

The Australian Friend

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Editorial

In this issue we welcome our new Yearly Meeting Secretary, Jacque Schultze. This is a good opportunity to celebrate the many ways in which Friends serve each other and the wider community. We give thanks to Jude Pembleton who filled in after the sudden death of the previous Secretary, Susan Addison. Our YM Secretary works very much on her (or his) own, and needs a remarkable degree of ability and patience. We have been blessed by the dedication which they have brought to their work.

We also continue our theme of Education, one of the ways in which many Quakers serve the Society of Friends and our wider community. At a time when education is often seen as a kind of competitive mental gymnastics, these articles remind us of the value of every person, and of the need for all to develop moral values and spiritual depth.

We hear of other Friends living out their Quaker testimonies in peace work, and in running community development programs through Quaker Service Australia.

We are reminded that Yearly Meeting is almost upon us, and in our next issue we will be reporting on the meeting in Hobart, and considering 'how the truth has prospered amongst us'. We hope that some of you who will be attending Yearly Meeting will be willing to share your experiences and insights with us.

THE AUSTRALIAN FRIEND EDITORIAL TEAM

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Cover photo: Jacque Schultze,
our new Yearly Meeting
Secretary. See page 4

Introducing Jacqueline Schultze

our new AYM Secretary

JUDITH PEMBLETON | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING

Jacqueline (Jacque) Schultze has accepted a contract to serve Friends as our AYM Secretary for the next four years, and will start that journey as a keenly-interested observer of her new role at this year's Standing Committee and Yearly Meeting.

Jacque's leading to apply for the Secretary's position came after spending 15 years following her migration from the United States in 2001, during which she took time to come to understand her new life in a considered way and to understand more fully the Australian Quaker voice and where she might be led to be involved.

It is during this past year that Jacque has felt 'at home' and more rightly ready to take on responsibility in a deeper sense within the wider circle of Australian Friends.

Jacque grew up in the US where she

became a member in Danville Friends Meeting in Danville, Indiana, a part of Western Yearly Meeting of Friends when her family came to Friends.

She married a 'recorded minister in the manner of Friends' and as the wife of a Friends' pastor, Jacque served two meetings for seven years in Western and Indiana Yearly Meetings.

She served at local and Yearly Meeting levels on Clearness Meetings, co-clerking local meetings, serving on the Yearly Meeting Planning Committee and Junior Yearly Meeting Planning Committee, Peace and Social Concerns Committee, and working with the United Society of Friends Women.

Jacque says: 'I was always deeply involved in the life of the Meetings I attended and these activities were a natural extension of my leadings, whether it was helping with the annual Chicken BBQ (quite an operation!) at Valley Mills Friends Meeting or in developing adult teaching curriculum for Quaker Studies.

'Western and Indiana Yearly Meetings have programmed, unprogrammed and semi-programmed Meetings and through my desire to

worship with Friends wherever I might be, I have attended all these types of meetings for worship.'

In worshipping with Australian Friends, Jacque has observed how our practice differs or resonates with her US experience.

'Although there are unique differences between Australian and American Friends, such as Australian Friends' deep concern for and relationship to the environment, there are similarities especially regarding Australian Friends' deep concern for and recognition of First Nations People,' Jacque observes.

Jacque's reflections resonate with those of Queensland Friend and Kooma elder David Carline after his sojourn at Pendle Hill Quaker Centre. Friends may recall his observations of US Friends and their relations with First Nations People.

From 2003–2014, as a member of Canberra Regional Meeting, Jacque became aware of Friends' lobby for peace via the Peace and Legislation Committee Action Alerts and saw the establishment of Silver Wattle Quaker Centre.

Over the years, Jacque has been



active in outreach activities, first day school teaching, youth activities and adult education.

In 2015, Jacquie helped run a Meeting for Learning for Wahroonga Friends focusing on Ben Pink Dandelion's 2014 Swarthmore Lecture 'Open for Transformation'. This awakened thoughts about outreach possibilities and led Wahroonga Meeting to hold its first Open Day, part of a sense of growth for the Meeting.

Those who know Jacquie will know her passion for literature and arts-related pursuits. This is evident in her career choices as well as her work with Friends.

In 2008, Jacquie received a scholarship from Pendle Hill Quaker Study Centre to be an artist-in-residence. She describes that time as an 'amazing experience which continues to enrich my life and deepen my personal Quaker faith and understanding'. Jacquie said the Friends from around the world she met there remain significant influences in her spiritual growth.

The following year, Jacquie helped organise an exhibition of Australian Quakers in the Arts for Yearly Meeting in Canberra, which brought together

writers, visual artists and others to share their creative gifts with other Friends.

In January this year, Jacquie was co-facilitator for a weekend spiritual retreat for Wahroonga Friends using creative activities along with quiet and worship and is in the process of planning another.

Jacquie will bring to her work as Secretary the creativity and skills developed as a professional librarian as well as an arts administrator. She will also bring a wealth of knowledge of Friends worldwide.

Her work in US Meetings brought her into contact with Friends' involvement in mission outreach work in Kenya, Belize, Jamaica and Palestine; Kaimosi and Lugulu Girls High Schools; Kaimosi Friends Hospital; Christian Peacemaking Teams; the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC); Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL); and the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC). She has made Friends within Africa Yearly Meeting and learned of Cuba Yearly Meeting through visiting Friends.

The end of her marriage and her move to Australia to join her daughter

and son-in-law has presented Jacquie with some testing times and these have expanded her compassion for others in similar plights and deepened her spiritual connection to Friends.

As a migrant seeking residency and then citizenship, Jacquie has experienced the uncertainty of those processes and that has deepened her compassion for and sensitivity to other migrants' journeys. Reflecting on those difficult times, Jacquie gives thanks for Quaker community.

She says: 'I like to think of myself as resilient but have found that I am not that way on my own. It is through the support, love and sensitivity of Friends and my Quaker faith that I have been able to 'come round' after experiencing life's difficulties over the years.

'I have been able to find strength and support amongst Friends, even as I questioned and wrestled with my understanding of my faith and Quakerism.'

AF

Teaching-Counselling-Quakerism

'where the spirit meets the bone'

LOUISE GIUDICI | THE FRIENDS' SCHOOL, HOBART

I have been at teacher at The Friends' School Tasmania for 16 years. I teach Humanities, Comparative Religious Studies, Social Psychology and Sociology. I am the staff nominee to the School Board and also year 11/12 Coordinator. A major part of my role as year 11/12 Coordinator is working with the 'Clemes Council', which is the student leadership council for the school. Life is busy! I have two children in the High School and my husband also teaches at Friends' part time. So with little imagination, it is obvious that on many levels, the school has come to influence so many aspects of who I am, what I do, and the way I do it. Indeed it is true to say that my life at the Friends' School has given me a 'community' context to explore Quakerism, and recently I was welcomed to the Tasmanian Regional Meeting as a member.

'To reach a child's mind, a teacher must capture his heart. Only if a child feels right can he think right' (Ginott,

1969 in Lovatt, May 2006).

Despite my busy life, my experiences as a teacher for 24 years compelled me to undertake a Diploma of Counselling while working fulltime at Friends' during 2014-15. There had been several occasions throughout my time as a teacher when I had been involved with a student or colleague in challenging emotional circumstances. I wanted to stop feeling as if I was supporting them only through instinct (what my 'gut' felt to be the right thing to do and say); instead I wanted to really make sure I was helping them as best I could, and for this help to be grounded in best practice and informed research.

I was both nervous and excited; I was going back to university after a break of 20 years! I could truthfully share with my students the struggles with essay writing, the perils of not keeping adequate records of references and most importantly, I could share my experiences of a 'new beginning', i.e. enrolling at uni, meeting new people, stepping way, way out of my comfort zone. Already this strengthened my connections with my students. My claims to understand their worries and concerns had a new authenticity; I really did understand what they were going through and they respected my desire to deepen my understanding of how best to support them.

