

## Formal Session 8: Saturday 9 July at 2.00pm AEST

### YM22.38: Opening Worship

The Presiding Clerk read from the Australian *Advices and Queries*:

*Every stage of our lives offers fresh opportunities. Responding to divine guidance, try to discern the right time to undertake or relinquish responsibilities without undue pride or guilt. Attend to what love requires of you, which may not be great busyness.*

*Advices and Queries* no. 30

### YM22.39: Minute of Record for Share and Tell Sessions

As part of YM22, sixteen different Share and Tell sessions took place. Attendance ranged from smaller with around a dozen participants, to larger sessions with over 30 Friends in attendance. It is pleasing to note that a majority of sessions were able to coordinate their own tech support, showing just how far we have grown as a Society in that respect over the last three years.

Share and Tell sessions covered a wide range of topics, reflecting the variety of interests and experiences of Friends in Australia. These included: Quaker history; integrity in public office; supporting refugees; singing Quaker stories; reflections on worshipping online; the future of the AYM office, and more. Our visitor from Aotearoa/New Zealand Yearly Meeting was also able to offer a session about working as a Quaker volunteer in Guatemala.

A session on integrity and gender identity was held before Yearly Meeting began, and was just as well attended as sessions held during Yearly Meeting: a welcome reminder that Friends' eagerness to hear and learn about each other, their activities, and experiences, is not limited to our annual gathering.

Brief reports from many Share and Tell Sessions will be included in *Documents in Retrospect 2022*.

### YM22.40 Minute of Record for Presiding Clerk's Report

Ann Zubrick presented her report 'Looking back with thanksgiving and forward with courage', reflecting on her experiences over the past three years as Presiding Clerk.

Ann shared her expectations of opportunities to travel amongst and get to know Australian Friends, and to allow Friends to know her better. However, these expectations were unable to be realised due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the last three years. The concept of 'familiar stranger' rang true for her and others in these times of learning to manage Zoom meetings and gatherings.

Ann reflected on matters of governance and Yearly Meeting business. She expressed her surprise at the amount of time and attention now needed in areas of governance, and the extent of changes in accountability and responsibilities.

We heard that through her attendance at National Council of Churches and ecumenical events on behalf of AYM, and appointment to the NCCA Board, she has gained a greater understanding of NCCA, and the value and importance of Quaker voices in ecumenical conversations.

Through the Presiding Clerk's *ex-officio* membership of AYM associated bodies, Ann reported the need to sometimes get her "head around the structures and responsibilities of AYM associated bodies". While she observed that wise, experienced Friends have generously supported her in this endeavour, she asked "As AYM, can we afford to rely heavily on collective memory?"

Ann reflected on how the pandemic has required Australian Friends to make rapid adjustments to the way they have done business, both for Standing Committee Meetings and Yearly Meetings. This will be ongoing, both for reasons of the continuing pandemic; but also concerns about travel and other factors. Ann acknowledged the tremendous support she had received from many Friends to adjust to these new ways of doing our Quaker business. She asked, "Where might we look for signs of hope and opportunity in our Meetings for Worship for Business online across the vast land? What is our essential spiritual work when we come together as an Australian Yearly Meeting? *What is our essential business?* What might we do differently?"

Ann reflected on what has held her spiritually. Her times of quiet reflection by the ocean near her home gave rise to a calming presence, dispelling her sometimes sense of inadequacy, anxiety and technology fatigue. She concluded that she has felt enabled by Spirit simply to be enough.

We thank Ann Zubrick for her service as Presiding Clerk from 2019 - 2022.

The full report will be published in *Documents in Retrospect 2022*.

## **YM22.41 Integrity Project Report**

We have heard that Wies Schuiringa (NSWRM) and Sue Ennis (VRM) brought their concern regarding their Integrity Project to the AYM Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee, for its discernment and to seek its support to bring this issue to Yearly Meeting.

The Integrity Project arose from a deep frustration and concern about the lack of integrity in Federal Parliament and the inability and unwillingness of the former Coalition government to implement a strong and comprehensive Federal Integrity Commission bill.

Wies Schuiringa and Sue Ennis propose to make a public statement with a banner stating "Show Integrity in Public Office" outside Parliament House in Canberra on four occasions over the next two years. We note that other Friends and organisations may be present at these events. Messages on social media will support this action. Friends are encouraged to promote these events by sharing on their own social media.

Friends who may like to join with these events and to expand the project, can contact Sue Ennis and Wies Schuiringa for information.

Yearly Meeting agrees to endorse this project.

## YM22.42 Handbook Revision Committee

YM accepts the proposed changes to Section 4.3.2 Planning a wedding or celebration of commitment in the *Handbook of Quaker Practice and Procedure in Australia*. We note that in addition to changes in *Documents in Advance 2022*, wording for permission to marry and references to the Marriage Act will be included.

YM accepts the proposed changes to Section 4.6.4 Testimonies to the Grace of God in the lives of Friends who have died.

YM accepts the inclusion of the name 'Other Committees' in Section 5.3.7 Types of AYM committees. Wording for this will come to YM23.

We note that the previous flow chart for the approvals process for revisions to the *Handbook* has been restored on the Handbook Revision Committee's webpage. A proposed new flow chart showing the approvals process will be included in *Documents in Advance 2023*.

## YM22.43 Loose Ends Session

We note there was a sharing of a possible new way to sustain our Australian Quaker community through a Quaker Life Network (based on that in Britain Yearly Meeting). Ronis Chapman (CRQ), Emily Chapman-Searle (SANTRM) and Robin McLean (TRM) led this discussion.

Friends were invited to frame their thinking on this around the questions:

- What would you love Quakers in Australia to be doing?
- If we were to have a national Quaker Life Network in Australia, what might it give us? What might it give your meeting?

Responses to these questions will be included in *Documents in Retrospect 2022*.

Friends with ideas about this are invited to contact Ronis Chapman or Robin McLean.

## YM22.44 Closing Worship

The Presiding Clerk shared a reading entitled 'Theology of the gum tree' (author unknown):

*The gum tree is anything but symmetrical. Its branches flow in all directions and they are often twisted and gnarled. Gum trees are very messy. They are always dropping twigs and branches and always shedding bark. This is because they grow from the inside out and so the outer layer becomes too small and splits and is gradually shed. The leaves and bark become humus to renew the soil. Gum trees have lots of scars where they have lost branches. If there are large holes, birds can make their nests there. Sap often flows from smaller holes, providing a place for nourishment for spiders and insects.*

*Despite their messiness Gum trees are beautiful and they are perfect because that is how Gum trees are meant to be.*

*Human beings are like Gum trees. We reach out in all directions, often in a twisted or gnarled way. We have lots of scars from our 'letting goes' and sometimes our responses show how we have been*

*wounded in life. Our woundedness can be a source of life for others, as we can offer understanding and compassion to others suffering similar pains.*

*We are very messy – we are always in a process of growth. We too grow from the inside, from our deep inside spirit. Often our behaviour is messy because we are in a process of transition from one way of acting to a more loving way of responding.*

*We are beautiful just as we are and we are perfect because that is how God created human beings – we are always in the process of growth.*

The Formal Session closed with silent worship.