

The Australian Friend

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Quakers in the wider world



Editorial

In our last issue we considered our Yearly Meeting, a time when Friends come together to strengthen their spiritual bonds and to ask how the Truth is prospering amongst us. In this issue we look at how Friends go out into the world to live our testimonies.

Wies Schuiringa writes about her trip to Rome to attend a conference on xenophobia, racism and nationalism in the context of global migration. This is a matter of particular concern to Australian Friends, at a time when our country vacillates between compassion for and fear of refugees. Quaker Service Australia has started a new area of service, supporting programs for refugees stranded in Malaysia.

At the 2018 Yearly Meeting Sejin Pak shared his concern for peace on the Korean peninsula, and as a result a group of 12 Friends and friends of Friends visited North Korea. A large part of this issue is devoted to Sejin's article explaining his concern, and accounts of the trip. Those Friends who made the trip are looking for ways to take this concern forward.

Meanwhile many Friends faithfully seek to live in the Light here at home. Our Friend Sally O'Wheel writes of her path to Friends and the meaning that the testimonies have in her life. Heather Saville tells of her work with the National Council of Churches and Act for Peace. And Friends continue to review books which have touched their lives.

We keep hearing that we live in a time of change, but our deepest concerns – Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality and Sustainability do not change. The challenge is to continue to incorporate these testimonies into our daily lives.

THE AUSTRALIAN FRIEND EDITORIAL TEAM



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice of Annual General Meeting of the
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia,
will be held at 1pm on Sunday 20 January 2019
in Canberra ACT,
at the Friends Meeting House,
Condamine Street, Turner ACT

Contents

FEATURES

- 4** The Conference on ‘Xenophobia, Racism and Populist Nationalism in the context of Global Migration’
- 6** Reflecting on how my concern on peace in North Korea arose
- 8** What we learnt about North Korea
- 10** Travelling to the DMZ in North Korea
- 12** Know thy Friend: Sally O’Wheel
- 13** Silver Wattle Quaker Centre
- 14** National Council of Churches, Act For Peace and Quakers

REGULARS

- 16** QSA Notes
- 18** Book review –
Our Life Is Love
The Quaker Spiritual Journey
By Marcelle Martin



Cover photo: The North Korea study team (with ‘minders’) in Kim Il Sung Square, Pyongyang

The Conference on 'Xenophobia, Racism and Populist Nationalism in the context of Global Migration'

WIES SCHUIRINGA | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING



Wies meets Pope Francis

The conference was organised by the World Council of Churches, Geneva (WCC) and the Vatican City Department for Promoting Integral Human Development and the Department for Promoting Christian Unity, and was held in Rome, 18 – 20 September 2018. Wies took part as Vice-President of the NSW Ecumenical Council, and as a member of the Religious Society of Friends, Quakers.

About 200 representatives from all continents, different Christian denominations, lay and religious vocations, senior religious leaders, front line workers and academics met for two long days to listen to almost 40 speakers who all approached the conference topic from their perspective: theological and biblical, political, socio-historical and cultural, non-Christian faith traditions, UNHCR, UNICEF, Council of Europe, media from different continents, and front-line refugee support services.

From this wide variety of perspectives, common ground was found immediately and our different denominations, regional areas, spoken language and organisational positions fell away. The emphasis was on human rights which were expressed by representatives from Christian churches, other faith traditions and speakers from secular organisations.

... the common basis for our reflections is the conviction that all human beings are equal in dignity and rights and equally to be respected and

protected, and as a consequence we are called by God to resist evil, to act justly, and pursue peace to transform the world.

Recent drivers of forced displacement and migration have included unresolved brutal conflicts and the lingering consequences of global economic crisis and austerity policies, as well as other root causes such as extreme poverty, food insecurity, lack of opportunity, and insecurity. The advancing impacts of climate change will likely add significantly to the drivers of displacement.

In Australia we distinguish between migrants and refugees. At the conference this distinction seemed not significant as people spoke from their experience e.g. two million refugees/ migrants from other African countries in Libya hoping to cross the Mediterranean, Filipino workers in many countries, Venezuelans fleeing their bankrupt country.

Xenophobia, which primarily means 'fear of the foreigner', is expressed by



Not your usual Meeting House. Cardinal Turkson presents an overview of the conference findings before Pope Francis in the Vatican.

an attitude that excludes and confines the other in their predicament and by forms and structures of indifference and rejection, ... It is therefore necessary to address the fear of the other and to challenge the exclusion and marginalization of migrants and refugees. This fear can reveal a complex personal or collective relationship with the past, the present or the future, and expresses the anxiety of losing one's identity, security, possessions and power in confronting the challenges of life and the future.

We recognize that the concerns of many individuals and communities who feel threatened by migrants – whether for security, economic or cultural identity reasons – have to be acknowledged and examined. We wish to be in genuine dialogue with all those who hold such concerns. But based upon the principles of our Christian faith and the example of Jesus Christ, we seek to raise a

narrative of love and of hope, against the populist narrative of hate and of fear.

Good cooperation between faith communities, civil society actors, academics, economic and political actors is essential in the fight against xenophobia and racism.

The full statement from the conference can be found at: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/message-from-the-conference-xenophobia-racism-and-populist-nationalism-in-the-context-of-global-migration-19-september-2018/>

A more personal reflection:

The attendees were invited by the WCC or the Vatican and were a self-selected group of Christians who have a concern for the plight of people who leave their home country or region because of civil war, entrenched poverty and inability to make a living locally, or endemic corruption, and who have chosen not to participate in local

warfare or corruption to survive. Most of these people do not have the luxury of being assessed by the UNHCR as a refugee, and if they did would wait for many years in refugee camps that have their own levels of violence and deprivations. If they are 'economic migrants', then that is to send money home to lift their family out of poverty.

