



# **Convergence Newsletter**

Nr 51 — March 2019

Welcome to the first newsletter for 2019. This newsletter includes the very important information that the first Mini-gathering is this weekend — 22–24th March. We hope to see as many of you as possible there. It also includes practical information for the next Convergence and reflections on the Convergence that’s just been.

It’s 2 days after the horror and shock of the Christchurch mosque attack, and it seems Convergence’s call for a different way of living is more and more important as tension increases in the world. As Convergees we don’t try and make everyone the same, instead we celebrate people’s differences and learn to connect with each other authentically, in love, acceptance and respect. Let’s keep showing and living that.

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## **Convergence notices and newsletter**

There now is an email list for Convergence notices, which are sent out more often than the newsletter, and are better for news that can’t wait. You can get more information and opt-in here: <http://convergence.org.nz/notices>

Send notices you would like to be included to [mynotice@convergence.org.nz](mailto:mynotice@convergence.org.nz)

Contributions for the next newsletter can be sent to [mynotice@convergence.org.nz](mailto:mynotice@convergence.org.nz) . To receive the newsletters ask [info@convergence.net.nz](mailto:info@convergence.net.nz) for it (note .org/.net). The newsletter is produced approximately 4–5 times a year (before Mini Gatherings).

## Mini Gathering next weekend

*Fri 22 – Sun 24 March 2019*

Leigh Lodge is nearing completion of its renovation, and the site owners would like to use it for their Easter camp. They would really like our help with that. In the past they have always been very accommodating of our wishes during Convergence, and have spent a lot of time and work on supporting us. Now we can show our appreciation and support them.

What's left to do is mainly painting walls, cleaning, putting up curtains, moving things into place, ... We'll compile a list before the weekend. There'll be plenty to do for lots of people.

## Mini Gatherings for 2019

These happen several times during the year and are an excellent way to socialise, meet up with other Convergence people again, prepare for the next Convergence, get a bit of site maintenance work done, and keep the ticket price down. There'll be something for everyone. To help make these fun, we're having a Saturday night feast.

More details will be available closer to each gathering, in the emailed notices and the newsletter. We aim to have the newsletter out about 2 weeks before each gathering. Don't forget to send in your event etc. notices for it. See the front page for contacts.

### This year's dates

They start sometime on Friday afternoon, finish on Sunday afternoon. Put them in your calendar now!

- ◆ 22–24 March
- ◆ 10–12 May
- ◆ 12–14 July (mid-winter social)
- ◆ 25–27 Oct
- ◆ 6–8 Dec (BBQ, final site prep)

## Tree planting 11/12 May 2019

I'm going to organise a trial planting of about 50 native trees during the May Mini-Gathering (11/12 May) near the road boundary at Journey's End.

The stony ground means it'll need strong people to dig holes, so it'd be great to have heaps of people come and help. We'll be mulching the young trees very thoroughly to minimise the need for watering next summer.

Details will be in the May newsletter and on the notices email list — join up to get them.

— Rebecca

## Looking forward — looking back

As I type this at the start of March the weather in Christchurch is cool and overcast, with a stiff sea breeze and just the hint of rain in the air. How unlike the recent Convergence past when, sandwiched in between periods of persistent rain we enjoyed a wonderful spell of fine weather. The camping was easy, the swimming was good, and with lots of us on-site there was plenty of opportunity to have a busy social time if we wanted or disappear somewhere on the site if we felt like it.

The “One Tribe” theme worked amazingly well. From the careful and inclusive way that the theme was developed to the way it played out during Convergence, it was a delight to witness. Of course a great theme will often provoke as much as inspire, because a great theme is also a catalyst for change — and this year there was plenty of provoking and a lot of change going on. Big changes, little changes, some changes that were quickly tweaked when people missed out on meals, and the kind of provoking that meant some people may never come back (we’ll miss you)! That is co-creation in action.

“The vision that inspires [Convergence] is that we can change the present situation. We can live meaningful, joyful lives in a supportive creative community. The purpose of [Convergence] is to begin these changes now with the goal of peace and a positive social environment for everyone.” Back in 1986 the founders of what is now Convergence wrote those words. So trying new ways (beginning changes) is firmly within the Convergence ethos. Those new ways may not always work — but Convergence is the place to try them out anyway because... in 1986 they also wrote “It is without doubt if we do not change direction we will end up where we are headed. At present where we are headed looks grim.” If the most pessimistic of the climate change scenarios given today are correct — then “grim” is an accurate description of our near future.

In some ways this makes Convergence more important than ever. If ever there was a time to take what is good and what works from Convergence into the wider world (which sorely needs it) then now is that time. While it is nice to have a place where we can camp together and do fun stuff with people we like (or are like us), there could be a temptation to just focus on keeping that good thing going until it all turns to custard. That line of thinking does seem to be self-defeating and not in line with the ethos of the event.

If we are to live Convergence 365 days of the year then six days of goodness at Journey’s End will not be enough!

Convergence is more than a camping event — it was designed with the idea of changing the present situation to a better one for the sake of ourselves and our children’s children. This is the challenge which is offered to us all, 365 days of the year. How will you respond before the next Convergence?

— M



## My first Convergence

So how was my holiday excursion to the festival? In a word: Awesome.

Filled with a lot of incredible moments, a bit of emotional strain, and a number of unexpected developments. I was told to expect the festival to be an emotional time, but it really was a roller-coaster of intense feelings and working through some inner turmoil, a chance to grow and reflect and experience new feelings, and come to a point where I can see a way through some tough impositions. I enjoyed some great company and activities, made some interesting friends, and built a new outlook on a number of things. It was transformative, and I can't wait to do it again next year.

