

The Australian Friend

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Religious Freedom



Editorial

In the past few months we have been delighted to receive so many contributions from Friends, sharing a great range of concerns and insights. We begin this issue with articles on Religious Freedom because this has been so much in the news. While recognising that in Australia people are free to worship according to the tradition of their choice, many religious groups feel that they are losing status and influence in the community. Changes in the law such as marriage equality and decriminalising of euthanasia alarm some of them. During the Religious Freedom debate the churches sometimes seem to be dealing with important matters like the freedom to follow one's conscience – as with the Quaker concern for conscientious objection to war, or the right of Catholic doctors to refuse to carry out abortions. Sometimes they seem to be seeking to keep their institutions outside mainstream law, for example by discriminatory hiring practices. These issues are explored in our leading articles.

The issue of living sustainably is also concerning many Quakers, and we hear how one Quaker is trying to cut her carbon footprint, and how Quaker Service Australia implements the principle of sustainability into its projects. The traditional concern of Peace still flourishes amongst us, as does a concern for the refugees created by war and environmental destruction. And as always, we offer the opportunity to read about the spiritual journeys of Friends. Our paths are so different, yet our concerns and deepest needs are the same.

This brings us to our crucial need to turn to the Inner Light for guidance and refreshment. How are we to minister to each other in Meeting for Worship? How do we distinguish true ministry from a mere exchange of ideas? This issue has one article about ministry. Do Friends have similar or different experiences or understandings? We would like to hear.

THE AUSTRALIAN FRIEND EDITORIAL TEAM



NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting
of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia
will be held at

1pm on Sunday 19 January 2020

at the Brisbane Friends Meeting House
10 Hampson Street, Kelvin Grove QLD 4059.

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Cover photo: NSW Ecumenical Council members

Quaker submission on religious freedom legislation

DAVID PURNELL | QUAKER PEACE AND LEGISLATION COMMITTEE



The following is a summary of the Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee submission to the Religious Discrimination Bill, the Religious Discrimination (Consequential Amendments) Bill, and the Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Freedom of Religion) Bill. The full submission can be seen on the Yearly Meeting website.

We are part of a global organisation (the Religious Society of Friends) that is culturally and theologically diverse, and places a strong value upon spiritual freedom of individuals within the group. Over the years Quakers have worked for the freedom of slaves, the equality of women, the rights of LGBTIQ people and all races, the resolution of conflict by nonviolent means, the right of conscientious objection to military service, and the need for a life of simplicity that is in harmony with our environment.

We support the principles of religious freedom embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and international human rights conventions. We also endorse Section 116 of the Australian Constitution that prevents the establishment or imposition of any religion, or a religious test for public office.

We consider that over the past decades, humanity has made progress in the protection of human rights internationally and domestically, and we seek to maintain that progress through mutual respect, dialogue and acceptance, rather than creating exemptions that could reverse that trend. In the Australian context, we believe that a Charter of Rights consistent with international norms would be the best way to fill current gaps and underpin comprehensive protection of religious freedom along with all other human rights and freedoms.

We welcome the draft legislation as offering a framework for national

dialogue on the standards appropriate to encourage mutual respect for different beliefs. We are concerned that the proposed legislation gives a special priority to religious freedom and is likely to conflict with existing human rights and anti-discrimination laws. In addition there seems to be a conflation between the rights of individuals and the rights of organisations to discriminate. Under established human rights regimes it is clear that only individuals have such rights.

We are relieved that the legislation is grounded in anti-discrimination law instead of religious rights philosophy. In this respect the Bill reflects existing anti-discrimination laws in the states and territories. However, it grants religious bodies the power to discriminate in hiring staff, but no such provision is available to commercial organisations. The provision that someone cannot be said to discriminate merely for expressing a genuinely held belief seems designed to prevent an employer putting any restriction on an employee such as Israel Folau (even though the public service is being treated more strictly).

The definition of a 'relevant employer' specifies a turnover of \$50m, apparently on the assumption that large employers set the standard for businesses generally. Apart from \$50m being an arbitrary figure and the test being hard to meet, it also ignores the reputational or other non-financial damage that may be incurred (e.g. through social media).

There is reference to health practitioners being able to object to

offering a service on the grounds of their religious belief/activity. It should be made clear that, alongside this right, there should be a provision that the practitioner has the obligation to refer the patient to a health care practitioner who can provide the service.

The legislation provides for the creation of a new position of Freedom of Religion Commissioner. We are not convinced of the need for such a position, given the powers already available to the Human Rights Commission.

The legislation amends the Marriage Act 1961 to allow educational institutions established for religious purposes to refuse to make facilities available or provide goods and services in relation to the holding of a marriage service/ceremony. This will have an adverse impact especially on LGBTIQ people who seek a marriage ceremony under the care of a group like Quakers. Quakers have long held that marriage 'is the Lord's work and we are but witnesses'. We believe that the 2017 legislation was a step forward in recognising the equal rights of everyone, and we consider that the new legislation gives too much leeway for exemptions from according equal rights.

We would be concerned if Quakers' advocacy of equal marriage rights for LGBTIQ people were to raise questions about the charitable status of a Quaker organisation. To avoid privileging the views of some faith communities and people over others, the legislation

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Discussions and consultations about the draft Religious Discrimination Act

WIES SCHUIRINGA | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING



By the time you read this article, Australia may have a Religious Discrimination Act, or not. Australia Yearly Meeting made a submission about the draft Act that is summarised by David Purnell in an article in this edition. The full submission is on the Australia Yearly Meeting website.

I am a board member on the NSW Ecumenical Council, and the Council made a submission about Religious Freedom to the Federal Attorney's Office before the draft Act was released for comment. However, the Council's argument remains the same: people of religion and their institutions should not be granted greater rights and freedoms than exist in other anti-discrimination legislation in the country. The Church does not exist to serve and protect ourselves, we are here to serve society. The proposed Act protects the right to express genuinely held religious views that will override existing anti-discrimination acts. It has a large section on employment-related discrimination that I found complicated and has been described by others as the 'Israel Folau' clause that protects the expression of 'genuinely held religious beliefs' in employment-related circumstances, as he did. It all becomes more complex as the Israel Folau case will be heard in early 2020.¹ Another complicating factor is the report by the Law Reform Commission to be published in late 2020 about religious schools and their students and employment policies. This report was commissioned in response to the Ruddock report, published in May 2019 on religious freedom.

As has been mentioned regularly in the media, this proposed Act seems to be in response to the same-sex marriage legislation that was passed in November 2017, much to the shock of more conservative people of faith. A new organisation has since been formed: 'Freedom for Faith' that seeks to represent the more socially conservative Churches and it has a well-resourced website.

¹ The case between Israel Folau and Rugby Australia has been settled out of court.

Former High Court Judge Michael Kirby wrote an article for the Law Society about the proposed Act that is quoted in an article in the Guardian Australia on 11 November 2019. Michael Kirby is quoted: 'existing discrimination law enacts the principle that 'the right to swing my arm ends when I hit another's chin', which is 'now ... being dismantled to give a free go to the religious arm swingers'.

On behalf of the NSW Ecumenical Council I attended a consultation with the Attorney General Christian Porter and with Labor politician Chris Bowen in the Western Sydney seat of McMahon. I also attended the live recording of the interview by Andrew West with Philip Ruddock at the Anglican Church in Burwood, Sydney, that was broadcast on the Religion and Ethics report on ABC RN. All these occasions were fascinating. The consultation with the Attorney General was dominated by representatives from 'Freedom for Faith'. They were very well prepared with a law professor and senior Anglican representation, pointing out lack of clarity in defining 'religion' and 'genuinely held belief', among other disquiet in the proposed Act. Chris Bowen organised a consultation with local clergy as he has said publicly that the Labor Party had not listened enough to people of faith in Western Sydney after Labor lost in the last federal election. It was interesting that the local clergy at this meeting had not read the proposed Act and wanted to talk about feeling under siege as clergy, distressed about the same-sex marriage legislation, 'the State' restricting religious freedom and increasing secularisation.