There was not an attendance list to get an overview of the attendees. My estimate was that about 60 per cent were from Europe, 20 per cent North America, 10 per cent Asia and the other 10 per cent from South America, Middle East, one person from New Zealand and I was the only Australian. Perhaps 60 per cent of attendees were catholic and 40 per cent protestant with the majority Lutheran. About 60 per cent of presentations were in English. The organisations that the attendees came from were not always informative e.g. University of Miami: a Law professor, specialising in migration

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18



Reflecting on how my concern on peace in North Korea arose

SEJIN PAK | SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND NORTHERN TERRITORY REGIONAL MEETING

Sejin at the Unification Gateway in Pyongyang

I thought I had thought about this matter many times, but when I sat down this time to write about it, I found that it is not so simple.

A simple version of the story, commonly understood by others who know a little bit about me, would be that I have family ties in North Korea. It is true that my maternal grandfather lived in North Korea. He died and his grave is in Pyongyang. His son, i.e., my mother's brother, thus an uncle to me, and his children and grandchildren are there. This kinship tie with the people in North Korea would be a most natural basis for desiring peace with North Korea.

This version of the story is not untrue, but not quite adequate when I consider how the peace concern arose in my mind (or heart) and how I think about my ties with North Korea, or even South Korea where I was born.

I visited North Korea for the first time in 2017, only last year. I visited my grandfather's cemetery, met uncle and his children for the first time in my life. Unlike most Koreans who visit North Korea, I did not consider North Korea 'my country'. It requires explanation, but I did not consider even South Korea where I was born and grew up, 'my country'. Technically, of course, I am a citizen of Australia, and Canada, therefore neither South Korea nor North Korea is my country of citizenship. But, of course, what matters is whether I identify culturally and emotionally with either Korea. To some degree, I do. But I do also with other countries where I have lived,

especially Australia and Canada where I lived for long periods, but also with USA and Japan, in each of which I lived four years.

Another way to think about it is the question of loyalty to a country. South Korea is the country of my birth, but not a country of my loyalty. However, it does not mean that my loyalty is toward the country of my citizenship either. It may sound strange if I say I am not loyal to any country, but another way of putting it is that I feel more like a global citizen whose identity is not based on citizenship or country, or even ethnic background. This situation is not uncommon to many people in this age of global migration. But it is especially true in my case when my migrant background is considered: 15 years in South Korea, 5 years in Brazil, 15 years in Canada, 4 years in the USA, 4 years in Japan, and 27 years in Australia. It is no wonder that I do not relate when someone says 'in your country' to mean South Korea. I do not react to the utterance, but cannot help murmuring to myself 'my country?'

The issue of concern and commitment is closely tied to one's identity, especially 'spiritual' identity. Spiritual identity is not necessarily best defined by one's place of birth or ethnic background. This point is most obvious when a person belongs to the majority, but not so when the person is of minority, migrant or 'ethnic' background.

So, what I am saying is that my peace concern with North Korea, in fact with the whole of northeast Asia, is

tied to my identity as a spiritual being. To say this much is easy, but to actually elaborate the details to make sense to me and to others is not so simple, I find. It will have to be an autobiography, a book! And I am, of course, not prepared to write one yet. But this occasion led me to consider at least briefly what key factors in my life lead me to the peace concern for North Korea.

It seems that three factors are important in the early period of my life, that is my twenties in the 1970s. They are 1] immigrant youth, 2] my personality: contemplative disposition, and 3] family background, especially mother's role.

1] My family migrated to Brazil in 1964 when I was 15, and re-migrated to Canada in 1969. In this period of age 15-25 I was a migrant youth going through two countries and two languages, and this was important in shaping me in terms of cultural adjustment and identity formation. Learning new languages and adjusting to a new society was challenging, but it was the experience of discrimination in the white majority society that left a strong mark on me. My personal experience was expanded by my book learning of the situation of blacks and native Indians in North America. This led to the development of my concern with discriminated minorities anywhere.

2] My contemplative, asocial, personality led me to major in physics in university (U of Toronto), but with philosophy as non-major interest. My interest in philosophy combined with



Sejin's grandfather's memorial stone

my concern with inequality led to an interest in Marxism and critique of capitalism, and in human liberation. It was around the same time that I also read M. Gandhi's autobiography and Thomas Merton's *Seven Story Mountain*. These streams combined with my Buddhist family background to form the backbone of my spiritual identity.

3] Added to this was my family ties with North Korea, which initially were not so important to me, but became so through my mother's political activism. North Korea did not mean much to me (or to my mother) until 1974 when our family, which at the time was living in Toronto, Canada, learned that my maternal grandfather, who had been regarded as 'disappeared' in 1949 and 'dead' by 1960s, was alive and living in North Korea, 25 years after his disappearance.

The case of a divided family was very common in Korea due to the division of Korea into two parts and the War in 1950-53, and lack of exchanges between North and South afterwards. Millions of people had divided families. In many cases, they did not know whether the missing family members were alive or dead. My mother had hope that her father might be still alive in the North, and since moving to Canada, had tried to contact the North Korean representatives in the UN regarding information about him. She did not get much useful response from them, but in 1974, read an article about our grandfather in a newspaper from North Korea that was circulating among the ethnic Koreans in North America. He

was by then already nearly 90 years old. The article was autobiographical: he said he came to North Korea in 1949 and was welcomed by the leader, Kim Il Sung; and, thanks to the 'Great Leader', he was able to serve North Korean nation building in various capacities. In fact, he had been a major industrialist in the mining field during the colonial period in Korea under the Japanese rule. His experience and expertise would have been useful whether in South or North Korea.

Soon after Imperial Japan lost the war, Korea, rather than becoming an independent nation, was divided into two parts by the US and the Soviet Union. While some people, like the landlords and Christians, in North Korea moved to South, some people in South Korea moved to North Korea. My grandfather, a socialist-leaning industrialist, not being happy with the US military rule and anti-communist policy toward the labour and business, voluntarily went North thinking that that was where he could be more useful, even though he was already in his 60's.

