

Opening remarks #ZenAI Conference 2026

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Kia ora tātou. Nau mai. Haere mai.

My name is Sue and I am from Christchurch, New Zealand

Thank you to Jumoke for the title of this conference which brings together what seem to be two opposites, firstly the fact that we live in the age of AI, a **developing tool** already changing our world, including adding pressures and uncertainty to life. And secondly, that **positive change** in our society begins with the proven practice of inner listening, of **seeking divine guidance**, stilling the heart, taking time in silence as Zen does.

I am a mother, carer, student of sociology and of counselling, and I am a trustee and secretary of the Board of Initiatives of Change (IofC) New Zealand. Ours is a local team who have experienced the value of working together for a better world. IofC internationally is a **global community** of people of diverse cultures and backgrounds, who are **committed** to the transformation of society through **changes in human motives** and behaviour, **starting with their own lives**.

The **movement began** with the social upheaval following the First World War, with a call for **peace** and the sense of an urgent need for **transformation in hearts and minds**. The world was divided and was left totally shaken. Nigel Cooper, who has worked with IofC in many parts of the globe, will speak later of his own experiences in Bougainville.

I put it to you today that our **challenge is the same**, that we are faced with the **biggest call for change**, a growing concern over the **use of AI**, and a desire to **dig deep** to find a way to respond if we are to **fight for a new direction**.

The use of AI is new to me. I open an email chain between our board members and find the offer to have the content summarised. Good idea, I think - I don't remember where our conversation got to yesterday (pause).

We have an **amazing tool** at our fingertips, ready to use, but there is hesitation and some fear. We also see that this tool brings power to some, while others go to the library to access the internet; some need the money to put data on their phones; school children will need to share a computer and wait their turn. So what inspired thoughts will we find tomorrow the use of this tool, and how can it be used in our hope to be involved in real transformation and **bridge divides** in our country?

Today may be an opportunity to do some **deep listening**. **Write down a thought** during this time. Grab a piece of paper, a notebook, a sticky note. **Act on that thought**. Today we hear the experiences of our speakers, and there will be time to reflect and to leave with divine **inspired thoughts**. There will be connections formed between us. Let us seek out the opportunities for us to participate in the **transformation** of our divided world **beginning with ourselves**.

Tenā koutou, tenā koutou, tenā tātou katoa.