Philip Ruddock re-iterated sections of his report into Religious Freedom, made public in May 2019 that his

enquiry found very little actual religious oppression or discrimination in Australia. His enquiry received more than 15,000 submissions and more than 250 meetings were held around the country. The report is online at <https://www.ag.gov.au/RightsAndProtections/HumanRights/Documents/religious-freedom-review-expert-panel-report-2018.pdf> In the meantime, business councils have gone public stating that the proposed Act is addressing a problem that rarely exists in the workplace and the proposed Act is too complex. Legal bodies have also expressed concerns that the proposed Act does not fit into existing discrimination legislation.

However, Chris Bowen emphasised that people should talk with their local member of Parliament if they have concerns about the proposed Act. The Liberal/National government have the votes in the Lower House, and the cross bench in the Senate could be swayed to vote for it.

The proposed Act and the subsequent discussions I have participated in represent the changing role of institutionalised religion in the Australian society: increasing secularisation and the decrease in the authority of the churches, especially after the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse which creates great anxiety in more conservative faith communities that legislation is restricting the public expression of genuinely held beliefs. The draft Religious Discrimination Act attempts to counter this perceived religious oppression, however to quote Michael Kirby, is it a 'free go to the religious arm swingers'?

AF



Reflections on one Quaker's journey to reduce their carbon footprint

SUE ENNIS | VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING

*Rowe Morrow has asked me to write about the changes I have made to reduce my carbon footprint. I know many Quakers have done much more and for longer, but here goes! My hope is that the next few editions of the AF will include others' journeys. The dates below show when I made purposeful changes to reduce my footprint. The triggers for change are in **bold**. On reflection the timeline looks rational, but it is based on my spiritual beliefs in care for people and treading lightly on Earth.*

In the 1980s the impetus and awareness. Nikki, a Quaker-like friend, had a car sticker *Live simply so others can simply live*. This was (and still is) quite different from my family background of high carbon usage. I now learn the sticker came from the Uniting Church. This sticker motivated me to live more simply. At this stage I didn't know much about the science of climate change. I still don't understand it fully, but do I need to? Rather I need to listen to those who do.

In 1985 I moved into my own home and began to practice simple living. For example, I started green cleaning my home, yet I still struggle to get my cleaner to green clean. I furnished simply, mostly with quality second-hand furniture. I still have two portable fans and, no air-conditioning but how much longer can I do this? I also installed gas heating because it was the most energy efficient then, but not now. I started my first compost bin; I now have three.

I taught in China in 1989 and started realising that the World – a speck of dust in the universe, would soon be in a huge environmental decline. Despite this I decided I needed to try to live more sustainably and become more aware of the impacts of how money is made, and what I buy. As a result, I started ethical super investments with a

Melbourne company. Prior to this, for totally environmental reasons I bought Timber Corp shares. This company turned out to be an ethical and financial dud! I learnt there are sharks out there dressed as lambs.

In 1994 I met Rowe at the South Australia Yearly Meeting. We had long talks and quietly she taught me heaps, as since then she often stays with me in Melbourne. At that time, I inherited some furniture, so I recovered and resprung my grandparent's couch. This cost about the same as a good quality new couch and I still use it. I employed someone to repaint the other second-hand furniture. I installed new wooden windows because the old ones were rotting. I should have saved more and double glazed, but I did not understand this would save energy

When the ALP agreed to mine uranium, I resigned my party membership!

Two years later I became aware transport was a big climate change issue. So, since then I have chosen jobs I could go to on public transport. I live in inner Melbourne, so it is easier than if I lived in outer Melbourne.

From 2005 to 2007 I started sustainably retrofitting my house. I put the highest-level insulation into my house. Unfortunately, 1/3 of my house walls are lathe and plaster, so it is not

possible to insulate. Also, the next year there was the government rebate. I could not insulate underneath because of white ant checks.

I bought a new dishwasher the most energy efficient for the space and a new washing machine because the old top loader used heaps of water in the drought. Choice magazine helped me choose these. Sometimes these appliances were more expensive but in the long run they used less carbon and so were cheaper.

I attended a 2008 sustainability festival session in Melbourne. I have chosen to travel overseas with Intrepid, a low-impact, ethically responsible travel company; in 2010 they became carbon neutral. I also started carbon trading all my flights by giving donations to Quakers to plant trees and more recently to Greenfleet.com. Also, when overseas I travel as much as I can by train and bus even if it is more expensive.

A year later I replaced my gas heater with two new heaters that were more energy efficient, but again slightly more expensive. Gas was the most sustainable then, but not now.

In 2010 I realised the earth was warming quickly so I made structural changes to my home as I needed to 'walk the talk'. I recognise that I had sufficient money to do this, but not

everyone can. So, I installed a long lasting 1.5-watt German solar power system; a bit more expensive. 1.5 watts was too small, but there were fewer options then. I also installed an evacuated-tube solar hot water system and gas back-up. I should have got electric back up. I put in a 3,000 litre water tank and drip irrigation system, but this tank is too small. All this cost me about \$25,000 but I have paid minimal power bills since as I get 60c per Kw for the solar till 2025.

The next year I made changes to how I travel in Australia. I travelled more by bus and train but sometimes flew (e.g. to Queensland). I work part-time so slower travel is possible.

In 2012, the year I finished my PhD, I had time to do more changes to my home. I put in double glazed wooden doors and a new deck extension – something Rowe had always suggested. I used recycled timber on the deck. I set up a vegetable garden. I used good quality steel beds for less maintenance. I now know I should have used wooden ones and employed people to replace them.

I also changed my financial advisor to Ethinvest (got a referral from Rowe) because the one I had in Melbourne was not green enough. I started sharing my car with people and mostly buying locally produced or Australian food to reduce food miles. I have had three laptops (two second hand) and, two printers. I purposely employ someone to upgrade rather than buy new.

Then in 2015 as I learnt more, I did more. I decided not to get another gas heater for a room. So, I bought Choice's

best energy rated electric heater. I bought green power so now all my electricity is green.

In 2017, I got involved with Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC) and their Living the Change (LtC) Initiative. As a result, I started to buy quality second-hand goods for my home and quality (don't want to look daggy!) second-hand clothes. When I have to buy new clothing, I try to buy natural fibres. I started reducing eating beef and began to think about flying less.

After the 2018 election and reading a Climate Change statistic that we only have 12 years to hold back disaster I became more structurally/politically active. For example, I started donating some of my inheritance that I had planned to leave to Quakers to Market Forces (<https://www.marketforces.org.au/>) and ARRCC because climate action is needed NOW. I also bought Macquarie Bank Shares in a Market Forces shareholder green action which was successful. I also started some proactive super investments in new energy programs in one of my super funds.

This year I bought green gas one dollar a week. Would it have been better to give \$50 to GreenFleet or to Alan Clayton's environmental group? I travelled to Indonesia for Friends Peace Teams choosing the shortest carbon route rather than the cheapest ticket. But for YM 2019 I flew to Hobart. I should have gone by boat as less carbon, but I did not understand. I further reduced my driving using 6 tanks of petrol from January to September But

I have excellent local public transport, I have no grandchildren and all my family live near me. My next car will be a hybrid or electric.

Concluding thoughts

About 15 years ago I decided I needed to model living a 'simple yet rich life'. So, a cultural routine in my life is attending for example national and local folk and jazz festivals, music events and art galleries. These bring me much joy and are less carbon intensive than flying. Thanks to Catherine Heywood who first took me to these.