In studying the course I was immediately struck by how significant it is that I have worked in a Quaker school as a teacher and year coordinator

for most of my teaching career (now 16 out of 24 years), and how much the experiences I have had in my working environment have shaped who I am at my very core. Through my studies I realised that the most significant strength I bring to counselling is my experiences as a teacher.

The significance of personal reflection is often under-rated in professions like counselling and teaching. The social context of these work environments is characterised by the busyness of the working day, and often the benefits of reflection are forgotten in all that needs to be done in the 24 hours of one day. Just like schools all over the world, life at Friends' is very busy. So 'Gatherings', our weekly Meetings for Worship with the students, offer a unique opportunity in the school day for quiet reflection, for solitude and disconnection from screens and 'shoulds'. These moments provide a growing awareness of a sense of both self and other. In Gathering as a student or staff member, I have dedicated time to sit with myself and listen to the place where my 'spirit meets the bone'*; I listen to others, mindfully and with compassion, I develop a sense of connection, a sense that there is more than just me.

As teachers, it is undeniable that mindful reflective practice can facilitate enormous personal growth because if we are 'present' in all our interactions we understand so much more about the needs of our students and colleagues. In order to do this we must also understand the importance of developing our communication skills. In this light,

* From the poem 'Compassion' by Stanley Miller Williams (1930 - 2015)



Egan's (2014) final words, stressing the importance of communications skills, in his text *The Skilled Helper* are noteworthy: 'Prize them, develop them. Make them second nature. Use them every day in both your public and private life. Teach them to your children. Make dialogue your default communication position' (p.404). The very fact that 'helping' people is central to both my profession as a teacher and my studies as a counsellor means that every day and every problem solving opportunity is a unique experience, no day is the same – I love that! It also means that I cannot escape from the need to be a highly skilled communicator in all that I do. Although I also love that aspect of my life, at times (usually at the end of a long and particularly challenging day) I find I am not always the skilled communicator I would like to be!

Because of my work at the Friends' School I have had the opportunity to make reflective practice an integral part of my work habits and I have also taken time to think explicitly about what my values are, particularly in relation to those outlined by the school in our 'Purposes and Concerns' statement. Central to both my own beliefs and the 'Purposes and Concerns' of the school is that there is 'that of God' in each of us and that 'As a learning community, we are concerned for the academic, cultural, physical, social and spiritual development of each person in our care.' How this approach compliments Rogers' (the father of Humanistic Counselling) 'absolute positive regard' is obvious. As a teacher and counselling practitioner I am obliged to actively search for the 'good', the potential, the strengths, of all in my care. The 'Purposes and Concerns' statement of our school also outlines our goal to: 'help students develop into men and women who will think clearly, act with integrity, make decisions for themselves, be sensitive to the needs of others and the environment, be strong in service and hold a global perspective.' Here again this statement compliments a humanistic approach to

counselling by stipulating that there must be an atmosphere of mutual respect and empathy. The crossovers are also apparent when considering that counselling aims to enable the client to develop skills which will 'push start them toward more productive and life-enhancing ways of thinking, behaving, dealing with emotions, and coping with negative experiences. When our clients leave us they should be managing their problem situations more effectively or be well on their way' (Egan, 2014, p. 281). These are of course, all things I want for all students in my care. It is my duty as both teacher and counsellor to assist people to break negative and destructive habits, to build skills, and to teach strategies to adjust behaviour to a more productive and positive way. To engage with the multidimensional model of Quaker education, the aim is to ensure that at an individual level the mind, body and 'spirit' are nurtured (inward looking, developing a sense of self), while simultaneously ensuring that students have multiple opportunities for meaningful connections with each other and all members of the community, (outward looking, developing a sense of other). The hope for our students is that they will flourish, through building a meaningful life. Here there are numerous crossovers with the aims of Positive Psychology; indeed, Seligman (2011) has much to say about this in his work on the role of engagement, relationships and wellbeing. The final sentence in our Purposes and Concerns statement reminds us that: 'We believe that these aims can best be achieved with the active support of all members of our School community'. Importantly the nature of that support is 'active', i.e. we all have the responsibility to help each other reach our full potential. Regardless of the 'subject' I have taught my students, these aims are what I would hope for my Year 12s as they finish their final exams and think about their future plans for a meaningful life.

Relationships are central to both the counselling process and to teaching,



Louise as the Care Bear

because as noted earlier, without effective relationships we cannot learn. Most significantly a mindful awareness of one's emotional wellbeing cultivates deeper academic success. Academic achievement can only occur in an environment in which a child feels heard, positively regarded and respected; 'lasting learning engages both hearts and minds; learning is fundamentally a social exchange; emotions have the power to freeze or free cognition; students must feel safe in order to learn' (Baldacci, 2014). In order for anyone to learn teachers of all 'types' need to help students develop both their cognitive and emotional skills if learning is to take place; there are now several research-tested practices that support this assertion. For example if you, 'teach students about the impact of thoughts and beliefs on their ability to succeed; and teach students how to work with their emotions' (Zakrzewski, 2014) there will be improvements in both their ability to learn and the overall learning

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Relationship between work and faith

How does your life speak? Work as an expression of spirituality

ALISON IRVING | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING



Many people have heard of the idea of ‘Quaker’ as a verb, as a way of being. I was asked to speak at Wahroonga about how my faith expressed my spirituality. Trying to understand how I ‘Quaker’ on a daily basis was challenging. Not being particularly analytical, I had real difficulty in working out the relationship between work and faith, faith and work, yet I know that my faith has a huge impact on my work life.

I run a business as a specialist literacy tutor for students with specific learning disabilities who are mainstreamed at school. To attend, a child must have some form of diagnosis of disability. I

don’t take an achieving child just to push them through selective school exams, for example. I take the strugglers, both in literacy and in behaviour. These are the interesting ones.

What schools, and society in general, rank as important, seems trivial in comparison to our individual self worth. The world’s values, in the Christian sense, are skewed towards money and achievement; success in school is often acknowledged only when it is academic or sporting success. However, what we as Quakers value does not mirror those values rewarded in society, regardless of whether society pays lip-service to the true ideal. Recently, I walked into an educational bookstore in Castle Hill. The store was geared for high-achievers, selective school examinations and educational success. There was nothing in stock to help the struggling child. In fact, what the ‘world’ sees as important, such as academic success and achievement, tends to exclude those students who are less able academically, behaviourally or socially. They become the young, hidden, marginalised of our own society. A discussion of some of these children will give an idea of my job and how my faith impacts my work and vice versa. Names have been changed to protect the innocent.

David: the beginning

David was the person who first drew me towards special education. We never know what effect our actions have on others. David had been at a London primary school since he was 4. He had been in my class for 2 years and he was a nice enough wee boy. I remember a cheerful child in 1960s short shorts and a white shirt. We didn’t even realise that he

was failing in reading. When David was 6 years old, he had a Welsh nationalist teacher named Miss Thomas, who hit him because he couldn’t spell the word ‘the’. There wasn’t much I could do at the time, because I was 6 as well, yet I clearly remember thinking, there has to be a better way to teach than walloping somebody.

I have always felt drawn towards the strugglers. At university, my electives were in special ed., language development and learning support. Later on, one of my own children was diagnosed with dyslexia. For me, teaching is at its most rewarding when it’s about lifting the struggling, teaching the child to believe in themselves, and turning a student around from failure to success. A fellow Quaker suggested to me recently that I have a passion for justice; I think in fact that it is a passion for both justice and mercy.

Rebecca: intercession and fairness, putting equality into practice

Rebecca was a child who never had a playtime. She was put down by her teacher, whom she had for 3 years running, and forbidden to read Harry Potter because it was ‘too difficult’. She was denied help even by her school principal. The exam board in New Zealand permitted Rebecca to have a reader, but the principal denied it. He thought fairness was everyone having the same; other children did not have a reader, so he argued, why should Rebecca? Rebecca suffered from a specific learning disability. His attitude was not unlike saying that if a blind child has a white stick, so should all the others. This man paid lip-service to equality without understanding that fairness is not about everyone having the same: it is about

everyone having what they need. Literacy tutoring is about providing the students with those necessities, whether it is an assessment, appropriate intervention, scaffolding, techniques like mnemonics to help memory, organisation, or skills for survival. This is putting equality into practice by giving the students the tools for a level playing field. Fighting for this, once again, is 'Quakering', it is justice in action.

