

# Tasmanian Quaker Newsletter

February 2024

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Photo: Sue Headley

## Tasmanian Quaker Newsletter

Tasmania Regional Meeting  
The Religious Society of Friends  
(Quakers) in Australia

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The image adopted as the logo for Quakers in Australia represents the Aurora Australis, a natural phenomenon of the southern hemisphere, associated with Antarctica, a fragile and magnificent part of the planet. The Aurora Australis is considered an appropriate logo because of its association with:

- pure light, the centrality of the Light for Quakers

- beauty, a quality many associate with God or the Spirit within
- nature, a permanent reminder of everyone's responsibility to care for the world
- the colour blue, used by the UN
- the ephemeral and intangible, a reminder that language is inadequate to describe God, the truth or the Spirit within.

## Reflecting on a Quaker education

### Outgoing principal shares gratitude and insights : Nelson File

IT WAS February 1973 when I stepped foot for the first time into a classroom at a Quaker School – Abington Friends School just outside Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Unlike Australia, February is in the second half of a school year in the United States, so I was really the ‘new kid on the block’ joining the School in the middle of the school year.

Despite being born and raised in a Quaker family, none in our immediate family attended Quaker schools. During 1972 and 1973, Philadelphia Public School teachers were on repeated strikes. Subsequently, my parents were desperate to get my brother and me back in school, after having our education repeatedly and for extended periods, interrupted. Byberry Monthly Meeting, the Meeting our family had been in continuous membership since its inception in 1683, agreed to provide some financial assistance for my brother and me to leave public education and embark upon our Quaker education. My brother (who was three years older than me) was admitted to George School (north of Philadelphia) and I was enrolled in Abington Friends School (AFS). Not ideal for my parents, but somehow they made it all work.

When I entered AFS, it was a very different setting from the public school I had been attending. From a city school with 1,200 Year 7 students to a suburban school with beautiful green grounds and mature trees surrounding the school was quite a change. There were 46 students in my Year group - 27 girls and 19 boys. What a difference. What struck me most, however, and what I remember most is the caring relationships the teachers had with the students. The high expectations in the relaxed atmosphere were immediately evident, with the understanding that everyone was supposed to live up to that which is inside them to do their best.

What I see here at The Friends’ School, where I am completing my journey in Quaker education, is a set of very similar relationships between students and staff. A relaxed learning atmosphere full of high expectations that enable students and staff to be their most authentic selves.

We all know the best schools (Quaker or otherwise) are developed through the strong relationships that exist within them - students/ students, students/staff, staff/ parents, staff/staff. Unless these relationships exist in an atmosphere of kindness,

common purpose, and a caring community, people are not able to feel in enough of a safe place to develop and grow as they should.

My family and I have been blessed with the opportunities we have had living in different regions of the world and learning about those places and cultures while working in those locations for extended periods of time. Professionally, my family and I have lived and worked in New Delhi, India (11 years), Muscat, Oman (9 years) and now here in Hobart for 11 years. Now, I am returning to an America that is a very different place from when we left 32 years ago.

As I reflect back on my life as a student, starting at Abington Friends School more than 50 years ago and my life here as the Principal at The Friends’ School, I realise how fortunate I have been. For me, the Purpose and Concerns sums up Quaker education better than any other Quaker school document I have come across – “We seek to help our students develop as people 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.”

The goal of all Quaker schools across the world is to help develop students into positive, contributing members of society – to build a better, more just world. Who does not want to work towards that goal and live in that sort of world?

It has been both heartening and gratifying to see staff, students and the wider Friends’ School community live out the Purpose and Concerns. A Quaker saying that comes to mind is ‘Let your Life Speak’. As I have said before, some find that sentence a bit daunting. In reality, we all let our lives speak everyday through the choices we make in how we live our lives. For me, I think it asks each of us to be a bit more conscious of how we choose to live our lives – in modern parlance - to be mindful of the choices we make - both the large choices and the daily ones.

On behalf of myself and my family, I would like to share a warm and deeply felt sense of gratitude to the entire Friends’ School community. My time at The Friends’ School has been a fulfilling and joyous period in my life, littered with challenges, successes and friendships.

Thank you. With Friendship,  
*Nelson*

## The Red Wheelbarrow

William Carlos Williams 1923

so much depends  
upon  
a red wheel  
barrow  
glazed with rain  
water  
beside the white  
chickens.

THIS POEM was sent to me by an American friend. His view is that we ware the red wheelbarrow and 'so much depends upon' what we fill ourselves up with ie. thoughts, words and deeds!

I wondered if my friend had only sent me part of the poem. Eight lines and sixteen words! Where is the rest of it? Or is this some sort of Haiku variation? Internet searches in the usual places reveal that this is the whole poem. It is a product of the 'Imagist' movement of the early 20th Century. Other more scholarly works argue that Imagism is a part of, and can be parcelled up with, Modernism.\*

'We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous ...' so said one of the leading lights of the movement. Echoes here of the first generation of Friends in the 17th Century and 'plain speaking'.