My mother decided to go to North Korea to see her father despite the anti-communist sentiment not only in South Korea but also in the Korean community in Toronto. Having met him, she gained a new sense of mission to work toward the peaceful reunification of the two Koreas. The ten years or so (1974-1984) that followed her meeting with her father in North Korea was a period of political activism for her. Her political activism aligned with a political line called 'the unification movement' that

was shared by some Koreans in North America, but opposed by the majority line, 'the democracy movement'. Some explanation of the political context of the time is necessary here. South Korea in the 1970s was an anti-communist dictatorship, and this gave rise to the democracy movement within South Korea as well as among the overseas Korean communities. However, the democracy movement was still largely anti-communist in feeling. And in North America, those who advocated the 'unification movement' were regarded as communist sympathisers.

As a PhD student in physics in latter part of 1970s, I had many Korean postgrad students in various disciplines as friends. We were all supportive of the democracy movement in South Korea and had organised ourselves for study and conference on the issue. One thing that distinguished me from others was that, like my mother, I did not share the anti-communism of the democracy movement among the Koreans. The net result of my mother's political activism was that our family was regarded a 'communist family'. Friends and acquaintances, and even relatives, cut relationship with us. My mother was heartbroken when the sister she was very close to cut ties with her. I did not necessarily agree with everything my mother was doing politically, but accepted her position as that of a different religion. But my Korean friends also cut relationships with me. People were afraid of being associated

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

What we learnt about North Korea

DAVID SWAIN | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING



We went to North Korea, or the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), not knowing what to expect.

We knew from history that the Korean Peninsula had been controlled by Japan from 1910 until the end of World War II in 1945. After that North Korea was controlled by the USSR and South Korea by USA. Kim Il Sung was installed as leader in the north, and Syngman Rhee in the south.

Both wanted to unite the Korean peninsula; eventually the North invaded the South (but the North Koreans don't tell it like that). In response, a United Nations force, mainly American and led by General Douglas MacArthur, attacked the invading force to drive it back. But instead of stopping at the agreed border at the 38th parallel, MacArthur pushed onward through North Korea, almost to the Chinese border. This brought the Chinese into the war on the North Korean side, forcing the UN forces to retreat. There followed a bloody war until 1953, when an armistice was signed, defining a Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea. No peace agreement has ever been signed, so theoretically North Korea is still at war with South Korea and the United Nations.

During the war, virtually every building in North Korea, and a large proportion of the population, were destroyed by bombing. Since the war, North Korea has been under some form of international sanctions, limiting the ability to trade.

So what did we learn?

'You can't get into North Korea!' they said.

North Korea has many tourists, mainly Chinese, but some European. The lack of American tourists is principally due to bans by the US government, not the North Koreans. There are several North Korean tourist companies delighted to welcome you.

But you must obey the rules. We had four minders, including the bus driver, looking after 12 of us and making sure we stayed in the approved areas. Yes, we know we only saw the things we were supposed to see, but the alternative was staying at home and seeing nothing.

Pyongyang

We approached Pyongyang from the airport in expectation. The older buildings were unexceptional: basically Soviet Revival in concrete. The difference was that they were all brightly painted in pastel greens, blues and oranges. Further into the city, however, all changed. There were some buildings in traditional style, but many were modernist, indeed futurist. It was as though a group of architects had been gathered together and asked to have fun. Tall buildings (our hotel was 40 floors) are of many styles. And because the city was centrally planned, there was space around each building so it could be appreciated. Roads were wide, despite the lack of heavy traffic, and bordered by generous footpaths and bike lanes.

And throughout the central city were the ceremonial buildings: the 170-metre Juche tower, the Arch of Triumph, modelled on the Paris arch, but intentionally 10 metres taller, and many mosaic pictures and statues of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, at least three or four times life size.

There were relatively few cars, and heavy trucks were rare. There were, however, substantial systems of buses, trolley buses and trams, as well as an impressive, if limited, underground railway system.

We noticed that many apartment dwellers had photovoltaic panels on their balconies or hung out of their windows. We didn't see any large rooftop arrays of panels.

The countryside

Outside Pyongyang life is tougher. The lack of fuel and machinery means most tasks are done manually. Rice, the main crop, is cut by hand, then transported by small tractors with trailers, or in some cases by bullock carts, to a central thresher. The farms we visited had substantial greenhouses to extend the growing season. These have been designed to maximise solar gain, with the plastic covers facing south and a wall to absorb heat and give warmth back again at night, but heating is still necessary and expensive, and based on local coal. We were told that heavy oil was previously used for this, but this is no longer available because of sanctions.

North Korea has a population of



Arch of Triumph



Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il are hard to avoid

about 25.6 million, and a land area of 120,505 square kilometres – roughly equivalent to the population of Australia living on twice the area of Tasmania. Only about 20 percent of North Korea can be used for food production, the rest of the country being mountainous. An official of the Ministry of Agriculture who met with us said that North Korea needs 8 million tonnes of grain per year to feed its population, but current production is only 6 million tonnes. The country would need to import 2 million tonnes to feed its people, but it does not have the finance to do this. Consequently the population is under-fed. This is supported by reports from FAO, which add that the North Korean population is particularly short of protein. However, as one of our group remarked, their food self-sufficiency is far greater than many of the world's developed countries, such as the UK.

The situation is, however, better than in the 1990s when, largely because of climatic disasters, production fell to 3 million tonnes, and many people (hundreds of thousands, or millions, depending on who you talk to) starved.

How much does the average North Korean earn?

This is a difficult question. Initially, North Koreans obtained their food through the government Public Distribution System. During the 1990s famine, however, an unofficial market system grew up, with people growing food around their houses and selling

it to their neighbours. The government initially tried to suppress this market system, but more recently have been more lenient towards it. This system has grown, and is now important in providing food to the average North Korean.

On a cooperative farm we visited, farm workers were provided with houses, with education for their children, with medical attention, and with community services such as a swimming pool. I understand that they received a cash bonus, perhaps once a year, and as a reward were taken to entertainments in the city. A silk mill we visited in the city seemed to run on similar lines, with some of the staff living on the premises, and education provided both for children and for workers. They also had a swimming pool and gymnasium.