Megan: Developing excellence and the Quaker value of integrity

Megan is a foster child. Her tuition is paid by the foster society. When working with her, I have a responsibility to her birth mother, to her carers and to the society, so there is enormous importance in being seen to have integrity in business dealings.

Firstly, there is the importance in being well-informed and well-qualified. In the business of special education there are too many charlatans and well-meaning quack practitioners. In my case this meant having a post-grad qualification in Special Education and continuing my professional learning through the Cheri conferences, the Learning Difficulties Coalition, SPELD and other professional bodies. I regularly attend conferences to ensure that I am the best that I can be, to ensure that the students can be the best that they can be. Keeping up with research is a vital part of integrity.

It is a weird world out there. There are a huge number of 'treatments' available for children with specific learning disabilities. Parents who are desperate will turn to anything that offers a promise of help. My own daughter is dyslexic and I understand the drive to find an answer. Two of my students have been given cranial massage for spelling. This made them much more relaxed, but it failed completely to improve their spelling scores. Some people swear by coloured overlays, despite the lack of research demonstrating their efficacy. I have met children who have been walking backwards upstairs to help

spelling! When the placebo effect is 42%, how does a parent decide what is worthwhile for their child?

As a Quaker, the value of integrity means only presenting interventions that have been scientifically proven to work, using peer-reviewed research, and which have measurable effect sizes. To do otherwise would feel dishonest. Furthermore, it means keeping exact records and data on a daily basis, measuring progress or lack of for each child, so I know exactly how much a child's work is improving, and then writing reports to reflect on the student's improvement and to set new goals. Giving structure to a child's learning is important, but so is being prepared to abandon the plan to suit the needs of the moment. There are often emergency sessions in learning support, when bullying, panic about assessments or another crisis are more important than the planned activity. For Megan, I requested a full assessment from an education psychologist, which provided direction for the way forward.

Lucy: Batting for the losing team

Lucy was a wee girl in Year 5, who turned up one day and said, 'it was awards day in assembly today'. Naturally I asked her if she had won an award. Her reply, 'I've never had an award,' broke my heart. This was a child on the losing team. Her learning disability permeated her entire existence. She was even dropped from the primary dance group, the one thing she enjoyed, for not being good enough, the only child to be dropped. At school, Lucy was lost and confused. Picking up a child from a situation like this is difficult. Boosting confidence on its own is counterproductive. It's no good saying to a student, 'well done for trying hard', when the child knows that they have been unsuccessful. Most awards that children with literacy problems receive at school tend to be for trying hard or for finally managing a neat piece of work, as if tidy writing is a measure of self-worth. To be confidence-boosting, praise must

be specific and it must be targeted so that every one of our children know that they are important. Many of them, like Lucy, struggle to understand that academic achievement is not a measure of personal worth. Worth is intrinsic to each person, regardless of their performance in reading. As Quakers, we know that there is 'that of God in everyone'. Helping the child to see their own spark is vital for their self-worth.

Mike: teaching responsibility and ownership

For Quakers, our learning and progress in faith is our responsibility. We do not hand it passively to a pastor. Children at tutoring are encouraged to believe that 'My learning is my job.'

Mike was the king of excuses. Nothing was ever his fault and there was always a reason why he hadn't done his homework, hadn't brought his books, hadn't remembered to hand in work at school. This was bad enough when he was in Year 5. He came back to tutoring as a failing Year 12 with the same problem. Part of being a Quaker is taking ownership. It is my job to teach that to the students. There is a poster as the children walk into the room that says:

My learning is my job. It is my responsibility.

I provide the effort.

It is not my teachers' responsibility.

Teachers provide place, support and information.

It is not my parents' responsibility.

Parents provide support and help.

It is only mine.

Fortunately, Mike learned this lesson just before HSC. He began to take responsibility for his own progress with positive results and is now at university.

Others blame their lack of homework on memory issues, so we work on techniques to boost memory and organisation, not just for tutoring, but also for school. Tutoring is a 'No blame society!' in which we work the problem together to find solutions.

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Quakers and education

PETER D. JONES | THE FRIENDS' SCHOOL, HOBART

Quaker attitudes to education have obviously evolved over time, so a quick look at how these have changed is a good start. Initially in England and Ireland, the first schools reflected the period they were set up in. For a start, Quakers could not attend university, whereas today the emphasis for most Friends' schools is for students to go on to tertiary education, requiring adherence to the set curriculum. Many of the early schools were boarding schools so the issue of cost is not a new one.

Although there was a uniform, the emphasis was on 'plain dress' and low cost in keeping with Quaker principles, posing a challenge to our expensive school uniforms today. The idea of uniform seems more to reflect the culture of a country nowadays, with the tradition predominating in schools where the British tradition of 'school uniform' still rules, despite the cost involved not being exactly in line with the testimony on simplicity.

Corporal punishment went out by around 1850 in England but seems to have survived much later in Hobart, although there is endless debate on how to 'chastise' errant students in a 'Quakerly' fashion.

While non-Quaker students were sometimes accepted in the early Quaker schools in England, we have not really settled on what a 'Friends' School' stands for when over 95% of students come from a non-Quaker background. The Bible was central to early Friends' schools and a religious atmosphere persists in some Friends' schools, but in Hobart the current

compromise is emphasis on what we call Gathering where the stress is on reflection and the need for silence in our noisy world. While some students may value and understand this, others probably have no idea why, although students coming from other faith-based schools are usually the ones who appreciate it most today.

Another issue facing early Friends was teacher training. There was a marked shortage of skilled Quaker teachers, while today the compromise is having highly skilled professional teachers but with no Quaker background. Some teachers with a strong Christian faith are privately horrified by some of our beliefs or non-beliefs (for example on the concept of Original Sin or the Doctrine of the Atonement) while others resent any reference to religion at all. As for the teaching of Religion, it simply remains an option in Years 10–12 plus a little bit here and there about Quakerism in the Junior school and Year 7. New students who come to Year 11–12, especially international students, rarely know anything about Quakerism.

The curriculum has obviously evolved since the 17th century, but while Friends did pioneer an emphasis on teaching science and natural history, are we today any different from other schools? Friends also pioneered the idea of co-education, but while some independent schools remain single sex, even some of them are merging, usually for economic reasons. Hang ups over teaching music seem to have evaporated and Art is no longer just 'drawing' which it was in the early days when colour was avoided as out of keeping with 'plainness.' Despite the current obesity epidemic, the early Quaker emphasis on keeping physically fit continues in our schools, and efforts are made to offer students more healthy food in the canteen when many prefer

junk. No easy answers there either.

Where Quaker values do make us different is in the Statement of Purposes and Concerns, although how much of this rubs off on our students is hard to tell. The testimony on Equality manifests itself in use of first names but it is hard to make Service to others compulsory without negating the whole concept. The Peace Testimony certainly does not rub off on students seeking a military career after school, although the ADF are not invited to recruit as in other schools. On questioning why they sign up, students will invariably say that they want to learn to fly or get a free tertiary education.

Simplicity is the hardest testimony for teenagers in our consumer society, although there is more stress today on caring for the Environment, except when it comes to the attraction of having a car to drive to school in. Do we have a responsibility to suggest to parents that, if possible, they do not drive their offspring to school, especially when they are not Quakers anyway?

The emphasis on internationalism and learning foreign languages remains strong, despite the culture of litigation that has made school trips overseas either impossible or disgracefully expensive, but many of our students do maintain the Quaker tradition of travelling after they leave school, open to different cultures and new experiences.

