quaker Settlement,
Aotearoa New Zealand July 28- 30 2017**

Seminar Epistle

To Friends everywhere,

In an experiment with digital communication there was a successful interchange between a seminar at the Quaker Settlement in Whanganui, Aotearoa/New Zealand and knowledgeable tutors at Woodbrooke, United Kingdom. From this experience we encourage Quakers today to explore the use of the modern digital culture the way seventeenth century Friends were actively immersed in the print culture of their day.

The technology added to the weekend, it was almost as though the Woodbrooke people were in the room with us. Stuart Masters and Betty Hagglund shared their huge knowledge with us in an accessible way. We were drawn into the turbulent years of early Quaker thought and practice and feel a closer connection to their experiences and their spiritual development. I feel like I belong.

In the spirit of openness and joy we came to experience a new technological way of connecting with Friends at Woodbrooke in order to explore current thinking about the beginnings of Quakerism and key people of the time. The enthusiasm of early Friends has changed and developed over the years.

We were privileged to benefit face to face in this collaborative learning process in the depth of their knowledge. There was a sense of greater appreciation of the deeper nature of their Wairua or spirit led transformative experience and of how vital that is in our times of increasing turmoil.

There is value in being reminded that in the manner of early Friends the spirit is something that can transform our lives. The conviction of early Friends challenges us to affirm our commitments to our testimonies in the way we live. How can/do we today discern the gifts of spirit and act with the faith and conviction displayed by early Quakers?

Current day NZ Quakers can learn from our British ancestors and for us our broader society Te Ao Maori resonates, and this is something we can embrace. Karakia (prayer) followed by silence; that can be our contribution.

Loving greetings from

Anne, Alan, Alistair, Brigit, Christine, Cynthia, Di, Jae, Jonathan, Kay, Margaret, Mark, Michael, Patricia and Ronis.