

Friendly School

3 July, 11.00am-4.30pm AEST

Report submitted by: Michael Griffith, Rose Griffith

The Friendly School theme was *Caring for Humanity in "Interesting Times"*. The last phrase is from an ancient Chinese curse "May you live in interesting times" which is no longer a curse but a blessing; times of danger and uncertainty can also be the most creative times.

This topic inspired 10 wonderful schools that rose to this creative challenge. Schools were allocated a five-hour period and school presenters were asked to choose their own starting and finishing time, while providing regular breaks to allow attenders at the schools to properly refresh themselves. Presenters reported that while preparation took their time, it was there was much personal value in this work.

Overwhelmingly, presenters were very happy with the sessions. With a Zoom host in place, they did not find any difficulty with using Zoom. They enjoyed the level of engagement by participants and the opportunity to share something of their own passion in confronting these "interesting times".

The ten schools offered were:

1) Working together adaptively as we face the ten threats to human existence. *Facilitators: Vidya & Julian Cribb.* Discussed 10 threats we are facing now and what we can do to protect human civilisation and the web of life that supports us. Explored what we personally can do to help our families and communities adapt and how Quakers can be part of building the changes we need in Australia and the world, for our societies to flourish.

2) Creative Writing on the Theme of "Caring for Humanity in Interesting Times". *Facilitator: David Evans.* Creative writers were invited to contribute an essay or poetry on the theme of Friendly School 2022. The time available was divided between the number of contributors. Many interesting submissions were forwarded and discussed. The plan is to publish a booklet of these contributions.

3) Building the Peace the World Needs, Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee. *Facilitators: Harold Wilkinson, Margaret Clark.* Key outcomes: helped to produce ideas about **what** Friends would like the Australian Government to do; this will help inform the work of QPLC, and help develop an AYM statement about **how** Friends want the Australian Government to undertake its work.

4) An introduction to several words in the language of Original Australians and the implied concepts they encapsulate. *Facilitator: Harald Ehmann.* Here we were introduced to several words in the languages of Original Australians and learnt the concepts they encapsulate. These can be added to English, can help to streamline communication and can also promote better ways of living in harmony with Original Australians, well and sustainably. Original Australian Elders invite us to consider and adopt their understandings, words and concepts to "come right way" with them, ourselves, nature and the Earth. Their generous wish is that we proceed together cooperatively into a shared future. Adopting these will help to truly care for Humanity, all life and the Earth in these interesting and potent times.

5) Time with John --John's Gospel as the Quaker Gospel. *Facilitator: David Johnson.* This was an opportunity to engage with John's Gospel, regarded as the Quaker Gospel because of its inwardness and the emphasis on the divine Light which is gifted to very person, without exception. The first Quakers, at times, referred to themselves as Children of Light. George Fox asked the congregation at Ulverstone: "What canst thou say? Art thou a child of the Light, dost

thou walk in the Light, and what thou speakest, is it inwardly from God?" The session provided a mini-retreat, allowing participants to stay inward during the break between sessions.

6) The Spiritual Side of Reality Caring for Humanity in Interesting Times. *Facilitators: Heather Herbert, Roberta Turner.* People in the group shared their deepening spiritual experiences and how these have affected their lives going forward. The question was raised on the difficulty of expressing these experiences in our Meetings for Worship without being judged. The session ended on a note of trust and fellowship and a wish for a deeper understanding of the "Godness" within ourselves and in others. Recommended: Alpha's Page 'If God Could Write' www.alphaspage.com.au

7) The Earthcare Game as a way of Caring for Humanity in Interesting Times. *Facilitator: Lisa Wriley.* Lisa joined from the Central Coast pod and presented in three parts: 1) the background to the EARTHCARE game and how she came to want to make it; 2) the current situation with about half of the first 500 board games sold and more cloth games being made up and demonstrated how to play the game; and 3) Lisa shared future ideas for the game including her hope to make a bilingual version for New Zealand.

8) The labyrinth as a way of consolation. *Facilitator: Joy Bowles.* An interactive session tracing a labyrinth on paper with our fingers as we considered the theme of "consolation" and what that might mean for us each and as a group; what the group shared was meaningful and quite deep.

9) Poetic and Artistic Responses to "Caring for Humanity in Interesting Times. *Facilitator: Michael Griffith.* Session provided an opportunity for the group to explore the ways in which poems and paintings can deepen our experience and understanding and strengthen the capacity, as individuals and as a community, to face our "interesting times" with creativity and spirit.

10) Focus on the deeper spiritual and cultural factors behind our exploitation of the world and resources. *Facilitators: Elizabeth PO', Adrian Glamorgan.* In this session we consider how young people want to live their lives, and how they prepare for this uncertain future.