As always, the questions remain, but Friends as Seekers never sought certainty, despite the endless polemic that this creates. As for the author, the contradictions of teaching as a Quaker in an expensive independent school never cease to keep him awake at night, but having all the answers laid out in canon law would be a far worse experience.

AF

‘Shall we begin with a few moments of silence?’

DUNCAN FREWIN | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING



Yearly Meeting is coming up, and with it a week of business meetings that we commonly open with ‘Shall we begin with a few moments of silence?’ And of course there are all the local or regional business meetings, the committee meetings, clearness meetings that also begin with ‘a few moments of silence’.

Too often it seems to me a perfunctory silence – just a lack of noise, a dry ritual at the start of the real business with the guilty whisper of late-comers, and eyes checking over the agenda. I wonder how many others find the silence perfunctory. Yet I have also experienced the living silence where the divine presence breathes among us, a silence that is of the soul rather than of the ears. What is this living silence? How does it prepare us for conducting our business?

What is this silence? Is it prayer? And what anyway do we mean by prayer? I’m not talking about what a friend called ‘God-bothering’ – you know: ‘Oh Lord, won’t you give me a Mercedes-Benz?’. God for me is not a thing out there that gives or withholds favours, who can be bargained with. But prayer is still something I turn to when I am desperate, when no earthly power is able to comfort me. I am faced with my powerlessness and I beg God (whatever that word means) for help. I don’t rationally believe in that God. I don’t know if this cry for help prepares me for a business meeting, yet that desperate call is my real human response. I can only accept it for that. Does it prepare me for a business meeting? Probably not. My needs are overwhelming me.

The idea of intercession is easier to accept – asking God to do something for someone else, commonly to heal them. At the beginning of business, my silence is sometimes a prayer for someone I love or some concern that is on me. I want

something to be achieved and hope God will do something about it. Someone has said that God has no hands but our hands. So, if I ask God to do something, I’m really offering to work on it myself. In the silence am I really offering myself to stand with the person I love or to take on some task or to stand with others in the concern, or take up something I have never attempted before?

Prayer can also mean opening myself to the divine will, as Jesus did in Gethsemane – ‘Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done.’ The silence is a time of listening for the voice of God rather than beseeching or demanding. But what is the voice of God? We say there is ‘that of God’ in every person. Can I hear the voice of God in the voices of those I meet? Then listening to the voice of God has to mean being open to the hopes, aspirations, fears, needs, pain and joy of those around me, both friends and strangers, listening for the call. ‘What do I have to do? What does love require of me?’ Can this be my worship as I settle into a business meeting?

More often I see worship as meditation. In the silence I seek to still the clamour of the world, shedding myself and its concerns, letting myself just be, as God just is. Meditation is a path to the sense of oneness with the universe – the world, the people around, the past, the future, and God. Not so terribly far from opening the self to the Divine. Is the silence a meditation that leads me to oneness with the divine, to discernment of the way forward in God?

At various times the silence has been all of these for me. In hard times I have faced my dark side, and hoped for a way into the light. In better times I have interceded for others, trying to offer my hands, my time, my energy to something in the business at hand. At yet other times

in opening myself, I have listened, or at least attempted to listen, for what I am called to do. I have tried to open myself to new light on what I hoped for, asking if it is right for me or for the meeting. Most often, though I try to meditate, trying to drop my ego, again and again, to let my eyes see more clearly, to let my heart feel more compassionately, to accept myself as part of the problem but also part of the solution, and to ‘live peace, live love’ through the matter before the meeting. And, I acknowledge, too often in dry times I have just waited for an empty silence to end, just going through the motions of discernment in the meeting.

We may be able to do all these in ‘a few moments’ but I still wonder how those few moments of silence work in us. Is ‘a few moments’ – often less than a minute – enough to take us into that state of grace where we can discern God’s calling in the matter before us? My soul longs for more time to feel the divine presence. I long to still the inner chatter, clear my heart to love the difficult people, open me to the divine presence in the midst. How do we make the silence a living silence, a creative moment of grace?

Is there a way for us to sit in truly worshipful silence to prepare ourselves to conduct business? Do we need more time? Do we need to practise silence more? I don’t have a sure answer. What I do know is that I can’t expect a living silence in those few moments if I have not quieted my soul in the weeks and months before. I need to live in that silence every day, the quietness of the soul. I need to practise focusing on the divine presence in all I do. Perhaps that is the lesson for me – to strive in every moment to live in the divine presence, so that the silence (and the meeting that follows it) can be filled with light.

AF



Know thy Friend

Jan de Voogd

IN CONVERSATION WITH RAE LITTING | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING

Jan tells me his life is made of out of four components – music, boats, peace, and Quakers. He says that music is his passion.

Jan started to learn to play the oboe, which he got for his 21st birthday, while he was still at university studying for an Arts degree. As he had plans of becoming a patrol officer in Papua New Guinea, he felt he needed a small instrument. However, after passing his ABC audition he played in orchestras in Australia and New Zealand for 7 years. These were possibly the happiest years of his life.

Subsequently Jan worked as a teacher, and looked after overseas students for the Commonwealth Office of Education and later administered Post-Graduate scholarships. These jobs did not give the same satisfaction, and Jan retired early at 55 years of age as he wanted to do peace work. While he was working for the Commonwealth he was a member of the Professional Officers Association, and was instrumental in introducing flexible working hours to the Commonwealth Public Service. He had hoped this would lead people to work when they were needed most, but he fears that in many cases they only took advantage of the freedom flexible hours offer.

His pleasure also came from building and sailing boats. He built four wooden boats in his flat at McMahons Point! When they were finished they had to be taken down the stairs (many of them!)

or removed via the window down many stories. Jan also built his *Duyfken*, a 29 ft raised deck cutter, designed by Quaker Iain Oughtred, nearby. He was lucky to have many helpers and it was a very rewarding creative effort for 3½ years. This boat did not have an engine for its first 17 years, but Jan enjoyed the freedom of sailing alone, taking off whenever the tide and wind were right. Jan also formed part of the Peace Squadron, sailing out to protest against boats which carried nuclear weapons. This taught him to seek that of God in the American sailors, and to see them as probable victims in a nuclear war.

It is hard not to see Peace as the enduring passion in Jan's life. His concern for peace probably has its roots in his multi-cultural background. He was born in Japan to Dutch parents with Huguenot ancestors – his father was a career diplomat who started work as a Japanese-Dutch translator. Jan's first language was Japanese, learnt from a very young Japanese wet nurse. Jan was born premature, and his family credit his wet nurse with saving his life. Jan was educated in English at a Canadian school in Kobe, Japan. He subsequently lived in Canada, the USA, Holland, China and Australia. He has always believed in an inclusive society and inclusive worship. The first Church Jan belonged to was the Union Church in Peking, a church that united people of different Protestant faiths into

one congregation. His father played the organ at this church, and at other Union Churches the family attended throughout the world.

Jan became involved in the Peace movement through the anti-nuclear movement in the 1960s. He learnt about non-violent action from the Quaker Peter Jones. He was secretary to the Peace Tax Campaign, and believes that no-one should be forced to pay tax for military purposes. He trained with Peace Brigades, and accompanied a Catholic priest who was returning to Sri Lanka from England as the priest had come under threat of disappearing due to his support of the fishermen in his parish. He had helped the fishermen to market their catch co-operatively and avoid exploitative middle-men. Jan, along with Jan-Louise Hamblyn and Jerome Fink from the Devonshire Street Meeting, were in the first Alternatives to Violence Program training course when Stephen Angel came to Sydney. He strongly believes that the peace activists should participate in all the decisions they are involved in, and that the peace movement needs to be non-hierarchical.

Strangely, it was not any of these activities which led Jan to Quakers. This came about when he was a member of the Christian Action Group, an ecumenical group which he tells me was more given to words than action. The group wanted a talk on Pierre Teilhard de Chardin,



Boats and peace: Jan in the *Duyfken* with the Peace Squadron.

and the speaker Jan found for them was Rudi Lemberg, a Quaker biochemist. It was through Rudi that Jan came to attend Meeting for Worship.