About a third of the way into my PhD on spirituality/religion and refugees I became aware that many people will use their religious/spiritual meaning system to frame and cope with future and current climate disasters. Hence my nine-year involvement with Religions for Peace Australia (and more recently ARRCC and the LtC initiative) working with others to form networks so religious leaders/communities can 'hold' spiritually, socially and politically the enormous societal consequences of our current and continuing climate emergency.

My biggest regret in life is how much carbon I have used on air travel. So, I have decided to rarely fly for holidays and will discern with Quakers which RfP International meetings I need to attend. Currently I have few family members overseas, so I don't have that struggle. But I will miss travelling in different cultures as I am an experiential learner. **My biggest satisfaction** in

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Australians working for peace through Friends Peace Teams in Asia West Pacific

VALERIE JOY | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING
AND JANE DREXLER | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING



Jane Drexler



Valerie Joy

Quite often Australian Friends working for Friends Peace Teams (FPT) are asked about the difference between us and the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) is. They are both wonderful organisations working for peace and there is a strong relationship between the two.

Friends Peace Teams is a Spirit-led organisation that develops long-term relationships with communities in conflict around the world to work for peace, healing and reconciliation and to create enduring cultures of peace. Friends Peace Teams is one of AVP-International's primary supporters around the world, especially among activists working for peace, justice and reconciliation.

FPT uses the basic AVP workshop as the foundation of all workshops and activities when we work with peace and justice activists. FPT in Asia West Pacific (FPT-AWP) started with an AVP workshop in 2005 in East Aceh, Indonesia, after the thirty-year war there had ended, and the tsunami had devastated the region. For activists challenging human rights violations in the face of war, illegal logging, land grabs and other exploitations, the AVP Basic Workshop provides essential practice of skills, tools and insights to recognise and choose among the powers of violence, nonviolence and peace.

Following on from Aceh, FPT-AWP was asked to facilitate

workshops throughout the region often in conjunction with AVP. From these we learnt that people still struggle with primary and secondary trauma as well as with the erosion of basic cognitive capabilities resulting from violence.

So FPT-AWP created a trauma informed AVP Basic Workshop by integrating key trauma resiliency tools. We developed two special topic workshops: one on trauma resiliency and one on developmental play. Peaceful individuals need a peaceful society in which to live, so we developed special topic workshops on conscience, liberation and discernment. We call these creating cultures of peace. Building on AVP foundations of listening, empathy and equality we include activities on self-care, good companions, and staying grounded in one's core self and in life's transforming power. We practise tools for discharging emotion, reprocessing memories, mourning losses and reintegrating life experiences over time. To spread the message of peace, we collect stories that describe how nonviolent action or reconciliation have worked in specific times and situations.

What draws Australian Quakers to work for FPT-AWP?

Valerie Joy tells her story of her involvement and how other Australian Quakers have become involved. Many Australians are trained AVP facilitators

and this is the basis of their link into FPT-AWP.

When I was Secretary of FWCC/AWPS between 2004-2012, I kept noticing emails from Nadine Hoover, an American Friend, at Conscience Studio. She was posting quite a bit of information about Indonesia and her work there with FPT-AWP. I contacted her and included some of her news in the AWPS Newsletter.

The next opportunity was in 2009 when I registered for the Indonesian Yearly Meeting near Jogyakarta, while also visiting Singaporean Friends. I then contacted Nadine and asked if she could attend as well. Luckily, she was able to, and she acted as my interpreter. My Bahasa Indonesia is very weak. She quickly picked up the roots of the conflicts that were festering between the Friends Churches and offered significant listening time to them.

In 2011, I was responsible for arrangements for an AWPS Gathering in Manila and Nadine asked if she and two Indonesian Mennonites could attend. We had already offered reduced fees for two Indonesian programmed Friends and the five camped together in a single room. This was when I met Nanik, who was with her husband Petrus, on the point of turning her home into a centre for peace- now known as Peace Place in Pati, Central Java.

I then learnt that Nadine was invited to present a Trauma Healing Workshop



Valerie Joy (back row) and Sally Herzfeld (front row) in 2016 at a workshop in Bohol, Philippines



John Michaelis and Claudia Barduhn with participants from around the region at Peace Place, Pati in January 2019.

after Yearly Meeting in Perth in 2012. This was at the AVP National Gathering. I invited Nadine to spend 5 days at AYM, which was when she made her first very useful contacts with significant peace workers in our Yearly Meeting. Many Friends also enrolled in the AVP Gathering, so became very familiar with her work. Amongst these were Helen Bayes, who invited Nadine to Silver Wattle as a Resident Friend – twice. Maxine Cooper had already experienced Friends Peace Teams in the African Great Lakes and was also present.

Friends Peace Teams was operating in Nepal at this time and John Michaelis was involved. But before him, Aletia Dundas had made the initial contact with Subhash Chandra to develop the AVP program there. John Michaelis, Maxine Cooper and Bev Polzin were facilitating workshops in Nepal in 2015 when the devastating earthquake struck. Australian Friends were quick to respond and donated generously. Through Subhash the money went to the most marginalised people in Nepal where other aid was minimal.

When Nadine was at Silver Wattle in 2013, I attended her workshops on Discernment. John Michaelis, Jasmine Payget and many Friends were present. She also met Jane Drexler who guided her through the NSW Incorporation of Associations legal structures, so that the

Working Group for Asia West Pacific then became Incorporated in NSW. At the same time Jane was appointed Treasurer of the Australian section. This made it convenient for Australian individual Friends and Meetings to make donations to FPT-AWP.

Vidya from Canberra Meeting and Judith Simpson from Victoria spent 2013 with FPT-AWP at Peace Place in Pati Indonesia and in Kathmandu, assisting with AVP training, and in practical ways to make buildings safer.

Paula and Ian Paananen (NSW RM) have recently visited and worked at Peace Place, Pati. They were leaders of a team integrating permaculture with peace work. Paula and Ian have drawn up a plan for the land at Pati as a practical permaculture training place and farmers in the region are now attending courses there. Also, permaculture is being incorporated into the Joglo pre-school program at Pati and school for children with special needs and their parents.

How do Australian Quakers feel the work enhances their Quaker beliefs?

A British Friend found his participation at the International Peace Training at Pati spiritually grounding. Claudia Barduhn from Victoria RM expresses similar feelings about her attendance at the Pati

workshops. Working for FPT is an opportunity to experience peace and nonviolence as active forces in daily life. FPT-AWP provides the support for committed Quakers to be involved with communities struggling with violence.

I use my work in the Philippines as an example. By working over several visits in the Philippines (where English is spoken), I became much more capable in delivery of the AVP workshops. I saw how poverty impacted on people's lives; the sadness of corruption in all levels of government; the Americanisation of the original culture; the way that faith sustains people through natural disasters (floods, earthquakes etc); the terror of extra judicial killings especially of people working in the media or as lawyers – where to protest can be a death sentence.

In many of the countries that FPT-AWP works in, groups are at war with one another or there is entrenched violence. We see it is possible to bring sworn enemies together in the same room and have many leave as life-long friends. As Dahlan in East Aceh says, 'After we did the AVP Trauma Healing workshop there was so much change. It was like the world came to life again.'

AF

To live in interesting times

JUDITH PEMBLETON | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING



Frances Long

As we approach 2020, it is difficult to recall the widespread fear of a nuclear attack or accidents at nuclear power stations in the 1970s and 1980s.

