

Ecumenical/Interfaith Share and Tell Session YM 2023 Tuesday July 4th

Clerk Ann Zubrick Note Taker Valerie Joy

Purpose: to hear from Friends in Regional Meetings involved in Ecumenism and Interfaith bodies.

Welcome and Silent Worship

From Aotearoa NZ Handbook: We are challenged to enter into fellowship with people of all faiths and philosophies, locally, regionally and globally so that we may work and worship together and co-operate for peace, justice and care of the planet.

Are you open to understanding and acceptance of Quakers of diverse traditions locally and worldwide?

Are you open to understanding and acceptance of traditions of Christians of all denominations and people with other faiths and philosophies locally and worldwide?

Ecumenism

QRM: Taisoo Kim Watson was the first woman and the first Quaker to become President of Queensland Churches Together. Recently QCT held a visioning day on how to advance the life of the churches in Queensland and strengthen ecumenism. The General Secretary David Baker plans to hold a discussion with Friends, on our suggestions to move this forward. Valerie Joy has been active with the JCDVPP (Joint Churches Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Program); David King is a member of QCEN Qld (Churches Environmental Network). We are also involved with Qld Faith Communities Council, where we are invited to join with other faiths in their worship as well as attend an annual Prayer meeting at Parliament House.

NSW: Wies Schuiringa reported NSW Ecumenical Council has eighteen denominations. Three recent applications for membership came from the Ukrainian Catholic, Macedonian Orthodox and German Lutheran Church. The Council has supported the Uluru Statement and the Voice. When the General Secretary resigned at short notice, Wies offered and is now the Interim General Secretary until a new appointment is made. Debate over peaceful resolution of militarism and arms race is not a priority. The Domestic Violence project finished when funding for a worker finished. A funding application to a Western Sydney Council for work with addressing DV is pending. Many Orthodox churches, Maronite Church and other Eastern Orthodox churches are involved. K. Woodhouse reported that Lisa Wriley is involved with the Wellspring Community- connected with the Iona Community. Lisa will meet with local groups across Australia to connect Indigenous groups with Celtic spirituality. K. is involved with the Sydney Mardi Gras. The Pride March held in Oxford St included an Inter-church float, but Quakers did not feel led to join this.

Canberra and Regional Friends: ACT Churches Council – David Purnell reported Canberra Friends in the past were not supportive. Susan Rockcliff, Jonathan Benyei and Daivid met with the Chair of the Council who intended to broaden the range of concerns. Kay de Vogel reported that, individually, several Friends participate in ecumenical activities e.g., Mennonite activities. Kay represents Quakers on refugee actions, and there are weekly vigils in Canberra centre to highlight needs of refugees. Sara Bachelard's Benedictus is very welcoming of Quakers. Michele Fahey a journalist has spoken to Friends on how retiring politicians become involved in the arms trade. Michele has received a grant from the Jan de Voogd fund. Women's Interfaith Network is a friendly and encouraging group- and probably meets in other major Australian cities.

Sieneke Martin from Victoria Council of Churches- spoke of the twenty-seven member churches, including many migrant churches. Within the Victorian Church Leaders network, there is a level of trust amongst pastors. Discussion has taken place on female leadership of congregations. VCC has a new Executive Officer with a focus on local bodies in Local Government areas. The AGM of the VCC abolished its Commissions- and now will form working groups as required. They have received a substantial bequest allowing them to fund a young person to attend the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago in August. He will report back.

Dale Hess was part of NCCA Faith and Unity Commission. Neither the Salvation Army nor Quakers were involved directly in discussions on Baptism. However, Quaker involvement was very welcome. Dale also had raised the question of peace in West Papua but found reluctance in NCCA to strongly support this.

TRM: Maggi Storr, Hobart, she is a member of Religions For Peace, and interfaith communities; Sacred conversations held in the Bahai Centre; Monday night meditations on AARC. David O'Halloran is president of Council of Churches and Executive Officer involved in NCCA. Tasmania undertakes practical ecumenism and joins willingly with events. Kevin Sheldon from Deloraine is positive about Community. The Maronite Church participates in peace and welcomed Kevin. He attends the Uniting Church and finds their theology very flexible and invites people to experience other churches, which may lead to opening minds. Paul from Tamar Valley is enjoying his ecumenical experiences.

SANTRM: Geoff Greeves reported: Jo Jordan and Jenny Stock are the main Friends involved in Ecumenical activities – contact is facilitated as the Meeting House is next door to St Marks and St Peter's Cathedral. Quakers are working to stop the selling of alcohol late at night to reduce harm to vulnerable young people.

WARM: Ann Zubrick reported on her involvement with the Heads of Churches group in WA. In February, she was hosting the group at the Meeting House when applications to join were received from small evangelical churches. The group voted that membership rested on acceptance of the Nicene Creed. Ann spoke in response and the group. As a Board Member of NCCA, Ann is welcomed, valued and included. Currently the Board is planning a 2024 NCCA Forum in the Adelaide Hills (deferred during from 2022 due to COVID). NCCA is rethinking its role and work –including deepening engagement and relationships with the Pacific Council of Churches

Interfaith

Sue Ennis (VRM) presented a short PowerPoint Religions covering current initiatives and foci for Peace Australia and Religions for Peace International. Participants were encouraged to look at their website at <https://religionsforpeaceaustralia.org.au/>. This site and international websites (Religions for Peace Asia and Religions for Peace International) have rapidly growing numbers of national and international visitors, including Mainland Chinese.

Sue spoke of the network of links across Australia and her aim, as a strategist, to develop an Action Plan for Religions for Peace, which includes First Nations spiritual representatives. She continues to work, with others, to establish an Australian Inter-Religious Council of some kind. Money will be needed to conduct work of a Council to effect change. Sue has been asked to go onto the ACRP Secretariat- looking at climate matters across the Region. ARRCC recently signed the letter to Woodside- and will ask Japan to also send letter to Woodside. Sue highlighted the value and need for Quakers to network with other faith groups to be collectively effective.

Sue's conversations, conferences and online meetings with others globally highlights changing conversations and ongoing concerns: Climate and environment. Family violence. Rise of right-wing extremism. Growth of the weapons industry and nuclear issue. Human and body-part trafficking. Human slavery. She encouraged Friends to join in activities such as prayers for and events e.g., Hiroshima Day.

We are grateful to Sue for bringing this work to our attention and to understand its reach and possibilities.

Gerry Fahey reporting on involvement with ARRCC. He finds its also useful for outreach. At St Pauls Cathedral in Melbourne, had a range of people speaking e.g., an Islamic person shared from the Koran around care of the earth and creation. Gerry is also a member of the Ballarat Interfaith Network.

Global Freedom Network: International Human Rights group – University of Notre Dame is now offering courses in slavery and modern trafficking- now a requirement for law and business studies- important to remain vigilant on these issues.

We were also reminded that ecumenical and multi-faith organisations appreciate the contributions made by Friends, and we were encouraged to be involved.