Asked about the most important peace issue of our day, Jan suggests the protection of refugees. He tells how he was twice a refugee. In 1941 he left Japan with his mother and brother on the last ship to carry passengers before the Second World War started in the Pacific. He was 9 years old, and settled in Toronto, Canada with his mother and younger brother. The Dutch ship only narrowly escaped being caught by a German raider because the captain made it difficult for the raider to follow accurately by heading straight into the sun. The slower ship managed to escape when it was able to hide in a rain squall.

Jan's father Niek de Voogd, who was the Dutch Consul in Kobe, was responsible for saving the lives of 4000 Jews who had escaped from Europe via Russia. Many of these refugees had been helped by a Japanese consul, Chiune Sugihara, who was working in Lithuania.

Sugihara produced thousands of handwritten transit visas permitting the holders to travel to Japan. However, before entering Japan, they were meant to have a visa to enter a third country. Jan's father met the refugees and issued them with visas to travel to Curaçao in the Dutch West Indies. It is doubtful that any ever went there, but the visas enabled them to travel to countries en route! Jan says there were three reasons why his father issued the visas:

- He remembered he was of Huguenot ancestry.
- He always tried to see things from the other person's point of view.
- He believed it was the spirit, and not the letter of the law that mattered.

Jan has always tried to follow these principles also.

After some time in Canada, the family lived in the USA, and then in Holland. Jan left Holland to join his parents in China in 1949 when the Dutch government asked his father to be the head of the mission that was to open

diplomatic relations with China. In 1951 he left China, again as a refugee, to go to boarding school in Australia because it was feared that the Korean War would turn into a world war. This was the height of the McCarthy era in the USA, and Jan hated the lies being spread by both the Americans and Chinese. He did not want to study in the USA because he could not stand the propaganda that was fostered by the Voice of America about Chinese Communism, and he was aware that he would not be allowed to work to earn his keep in the USA while he was an overseas student.

But Jan cannot confine himself to one concern only! He is involved in planning the Quaker involvement in the Sanctuary movement. And while I was interviewing him at his flat he was preparing a letter protesting against the ability of our Prime Minister or Minister of Defence to declare war without bringing the matter to the House of Representatives for discussion and approval.

AF

Devonshire Street Meeting House

Seeking New Wardens



Friends at Devonshire Street Meeting House, Surry Hills, Sydney, are seeking two Wardens for a 12-month period from the beginning of November 2016.

The Wardens' role is a voluntary one, and the Meeting supplies a semi-furnished 2-bedroom loft flat with services, including unlimited internet usage and Wi-Fi. There is also a separate wardens' office.

The Wardens are responsible for the general care and oversight of the Meeting House (Friends House) and the running of the guest accommodation and hall hire. There is ample opportunity for developing relationships with Friends, community and social justice groups and overnight guests. Quaker Service Australia (QSA) is based at Friends House.

The position would best suit active retirees or people in part-time employment, as some presence is

required during the day to welcome guests and hall users. The Wardens are well supported by the Devonshire Street Local Meeting (DSLML) House Committee.

The Wardens need not be Members or Attenders, but are expected to be in sympathy with Quakers, and to understand Quaker testimonies and processes. Applicants should be Australian or New Zealand citizens or residents.

Wardens have served the DSLML since 1975 and, following extensive renovations to Friends House in 1999, improved accommodation has been available for both the Wardens and travelling Friends (and friends and family of Friends).

The Surry Hills area has changed considerably over the years and is now a thriving, eclectic mix of largely rejuvenated private housing, public housing, offices, cafes, restaurants,

shops, clothing outlets, colleges, galleries, the award-winning Surry Hills Library, the Belvoir Theatre and, yes, still a number of 'public houses'. There are two parks close by (one with a swimming pool) as well as a cycle track installed by the Council of the City of Sydney. Friends House is just 5 minutes walk from Central Station.

Come and spend a year in Sydney and enjoy what inner-city living has to offer!

Further information is available from Jenny Madeline or Mary Pollard. Email: wardensearch@quakers.org.au

Applications close on 31 July 2016 and should be sent to the above email address or posted to:

House Committee
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)
119 Devonshire Street
Surry Hills
NSW 2010

AF

Everyday Prophets

The 2016 Backhouse Lecture



Margery Post Abbott. Photo by Laurence Kesterson



James Backhouse 1794 – 1869

Margery Post Abbott will give the 2016 Backhouse Lecture, entitled *Everyday Prophets*, on the evening of Monday, July 4. This lecture is open to the public. The following is an extract from her writings for this lecture.

‘Faithfulness to the Inward Guide lifts us free of the desire for personal success, or for revenge, or for control over the world around us. Such faithfulness opens the possibility that we might become, as our spiritual ancestors were, a band of what I have come to call everyday prophets. Everyday prophets are a people who listen for the Voice of the Light, who might walk humbly even as they come to speak boldly, following the path of compassion and justice.

‘One of our great gifts is the potential for each of us to act with divine grace, that we might each be an everyday prophet. As such, we seek to listen on a daily basis for God’s guidance. Doing this, we can be faithful prophetic voices in very ordinary ways – be it through prayer, caring for our neighbours, small acts of kindness – even as some of us are called to a larger, radical prophetic

vision and voice. We do this best as part of a community that is able to carry a vision of the New Creation, the Kingdom of God, being formed on earth as we remind each other to listen for the movement of the Spirit and be open to a fresh way of being.’

And a little later in her lecture, Margery expands on this:

‘I tend to see prophets as radicals who very publicly proclaim wrong-doing and predict harsh consequences. Certainly we have had many such prophets in our midst as a Religious Society of Friends, starting with George Fox, and carried on with folks such as the abolitionists Isaac Hopper and Lucretia Mott. More recently ... Jo Vallentine has been a prophetic voice in parliament on nuclear disarmament as well as the environment and relations with Aborigines, and Susannah Kay Brindle has been among those who have called for those of Anglo heritage to ‘pay the rent’ to Aboriginal people for the use of the land under Aboriginal spiritual custodianship as well as other work that helps shift the whole way we view our place on this earth. But there is another kind of action, a way of life really, that

is part of our heritage of believing that each person might directly experience the living Christ and follow that guidance, whether it be by speaking in worship or in their day-to-day actions.’

Margery Post Abbott is a released Friend currently writing and travelling in the ministry, with the support of Multnomah Monthly Meeting in Portland, Oregon. She has published widely, including her 2010 book, *To Be Broken and Tender* and co-editing the *Historical Dictionary of the Friends* (2012). Her writings carry a concern for the whole of the Religious Society of Friends, and she works to engage Friends of all traditions. Her concern for making Friends’ voice heard more widely in the world takes her regularly to Washington, DC, where she has served as presiding clerk of Friends Committee on National Legislation. FCNL published her pamphlet *A Theological Perspective on Quaker Lobbying* in 2012. She regularly offers workshops on discernment, support and clearness committees, and prophetic ministry among Friends.

AF



QSA Notes

Developments in Cambodia

JACKIE PERKINS | QSA ADMINISTRATOR



Training in growing vegetables and fruit trees resulting in food gardens to feed the family. Photo credit QSA



QSA and DFAT funded wells. Photo credit QSA

Monitoring visits are always exciting and busy times. They also provide opportunities to see project achievements first hand, and develop further the relationship with project partners and participants on behalf of QSA. Details of many events are also given, many of which were not included in the quarterly report because they happened a few weeks ago, or the partner's staff thought we would not be interested! How wrong can they be? We love to know everything that is going on.