The fear was based on real threats. In 1979, the accident at Three Mile Island had created nuclear panic; the threat that the Soviet and United States governments could start a nuclear war was ever-present. Then, in 1986, there was an accident at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in the Ukraine. It is considered the worst nuclear disaster in history, releasing about four hundred times more radioactivity than from the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

For Queensland Friend Frances Long looking back to that time is to revisit long-forgotten memories and she is unsure of the accuracy of all the details – however, her experiences took her to the forefront of some fascinating events.

In 1980, Frances lived in the United Kingdom when it was announced that the RAF base built on Greenham Common was to become the first site for cruise missiles in the UK. The UK's share of cruise missiles was 160 missiles,

96 based at Greenham Common with four spares, and 64 at RAF Molesworth.

By the time of these Cruise missile protests, Frances Long was a seasoned environmental and peace campaigner in the UK who was active with the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND).

Through her activism, Frances came into contact with Quakers when peace groups in Plymouth, which included members of CND, met in the Quaker Meeting House. There she met Friends who were active in those protests.

Frances says: 'At that stage, I was still going to the Methodist Church that I grew up in and I was still working out my belief system. I was familiar with that church, part of the community and in the choir. I thought Quakers were a bit 'out there'. But Quakers kept popping up.'

Frances was already experienced at responding to environmental and peace threats when the cruise missile threat came along.

Her activism began when she was a junior school student inspired by a teacher's story about the work of Oxfam. Though many children may have admired Oxfam's great work and thought no more about it, for Frances it was a call to action – and she organised a fundraising event in her parents' back garden, searching out games for people to play and things to sell. Frances joined the Wildlife Youth Service, which was part of the World Wildlife Fund.

In Stoke-On-Trent, Frances was also part of an Amnesty International campaign to free a Russian political activist who was a prisoner in Russia. They managed to bring the prisoner and two members of his family to Britain, but unfortunately the political prisoner was so damaged by what he experienced he had to enter further psychiatric care.

In 1980, Frances went to a cruise missile base near Molesworth, Cambridgeshire, where Christians joined those from other faiths and none in witnessing for peace. There they built the Eirene Chapel, named after the Greek word for 'peace', which hosted daily vigils and acts of worship. Frances was again conscious of the Quakers who were present.

The Ministry of Defence quickly cordoned the chapel off and eventually it was demolished. Frances recalls: 'People at the base put up barbed wire so no one could go to the peace chapel, so we were stuck standing outside the barbed wire gazing across to the Peace Chapel which was now on the missile base.'

The cross from the Eirene Chapel, built during the protests, remains at the site and the Peace Garden has been restored through a donation from Christian CND and thanks to the work of Molesworth Peace Garden Group, local volunteers who were involved with actions at Molesworth in the 1980s.

Frances first attended Meeting for Worship in Waterford in Ireland when

a friend wanted to go to a Meeting and wanted someone to go with her. Frances had moved to Ireland at a time when she felt out of step with her work colleagues.

'It was the time of the miners' strikes and the area where we worked was very much involved. At that time, the husbands of two of the women I worked with were police officers, so I felt very much out of place as the only one who supported the miners' strike.'

As well, Frances was feeling 'more and more disillusioned and seeing people in the peace movement and the environmental movement getting burnt out'. This concern will be familiar for those who take long-term action for peace and environmental causes – the challenge is to maintain the fire in the belly without becoming burnt out.

'I arrived at the hospital in Waterford in 1986 on St Patrick's Day and it rained, as it always seemed to in Waterford on St Patrick's Day.' Once in Ireland, Frances said: 'I realised I was among friends, people who felt strongly about nuclear issues and longed for peace.'

'I joined an anti-blood sports group, the Irish Council against Blood Sports, and there was a very good feminist group in the city that I joined. With a friend I started 'WANG' Waterford Anti Nuclear Group, mainly to bring attention to the Chernobyl incident and to put pressure on the English government from an Irish perspective.'

Frances said: 'The Irish were so distressed with the English because of the nuclear waste going into the Irish Sea'. [*The Irish Times* reports that the British government will admit today that radioactive waste was secretly disposed of down a 300 meters deep munitions dump close to busy shipping lanes in the Irish Sea, but denied it for years.]

In Waterford, Frances' group wanted to find a place to hold a commemoration event about the Chernobyl accident. They had heard about a Baha'i group of anti-nuclear and peace campaigners that they wished to include in the event, but the priest at the local Catholic church would not let them hold this meeting in his chapel, so the group turned to the Quaker Meeting House because the Quakers were fine with the Baha'i's coming. Once more, Frances's activism brought her in contact with Friends. Quakers were well known in Waterford as there was a Friends' School there.

'I also hadn't really explored fully the troubles in Northern Ireland and I became more aware of the Irish point of view,' Frances said. 'Overall, I found the Irish more forgiving and not as angry as I had expected.'

Frances, a protestant, and a Catholic friend travelled by train from Dublin to Belfast and then around Northern Ireland by bus. In Belfast, they attended a Quaker Meeting in the middle of a housing estate in a working class area.

'We got there early and walked around the streets and this armoured personnel carrier was going very slowly and they came alongside us. The door opened slowly and this soldier peered out and said in a fine Northern Irish accent: 'Are you lost girls?' They explained they were waiting for the Quaker meeting House to open and the armoured vehicle moved on, but it was an awakening to the danger that Northern Irish experienced each day.

'We saw the walls and the barbed wire and realised that my friend was a Catholic and I was Protestant and suddenly it mattered, and also that she was from the Irish Republic.'

In 1989, Frances came to Melbourne to work and thought maybe this was the time that she would start looking at Quakers. Within the first few months she had started attending the Meeting in Toorak.

'I didn't know if I was staying in Australia. I was working in a very busy hospital and I didn't seek out anything more than attending Meeting for Worship. I started reading Bishop Spong and I became aware that you didn't have to believe without questioning – and that in Quakers it was safe to say the things I had doubts about.'

'I moved to Perth in 1991. I moved to Derby, and there were no Quakers up there, so I joined the local church. Friends who were in contact with

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Reflections

on being Presiding Clerk of Australia Yearly Meeting 2016–2019

JO JORDAN | SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND NORTHERN TERRITORY REGIONAL MEETING

It is a privilege to be nominated for the role of Presiding Clerk of Australia Yearly Meeting, a position of great trust and responsibility. Although I was uncertain of my ability to fulfil the role, I knew from past experience that I was surrounded by loving, supportive Friends and that this was a job that was not done alone.

The role pushed me into places and situations well outside my comfort zone. Within a few weeks I was asked by Fairfax media for an interview on Quaker attitudes to same sex marriage. I had to put aside my nerves, given this opportunity to convey to a wide audience the message that Friends strongly support marriage equality and had done so for many years.

One of the most pressing things to deal with as Presiding Clerk is the number of emails, many requiring attention and action. This is only a fraction of the number of emails that the YM Secretary has to deal with. I felt it was important to receive and to read minutes and newsletters from all regional meetings and from all Yearly Meeting committees. After all, that's where the real work is done. Email communication was also a very convenient and efficient way to seek advice and guidance when I needed it.

There were times when I received requests from individual Friends urging me to respond publicly to a particular issue. The YM Clerk certainly does make public statements. However, these are made on the recommendation of a Regional Meeting or YM Committee. It was my job to remind Friends that it is our practice to initially take a concern to the local meeting, regional meeting

or YM Committee for discernment. We begin at the grass roots level.

The Presiding Clerk is ex-officio on the Board meeting of The Friends School and its subcommittee, the Quaker Values Committee. The YM Clerk is also ex-officio on the Linkages Committee of QSA. By chance I had been on both of these committees before taking on the role of Presiding Clerk, and I enjoyed very much the opportunity to develop stronger connections with both The Friends School and QSA. An important responsibility of the Presiding Clerk is representing Australian Friends nationally. This is particularly important at meetings of the National Council of Churches where there is an opportunity to network with churches with whom we share concerns. These meetings also offer ways to spread awareness of the ways that Quakers operate without clergy and without hierarchy. Over the past three years I have met many impressive people doing important work within their own communities.

