

'Loose ends' session during Formal Session 8 Report

During Formal Session 8 at YM22, Ronis Chapman, Emily Chapman-Searle & Robin McLean ran a session about pulling together some of the loose ends from Yearly Meeting. These loose ends included the future of the Safe Quaker Community Committee, carrying forward the work from the Child Protection and Other Safety Concerns Working Group, the future of the Children & JYF Committee and paid worker and the unfilled Quaker Learning Australia Committee.

Friends at the session were invited to think about what their dreams for Australian Quakers were. Friends were invited to share their responses to the question:

What would you love Quakers in Australia to be doing?

Responses were shared using padlet, an online program that allows people with the link to view a collective board, contribute responses and see responses from others.

Friends were introduced to the idea of a Quaker Life Network, based on the model from Quakers in Britain, which would bring together a range of different activities and interests, including the loose ends we had identified. Friends were then invited to share, on a different padlet, answers to the question:

If we were to have a national Quaker Life Network in Australia, what might it give us? What might it give your meeting?

The following summary includes responses to the two questions. The responses to each question were considered separately. All responses were grouped into themes or topics and have been presented in these themes. These groupings are intended to help show similarities and key issues that emerged from Friends' responses.

If you would like to run a similar activity in your meeting or committee, padlet is a great tool which is free to sign up to and does not require all Friends to have an account, just the person who creates the padlet. If you would like help setting up a padlet, you are welcome to contact Emily: echapmansearle@gmail.com.

QUESTION 1: What would you love Quakers in Australia to be doing?

BEING IN THE WORLD

Outreach

- End the heresy of not alerting the community to our existence...Proselytising hits people on the head with a faith. Quakers do not proselytise. But in ensuring we don't bang people on the head, we have neglected George Fox's encouragement to alert people to Quaker principles and practices. Let's start advertising our meetings so the wider community knows about us, and have regular Quaker Essentials classes
- To make ourselves more visible...Stop hiding our light under "a bushel"
- More Visible...Speaking out more against things that are happening in Australia. Both those things that are working well and not so well.
- To be more visible in the world--on social media and other media--in or organised, well-considered way.
- Continue to look forward to the future and outward in the wider community
- More involved in our testimonies in the world. Less inward looking
- Promote ourselves more effectively.
- Speak truth to power, hold dialogues on issues from a position of non-partisan trust
- Loud in proclaiming our vision for a just, safe and fair society

Action

- Just do it!
- Be the world we want to do

- Working together to make the world a better place
- Freely give as you have freely received
- Love and be loved

Environment & Climate

- Growing connections with nature
- Protecting landscape, culture and heritage
- Let's plant some seeds
- Our climate actions to have measurable targets against them
- Cutting edge, brave climate action
- All RMs become aware of the 10 existential threats - see website Council for the Human Future. Speaker Julian Cribb is available to talk.
- Inform ourselves as to what is really happening in relation to climate and the state of the world

BEING TOGETHER BETTER

Conflict resolution

- Practising our conflict resolution and authenticity through peace building training for us and others

Inclusive action and practices

- To be more active supporting queer and trans people in Australia and the wider world
- Welcome new people from different backgrounds - people who are younger / older, don't speak English well, have different things to share with us (Get rid of our do-gooder attitudes, which are patronising)
- People...Find ways of including young adults / adults in the 20 - 40 range in my age group to relate to in MWF and Quaker Community
- Become more visible to younger people
- More hospitality, including Quaker education / spiritual formation...In all our meetings, including AYM, we need to warmly welcome and help newcomers, including helping them understand the quiet inner dynamics of Quaker discernment, decision making, vocation, leadings. Let's separate friendly schools consciously into two parts - faith, and faith-in-action
- Model care for every person who comes to our meeting, knowing that community is likely to be the glue that holds us together amid the challenges we are facing
- Keep the nurturing essence of home groups going