It was cool to disconnect for a week and a bit from the world and what's making it miserable. Plagues of sandflies and huhu beetles aside, the location was a beautiful and peaceful backdrop replete with evolving birdsong, trickling waters of the cool river, dark skies overflowing with stars on a clear night, and trees that rippled in the mighty Nor'wester making the sound of waves on a beach.

I was a wwoofer, so my days mostly revolved around working in the kitchen, with a great crew of other volunteers and a couple of professionals managing the food side of things. Feeding a large number of people is no mean feat, and I'm in awe of the gruelling amount of work the co-ordinator put into it to ensure things ran pretty smoothly.

We were informed early on that "time is a construct" with no place at the event, and that things would generally happen at a vague point during the day after a meal which was eaten whenever it was ready. It was nice to do away with watching the clock, but a little problematic when meals ran late or events carried on past midnight — this was an issue for me especially as it made it hard to ration my limited free time for attending formal events or manage my scheduled intake of medication and food.

The weather was almost always good, with just a bit of rain about every other night. The tent my parents lent me was indeed waterproof, but could have done with a cover over the entry.

Activities included swimming in the river, having a sauna in a hobbit hole built into a river bank, a meditation workshop, dances, enjoying performances, sitting around eating pretty good food, talking with friends and other festival goers, chilling in the café and chill out zones, art, parties, and too many other things to list. There was a lot of talent there from young and old, spanning dance, singing, music, acrobatics, poetry, comedy and more, and coming together in this environment brought out the best from a lot of us.

New Year's eve in particular was a full-on day for me, with work leaving me pretty overwhelmed physically and emotionally, but with the help of the chill out zone and some peaceful music and company I got my energy back and was able to return to the new year party. I ended up seeing in the new year with 100 or so people in a warm tent on a field in the middle of nowhere while the rain poured down outside.

The new year started pretty well, with hugs from a bunch of people. I carried on dancing with a group of people including friends and people I'd only seen before at a distance. As the night carried on the majority of the adults and kids dwindled away until by the last song at about 2am I realised I was the only adult left, with about 8 teenagers for company. I had a fun dance with them and felt that the other adults were missing out. It was fun being young again.

On that note, one of the boys seemed to take a shine to me. He'd been curious about the packet of pretzel sticks I'd been eating, so I gave some to him and his friend, and from then on he excitedly called me "pretzel guy!" and he pointed me out to his friends every time we saw each other — which ended up being uncannily frequently. I suggested to him and his friend that we saw each other a lot because we like similar things — parties, swimming, saunas, cafes... And pretzels. He was a real character.

You all know I'm painfully shy and find it hard to make friends, but I became more and more confident and outgoing day after day. There's a lot to be said about the contextual and environmental influences that affect expression of personality, and I felt that being in this really friendly and open environment gave me the support I needed to open up and reach out. "The people are so friendly" is a real cliché, but I was initially taken aback by just how welcoming and supportive the other participants were. After I settled in and got the hang of the event's philosophy I managed to make friends, strike up conversations with strangers, spend time doing whatever I enjoyed, hang out with people who seemed (and nearly always were) fascinating and great company, and expressing my feelings in ways I've never done before.

There was a lot said about "authenticity" here, and it took me a while to figure out how best to apply that to myself. Being honest to myself and open to others has been tricky to me in the past, but I realised that the most important thing was to let others know I appreciate them. I stepped out of my comfort zone and told several of the awesome people I'd met that I'd enjoyed meeting and hanging out with them and that I thought they were awesome. They were pretty happy to hear that and said I was awesome too ☺.

So all up, it was an awesome experience, and I hope to do it again next time.

— Andrew

## Candle safety

We all like the warm light of candles, flickering with life. There's something primal in it. But we also need to be conscious of the potential dangers, and that candles are "contained fires". One such danger is the assumption that the heat proof enclosure containing the fire does its job, which is not always the case, as this news article about an [exploding candle](#)<sup>1</sup> shows.

Personally I would like to see all candles at Convergence in heat proof enclosures, and they need to be large enough to hold the length of a toppling candle and all the volume of wax, if the candle doesn't burn down as expected (we've all seen it many times) and all of it melts at once. That's also protecting the newly laid carpet from wax stains. Additionally, we can't assume the enclosure (glass etc.) won't disintegrate. Tea lights are safer — but even they can shatter stone enclosures and end up as burning mess on the floor.

Does this make electronic candles more appealing? The person who was allergic to paraffin candles at the last Convergence and can't use the chapel when those candles are burnt would probably appreciate it.

— Volker

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/homed/latest/110927097/the-hidden-dangers-of-home-candles>

## Registration changes for 2019

Convergence 2018 was a fantastic and popular experience, however it posed a few challenges to those involved in setting up such a well attended event. For Convergence 2019 there will be some changes in the registration process, which will improve the information available for those ordering food and goods, address some security concerns, and reduce the stress on those doing the work beforehand.

Earlybird registrations will be during October only — a month earlier than in the past.

Standard registrations will be from 1 November to 18 December. No online registrations will be possible after this date.

All Earlybird and Standard tickets need to be paid via bank transfer or PayPal during the appropriate ticketing time band. Anyone bringing cash to the gate will be charged the Gate Sale rate.

We hope that these changes will make it easier for everyone, and pull forward at least one thing from that busy pre-Christmas period.

— Sarah

## Pendant making

Renate and her group of volunteers have been making the Convergence pendants that so beautifully show we're paid-up family members for the past 7 years. It was fun to do, but is also taking energy and after so many years Renate has decided to give it up and pass it on to other volunteers to show their creativity. Thank you so much Renate and helpers for your passion and energy.

Marie is taking up making pendants in Dunedin for the next Convergence, or maybe the creative energy will transform into something completely different. I'm looking forward to what it will be. Thank you Marie.

— Volker

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