One of the highlights of the role was writing minutes at Yearly Meeting. I thought this would be the hardest and most demanding of tasks, but instead I found it most rewarding. At the beginning of a business meeting there is often uncertainty about how matters will proceed. When Friends speak openly, listen attentively and the meeting is truly gathered, the fog suddenly clears and a way forward emerges. When the minute accurately reflects the thoughts and feelings of the meeting I experience a sense of elation as well as relief. When the meeting is less gathered, when many hands shoot up and unrelated issues

are raised, minute writing is more like untangling fishing line. Also rewarding, but requiring patience and time.

Former Presiding Clerks advised me to 'trust the process' and I have found this advice very helpful. Our Handbook, which is meticulously updated and revised each year, provides valuable guidance on Quaker process based on tried and tested experience. Quaker process leads us to sound decisions and, just as importantly, builds an inclusive, compassionate community. I am now an enthusiastic supporter of Quaker process who has great respect for the Handbook.

Sometimes unforeseen events demand that the role is set aside for a time. My husband Joseph became seriously ill just before YM18 and died seven weeks later. At very short notice, emergency arrangements were made and all duties were picked up and carried forward by a dedicated team of Friends. I knew when the time was right to resume the role once more, and Friends trusted that decision. My support group has provided a wonderful network of support over the past three years. So, even though the role of Presiding Clerk is an important one, the Society of Friends manages perfectly well without one during times of crisis.

What sustained me during my term as YM Clerk, and which sustains me still, is the knowledge that I can draw on the experience, expertise, wisdom and support of Friends in addition to guidance from the Spirit. I am most grateful to have been entrusted with the position of Clerk for Australia Yearly Meeting from 2016-2019. It has been an unforgettable and most rewarding experience.

AF



Julian Robertson

Know Thy Friend: Julian Robertson

PETER JONES | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

Julian Robertson is well known to many Friends as a former Presiding Clerk of Australia YM, but his path to that role is not so well known. He was born in the south of England but with an Army Dad, spent the first twelve years of his life in many different countries as the military moved the family around all the time. High school in Berkshire was more settled but he was now moving on from his Anglican background to a more searching phase of life, perhaps influenced by his mother's interest in Theosophy and his sister's interest in Buddhism.

Tertiary education had led him into mining engineering and practical experience took him to South Africa during the apartheid era as well as to tin mining in Cornwall, but his spiritual search now extended to Eastern faiths, including the writings of Krishnamurti. His professional career had led him to work briefly for Shell before he hopped on to a boat going deck class from the Persian Gulf to India, now on a serious search for the meaning of life. Indian travels led him to a Rural Health Centre at Sevanilayam in Tamil Nadu (South India), and it was there that he met Kay, his future wife, on her overland trip from Australia through Asia.

By then Julian had further expanded his spiritual search and visited a Catholic ashram run by Dom Bede Griffiths as well as developing an interest in Vipassana meditation and meeting Marjorie Sykes, a British Friend who had settled in India and had worked with Mahatma Gandhi. After three years, he and Kay moved back to England where Julian trained as a teacher before they decided that Australia called and they set off on a tandem

that he built himself. Back in India at Sevanilayam for four years, they adopted their son, Chris, from an orphanage in India but had to go to Australia to complete the legal paperwork then required. Here they settled in Melbourne where Julian started attending Meeting at the former Meeting House in Toorak. It was in Melbourne that he started teaching Religious Studies at a Catholic school before an ad by Community Aid Abroad caught the couple's eye, this time for a position in Somalia, so off they went, with Chris, to work there for two and a half years as a nurse and administrator of the project.

When that job finished, Julian took up an offer from the co-principals at The Friends' School in Hobart (then Margaret and Michael Bailey) to come and teach maths, after meeting them at Yearly Meeting in Perth. By then, Julian's leadings had centred on connecting East and West so Quakerism had answered his need for a spiritual home, along with his perception that when it came to faith, 'it was the practice rather than the belief that mattered.' The focus of Meeting for Worship for Julian was finding the stillness within, a concept that he feels that Friends still need to work on, but the Universalism of the Society also attracted him and still does.

Although teaching in the high school, Julian now suggested to the head of Year 11-12 that the school should pick up on teaching Studies in Religion again as it had lapsed as a curriculum topic although it was on offer as an examination subject in Tasmania. At Hobart Meeting, he also became involved in developing a Young Friends group that incorporated

older Friends' School students while in addition being earmarked at Meeting for the role of clerk and co-editing a regular newsletter. Young Friends activities frequently involved water: sailing, rafting and swimming and for Julian, his celebrated efforts to 'walk on water.'

When Long Service Leave came up, Julian and Kay set off on the water in a small catamaran until the weather gods intervened and they ended up teaching in the Torres Strait Islands. Then it was Kay's turn to organise their travels in Asia and Julian ended up teaching briefly in Burma. His interest in meditation continued to develop through this period as he took part in various courses still with the focus on Vipassana. Back in Hobart, Julian resumed teaching at the Tarremah Steiner School until John Green (then principal at The Friends' School) offered him a job as Quaker coordinator.

When retirement called, Julian could return to his passion for building and sailing boats, on top of all his Quaker positions at the Meeting and at the school, along with the support he has given to Silver Wattle since it started. Their son, Chris, had finished school and university, and celebrated his wedding at the Hindu temple in Melbourne (his bride came from a Sri Lankan-Australian family) and then a Meeting for Worship in a nearby garden. However work took the new family to Canberra and so today Julian and Kay contemplate leaving Hobart to undertake grandparent duties there.

The search continues but Hobart's loss will be Canberra's gain ...

AF



QSA Notes

Sustainability

JACKIE PERKINS | QSA ADMINISTRATOR



QSA works with project partners to assist them and their communities to become self-sustaining and independent of foreign aid as much as possible, i.e. giving them a hand up rather than dependent on regular handouts, teaching them 'how to fish rather than simply giving fish to eat'. In some cases, this can require a long term relationship based on the development of mutual accountability and trust, and a commitment to mutual learning and capacity building. This also recognises the dynamic, inter-connected, multi-faceted and complex nature of poverty.

Sustainability for QSA means that it is able to ensure support of its project partners and the communities where they work and to meet commitments made to them and all other stakeholders. This means that the project outcomes, and resources provided, will both respond to the current identified needs, and be self-supported and managed by the community, meeting ongoing needs of members into the future without compromising future generations or resources. It encourages change which is sustainable and in the communities' best interests. This is in part why QSA

is very reluctant to provide resources such as vehicles and buildings without there being a clear means of arranging maintenance for these items, or they very quickly deteriorate, become unfit for purpose, and are not sustainable.

This enables communities to become better equipped to identify and address their needs in ways that promote their human rights and dignity while building on existing community strengths and resiliencies, and incrementally adding other skills and resources that are of lasting value and transferable. It is development which is strengthening and investing in local capacity. This alone however is insufficient for sustainability. Sustainability in the context in which QSA works, is often achieved by longer term support and changes to attitudes and behaviour. Built into a model of sustainability therefore are features of deliberation – project design and planning of activities, incremental capacity building to bring about the desired changes of economic development and environmental sustainability and protection. This includes the strengthening of project partners to support and facilitate

communities and activities, monitoring to track whether the smaller changes are taking place, and evaluation to assess whether the bigger picture of change has taken place.

