

Children's Meeting Epistle Yearly Meeting 2021

Over this past week, 7 children and various adults met for an hour each afternoon on Zoom. There were different combinations of children, aged between 6 and 11, each day. We were so grateful to have Sarah Davies, a newly appointed AYM Children and JYFs Coordinator, and her children, participating in the program.

Our theme for this Yearly Meeting was "Stepping out". While our physical movements are still limited by the pandemic, our minds can visit many realms in the real and virtual worlds. When we step out, where can we go?

Our program began with a story about birds, including Bunjil the Eagle, who is seen by the Wurundjeri people to be a creation spirit. The children used finger puppets from their welcome parcel to illustrate the story.

Singing and moving to music, always a favourite activity, proved to be both challenging and rewarding. The music had us stepping out, in our imagination, to visit the moon; but only to visit, not to live there. The children clapped, stamped and blinked along to *Dr Knickerbocker Nickerbocker Number Nine*. A more nostalgic and soothing choice of song, that will resonate with older Friends, who are still young at heart, was *The Octopus's Garden in the Shade*, by the Beatles.

Another activity was making pasta in the traditional way. This was great fun and we had useful tips from a mother and son, of Italian heritage, about how to make various pasta shapes, such as tagliatelle (ribbons) and orecchiette (little ears), as well as some traditional sauces. While the pasta was resting, before it could be cut into ribbons, we heard a story from *The Dinner Detectives* who investigated the origin of this popular and versatile food in *The Tangled Tale of Tagliatelle*. The children made enough tagliatelle for their families' evening meal.

This session played out, in a practical way, some important Quaker values such as community building, equality between boys and girls, respect for other cultures, and encouraging children to have a voice. And, as a small step in the de-colonisation of our minds, we discovered where pasta really comes from.

We were delighted to have Lisa Wriley to show us her Earthcare Game. She pointed out that when she "stepped out" she "got her boots dirty". We enjoyed seeing the Earthcare Game and learning about:

- the process of inventing games
- crowdfunding the production of the Earthcare Game and
- how to play board games on Zoom

as well as taking the creative liberty of covering her board with our heart tokens.

Finally, we joined with the JYFs for a Quaker Question and Answer panel: the QA Q&A. The panel considered four queries posed by Junior Young Friends. What is a Quaker? What do they do? What are their beliefs? What is it like to be a Quaker? Quite fundamental questions for us all to consider.

And, so, we played our part in Yearly Meeting 2021 online.