With so much of their requirements provided by the state, it is difficult to compare the income of North Koreans with that of workers in a capitalist system.

The performing arts

North Koreans are proud of their ability to perform at all levels – in fact they consider their country the world champion in karaoke. Miss Kim, our leading tour guide, several times serenaded us on the bus – with Danny Boy.

The tour company obviously wanted to show us the best. Our first concert was at a kindergarten with children between 3 and 6 years old

(North Korean children start formal education at 7 years old). This included a remarkable percussion band, a group of violins, and one of harmonicas. One girl played the Janggu, a double-ended traditional drum, and younger children presented highly dramatic plays.

The next step was the Children's Palace. This, we understood, is a large establishment where older children are given extra training after school. We saw lessons in painting and drawing, in computer skills, in dancing and in playing violins and the gayageum (a traditional stringed instrument). We were given a wonderful concert by these talented children.

The ultimate was the Glorious Country Games. These games, billed as 'the Grand Mass Gymnastics and Artistic Performance', are held in a stadium holding 100,000 people. Along one side of the arena was an ever-changing backdrop made up of placards held by at least 10,000 people (although I've seen some estimates of up to 30,000). The performances were outstanding, combining gymnastic and artistic ability with the coordinated movement of up to 1000 participants at a time in an area equivalent to an AFL field.

Many of the performances had a political note, emphasising the wish for the unification of the Korean peninsula, and desire for peace between nations.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15



Travelling to the DMZ in North Korea

DALE HESS | VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING

In October 2018 I was privileged to be part of a group of twelve Quakers and non-Quakers who travelled to North Korea. We had heard that the American Friends Service Committee had a farm project there and we wanted to learn more about it. We also wanted to see the country and the people and learn what opportunities there were to build friendship. Prior to going many people expressed to me their anxieties about North Korea; they were concerned for our safety.

One of the first things we did in North Korea was to travel to the Demilitarized Zone (the DMZ). This is one of the most dangerous, and in spite of its name, the most heavily guarded borders in the world. It consists of a strip of land between North and South Korea, 4 km wide and 250 km long reaching from sea to sea, which has been in place since 1953, the date of signing of the Armistice (cease-fire) Agreement. There are about one million soldiers patrolling the border and approximately two million landmines to prevent invasion. Technically the Korea War never ended. The United States has consistently refused to sign a peace treaty, and this has prevented North and South Korea from reunifying.

The Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) at the 38th parallel

Miss Kim, our guide, gave us a wake-up call our first morning at 6.30 am and we were to be on the bus ready to leave by 7.30 am. Not all of us managed to be on time and we left 20 minutes late. Miss Kim was not impressed.

The trip south from Pyongyang through the countryside took nearly

three hours. We passed through the Reunification Gateway at the southern limit of the city. This is a very impressive statue over the highway as seen in the photo.

We travelled on the Reunification Highway to the DMZ, a multi-lane divided highway running directly from Pyongyang to the DMZ, bypassing towns and settlements. It was almost completely devoid of traffic in both directions, except for the occasional tourist bus. Farmers were seen working in the rice fields and crops were planted to cover the arable land. It was harvest time. Most of the work was done by hand. We could see some evidence of erosion of the mountain areas and the efforts to plant terraces to prevent it. Occasionally we would see people walking or riding bicycles along the road.

At the halfway point we had a rest stop and there were tables set up offering tea and snacks and gifts for sale. Although most of the land along the highway was quite flat, we encountered some hills and passed through them in a series of tunnels.

As we approached Kaesong, we briefly stopped at four military checkpoints. These seemed to be more a formality than a barrier. There were only a couple of soldiers staffing each of these.

At the outskirts of the DMZ there is a large tourist area with a museum and giftshop. We were among about 50 busloads of tourists, mainly from China, but also from Taiwan, and a few from Europe. There was a small military presence there for crowd control. We heard talks about the history of the war

and the Armistice Talks which were given by military personnel.

We boarded the bus again and passed by signs promoting reunification. We were told we were not allowed to take pictures in this area as we travelled the road to Panmunjom, leading to the Joint Security Area. The road was narrow and on each side were large concrete blocks at the top of chutes leading to the highway. These blocks were held in place by wooden wedges and were there to form tank traps. Beyond the blocks were electrified barbed-wire fences. Much of the land on the other side of the barbed-wire has unintentionally become a wildlife reserve because it is unsafe for construction because of the landmines.

At Panmunjom we saw the Negotiation Hall, where over 200 armistice meetings were held during the war, and the building next to it which houses the North Korean Peace Museum.

The Joint Security Area is a little further on. Here is a symbolic demarcation of the line dividing the countries, on the far side of the bluish buildings. The bluish buildings are North Korean, those building on the outside belong to the United States and the large building in the background is South Korean. There is very little physical military presence at the JSA. One North Korean officer was very friendly and pleased to pose with us.

I believe the Korean people and the current leadership of North and South Korea, Kim Jong Un and Moon Jae-in, genuinely desire reunification. There have been recent moves to reduce tensions. A handful of guard stations



Reunification Gateway, Pyongyang over the highway depicting two women holding a globe showing a unified Korea.



North Korean soldier at the Joint Security Area. The JSA is perhaps the only place in North Korea where one is permitted to photograph the army.



The Negotiation Hall

on both sides of the border have been removed and the process of gradually removing landmines has begun.

A major step forward would be signing a peace treaty to end the Korean War. Although both Koreas would like to do this, the United States, and possibly China, is reluctant for this to occur.

Mr Kim and Mr Moon have agreed on the concept of 'One Country, Two Systems', which would preserve the integrity and identity of each side. Implementing this concept will be tricky. Also, there are the complicating factors of the process of de-nuclearisation, sanctions, and economic development of the region.

This is a time of transition and change. Sejin Pak, who visited North Korea last year as well, noticed the differences and some relaxation in regulation. As a result of our study tour, we are excited about the possibilities and are exploring ways in which we might contribute to the peacebuilding.