In summary, sustainability is not simply about income and finances, but relates to sustainability of the community, of the local environment, of resources, and of the partner organisation to become self-sufficient. An exit plan with project partners is considered depending on a number of different criteria as their sustainability is assessed across economic development for the organisation and individuals, risks of where the project is located, and the social equity and environmental issues which are monitored throughout QSA's relationship with project partners.

The sustainability of the ideas, perhaps new ways of growing food for example, after the project support has ended is another assessment of sustainability. In Cambodia, in Kampong Thom Province, an assessment of communities trained in permaculture food gardens for increased food security was made. The training,



Households showing improvements made in Kampong Thom Province, Cambodia. Photo left original house, relegated to the kitchen when the second house was built. Third photo shows stronger house built next door as the family's circumstances improved. Photo credit - QSA

funded by QSA and the Australian Government via Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, involved a number of communities. A survey of those involved over the last six years demonstrated that for most of the participants, the ideas and skills were sustainable, they still had productive food gardens more resilient to climate change threats, and families had been able to increase their income. Some families reported as a result that they had bought motorbikes to take food to the markets, houses had been improved and extended, older students had continued their education, and the family had better health resulting from the improved diet. So yes, sustainability can be measured, and assessed.

Another example of sustainability has been identified in a Lowy Institute article (published 12 Dec 2018), about the true cost of the fast fashion

industry, where clothes are cheap to buy, yet costly to make if the true labour and environmental costs are tallied and sustainability considered. This relates to very poor conditions for the workforce, and environmental cost of wastage, so that for garment works in some modern supply chains, the label they often wear is that of 'modern slavery'. The article states that 'under pressure to become more transparent with respect to its supply chains [and their accountability], consumers have been key instigators for change. Revelations of worker exploitation coupled with a realisation of the immense wastage in the industry were the spark. The success of initiatives such as Oxfam's 'What She Makes' campaign, as well as the devastating collapse of Rana Plaza in Bangladesh in 2013, killing more than 1000 workers, makes the problems near-impossible to ignore'.

Where do we stand in this matter Friends? Do we swap, borrow, re-use, re-cycle, but also purchase ethically in the first place? Are our *Advices and Queries*, Numbers 41 and 45 relevant here?

If pressure is brought upon you to lower your standards of integrity, are you prepared to resist it? Our responsibilities to God and our neighbour may involve us in taking unpopular stands. Do not let the desire to be sociable, or the fear of seeming peculiar, determine your decisions.

Try to live simply. A simple lifestyle freely chosen is a source of strength. Do not be persuaded into buying what you do not need or cannot afford. Do you keep yourself informed about the effects your style of living is having on the global economy and environment.

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.

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ACFID
MEMBER

Would you like to go on a Quaker study tour to North Korea?

In 2018 Sejin Pak (SANTRM) led a group on a one-week trip to North Korea. Sejin is planning a return trip next year, if sufficient people are interested.

Sejin has a concern about peace in the Korean peninsular, and would like to introduce Quakers to this largely unknown country.

The cost of the trip is expected to be approximately \$US2,500, plus air fares to a departure point in China.

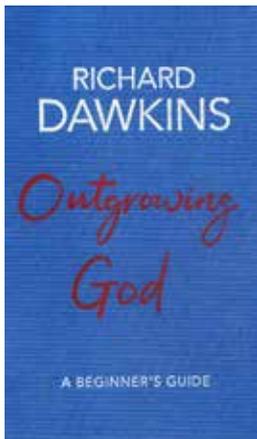
A party of at least 12 is required.

Travel in North Korea is tightly controlled but safe.

For further information, visit the Australia North Korea Peace Support Group website (<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/DPRK>) or email CDPRK@quakersaustralia.info



The 2018 group (and minders) in Kim Il Sung Sung



Outgrowing God: a beginner's guide

BY RICHARD DAWKINS

Published by Bantam Press, an imprint of Transworld Publishers, London, 2019

Richard Dawkins is undoubtedly one of the great science communicators of our age. Starting with *The Selfish Gene* in 1976, he has produced a veritable library of books describing evolution in a range of vivid metaphors.

Unfortunately along the way he inevitably crossed horns with the Creationists who objected to Dawkins' concept of a world without a Divine Creator. Dawkins was diverted into a campaign against all religion, notably with *The God Delusion* (2006). *Outgrowing God* is his latest in this genre.

I found this book confusing, in that it is difficult to define its target audience. The opening chapters seem to be aimed at not-too-bright fundamentalists, hardly the people who are going to pick it up.

Dawkins begins by pointing out there are many gods – 'they can't all be right'. He then questions the historical accuracy of the New Testament, while placing no value on its mythical content. Then an even easier target: the goodness of God called into question

by some of the unpleasant 'words of God' in the Old Testament.

His chapter asking 'do we need God in order to be good' raises some interesting questions, but questions covered much better by Richard Holloway's *Godless morality* which I reviewed in *The Australian Friend* in September 2013.

The second part of the book, 'Evolution and beyond,' is far better than the first, as Dawkins moves into his area of expertise. He presents an outstanding range of phenomena which appear to be evidence of design, including gazelles being chased by cheetahs, crystals, genetics, embryology, the evolution of altruism, and cosmology, amongst other things. He then explains how they have come into being by natural processes. Even quantum theory and Schrödinger's cat get a mention.

Dawkins praises the courage of people like Galileo and Darwin to follow their scientific leadings to unpopular conclusions. He encourages the reader to be similarly brave, with the condition: 'Plenty of people propose daringly surprising ideas and are wrong, crazy wrong. Courage isn't enough. You have to go on and prove your idea right.' Theologian Karen Armstrong has complained that it is impossible to argue with people like Dawkins because they know no theology. Dawkins, on the other hand, has said that theology

is what theologians discuss among themselves, and that the average person in the pew knows no theology but accepts what they are told as literal truth.

Dawkins, despite what some may want to believe, is not a heartless realist. His humanity is revealed in many places in his writing, particularly in *Unweaving the Rainbow* where he shows that an understanding of science inspires human imagination and increases our wonder of the world. In *Outgrowing God* he recommends that we read Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon as poetry. Nevertheless, the God that Dawkins doesn't believe in seems to be a mechanistic creator, not an immanent God, and certainly not the Spirit within. In an interview with Charlie Pickering, Dawkins was asked, if he had to pick a religion, what would he choose. His choice was Quakers, because they think about things. This book, however, may help Dawkins' 'beginner' to outgrow God, but I doubt it is the God of any Quaker.

DAVID SWAIN

New South Wales Regional Meeting



Speaking in meetings for worship

DUNCAN FREWIN | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING

Sunday morning. There is stillness around the room. Quietly a Friend stands, breathes in, then breaks the silence to speak – a prayer perhaps, or spiritual reflection occasioned by a current issue, or an encouragement to persist in the spiritual search. There may be a small stirring among those present. The speaker sits again and silence returns. We reflect on what was said. Perhaps after an interval another Friend stands and offers a message that takes the reflection further, or perhaps it starts a new strand. This is our ideal of true Ministry in a worshipping community.

Another Sunday morning. There is silence around the room. Quietly a Friend stands then breaks the silence to speak – perhaps an observation about something they have read or heard, perhaps an observation on a current issue, perhaps an exhortation on a social justice issue, perhaps a story of personal significance. There may be a small stirring. The speaker sits again and silence returns. Outwardly nothing differs from the first scenario, but inwardly some of us bridle at the message, some ignore it, some debate the message in their minds, some wonder where *that* came from.

Another Sunday morning. There is silence around the room. A Friend stands and starts speaking, perhaps preaching their own version of Quaker ways, perhaps meandering over thoughts that are meaningful only to him or her, perhaps insisting on the truth of a political stand. Friends screw up their eyes and close their ears. Someone,

perhaps an elder, stands and gently asks the speaker to say no more. There is relief around the room. The speaker sits, perhaps after some rejoinder to the reproof. Silence returns. Afterward the elder speaks to the person to explain why they asked the person to stop. Over tea there is tut-tutting.