A recent visit to Cambodia to see the progress of the projects funded by QSA and Australian Aid via the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) gave me the opportunity to meet many more project participants, hear their stories and, in this case in a village in Kampong Thom Province, see the great project food gardens they have created to feed themselves and their families. One main change, as reported by the village chief involved in the project, is the

change in the attitude and demeanour of the participants – they have more confidence, are healthier due to the improved intake of fresh vegetables and are more cooperative and supportive of each other instead of being competitive all of the time. What was particularly evident was the impact of access to water resources on the crops being grown during this dry season. Some households have received a well as part of this project, consisting of concrete rings to secure the well shaft, and each recipient is responsible for providing a secure lid to prevent rubbish, small animals or children from falling down the shaft. One widow with two small children had an uncovered well, but the village chief gave his assurance that he would help her to provide a cover. As part of the DFAT funding guidelines, all resources provided have to promote the country providing the funding, hence the emblems painted on the side of the wells.

Garden beds had been created by

the participants in areas around their home that was previously simply bare soil unused for any purpose. Already noticeable were the range of crops grown and impact of income generation from selling a small quantity of surplus produce. This is the time of year when many families have used up their rice crop from last season and are having to purchase some. Previously they would also be purchasing vegetables so growing their own is a reduced outlay for them. Many of the families supplement their income either by working as labourers for other families in the area, harvesting palm juice to make palm sugar, selling fruit leathers from reduced fruit juices, selling honey from small bee hives, or fish farming. Some keep poultry to supply eggs as well as fresh chickens for festivals such as the many weddings happening at this time of year and for Khmer and Chinese New Year. One family I met were also keeping crocodiles, approximately twenty in all and currently six



Completing the woven mats at the Centre. Photo credit QSA

months old, which will be kept for their skins when more mature. Many of the families I met asked about the possibility of having a toilet near to their house, instead of simply using the local field. This was discussed with the project partner staff and QSA is pleased to see that this has been included in the new project proposal for the project from July 2016, again to be funded by QSA and DFAT.

During the visit I was joined by Jane Drexler, from NSW Regional Meeting, who was making another visit as a consultant to the vocational training centre in Pursat, the Bunrany Hun Sen Development Centre. The influence

of two garment factories in Pursat Province as large-scale employers of thousands of young people, especially women, continues to be a major obstacle for the expansion of the Centre as a training centre. Ponna, the Director of the Development Centre, has met with community leaders and parents in attempts to increase the number of youth coming for training, however this has not been effective and the numbers have halved in the last five years. Consequently, the quantity of products completed for sale, such as scarves, woven mats etc, is insufficient, particularly when an order is placed by traders who buy in bulk so that sometimes the Centre has to refuse

an order as it cannot get the quantity in time. Some of the products made in earlier years, such as stone carving, have now been curtailed due to a reduction in sales. Product quality continues to be an issue. As a result of Jane's investigations and discussions with Ponna and her staff, the idea has evolved of shifting the emphasis of the Centre away from being a vocational training centre, to becoming a production centre, still supporting local women and youth. This has been reflected in the new project proposals for the coming project year, and we look forward to receiving progress reports about this.

AF

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.

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FGC Central Committee Report for Australian Friends

SALLY KINGSLAND | FORMERLY CANBERRA REGIONAL MEETING, NOW STRAWBERRY CREEK MONTHLY MEETING,
PACIFIC YEARLY MEETING (USA)

In October 2015 I attended the Friends General Conference (FGC) Central Committee meeting in Maryland. I was invited as an observer representing Australia Yearly Meeting and it was a wonderful opportunity to witness faithful Quaker process and meet a group of dedicated Friends from all over North America.

Friends General Conference (FGC) is a collaborative initiative of a number of Yearly Meetings in the USA and Canada Yearly Meeting. It was formed in 1900 in response to the wide and enthusiastic support of a biennial gathering of North American Friends.

FGC grew out of the gathering and continues to host, what is now an annual gathering that typically attracts more than one thousand Friends from across the globe. Various Australian Friends have attended FGC Gathering through the years, including my family in 2014. The Gathering aims to nurture spiritual growth and fellowship and provides opportunities for worship, workshops, plenary addresses, concerts and dances, special interest groups and affiliations, child and youth programs, exploration of the local area (the Gathering is held in different locations each year) and much more. Many plenary and Bible study sessions from previous gatherings are available on the FGC website.

With a staff of just under 20 people, FGC also undertakes a range of work in areas that many Yearly Meetings would struggle to address on their own. I have seen Australian Friends benefit from FGC's current, or former, programs including Couple Enrichment program, Travelling Ministries, children's religious education resources, the QuakerBooks bookstore and more. FGC also offers the Quaker Cloud service to host Meeting websites, a Meeting House Fund that allows

Meetings to borrow funds for Meeting House purchase or renovation, and Stewardship Services that provides advice around estate planning.

The Christian and Interfaith Relations subcommittee of FGC is responsible for representing FGC Friends at the World Council of Churches and interfaith dialogues. In this way, and others, I have come to realise that FGC is an umbrella body for 'unprogrammed, liberal' Yearly Meetings in North America, though it is very inclusive. FGC has a great working relationship with other branches of the Quaker family. The FGC website is wonderful place for new seekers to learn about the tradition that we, in Australia, are closely related to.

Central Committee is the FGC governing body and is made up of representatives of the member Yearly Meetings, and a small number of Monthly Meetings (equivalent to our Local Meetings), who have affiliated with FGC. Observers from other Yearly Meetings are also often invited, and Friends who have been co-opted to Central Committee committees also attend. Central Committee meets every year in October over four days and the event typically involves around 130-140 people including FGC staff.

I was mightily impressed with the way that Spiritual opening and deepening was supported during what was essentially a long business meeting. Participants could choose from worship groups, open worship or singing in the mornings before breakfast and the event





Young Love Awakened

On a delicate autumn day I play
 Nat King Cole, and the fifties come
 back,
 and the world is young again.
 Light yellow leaves fall on the
 footpath,
 the warm wind shifts its direction,
 and memories seep back, young
 love
 not then drenched with sex,
 tender, lyrical,
 enchanted, untouched by grim
 realities,
 ready to drift on the caressing
 wind, lovingly.

This is a dream world, one day to
 be awakened
 by rude shocks and successions of
 small failures,
 and the smashing of unreal
 expectations.
 Afterwards will come the slow
 realisation
 that the world can be made better
 by thought and patience,
 and the company of good friends,
 into something grander
 and more powerfully beautiful
 than we had ever imagined:
 over time, constructed by
 dedication and intelligence,
 communities of communities,
 open to God and each other,
 to invention and progress,
 at last, a credit to creation.

Reg Naulty

finished with an hour-long Meeting for Worship.

This year Central Committee had some difficult business to address around reducing the FGC budget. In order to reduce the budget, programs had to be laid down and staff let go. It was made more difficult because the impetus for change had come only two months before Central Committee was to meet. Despite the significant changes to be considered, and short time frame, the reports for the meeting were provided in good time for reading and committee members were able to join conference calls prior to the meeting to ask questions and raise concerns. Listening sessions continued to be held during Central Committee.

Thanks to an enormous amount of work from executive members, subcommittee members and staff, Central Committee was able to consider and approve significant reductions in the budget in a timely and considered manner. This was not easy, or without challenges, and grieving and celebrating during the process was necessary. The work was upheld by nearly ten prayerful presences (Elders) and a number of people were available as compassionate listeners throughout the four days. The FGC report from Central Committee is available here.

In finishing this report I would particularly like to highlight some services that I think Australian Friends may benefit from – there are many resources available for free, or at low cost, from FGC. These include material on children's religious education,

addressing racism, spiritual deepening for Meetings, how to better welcome newcomers to our Meetings and starting new Meetings. The Quaker Cloud service for hosting Meeting websites is unique and really worth investigating. Not only does it allow Meetings to have an attractive, easy-to-manage website at a highly competitive cost, it has features specifically useful to Quakers such as the Minute record keeping. This saves Minutes getting lost on people's individual computers which is a serious concern these days. We are in danger as a faith tradition of losing our impeccable historical record of keeping unbroken minutes that have, at times in the past, been sufficiently reliable to be used as court evidence. Another benefit of the Quaker Cloud is that as a community, all the Meetings who use the service contribute to, and benefit from, building resources for new seekers and existing members.

