
Golden Bay joins a network of vigils for peace

August 4 marks 100 years since the declaration of "The War to End All Wars".

In Golden Bay that event will be marked by a candlelit Peace Vigil on the Village Green at 6pm, to which all are welcome. It is part of a network of vigils taking place nationwide at that time, organised by the Quaker community in collaboration with Peace Movement Aotearoa. Golden Bay's Peace Group is part of that movement.

The participants in the vigil will also gather at the Village Green at 12.30pm on the day, to give passers-by an earlier chance to engage with the action, ask questions and have conversations about the peace imperative, explains local peace activist and Quaker Helen Kingston.

At 6pm, in synch with the other vigils in New Zealand, the participants will be back at the Village Green. As part of their vigil they will also visit Golden Bay's war memorial.

"We will walk to the war memorial and place white camellias there in remembrance of all the casualties of World War One – and all wars," said Helen. "That includes the civilians, the combatants, the women who were raped, the children, dissenters and resisters."

Peni Connolly explained her reasons for being involved in marking such a significant anniversary.

"The 100 years of warring since World War One hasn't worked. Trying to find a military solution to conflict just creates more conflict. A group of people standing on Takaka's Village Green in the dusk on a quiet Monday in August may not change the world, but the alternative is to do nothing. Doing nothing fails to challenge the dominant discourse that



Peni Connolly and Helen Kingston will be participants in the vigil. Photo: Neil Wilson.

accepts the necessity of war. Not many people question war. We want to ask: 'Is this the right thing to do?' We think the answer is self-evident."

The millions of dollars we spend on keeping our armed forces in readiness could be spent on a multitude of better causes, said Helen. She cites the example of Costa Rica – a country that disbanded its armed forces constitutionally in 1949 and now devotes the money it would have spent on the military to culture, education and welfare.

"Quakers have a proud 350-year tradition of working for peace. We believe there are just causes but no just war. We may disagree with the views and actions of the politician or the soldier who opts for a military solution, but we still respect and cherish the person."

Neil Wilson