What makes the difference in these three scenarios? How do we determine if one is true Ministry (I will use a capital letter), another is speaking in worship but probably not Ministry, another is speaking inappropriately during worship. This question has exercised many meetings over the years and probably will continue to exercise meetings.

Quakers hold that Ministry comes from God, not from the speaker's thinking or intellectual effort. True Ministry may come from the least articulate of us, and the most fluent speaker may have nothing to offer. How do we distinguish between Ministry that comes from the Spirit, and speaking that is from the speaker alone, no matter how sincere? Do we indeed make that distinction? Superficially, in a meeting for worship it seems to be open slather – a person is free to say anything they want. But is that where we stand? My hope is that it is not. If there is no distinction between true Ministry (words that come from the Spirit) and 'notions' (words that come from the individual – George Fox's term), then I see no need for a worshipping community. We could just as well worship at home or join a discussion group.

What does it mean to give Ministry in meetings for worship? Perhaps we need to start from our understanding of silent worship. Here we need to distinguish between *thinking* (Fox's 'notions') and *listening*. *Thinking* is what we do when we mull over a question or problem, exploring it from different angles, looking for an answer or a way forward or a better understanding. Let's be honest – we all often do it during the silence on Sundays. In contrast, *listening* is letting God/the Spirit work on us, just letting a thought sit and allowing what arises in our heart to happen. What arises comes not from a process of intellect but from submitting oneself to the Spirit. This is what we strive to do in worship – empty oneself and let God in. When God does enter, we may be driven to speak, giving a message sparked by that encounter. Such a message has been described as coming from deep within yet also from outside or beyond oneself.

Now, we can all recognise that not everything we hear in meeting for worship is Ministry. Much of it is merely speaking in meeting, the product of *thinking*. We recognise Ministry when it speaks to our heart rather than our intellect. Something like the sympathetic vibration of strings in a musical instrument happens – our heart vibrates in sympathy with the heart that has spoken. Does this happen for everyone present? Often, probably not. But I believe we can all recognise when the Spirit has spoken. True Ministry comes out of true worship, and nourishes our worshipping community.

The other question that we need to consider then is ‘How do I know if the words on my tongue are true Ministry?’ I may find myself moved to speak, but are my words Ministry? Are these words from the Spirit, or are they ‘notions’ – something I’ve thought of? This question takes us to our responsibility as members of a worshipping community. It requires us to accept the discipline of self-examination. Not everything that is on my tongue needs to be said aloud. Not every insight that I wish to share needs to be shared. Not every good idea I have is intended for worship. If I truly submit to the Spirit, I can recognise that some of my messages are purely an intellectual exercise, that some are from God but intended for me alone, that some insights do not help the meeting, that some of my brilliant ideas are for other occasions such as discussion groups or committee meetings. And perhaps I can recognise that sometimes I just want to speak because I want to be seen as a leader in my community.

For my own experience, I frequently find myself putting together words to correct shortcomings in the meeting, or to share new insights that I have developed. But they are not Ministry. In fact very little of what arises for me needs to be said. But it has been the experience of Friends over the centuries, and it is my experience too, that we know when the words must be spoken. Often the clue is in our body – a feeling that our chest will burst to let the words out, a quaking in the whole

body (even if no one else can see it), a shortness of breath or a pounding of the heart demanding that we stand. Indeed, some Friends describe being ‘propelled’ to their feet with no clear idea of what words will come out. The words may indeed be halting or seem to be wrenched from the person’s body. Yet we can all recognise that those words are true Ministry, a message from beyond the speaker.

True Ministry often takes the worshippers to a deeper place – ‘touched by God’ – and gives us nourishment for our spiritual journey. I suspect each person present may take different nourishment from the same Ministry. Some people in fact may take nothing from it. Perhaps they were not listening, or perhaps they are not spiritually ready to take in the message. That is part of what it means to worship in a community – the community includes people at all stages of understanding, from children to elders (both in age and understanding). But true Ministry feeds the worshipping community generally.

Now, we recognise that much of what we hear on a Sunday, though well meant, is not true Ministry. So what am I supposed to do with such a message? Perhaps it is true Ministry for someone else, or perhaps it is only for the speaker, or perhaps I am not ready to hear it. The loving response, and the advice of our *Questions and Counsel* is to let it go. I can acknowledge that it does not speak to my condition, or that it is meant for someone else, or that the speaker has erred by saying

more than the Spirit required, then let it go. However, resenting a message because it has disturbed ‘my’ worship is a problem. True worship is the work of everyone present. If I can talk about ‘my’ worship, it is unlikely to be true worship. So I have a duty, as a member of that one body, to accept that most Ministry that does not speak to me was given in good faith. I can ignore the words, but I am not free to resent them or reject the speaker.

What do I do however when someone’s words are clearly unacceptable? We do occasionally hear such speaking – exhortations to support such-and-such a political party, opinions verging on racism, carrying on personal feuds, the same message given repeatedly as if we weren’t listening, etc. Such messages disrupt worship to pursue a personal agenda. Every meeting has stories of inappropriate speaking in worship and how it was dealt with, whether well or badly. Quakers hold that in a worshipping community every one of us is responsible for the health of our worship. We recognise elders among us, who anchor the worship. Larger meetings appoint some as elders to watch over the health of our worship. Whether appointed or not, elders have a responsibility to educate us all about true Ministry. Likewise, as in the third scenario above, elders (or any Friends present) may need to intervene to protect the worship, as lovingly as possible, from inappropriate speaking.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23



Burning ears

PETER BURTON | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING

POETRY

Spirit of Equality

A rare commodity
 Can you find it?
 The answer is nearby.
 It's measured in time
 You have for each other
 When you see eye to eye.
 Forget about money
 Forget about fame
 Treasure the moments
 Fleeting or long
 When you see eye to eye.
 It may be someone you hold in awe
 Is travelling close by
 Exchanges are made with a smile
 As you look them in the eye.
 You remember the smile
 You remember the day
 The presence was so real
 The moment was there
 Treasured forever
 When you looked them in the eye.

David Evans

South Australia and Northern Territory Regional Meeting

A few weekends ago I was a delegate at the Queensland ALP State Conference. I had submitted a resolution to change policy re the confinement of refugees on Manus and Nauru, and after some consultations I reached a compromise with the group 'Labor for Refugees'. This meant that our two resolutions were combined, but at least it could lead to getting the refugees off the islands and out of detention. I've been active through Amnesty International ever since the *Tampa* incident.

The agreement meant that I would second the motion on the floor of Conference the following day. That night I sat down to get my head in order because there had been so many

reasons and arguments colliding and I was determined that I had to do this for those who had suffered for so long.

After settling down to stillness, as soon as I picked up the pencil the words just flowed, in waves, for no more than 10 minutes, and in another 10 minutes I had transcribed my scribble into the form it is now.

When the time came and I presented these words the usual low background hubbub suddenly ceased. Not one speaker spoke against the resolution. Several delegates afterwards asked me if they could get a copy of what they said was 'my poem'. I had not presented this as a poem but now I would like to share this.