Since moving to the USA (in December 2013) it has occurred to me what a challenge we have in Australia of being a relatively small Yearly Meeting and also undertaking a lot of the functions that FGC plays for unprogrammed liberal Friends here in North America. I wonder about, and will continue to explore, ways that we can collaborate to strengthen the spiritual vitality of Friends everywhere. I hope we might see a few Australian Friends at the FGC Gathering in July 2016! It will be held in Minnesota with the theme 'be humble, Be Brave, BE BOLD!'

AF



Becoming Friends

VIVIENNE LUKE | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

I would definitely recommend the *Becoming Friends* online course to people new to Quakers and to those who wish to deepen their understanding of the history, spirituality and practices of Friends. First, a little background.

In 2012, during a visit to the UK (I was born in Cornwall), my husband and I stayed at the Penn Club on a recommendation from a friend. Whilst there I picked up a copy of *Advices and Queries* and was immediately hooked. I carried my copy with me throughout our time away and reflected on it each day. Returning to Hobart, I began to attend Hobart Meeting intermittently, sometimes confused and frustrated, other times finding deep inner peace. I had been an active member of the Catholic Church since 1997 and struggled from day one with much of the dogma and practice of the Church. However, the Sisters of St Joseph became an anchor, especially their total commitment to social justice.

In 2013 I enrolled in *Becoming Friends* online. The course is run out of Woodbrooke using the Moodle platform. Since then I have stopped and restarted twice! The course convenors have been very patient and now I am fully engaged with all that the course has to offer. The stopping had less to do with the course and more to do with my personal struggles with some aspects of Quakers. I have struggled with the often unspoken divisions in Quakers, and with (what I experience as) a comfortable middle-class feel. As someone from a poor family of origin, I have difficulty in this. Having read much of the history, it feels strange

to experience the secular feel of much of Quakers. Personally, I have a deep faith in God and have experienced God's presence on many occasions. It is central to all I am as a person. I have twice returned to the Catholic Church, hungry for the diversity of people it offers in terms of class, colour and outlook, and for the deep commitment to God and to the poor in our society. However, my difficulties with dogma and practice resurface and I find myself alienated again. Hence *Becoming Friends* has become very important to me. There are many Quakers who understand my struggles and that is very helpful to me.

Each time I have moved away from the Church and re-engaged with Quakers, *Becoming Friends* has immediately drawn me back and offered a pathway to understanding.

Becoming Friends is a wonderful course to engage with. Over the last few years I had done a lot of reading about Quakers and attended *Quaker Quest*. I was looking for something to deepen and inform my journey, and *Becoming Friends* fulfils that very well. The course is well set out and easy to work with. At £20 Sterling, it is also affordable and very good value. The student can work through the content at their own pace and there are no assignments or exams.

A quick rundown on the structure of the course:

Becoming Friends offers eight units plus an opening and closing unit. The units are: Faith in Action, Speaking of God, Silence and Waiting, Experiencing Quaker Community, *Advices and Queries*, The Sacred in the Everyday, Deep Roots and New Growth, Faithful Diversity.

Each unit has the same structure. There are opening sections called 'Distinctives' where the student is given information and

background for the unit. Then it moves on to 'Discoveries' where the student explores the topic in more depth and their own responses. The final section is 'Deepening' and this is an encouragement to really deepen our own practice, understanding, and to share with others. All of this is supported by online companions and the unit online Forum for sharing with other students. I have found the online companions very supportive, encouraging and approachable. The Forums are a wonderful way to 'meet' other students and exchange our experiences with the course.

At this stage I have completed three units and am currently immersed in 'Silence and Waiting'. I will return to the completed units again, as my understanding deepens allowing me to learn more.

I cannot recommend the course highly enough. It is grounding my practice and informing much of what I do. It has helped me ask questions and engage with Friends more. I can't pass comment on the units I have not yet done, but those I have were really enlightening and challenging.

Some suggestions:

Firstly, perhaps local Meetings in Australia could encourage Friends to be available to meet and encourage those doing the course in their area. This would help students integrate more in their local Quaker community and offer support and conversation about the student's experience of *Becoming Friends* and of their experience with Quakers. I believe that Woodbrooke offers help to those who wish to support students in this way and they can be contacted online for details. It would be ideal if students had a local *Becoming Friends* companion and,

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How do Friends DO theology?

VALERIE JOY | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING



I was fortunate to attend recently a Seminar entitled ‘Testing Tradition and Liberating Theology’, led by Dr Val Webb. Val was at the University of Queensland in my undergraduate days, and we were both members of the Evangelical Union. I reflected on how far both she and I have travelled over the subsequent years in exploration of faith, spiritual community and belief!

Theology is always subject to change and encompasses the where, what, how, who and if of God. From the early church, Val took us through theologies of the Middle Ages, Luther, Calvin, Kant, Wesley, Hegel, Schweitzer, Barth, Bultmann, Bonhoeffer and Tillich. Outside influences on theology such as that of Darwin’s *Origin of Species* were touched upon.

An amazing juxtaposition of the Billy Graham crusades and Bishop Robinson’s *Honest to God* in the early 60s created great tensions between traditional theologies and courageous questioning. Being part of both, I felt great confusion in my early 20s. Following this, saw the start of ‘contextual theology’ – which includes a theology for the planet, liberation theology, feminist theology, and the influences of Buddhism, Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and other faiths. A new beginning has emerged, which Val described as a ‘spring cleaning of our minds’. Our theologies involve our imagination and our passion – not the dry as dust stuff of my early evangelical

years. It reminds me of the Quakers in the first decade 1652–1662, where they were on fire with the Spirit and teaching of Christ, as well as the early Christians after Pentecost.

The Buddhist teacher Paramananda asks us to wear our beliefs like a suit of clothes, not a suit of armour and be ready to shed them if necessary. Over my own decades I have shed some, re-examined some, used different language for others – finding an excitement when reading or listening to theologies that fit with my understanding and relationship with the Divine.

Belonging, Behaving and then Believing is what I see Quakers doing. Enquirers come to us looking for a welcoming faith community. They sit amongst us and share their stories. Belief for Quakers then comes, and it is usually individually tailored by the Spirit working in each person’s heart. This comes back in the circle to belonging as we share our wonderful new insights. It is not dry belief either because it leads to compassionate actions, nurture of ourselves and others.

In our small groups, we shared our understandings of doing theology. We looked at theological hospitality, which involves acceptance of one another and being open to learning from them. Being part of the ecumenical and interfaith work of QCT (Queensland Churches Together), I see this sharing work as opening doorways and shedding Light on

our paths.

Jesus is an incredible

role model for us now. Belonging for his disciples, involved behaving in new ways as they struggled with their Jewish theologies towards new life-affirming beliefs. I hope the influence of these progressive theologies will make us more certain of our position and practice as Quakers.

A Date Claimer:

‘Progressive Spirituality: New Directions’ 16-19 September 2016, Somerville House, South Brisbane.

An opportunity to explore future expressions of faith and spirituality, eco-theology and inter-faith issues (including indigenous connections) with a program of distinguished international speakers and eminent Australian and New Zealand experts.

Speakers include:

- Dr Val Webb, Australian theologian, internationally popular teacher, presenter and author.
- Diana Butler Bass – Specialist in issues of religion, spirituality and culture.
- Dr Pamela Eisenbaum – a Jewish New Testament Scholar
- David Felton – cofounder of Living the Questions

Registrations are opening shortly. Go to www.commondreams.org

AF

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also, access to a group of people open to sharing with them.

Secondly, what is lacking in *Becoming Friends*, of course, is an Australian flavour. Perhaps an Australian short course in association with *Becoming Friends* could provide history and engagement with our

landscape and culture. Australia has been called ‘The Great South Land of the Holy Spirit’ – quite a Quaker image? I don’t know if resources would stretch to this, but it would be marvellous if they could.

I hope this brief review has been helpful and that people may be motivated

to have a look at the Woodbrooke website, <http://woodbrooke.org.uk>. At the top of the page click on ‘Courses and Learning’, then in the right hand list, click on *Becoming Friends*.