Families & all ages

- Regular family bush walks
- I want to plant trees with children in our meeting
- Show our children that we want to care for the earth together
- More connections with children, families and safety issues but with loads of fun too!
- Have regular story times
- Sing songs
- Have a face to face family gathering
- Children's spiritual formation...Children in our meeting are given recreation and some worship, but how much spiritual formation do we offer? Quakerism, Judeo-Christian roots, World religions and humanism
- Support the person who will do the consultation project about asking families what they want

Spiritual growth & practice

- Decolonising and finding a meaningful way to be in right relationship with First Nations peoples
- Share spiritual practice
- Pause, persevere and hope ... with generosity of spirit and deep reflection
- Less structures and more engagement with Spirit
- Go for bush walks instead of MfW
- Spend more time in worship. Investigating how our Quaker ancestors worshipped.
- Spiritual journey sharing
- Share deeply our spiritual journeys
- Read more Quaker books

Have fun

- Have fun together
- More fun injected into Quaker activities
- Share recipes, crafts, things we do for fun

BELONGING & CONNECTION

Local

- Building Quaker community in our local meetings
- Greater sense of coming together and community at RMs beyond Business
- Shake hands at the close of Meetings
- Bringing all the people together in the meeting
- Sharing meals together, bringing in people less established/well known in our Quaker meetings
- Have meetings for eating more frequently
- Get to know each other better

Online & in-person

- Use zoom to empower a feeling of national Quaker community
- Have regular on line worship between meetings
- Meet face to face
- Figure out how to meet in person in small groups
- Meeting in community more often (face to face) for fun and fellowship
- Encourage-nurture hubs/pods
- Visiting each other in person - travelling in the ministry

National

- A variety of gatherings...Chances to worship, share, learn, and come together outside Yearly Meeting
- Monthly Share & Tells 11 months a year...Find a coordinator for this
- Have Yearly Meeting share and tells or Friendly School events during the year
- National Conversation...Have more opportunities throughout the year to engage together outside of our regular MFW other than the Sunday time slot
- Regular weekly Zoom "catch-ups" -- utilising both "Open Space Technology" (for those who have matters they wish to discuss) and "random breakout rooms" (for those who just want a chat)

EVOLVING OUR PROCESSES

Innovation, change, processes, structures

INNOVATION

- Become a model for governance

- Developing a new and energised way of working together
- To be able to make decisions faster than our present limitation of once-per-year.
- Cut through unnecessary process and imagine new ways of doing
- Take on a specific responsibility for particular faith-in-action matters within a broader movement...Rather than try and do everything, do one "corner" of the movement's work so we can be relied on. By movement, I mean peace-environment-social justice-emergency relief - Indigenous
- Trust...Give greater trust to those Friends who have been nominated for specific tasks on behalf of Friends
- Move business to a bottom up model where unities are elevated, not disunities. Let local meetings discern and trust the Spirit to gather us, not resolve conflicts in one annual meeting
- AYM meets 4 times a year. All Friends welcome to be part of the sharing of knowledge, experiences, wisdom and discernment. So we connect Australia-wide more often and fewer issues need to go to the small group of people on Standing Committee.
- Change how we do Yearly meeting...maybe do more Yearly Meetings within year in short periods, especially while on Zoom, and have a face to face fun and community time alone
- Incorporate ministry and care committee appointments to all RM & Aym working an ongoing basis, not just during business meetings
- Rethink carefully how much business we really need to address at RMs and YM...It's important for us to care for ourselves in how much time we spend deliberating issues.
- Work towards our visions while curating our human resources with care and understanding. A hard balance

Rethink our committee structures

- An injection of fun and revitalisation into our traditional committee structure
- More integration between committees that are working on related issues
- Rationalise our many committees
- Committees are great and meaningful and a necessary part of the Quaker community but we need to reflect and discern do we really need so many and what are they actually doing? People's time is precious and important now more so than ever. What are we achieving?
- MfW and leadings of the Spirit central to our work. Reduce our committee work ie lay down

QUESTION 2: If we were to have a national Quaker Life Network in Australia, what might it give us? What might it give your meeting?

