



## MEMORIES, PRAYERS, A SENSE OF PLACE

Where do you come from?

Where are you now?

How/why did you make that journey?

I expected to make one of the ideas—memories or prayers or sense of place—the focus of my thoughts, but they stubbornly held hands and would not be separated.

Recently I have been thinking about my past. I painted a little picture about blueberry picking in 1962 near Sudbury, Ontario. It was hot. It was two weeks before my first child was born. The wild blueberries were plentiful. Such tough little plants rooted into the crevices in the granite rocks. There were no bears present. Artistic license.

Where you are at any point in your life depends on choices, yours or someone else's, or on apparent chance. We were in Sudbury by chance. That was where my newly graduated husband was able to find a suitable job. Several moves after that were the result of successful job searches on his part. Not my choice, but not against my desires. Before our last move, to Aotearoa NZ, I did a great deal of praying. If I, the family, had to leave Canada I certainly wanted strong signs as to where we should go. We were not going to a job, we were going because my husband had itchy feet.

From the time I was a young teen I did a lot of praying. We were surrounded by prayers, bedside prayers when we were young, Our Father every morning at school, prayers in church depending on the season of the church year. I must confess most of my teenage prayers were of unmitigated misery. My outer life then was quite reasonable, I was well housed, fed, clothed, educated, loved by my parents. This was not reflected in my inner life which was largely one of despair. But you grow up and you learn.

I did, however, during my teenage years learn about the church I grew up in, and I learned more about my connection with God and about prayer. These were the roots.

Most of my prayers now are of thanksgiving, after all despite Covid and a raft of other problems, life is full

of things to be thankful for. And being thankful reminds me not to be a miserable old person despite being inclined that way.

Quakers tend to be suspicious of written prayers. “Quaker-founder George Fox was wary of recited prayers and liturgy because he believed any form of spiritual worship could easily become stale and routine.” says Wendy Swallow, Blog Editor, Reno Friends Meeting. Another particular problem these days is the religious language which is often found in written prayers. Many of us find ‘religious’ words uncomfortable. Despite Quaker wariness and religious language, many written prayers are beautiful and express precisely what we want to say. Once you are past the religious language at the beginning, how could you fault this Hebrew morning prayer, “Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, **who createst thy world every morning afresh.**”

Please note I have never, even as a young child, thought of God as a person. I use the word God as a short form for the spirit, the light, or whatever the power is. I would never in a personal prayer say, “Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe”. Most of the time I say ‘you’ or ‘dear God’. I’m not above giving a bit of praise but not in that form.

Prayers of supplication are the ones we are most familiar with. Many years ago my Grandmother had a very bad stroke and survived, she believed, because all her church friends prayed for her to live. She was not happy. “They had no right,” she told everyone. She had wanted to die. Prayers of supplication, I learned from that, need to be very carefully worded. ‘Thy will be done’, is the key.

Many of my prayers have been about making the best choice in a situation. Again I have found great care in word choice is important. I ask for guidance in making my choice, I ask that I will see and understand the right path. I don’t hear ‘a still small voice’. Shouting might help. Nevertheless I do my ‘due diligence’ about the problem and then set out what I might see as guide points, if the spirit will be so good as to provide them. Well its almost like ‘if this happens then’, ‘if that happens, follow the other path’. You can see I’m not only deaf to the spirit but rather stupid as well. I need all the guidelines I can get.

But it works for me.

Do you pray?

Life certainly has highs and lows. We all have regrets. We all have some wonderful memories.

I was sad to leave Canada but I have never regretted coming to Aotearoa. After six months of becoming familiar with an entirely foreign landscape, I settled, I was where I was supposed to be. If I hadn’t come here I believe I would always have had a hankering for some place, somewhere.

Here is a prayer for you. I wrote it before Christmas some years ago;

*Best wishes to all my friends for a  
Merry Christmas or a Happy Hanukkah,  
or a blessed winter solstice celebration,  
Or just a happy celebration of the end  
Of one year and the beginning of another.  
May we join one another in the spirit  
As it calls on us with love.*

In peace  
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—*

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Kiwi bank has stopped accepting cheques. If you don't do internet banking you will need to deposit any donation directly into the YM account at a Kiwibank branch.

## SUMMER GATHERING ON LINE

The Summer Gathering Organising Committee were asked if Summer Gathering 2021-2022 could go online. QLSD took up this challenge and with the help of various members of the organising committee have put together a programme. You will find information about Summer Gathering on the Quakers.NZ website <https://quakers.nz/quaker-learning/events/online-summer-gathering>

## JUNIOR YOUNG FRIENDS CAMP 2022

We would like adult helpers for JYF Camp April 19-25, 2022 at the Settlement. If you are interested, please contact Marion Sanson (email: [marionbsanson@gmail.com](mailto:marionbsanson@gmail.com)) as soon as possible.

## YEARLY MEETING 2022

Yearly Meeting 2022 is to be held at St Bede's College, Christchurch, <https://www.stbedes.school.nz/> under the care of Christchurch Monthly Meeting from dinner time on 28th April to lunch time 1st May 2022. The Preparation Day will be 27th April.

Ōtautahi Christchurch Monthly Meeting looks forward to welcoming Friends to meet in person at Yearly Meeting 2022. The venue is St Bede's College, and as with all secondary schools the School Board is required to adapt to the NZ Covid 19 Protection Framework and develop its own policies and procedures. As such, hire of St Bede's facilities requires all users to provide vaccination certificates and a Covid-19 Safety Plan will also be provided which will detail other related requirements such as mask use. There will be an option to connect via Zoom for those who are unable to attend in person. Registration will be required for attendance in person or for joining via Zoom. For those attending in person vaccination certificates (as above) will need to be provided. Further information will be available by the end of 2021 on the website at <https://quakers.nz/ymlac/events/yearly-meeting-2022>.