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environment of the classroom. We have a poster in our staff area I particularly love with the reminder – ‘We are ALL teachers of wellbeing’; again the commonalities between the goals of teaching and counselling are obvious. The importance of cultivating emotional and social wellbeing in my classroom has always been a passion for me and the resultant rewards are immeasurable. I know I have the unique experience of working in a job, that every day has the potential to change lives for the better; by teaching students about the world around them, by first teaching them about themselves. It really doesn’t get any better than that!

So, even though it was a hard juggling act, I am truly grateful to have had the

opportunity to formalise my counselling skills by undertaking study at the University of Tasmania; the skills learnt and the opportunities for formalised reflection have strengthened my skills as a teacher. They allowed me the unique opportunity to consolidate my passion for the Humanities, for Values Education and for the emotional wellbeing of my students and my colleagues, and, I get to practise what I have learnt everyday.

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Bethany: seeking acceptance

Working the problem together to find solutions takes time, yet time is something that some parents find difficult. This is a hard paragraph to write, because so many parents are wonderful, understanding and patient with their children’s problems. Unfortunately, occasionally there are parents who find the issue of specific learning disabilities beyond their understanding. They desperately want to help the child, but often seek for a ‘magic’, instant solution. Bethany’s mother is just such a parent. Having found school easy, she struggles to comprehend Bethany’s problems. She insists frequently and loudly that Bethany should try harder, work harder, practice her spellings more. Whatever Bethany achieves is never quite good enough. Quakers believe in the intrinsic worth of each person, just as Christ did. Bethany’s on-going work includes providing her mother with specific data showing her child’s improvement, and praising the child in front of her mother. Accepting the child we have, with the problems that they have, rather than the child we would like to have, and rejoicing in the skills that

they do have, can be a steep learning curve for some parents. Bethany is actually quite a bright student with strong gifts in creativity. Slowly, her mother is being encouraged to see this for herself.

Mark: teaching acceptance

Just as Quakers promote the importance of equality, so part of my job is often to teach children to be more accepting, especially children who have been the target of bullying. It is about teaching the children to cope with bullying and not to bully themselves. Some students lack the skills to understand what is, and what is not, acceptable and often they copy what they think are acceptable ideas, modelling their own behaviour on the behaviour that they have received. Fifteen-year-old Mark had to learn that acne isn’t ‘dirty’, in fact that children with acne often spend more time and effort on their appearance than those who are unafflicted. He needed to understand that older citizens do not have special ‘old people’ feelings that make them worth less than the young. Helping him to see that everyone is relevant is an integral part of ‘Quakering’ and the acceptance of all.

Myself: Accepting

non-acceptance

Quakers frequently have to accept non-acceptance, yet maintain their own standards. Walking the narrow way can be uncomfortable, even as we walk cheerfully over the world. Being a Quaker, choosing the non-violent way to live, choosing to accept others and to welcome them, is a choice that others might find threatening, and it can affect our comfort zone. Rejection is painful, while accepting it and moving on regardless is powerful.

In general, some teachers do not like tutors, even though we have come from the ranks of the teaching profession. Mainly, this is because there are so many strange and unresearched interventions available. These give tutors a bad reputation. Tutors carry the image of being uneducated and even unprofessional. A tiny number of teachers feel threatened and can be rude when they deal with tutors. Fortunately, many teachers, however, are wonderful and supportive of both parents and students, and are a delight to work with. I have had to learn to cope with

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Live the Spirit

DAVID EVANS | SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND NORTHERN TERRITORY REGIONAL MEETING



We need to be reminded constantly we live in a spiritual world.

Some Quakerly reminders have come my way in recent times, and I would like to think them over with you in a worship sharing way, i.e., not as a statement of belief. Unpredictable as the wind, spiritual experiences come and linger and fade, and leave you with a longing for more.

Actually I do have a credo. It is not very original and is like the Christmas message, *Work for peace with a spirit of goodwill*. My working definition of peace is *Peace is the enjoyment of good relationships*. Good relationships are great and attainable, and are built on a basis of goodwill. However, like climbing to the top of the slippery pole, we slide down again and have to start over.

In a further attempt to get belief out of the way in order to talk about spirituality, I would like to refer you to an article by Eric Palmieri in a recent issue of the *Friends Journal*.^[1] Referring to the tragedy of the deep divisions of the children of God worshipping within major religions including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Palmiere concludes,

The time has come for us to recognize the truth that we are all related by the Spirit, by that of God in everyone, and that no amount of dogmatic schism

will ever change the deep-seeded need to love and be loved by one another. We are all Friends in the Spirit, and we are all siblings in the family of God.

This statement of belief gets my full applause.

Moving to expression of spirituality, Sue Wilson has done a wonderful job in her recent article in the December 2015 issue of the *Australian Friend* entitled 'The breathtaking breadth of Friends' experience. (A plea to listen to each other's spiritual experiences rather than debate our beliefs).^[2] Sue talks of her 'Road to Damascus' experiences in a similar way as does Malcolm Whyte in his contribution to experiences of the spirit in *This We Can Say*.^[3] Sue says:

my preference for talking about experience rather than beliefs grows out of my own spiritual experience. Three or four times in my life, I have suddenly felt surrounded by a presence – Love and Goodness filling the space around me, like a huge balloon, bursting against the walls. The presence was all around me and yet it was in me as well. Each time, this overwhelming experience lasted about twenty minutes. It was beyond any words to describe it.

Malcolm relates how it happened for him one night in October 1960, saying,

I experience something very basic and important, personal, liberating, caring,

practical.... an experience of what's beyond the cloud of unknowing..... it was something I had read about and not understood....a Damascus road experience.

What we can say is that over-the-top experiences like this are not everyday fare, but milestones of your life experience – game changing milestones. Milestones that give you faith in the worthwhileness of our existence in spite of all the tragedy around.

We need more Quakerly spiritual stories. One of my own is that I was in trouble, and my wife Topsy hundreds of miles away knew at the time. Talking this way, other people will share stories of their own, anytime anywhere. Worship sharing is a great place for Quakerly storytelling. We express ourselves as we will. The moment is unrepeatable. In Meeting for worship, or in worship sharing, a deep silence may come. The feeling is of being at a deeper level of shared spirituality, a growing excitement related to a consciousness of a greater world; and you are there.

[1] Palmieri, E. Spiritual Kinship in the Family of God. *Friends Journal*, Feb 2016, 62, p5.

[2] Wilson, S. The breathtaking breadth of Friends' experience. *The Australian Friend*. Dec 2015

[3] Whyte, M. Experiences of the spirit *This We Can Say* 10.1 p.9

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RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORK AND FAITH — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

the rejection and not to let it impact my performance.

Finally: the lessons

Tutoring has helped me to put into practice the knowledge of the importance of every child. They have given me lessons

in humility and in perseverance. They have taught me so much, about values, about battling against enormous odds, about not giving up and about sharing the successes. I can say with honesty that these children are amazing and worthy of far greater respect than they often meet in daily life.

Why do I do it? I think it's about both justice and mercy. That is how I 'Quaker', it's about doing what is right, and it is fulfilling, exciting and humbling to find that my faith and my work are inseparable.

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Noted ...

This is our regular feature in which we briefly record interesting publications and websites that have come to our attention.

Inclusion of an item in this format does not preclude a possible longer review in a later issue. We welcome suggestions for inclusion.

WHAT LOVE CAN DO: FOLLOWING THE WAY OF JUSTICE, PEACE AND COMPASSION BY GERRY GUITON

The title of Gerry Guiton's latest book is taken from a quote by William Penn. It is about the Kingdom of God (or 'the Way' as Gerry usually calls it) and its practical application in today's fractured world. Much of the content was inspired by a number of courses Gerry ran at Silver Wattle and covers such topics as celebration, truth, faith and trust, the prayer of silence, peace,

justice, compassion, political and spiritual liberation, ecology and the non-human world, simplicity and equality.

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