AF

'My poem'

Take an island – *seas are rising*
 Take a slogan – *stop the tide*
 Take a cliché – *collateral damage*
 Take wedge – *add a slogan*
 Take a fear – *paranoia*
 Take information – *keep a secret*
 Take a lie – *save the drowning*
 Take a rescue – *hit the surf*
 Take a profit – *Kangaroo Island*
 Take a compound – *blood and madness*

Take a price – *\$9,000 million*
 Take a quote – *'Out, damned spot'*
 Take a value – *give a fair go*
 Take a definition – *what are YOU for?*
 Take an example – *Tree of Knowledge*
 Take a time – *6 years*
 Take a parable – *The Good Samaritan*
 Take a Salvation – *unless YOU do something*
 Take a diagnosis – *YOU need a heart*
 Take a vote – *YOUR heart, YOUR guts, YOUR brain ... YOUR feet*

*North Arm Cove (Port Stephens) Revisited**Elegy for Walter Walkey*

Coming to a dead end
 I get out of the car
 and look over the shore.
 It is low tide.
 Flat-bottomed boats lie
 becalmed on the mud,
 the inky-blue waves
 nipped to white
 by the west wind's cold.
 A teenage kid
 drives in bumpy circles
 round a paddock
 in an old Ford,
 throwing up dust.
 The oyster shed is abandoned,
 just a few racks
 left in the debris.
 In the shadow by the bridge
 where the creek slides into bay,
 a blue heron
 poses a question mark.
 No question but
 this place was made for me
 by Walter and Doris
 who once lived here.
 They could make the waves dazzle
 even on a winter's day,
 point out the beauty of their garden
 on the birded shore.
 I miss the old workshop,
 now roller doored garage,
 where Walter crafted wood on his lathe
 with a firm hand, keen eye,

all gone like the garden bed
 Doris made in his memory.
 I can't forget
 how she bent over the coffin,
 to place at the head
 flowers from their garden,
 speaking to him softly
 like a mother to her baby.
 How many times over thousands of years
 have the sounds of mourning risen here
 all the way from humpies
 with no workshop but the shore,
 no garden but the bush,
 to the mansion of the white invaders
 commanding the high ground,
 its verandas now sagging
 under bougainvillea tangles?
 I strike out across the stubbly grass
 for a fresh look at the bay.
 The blue heron
 finds exciting things
 in the weed under its feet.
 Two pelicans bask on the strand
 which the tide washes new.
 I catch sight of red geraniums,
 outrageous escapees,
 brilliant against sedges,
 robust, courageous, full of life,
 and pick some in memory of the garden,
 and Walter.

Jean Talbot

Prayer of the Non-violent Resisters

O God, loyal to your deepest calling,
 we abandon all intention of harming
 anyone, even those who attack us and plan
 our death. May you fortify us and hearten;
 may we not faint or falter.
 May our example inspire those who come after,
 may you take us into your care.
 Amen.

Reg Naulty
Canberra Regional Meeting



Belief is a solo journey

DAVID EVANS | SOUTH AUSTRALIAN AND NORTHERN TERRITORY REGIONAL MEETING

Dame Naomi James was the first woman to sail solo around the globe, circumnavigating the world in a yacht by herself, putting together her love of sailing with her hope to achieve, and faith in her craft and her ability to cope.

It seems to me the spiritual universe likewise is there to be discovered with opportunity and a zillion unknowns.

Extrasensory perception, promptings from within, forebodings of the future, Road of Damascus moments in time, and flashbacks as real as the day they happened, all defy objectivity and definition. The moments may give a 'high', but then, like the disciples coming down from the Mount of Olives, the need is to return to normality.

Pragmatic practical existence is mandatory as we face current family and social issues. Like Naomi James we need Love, Hope, and Faith.

But why is it all so hard? Why is there no consensus about the best way forward?

Good people will make a poor system work and bad people will wreck a good system. Religious thought tells us the ocean of light will overcome the clouds of darkness. Perhaps this is where belief is centered. My credo is very similar to the Christmas Message. Work for peace with a spirit of goodwill.

Currently residing *In God's Waiting Room* aged 83 years, I continue to ask questions like I did when I was young. Aged 6 years my father told of

me asking 'who made God', and how apparently I was not satisfied with the answer.

It is fun to speculate about beliefs even though it is so very personal.

What I presently believe is: there is understanding of everything that happens way beyond the possibility of human understanding. Reality is omnipresent, and even in dying moments a new incremental appreciation is possible. The idea of timelessness also keeps me wondering. Having my archives on i-Cloud is great. Could there be i-Thoughts hovering around?

Those we remember are only a thought away.

AF

QUAKER SUBMISSION ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM LEGISLATION - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

would be better worded to say that 'To avoid doubt, the purpose of engaging in, or promoting, activities that support a particular view of marriage is not, of itself, a disqualifying purpose'.

In our view, the development of the international human rights framework has largely been the result of active contributions from faith communities. The proposed legislation will correct

some of the gaps in the recognition of freedom of religion or belief. We consider it would benefit from more extensive public conversation/consultation, and from the input of the law reform commission's separate investigation.

There remains considerable ignorance about the different faiths and beliefs represented in the Australian

community. We see merit in the proposal from Religions for Peace Australia for setting up a National Centre for Multiculturalism and Religious Diversity to educate citizens and strengthen Australia's multicultural life and social cohesion.

AF

REFLECTIONS ON ONE QUAKER'S JOURNEY – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

trying to reduce my carbon footprint is changing my financial advisor and getting involved with Market Forces. My edge is deeply understanding the non-human costs of climate change. My hope is that religious/spiritual people will work with environmental groups to save our Earth. Existentially it is a

comfort to me that human environmental degradation of our Earth will not affect our amazing universe (but is this so?).

I wish to acknowledge, Nikki, Rowe, Catherine, some RfPA members and ARRCC assistance in my journey to date. I thank Adrian, Elizabeth and others for the excellent *Quaker*

EarthCare Epistle on Climate Emergency & Species Extinction YM 2019, (<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/Earthcare>) as it provides an excellent spiritual and action-oriented framework for Quakers as individuals and as a religious community.

AF

TO LIVE IN INTERESTING TIMES – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

remote Friends did contact me by mail and I received articles.'

Frances believes she was led to go to the Kimberley and found that 'such a rich and privileged experience to learn more about Indigenous people.' She found it 'humbling and distressing' that the Indigenous people lived in such awful conditions and yet it was

accepted as normal. 'I could not believe that in a country like Australia this was acceptable. It opened my eyes.'

Moving around, Frances sometimes attended the Uniting Church, but the preaching against gays and homosexuals, in a particular country town church, at that time shocked her. She came across a book by an American gay Christian

and remembers, 'I was relieved to know it wasn't against God's law. That pushed me even more so that when I came to Brisbane, I decided I would definitely seek out Quakers.'

Frances is just finishing a second term as Regional Meeting Clerk of Queensland Regional Meeting.

AF

SPEAKING IN MEETINGS FOR WORSHIP – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

And it is laid on all of us to support that speaker toward a better understanding of what true Ministry means.

But there is a further question that is not always considered: What do we do when someone's words are truly Ministry from the Spirit? The Minister needs to know that the message has got through. Acknowledging true Ministry is one way of encouraging more true Ministry. Modern Quakers, though, (including myself) often say nothing. The Minister is left wondering if the message was heard, or if it was inappropriate. But if

I say 'Thank you, I am so glad to hear that,' I seem to be thanking the person for their intellectual effort rather than acknowledging a message from the Spirit. The old way was to acknowledge the Spirit's moving through the speaker. 'Thee was highly favoured today' was a common phrase. Can we imagine modern words with the same meaning? We need to acknowledge true Ministry as Spirit-born, and acknowledging it reminds us – both speaker and listener – that what we listen for in worship is the voice of the Spirit.

So I hope that all Friends will submit themselves to the discipline of distinguishing speaking 'notions' from offering true Ministry, and will resist the temptation to speak more than the Spirit requires. Likewise, I hope that all Friends will consider the responsibility involved in offering Ministry in worship, and neither shirk the responsibility nor take it lightly. For true Ministry that arises from true worship nourishes the whole worshipping community.

AF

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