AF



Know thy Friend: Sally O'Wheel

SALLY O'WHEEL | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

My worship story

I discovered the idea of God in suburbia when I was nine years old, on my way to school. I waited for my friend under an ornamental street tree, a prunus which had broken out in pink flowers. The blossoms cut out the crisp blue sky above and I was overwhelmed by the beauty of it.

My next memorable experience of knowing God was with the school bush walking club. We walked to Waterloo Bay in Wilson's Prom. At the end of a day we climbed over a sand dune and saw the curl of white beach, the turquoise breakers rolling in. I was stunned. Here was an untouched world. It changed me forever and I was never able to explain to anyone in my family what that experience had meant.

Other important formation experience was reading, repeatedly, *Heidi*. It was one of the first books I read independently and here is where I learned of the idea of the 'still small voice' within, guiding actions. I also absorbed from that book that lying was particularly wrong. I remember feeling obsessively guilty because I had told a girl that I could make the culinary spice, pepper, from the peppers on the big pepper tree in the school playground. In fact I could do no such thing. Integrity: my first Quaker value.

Other reading that introduced me to Quakerism were *The Lark in the Morn* by Elfrida Vipont and *The Witch at Blackbird Pond* by Elizabeth George Spears. Both books depicted Quakers acting with courage, living adventurously.

Peace was my second Quaker value. I was led to my first Quaker Meeting was some years later. I was 18 in 1970.

I had noticed the 'Quakers for Peace' banners at anti-Vietnam war protests. My devoutly Methodist grandparents, the only family religious influence in my childhood, had discussed leaving the Methodist Church and worshipping with the Quakers. My grandfather, editor of their local church newsletter, was accused of being a Communist because of his anti-war stance. My grandmother who I loved dearly, never said about her Quaker ancestry. I had to find out about that later. I went to the North Adelaide Meeting House, not knowing that my ancestors had donated money towards its building,

There was comfort in the silence. It was a blank page which you could stare at.

To sit down in silence could at least pledge me to nothing; it might open to me, as it did that morning, the very gate of heaven. Caroline Stephen, 1890.

That meeting in North Adelaide held that promise. Sadly, I didn't stay. There had been no other young people. Had I stayed, my life would have unfolded completely differently and I struggle with regrets of what might have been.

Some time in my twenties I started to attend a 12 Step program where I learned ideas like 'Let go. Let God.' This has been a continued framework for my spiritual growth. I keep coming back to the Steps and that community, searching for a 'Power greater than myself' and trying to define it. It is an anonymous fellowship so it is impossible to know how many Friends share this background in the 12 Steps. I was so thrilled to learn that Enid Robertson, (a distant cousin by marriage), was a

life-long member of Al Anon but I wished I had known before she died so I could have had a conversation about that. Sometimes words echo 12 Step language in ministry at Yearly Meeting, leaving me curious.

I came back to Quakers in rural Tasmania in the late eighties. In 1993 I became a member. That was because I got a teaching job a long way away from any Quaker meeting and wanted to belong to the Society and be held by Friends as I launched into this new life as a single mum with my twin boys. My third Quaker value: community.

It was a difficult time in my life. I would sit in the silence and weep. Deep healing took place in that silence. Pools of grief for the mess I felt I had made of my life welled up in me and overflowed. I grew to know the understanding, soothing love of God. I cried in Meeting for years.

Connection to earth, to beauty in nature is one strong enduring theme of my spiritual journey. Engagement with the World has been another. I have always been 'political': women's Liberation, the Anti-nuclear movement, saving the forests. This comes together today in Green politics.

The two communities, the Quaker Community and the Green community have run as parallel lines over thirty years, each feeding the other and strengthening both. There have been civil disobedient actions, two arrests, standing for State Parliament, being convenor of the local Green branch, employment as a campaign organiser for elections and on-going attendance at branch meetings and fundraising. Quakerism gives me sustenance to keep going in a conservative electorate

SILVER WATTLE QUAKER CENTRE

A Retreat and Conference Centre that calls upon the diversity of gifts which have been given to each of us.

This special property has risen out of the needs around and within us. Let's embrace the opportunities it offers to enrich the lives of Silver Wattle's guests and ourselves.

Our hope is that this invitation will reach those who feel they have

- a gift for reaching out to guests.
- those who can share freely from what they have gained spiritually.
- whose gift is one of discernment, and an ability to share both empathy and rapport with others.
- who are prompted to share spiritual truths.

If your gifts are more in the practical sphere, you may be prompted to serve as a guide to Silver Wattle's premises and garden

- for transport
- hospitality to guests
- catering



Silver Wattle and Lake George (Weereewa) from the hill

- kitchen or laundry needs
- gardening and orchard tasks
- poultry care

Silver Wattle plays an important part in the spiritual life of our Australian Quaker community

Be part of this exciting endeavour.

Contact: Helen Bayes helen.bayes@silverwattle.com.au

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

where hate and fear are manifested. The Greens give me hope and an outlet for my rage and need to take action. The Greens social justice plank corresponds with the Quaker value of Equality. Simplicity is reflected in a Green anti-consumerist life style, with an eye to my ecological foot print.

Growing our Quaker Meeting in north-west Tasmania has always been central to my spiritual journey. It started with one Friend meeting once a month in Deloraine Community House. I joined him. Then Joyce Hudson arrived from WA. We grew and then we shrank. We moved to Devonport. We started meeting every week. There would be years of very small meetings then there would be times when I wondered if we would need to move to a bigger room. Going regularly to Meeting for Worship is a key to my spirituality and committing to weekly attendance was a breakthrough.

Birthright Friends are careless about their Quaker ancestry. They are

all related to one another and think nothing of it. But for me, a Friend by Convincement, discovering my Quaker ancestry and my distant relationships with the the Hodgkins and the Ashbys, has been astounding and wonderful. This year I have done lots of fascinating research on TROVE to discover more about my Quaker ancestor, John Godlee, who migrated to Australia in 1838 from Lewes Meeting, Sussex. Imagine my delight to learn of his on-going progressive politics and in particular his leading role in the Eight Hour Day Movement.

