

AYM Presiding Clerk's Report to Yearly Meeting 2020

'Praise the path on which we're led'.

My term as Yearly Meeting Presiding Clerk started smoothly and easily. At Jo Jordan's invitation, I attended the National Council of Churches Triennium Meetings in Canberra in June 2019 during which NCCA formulated strategic directions and planned the 2020 gatherings—now all on hold. In November I attended the NCCA AGM in Sydney and, with David Purnell, participated in an Assembly focussed on Moral Discernment.

At 2019 January and July Standing Committees and YM2019 I carefully noted the Clerk's role. Post Yearly Meeting there was little for me to do, so attentive had Presiding Clerk Jo Jordan and Yearly Meeting Secretary Jacque Schultz been attending to items arising from YM2019.

Since September 2019 emails, Standing Committee and other Zoom Meetings, the National Redress Scheme and now planning for a 'virtual' Yearly Meeting 2020 have added significantly to demands upon the AYM Secretary, the Presiding Clerk, Regional Meeting Clerks, and the Canberra RM Planning Committee. Who could have envisaged last July that we would be planning YM2020 entirely online?

Standing Committee (SC) agreed in July 2019 to hold on-line Meetings using Zoom technology. In the first Zoom Meeting, August 25th, SC approved the Yearly Meeting Budget. At a further October 27th SC the report from the Right Holding of Yearly Meeting Committee was accepted. We noted that 'Friends wish Yearly Meeting to remain an all-age community event with connecting and sharing time to deepen the collective spiritual experience at the heart of our discernment and decision making. We value the voice and contributions of Friends at every age and life stage. We asked: how might technology be creatively and usefully employed in conducting our Yearly Meeting Business?'. This question now is front of mind. Together we are slowly learning and refining skills to support Quaker business processes online. Social distancing means YM Clerk, YM Assistant Clerk and YM Secretary are in three different States and Territory and two time zones. Minuting under these conditions requires detailed preparation, sustained attention and discipline from everyone.

Last November, staff from the National Redress Scheme (NRS) notified AYM office of a claim 'citing Quakers'. Jacque Schultze and I each attended a webinar to understand the how the Scheme operated and convened a special Standing Committee Meeting asking: Should YM join the NRS? If so, under what structure, and what next steps would be needed? Responses from each Regional Meeting and YM Associated Bodies came to Mid-year Standing Committee in Brisbane in January. I welcomed the chance to meet face to face as we prayerfully discerned how we might proceed. Brisbane Friends' hospitality and care sustained us through long, challenging Business sessions. And we were blessed by deafening rain as we gathered for closing worship.

In the absence of a quorum in the Kelvin Grove Meeting House for the AYM, a small of number interstate Friends joined the AGM via Zoom so the Meeting was quorate.

When Standing Committee met again via Zoom on March 8th, we acknowledged that we face 'unknown unknowns' in relation to possible NRS claims which can be lodged until June 30th 2028. SC minutes record our discernment to guide processes and decisions.

I attended the Quaker Service Australia AGM in February at Devonshire Street Meeting House, Sydney. Jackie Perkins had just returned from overseas, visiting several locations and projects. Her photos and stories of changes in the lives and communities spoke volumes. We all enjoyed learning more about the challenges and successes of the ongoing Cambodian toilet project.

The Presiding Clerk is an ex officio member of The Friends School Board. In February I attended the Board Planning Day in Hobart. The agenda included updates and plans for further campus developments and

upgrades. Senior staff from each section of the school shared their experience and approach to pastoral support and care for students and staff. My visit included an opportunity to attend weekly Gathering with Clemes students and, following Hobart Meeting on Sunday, a luncheon for Former Scholars who left TFS 50 or more years ago.

I have participated in all TFS Board meetings via phone, and now a Zoom link. The school has made significant adaptation to provide online learning while Tasmanian schools remain shut down. The School's communication with and support for students, families, staff—shared with the Board—has been exceptional, reflecting the Purpose and Concerns Statement.

I have signed petitions on behalf of Yearly Meeting including the International Day of Peace Statement, Global Faith Leaders petition opposing the Adani Mine, and a further petition to the Federal Government to become a signatory to IPAN. Letters included one to Government supporting the release of the Biluela family from Christmas Island Detention Centre, and to NCCA inviting Christian leaders to speak out against Indonesian Military violence in West Papua. I am grateful to individual Friends and Committees who assist in drafting and crafting correspondence.

In December and January YM office received letters of support and concern from Friends around the world as they witnessed the terrible impact of our bush fires.

I have experienced support and concern from many Friends this year. Jacque Schultze has been a wonderful guide and mentor in all manner of AYM matters. I have asked much of David Purnell as YM2020 Assistant Clerk and valued his wisdom, perspicacity, and experience as a SC co-clerk. I have met with my support group every eight weeks or so. Allan Knight has worked alongside me as a co-clerk for some Zoom SC Meetings. Many others provide gentle listening, encouragement, and reassurance 'that all will be well'.

Recently, during WARM meeting for worship online, I sat with the Poem "Praise the Rain" by American poet laureate Joy Harjo. The poem suggests using the word **Praise** as a response to *all* we see and experience. No rush to judgement. Simply observe and express Praise. At the end of a long dry summer, it had finally rained in Perth two nights in a row. Not much rain. Enough to suggest transition to a gentler season. **Praise the rain.**

In this, my first year as Presiding Clerk it has been easy to express Praise for the many blessings and opportunities that have come my way and hard to Praise the challenges and difficulties accompanying this time and role. The poem invites me, us, to simply Praise them all. Join me Friends to **Praise** our way through.

Ann Zubrick, AYM Presiding Clerk