Better ways of dealing with conflict –

- Pastoral care and conflict resolution (we don't do conflict well); how to diffuse conflict in meetings
- An approach that is open to seeing that friends are also human, not perfect and that there may be actions that need to be changed
- Restore our confidence to communicate

A chance to connect and know one another

- Get to know each other better during the year; Connection; building community; A stronger and more engaged community; A feeling of being part of something bigger; Connection, community, families, a place to belong and to be together
- More Australia-wide contact for small worshipping groups (including those online)
- Continue AYM home groups; Keep the spirit of Yearly Meeting gathering alive
- Facilitate Quaker hikes, bike rides, folk festival attendance in a camp, music and arts camps, photography wildlife sessions, and domestic and overseas coach rides (similar to the Australia Friendship Study Tour to North Korea)
- More connection with Aotearoa YM, since we have many issues in common; Connect with Aotearoan Summer Camps to be Australasian Summer Camps
- Chances to gather outside of business
- A chance to spend time with distant Friends in things of the Spirit
- Summer gatherings - maybe 2 RMs together
- Fun! An opportunity to have fun! Shared meals

Inclusive communities

- A chance for people who are never asked to contribute
- Ideas and sharing about how to include people who are on the fringes due to age or inability
- Become more welcoming communities, who delight in the arrival of new people.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples... More engagement, discussion, learning and exploration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Multi-faith/outreach

- Invite others / other faiths / groups to feel the gift of Quaker process
- More multi-faith gatherings

Safety, connection, spiritual growth and nurture

- Develop safety checklists for meetings
- Bring Silver Wattle into the question about care and safety
- Bringing our safety work together
- Integrate Safe Relationships including statutory responsibilities to children
- Tenderness for emotional safety
- Cohesiveness of purpose. Less admin. Could make sure all aspects of care for our community are covered under 'one umbrella'.

Make connections across committees

- Linking all similar committees across RMs (library; earthcare; pastoral care; et alia) so individual ones don't try to invent wheels on their own when others are already roller skating

- Could we create from this a network of elders who can support one another and share their experiences and needs? Presuming we don't get hung up on who qualifies as an elder. I reckon we vote with our feet on that one

Less reinvention, more cohesion

- Re-inventing of fewer wheels, by sharing better between meetings; Less duplication
- Build stronger connections between meetings interstate
- Meshing Silver Wattle Education, Meeting for Learning, Q education, and care for adults children and families together. This means one Australia wide quality program which can link across Australia and also visit states. Well funded- a PT-paid implementer who organizes the practical things that the committee suggests? A enquires course included
- Has Silver Wattle overtaken Quaker Learning? Do we still need a committee?
- Network with Silver Wattle for mutual benefit
- Share our learnings across Meetings and generations

Sharing of skills and knowledge

- A sharing of skills and knowledge; To share our skills and share the load; Sharing of resources and ideas; A reason to share stuff together
- Quaker Oral History Projects training youngish people to interview older Friends
- History...As a sort of youngish friend it would be helpful, handy and beneficial to learn about Quaker history in Australia....It is hard to come by unless you pick somebodies brain...
- Heritage...commemorating and celebrating our heritage and how it may inspire and instruct our future
- A trusted place to meet - get to know one another - knowledge centre - discover experiences and gifts that already exist in abundance in our community

Resources - national workshops

- Run workshops together
- Publishing resources
- Record more learning opportunities - put these resources on YouTube or our webpage
- Develop mentoring for newer attenders
- Create a guide to finding AYM information!!!! some bits are impossible to find

Share and Tells through out the year!

- Coordinate Regular Share & Tells online through the year (10-11 per year)
- Have some share and tell sessions recorded for those who can't make it on the day.

Bring all ages into the heart of the meeting - rather than segregate by age

- Care for older Friends
- Work with the CJYF Coordinator to help integrate their work into the meeting
- All age gatherings
- Support for families and their children who already attend
- A sense of being there for all people equally, regardless of age.
- More people my age!
- Multigenerational community, diversity, a place to belong
- For RMs and local meetings, a central resource which we could draw on and contribute to in order to enrich our contact with families, children, young people