In recent years I have learned to meditate daily. I rejoice in the support of my iPhone and am a paid up member of Headspace, doing the supported meditations every day. This has been a huge help in coming to acceptance and even gratitude for the lessons offered by living as I do with a chronically ill husband, allowing me to let go, sometimes gracefully, of resentments, learning to love and accept him and

myself in this phase of life.

It has been a gift to become the co-convenor of the Friends in Stitches project. It has broadened my Quaker world across Bass Strait. Stitching is meditative and to create something beautiful, lasting and important is so satisfying. Being given the unexpected opportunity to be a leader in this project has opened me to so much. This experience justifies my life slogan of 'Let go. Let God'. It wasn't what I had in mind and I was astounded to be nominated but I trust the spirit and give it a go, in spite of initial reservations.

I never know what is in store for me and that's exciting. Live today and try to find gratitude and presence in the moment. Sometimes 'living adventurously' is not what you think: it can happen by staying in one place, a small rural northwest Tasmanian village.

AF

National Council of Churches, Act For Peace and Quakers

HEATHER SAVILLE | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING



Many of us have acted as representatives of Australia Yearly Meeting on various arms of the National Council of Churches over the years, including its international aid and development agency, Act for Peace.

As its website tells us, Act for Peace came into being in 1948 with the sending of food and other provisions to help refugees and internally displaced people who suffered during World War II. Its Christmas Bowl began on Christmas Day 1949 and since then the agency has expanded to help communities affected by poverty and conflict in over 130 countries.

Its purpose 'is to empower passionate people to work together to strengthen the safety, justice and dignity for communities threatened by conflict and disaster'. Something with which all Quakers should be able to identify.

Until very recently Act for Peace was structured as a Commission under the auspices of the NCCA, and member churches nominated representatives to sit on the Commission. Sieneke Martin and, before her Jackie Perkins, had served as the most recent Quaker commissioners. I was appointed to act in this role three years ago.

It has been a busy three years, which have included the resignation of the previous CEO, accreditation of Act for Peace for a further five years by the

Department of Foreign Affairs, the recruitment of a new CEO, and the conversion of the organisation into a company limited by guarantee with the NCCA being its one share-holder. This has meant that the Commission has ceased to exist and Act for Peace is now governed by a board of directors, of whom I am one.

The role of the board is considerably more demanding than that of the old commission, not least because for the last year there have only been 6 of us (in fact, for a variety of reasons, since early 2018 there have only been 5) rather than the 14 or so commissioners.

Preparation for accreditation, which was completed in early 2017, was a huge task particularly for the staff but also for the directors.

Act for Peace (the company) is due to hold its first Annual General Meeting in November 2018 and I have confirmed that I intend to step down as a director. I indicated my intention to do this to the YM Nominations Committee earlier this year. I explained then that the newly established Act for Peace board brings with it changes to how directors are appointed.

Rather than being nominated as a representative of their church, individuals need to indicate their interest in being considered as a non-executive director of the organisation, make formal application setting out their

background and relevant skills and undertake an interview.

A nominations committee was formed and advertised widely seeking expressions of interest through the Act for Peace website, the member churches of NCCA and other avenues. This resulted in a substantial number of applications being received and the Company Secretary prepared a short list for interview based on the skills set that the board had already determined was needed by Act for Peace. A list of five names will go forward to the Annual General Meeting. Sadly, for the first time in many years it will not include a Quaker name, not because we don't have relevant experience or knowledge, we do, but often we are already too busy elsewhere to take on another role.

Like others before me I have found working with Act for Peace to be a rewarding and worthwhile experience and leave with some reluctance. However, the role of a board director with Act for Peace today carries with it considerable time commitments and real governance responsibility. It should not be undertaken lightly. That said, the work of the organisation is splendid and the staff wonderful. I would urge other (younger?) Friends to consider applying next year.

AF



Soldiers in the field.

Is North Korea a threat to world peace?

North Korea has one of the largest armies in the world, but it did not appear particularly threatening to us. We saw soldiers working on city building sites, harvesting rice, or just walking around town. There were only two places where we saw soldiers armed. In the DMZ, the few soldiers we saw wore steel helmets and carried small side arms. In the mountains, at the Friendship House that displays gifts given to the leaders by foreign supporters, soldiers formed a ceremonial guard with shiny automatic rifles. In general, North Korean soldiers were less intimidating than New South Wales policemen.

The army, we were assured, is made up entirely of volunteers. It seems to be one of the few avenues of social and vocational advancement. A man or woman who performs well in the army can expect to be sent to university and fitted for a higher status job.

And of course North Korea, we are told, has nuclear weapons. We obviously wished this wasn't the case, but it seems improbable that these weapons would be used. The North Korean leaders must be aware that if they launched a nuclear attack on any other country, the beautiful city of Pyongyang would be destroyed overnight – a case of Unilateral Assured Destruction. Nuclear weapons seem

to be diplomatic rather than military weapons. The 'political commissar' of our team of guides explained: 'Before we had nuclear weapons nobody took any notice of us; we were ignored. Since we've had nuclear weapons all kinds of people are coming to visit us.'

So what does North Korea want? As far as we could see, it wants to be accepted as a member of the international community; it wants some form of unification with South Korea; it wants sanctions lifted so it can feed its people and become a prosperous country.

And that's really not too much to ask, is it?

AF

REFLECTING ON NORTH KOREA CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

with the 'communist family'.

This situation was a turning point in my life. I had decided to give up the idea of pursuing an academic career teaching physics in South Korea. Until then, I thought I wanted to contribute to the development of South Korea by returning there with a PhD degree in physics. But being labelled as a communist, my dream of teaching physics in South Korea was gone.

Under this situation, doing research in physics became meaningless, I wanted to study the great political and social transformation in East Asia that shaped our family's history and drama. I also wanted to leave Toronto where this little drama had happened to our family.

What happened since then was

that I pursued a PhD in sociology with geographic area focus on Japan, and eventually came to Australia for a university teaching post.

In the meanwhile, my mother also distanced herself from political activism but continued with peace concerns at a spiritual level: reflecting on and resolving historically accumulated wounds and hatred in the hearts and minds of Korean people became her main concern.

Because she lived in Toronto, Canada, and I in Adelaide, Australia, I did not know well how she lived. This situation changed in the 2000's when I helped her in the process of writing an autobiography. She had about thirty diary notebooks that I did not know existed. In them was revealed

her exploration of peace concern with Korea and Koreans at a spiritual level.

In the book, it appeared as if she was carrying on her father's work. And it also appeared as if her children were carrying on that work. I thought I had decided everything I did in my life, but it could also be seen that I am carrying on something over generations. My mother passed away in 2013 at age 91. I retired in 2015. I decided to put my time and energy to more consciously carry on my peace work. This is not because I am a Korean. I think, however, I would be most useful in the peace building work with North Korea. Moreover, I do not deny that the spirit of my grandfather and my mother may play a role.

AF



QSA Notes

Urban refugees

AI LEEN QUAH | QSA PROJECTS MANAGER



Above: Refugee children receive an education whilst their parents can engage in work and skills development.

R: A strict Child Protection Policy is observed in MSRI's day-to-day operations.

Photos: MSRI



This year has seen QSA commence work with refugees in consultation with the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA), the peak body for refugees, asylum seekers and their supporters in Australia.

Between QSA's usual field of work in development, and that of humanitarian relief, lies an often-overlooked 'grey area': according to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), a protracted refugee situation is, 'one in which refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile...' (EC/54/SC/CRP.14) On the one hand, the situation in their country of origin is unsafe for them to return; on the other, their host country is

incapable or unwilling to support them, even with access to education, healthcare or employment.

Unless the basic needs and rights of those affected by forced displacement are addressed, the central ambition of the [Sustainable Development Goals] to 'leave no one behind' cannot hope to be realised.'- UNHCR (UN/POP/MIG-15CM/2017/14)

Malaysia hosts the highest population of refugees within the Asia Pacific (<https://www.unhcr.org/en-au/figures-at-a-glance-in-malaysia.html>), and despite some families being stranded there for years, there remains a lack of protection as the Malaysian government does not recognise the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol.

A brief visit to the Malaysian Social Research Institute (MSRI) in Kuala Lumpur introduced me to QSA's

new partners' work aimed at plugging the gap in access to basic services for some 6,000 refugees. Even for those who are fortunate enough to secure resettlement, the process can take years. Without the work of organisations like MSRI, these children remain at risk of missing crucial developmental opportunities that will impact them for life.

In enrolling young children within the Early Childhood Education Program, MSRI enables parents, especially single mothers, to engage in study and upskilling such as English classes, vocational or business-management training opportunities. Where possible, the Education Program engages teachers from within the refugee and asylum seeker communities.

QSA humbly acknowledges the late Brian K Aubrey for his generous bequest that has enabled this work.

Whilst in the region, QSA tapped into collective knowledge and expertise of the regional Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN), having recently joined as a member. A member-led organisation involving refugee representatives, advocates and leaders, the network holds a consultation every two years, the 7th of which was held in Bangkok last month. The forum was a critical opportunity for members to meet face-to-face with a key outcome being the drafting of action plans and coordination on how best to advocate and advance the rights and protection of refugees in the region.

Representatives from 350 civil society organisations and committed individuals from 28 countries met to discuss joint advocacy, resource sharing and outreach service provision in a series of panels, presentations and

working groups. A delegation from the UNHCR attended selected sessions upon invitation. In addition to attendees from Australia, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam, new members from South Asia (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka) were welcomed to contribute to the discussion on the plight of the Rohingya. Topics stretched from such current emergency crises to protracted situations, such as that of the minority ethnic Karen at the Thai-Burma border, that have stretched into decades, leaving children who are born in refugee camps stateless. Various themes discussed



in working groups included gender, repatriation, and advocacy initiatives such as unique regional representation in negotiations over the UN Global Compact on Migration to be finalised in December as the first, inter-governmentally negotiated agreement to cover all dimensions of international migration.

It goes without saying – yet regrettably requires constant reiteration to quell the current political rhetoric – that no one country can resolve these matters on its own, and there is an urgent need more than ever for open dialogue and closer regional and international cooperation, not only to address, where possible, the various causes and consequences of these kinds of migration, but also to find durable solutions, whether it be through safe and voluntary repatriation or resettlement. The extent of collaboration amongst so many stakeholders at a regional platform such as this APRRN forum was exemplary, and heartening to see in the face of our growing global challenges.



Photos: APRRN

QSA is a member of the Australian Council for International Development and is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. The purpose of QSA is to express in a practical way the concern of Australian Quakers for the building of a more peaceful, equitable, just and compassionate world. To this end QSA works with communities in need to improve their quality of life with projects which are culturally sensitive, as well as being economically and environmentally appropriate and sustainable.

Find us on Facebook for more photos and stories: facebook.com/quakerserviceaustralia.

Unit 14, 43-53 Bridge Road, Stanmore, NSW 2048 Australia • administration@qsa.org.au

PHONE+61 2 8054 0400 • FAX: +61 2 9225 9241 • ABN 35 989 797 918



law, devout catholic, originally from Albania.

The conference had simultaneous translation into English, Italian, French and Spanish. When a non-English presenter started, all the English speakers put their headphones on and tuned into the English translation channel. The same for the other languages. The translators could not always keep up as it seemed that the non-English speakers said a lot more words than were translated.

The presentations on xenophobia, the 'fear of the foreigner' were good and outlined fear by the people in the receiving country of losing control of their identity and economic opportunities and fears of crime waves, fuelled by hate speech and false news by media, online forums and politicians perpetuating stereotypes e.g. these are not 'real' refugees or people in need. Factual counter-narratives may not have much impact on fear and it might be better to focus on building relationships at a local level, narratives of hope and the local people realising their blessings. The churches are not always helpful in communicating values and integration; it might be more effective to work with local government.

The African representatives spoke about the aftermath of colonisation causing many millions of Africans to move to other parts of their country or to other African countries to seek safety and a basic living for themselves and their family. It was mentioned that there is a lot of local racism and discrimination between different tribes and nationalities. A black, female pastor from southern USA and active

in the Black Lives Matter movement gave a fiery talk about racism and discrimination. The representative from the Council of Churches in the Middle East spoke about the millions of displaced people from the ongoing war who are languishing in refugee camps or living in sub-standard conditions somewhere in the Middle East, waiting to go home.

I spoke with several priests from Asia about the global military industrial complex needing wars to continue and the resulting flow of refugees. These priests were much in agreement, and then I realised that they all belonged to Pax Christi. The general secretary of the WCC is also very aware of the duplicity of many Western countries whose economies rely on the manufacturing and trade of weapons, also in his own country Norway. There was little opportunity to speak about climate change, necessitating peoples to move. As the attendees were well informed, I think that they were across this.

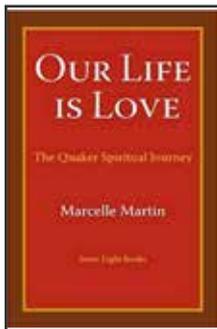
The second reading of the conference statement received a standing ovation and was accepted.

On the last morning, all 200 of us went by bus to the Vatican for an audience with Pope Francis. Getting to the audience room was a bit like a scene from the Da Vinci Code, the only thing missing was the spooky music. It was a rainy, grey day, we walked through large cobble stoned courtyards with high walls of buildings with curtained windows, under large stone archways, around corners, along walkways with Swiss guards standing in front of some large doors or in archways. Then we arrived at wide, long, white marble

staircases with polished brass handrails and after a few more turns arrived in an ornately painted room where our chairs were set out in rows. We were told not to take selfies with the Pope. When Pope Francis arrived, everybody jumped to their feet and applauded loudly and took photos on their mobiles above their heads, not the silence of a spiritual gathering that Quakers would have maintained. The cardinal who was assigned to the conference gave a short report in Italian, the general secretary of the WCC gave a short report and then Pope Francis responded in Italian. He then said that he would not give us a speech but meet us individually. We filed to shake hands with him, about 10 seconds each. The Pope, in his eighties did not seem to tire and interacted encouragingly with each person. The Vatican issued its own statement about the conference the next day, confirming the conference outcome. On our walk back to our buses, one of the African representatives showed us the Ethiopian chapel that is used by Ethiopian Catholics visiting the Vatican. There are many such chapels on the grounds of the Vatican. Then I saw some of the 2000 solar panels on roofs of Vatican buildings and got my photo.

The conference was held at a large hotel with extensive conference facilities about 20 minutes' drive from the Vatican. Conference attendance, meals and the stay at the hotel were paid for by the organisers. Wies travelled at her own expense to Rome.

AF



Our Life Is Love

The Quaker Spiritual Journey

BY MARCELLE MARTIN

Published by Inner Light Books. San Francisco, California. 2016. ISBN 978-0-9970604-1-6 [paperback] pp.228. \$20.

Anyone who has sought but not found, will be encouraged by this book. Thus Thomas Kelly:

For God can be found. There is a last rock for your souls, a resting place of absolute peace and joy and power and radiance and security. (A Testimony of Devotion. p. 17)

Marcelle Martin analyses the Quaker Spiritual Journey into ten stages, the main divisions of which are Awakening, Convincement, and Faithfulness. The ten stages fit into those; for example, the stages in Faithfulness are Leadings, The Cross, Abiding and Perfection. One half of the book consists of these stages as illustrated in the writings of early Friends, and the other half is given to illustrations from our own time. Concentration on the latter will be given here.

Martin emphasizes that people experience the Journey differently; all the same, it is easy to illustrate the ten stages from the lives of Friends. About the Awakening, Thomas Kelly wrote:

We have hints that there is a way of life vastly richer and deeper than all this hurried existence, a life of unhurried serenity and power. (Our Life is Love. p. 170)

These hints can be reinforced by many small incidents, the effects of which may be cumulative: a time of quiet, a book, an inspiring film, comments from friends. More dramatic forms of awakening, such as illness and war, are common. At these times, people are desperate for help, wherever they may find it.

Why is it that so many seek and so few seem to find? Perhaps the answer was given by Jeremiah 29: 13 'You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.' Not many put their hearts into it, but there are enough to show it works. A contemporary British Friend, Ben Pink Dandelion, writes

I felt lifted up and cradled by what I have called God, held and reassured...It was a powerful experience for me and, delightfully, has never left me. (op. cit. p. 49)

Similarly, Thomas Kelly, just like St. Teresa 400 years ago:

Those who learn to abide in God's love sometimes have the experience that they are living in two levels of reality simultaneously, interacting in daily events and at the same time abiding with God in this centre (op. cit. p. 150)

Some people are suspicious of religious experience, but that is one way in which we are given a share in the divine nature. See 2 Peter.1:4.

Exceptional among the testimonies are those of Marcelle Martin, given in twelve pages near the end of the book.

She resembles the Hebrew prophets and the Desert Fathers who went out into the desert to find God. She subordinated everything to her quest. Although a contemporary American, until the age of fifty-five when she married, she never owned a house or car.

For most of her life she lived without health insurance, which is perilous in the U.S. She had part-time work and was dependant on the benefactions of others. Although she felt vulnerable, she was free to do the learning, teaching, spiritual nurture, organising and writing, to which she felt led. She joined Quakers when she was 34. She wrote

A divine Light flows through all things. I felt this Light flowing through me down my arms, and out of my finger tips into the world. (op. cit. p. 181)

The book sometimes seems rather dire. That may be due to Marcelle's conviction that the cross is necessary for spiritual development, which is worth debate.

REG NAULTY

Canberra Regional Meeting

The Australian Friend

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Coordinating editor: David Swain

Editorial panel: Garry Duncan, Rae Litting, Wies Schuiringa

Production

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