If you are familiar with 'Plato's cave'\*\*\* you will see that the following illustration is not entirely accurate but it does assist us to see that Williams was wrestling with a very old problem.

*Steve Louis Smith*

\*[https://www.academia.edu/113838896/Williams\\_i\\_e\\_William\\_Carlos\\_Williams\\_imagist\\_cubist\\_objectivist\\_](https://www.academia.edu/113838896/Williams_i_e_William_Carlos_Williams_imagist_cubist_objectivist_)

\*\* [https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/seyer/files/plato\\_republic\\_514b-518d\\_allegory-of-the-cave.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/seyer/files/plato_republic_514b-518d_allegory-of-the-cave.pdf)



An Illustration of *The Allegory of the Cave*, Book VII of Plato's Republic..

## A review of Old (R)Age by Sheila Hancock

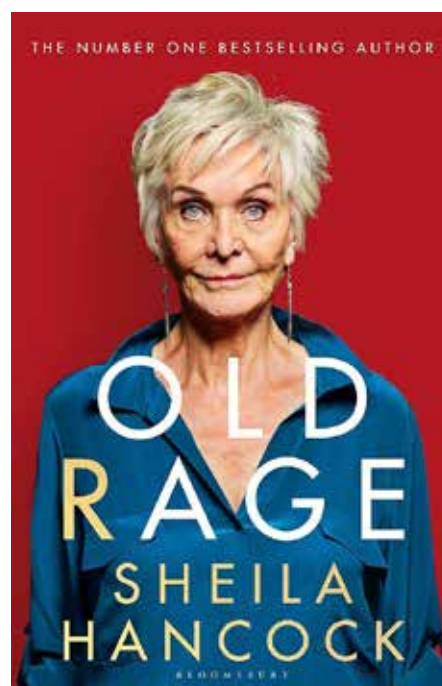
### Old Rage by Sheila Hancock, 2023, Bloomsbury Publishing PLC

A new addition to the Library, Old (R)Age is a wonderful read. Much loved and respected actor, Sheila Hancock, now 90 years old, has written a superb book about being OLD.

Her experiences and memories create a really interesting read. "She shares her story and unflinchingly examines her life and all that comes with it, flaws, mistakes and all. This was such a treat!" is one review on line.

It is difficult for me to know just what made this book such a good read. Her Quakerism underlies her life and, in many ways, defines who she is – yet she is such an unlikely Quaker! But such a flamboyant person finds solace in the quiet Meeting for Worship.

She tells us her book wasn't really intended to come out like it was – she HATES getting old – rheumatoid Arthritis, missing her husband, living alone. But the book, as a whole, is inspiring, enjoyable, memorable and OH so inspiring.



## David Johnson pamphlet

### The Fundamental Principle of Quaker Spirituality: Light in the Conscience by David Johnson, Pendle Hill Pamphlet 483 (2023)

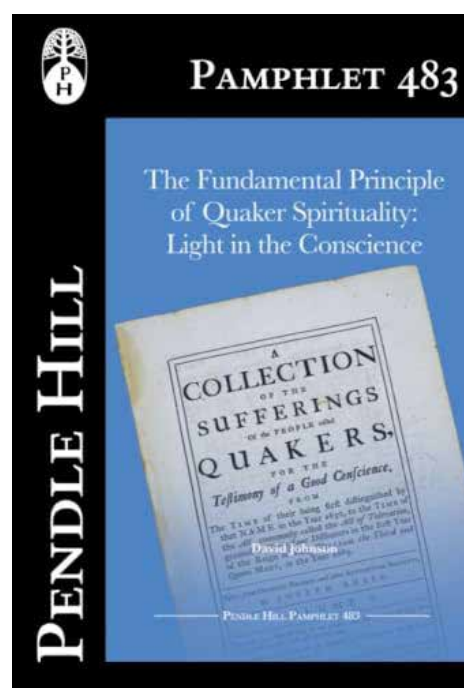
THROUGHOUT MY day to day life, I am constantly drawn to Advice number 1: "Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Trust them as the leadings of God whose light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life." It is a reminder to put aside the busyness, and all its flotsam and jetsam with which I might be distracted, and look instead, to the inner light in my heart.

This practice of looking for the light within, and being faithful to that enlightenment is very much affirmed in David Johnson's latest publication. It is a treasure. He explores early Quaker writings about coming to know God from within and being guided by that spiritual experience, following the light in their conscience. David quotes William Smith (1668) who said: "the Light ... shews sin in the Conscience", making us aware of our weaknesses and poor decisions so "that in the Light you may receive the wisdom that is pure, and in that wisdom to order all things you have in charge, to the glory and praise of Almighty God." That is what I am seeking when I am drawn to the promptings of truth and love in my heart. It is a constant process, not only for me, but for Friends who have been faithfully looking to the inner light since George Fox.

David Johnson shares the encouraging insights of a number of Quakers over the centuries as well as his own thinking, and a few prompts for the reader. This is a short but stirring read.

David Johnson is a Member of Queensland Regional Meeting and is widely known to many of us for his ongoing involvement with the Silver Wattle Centre, Bungendore NSW.

*Sally McGushin*

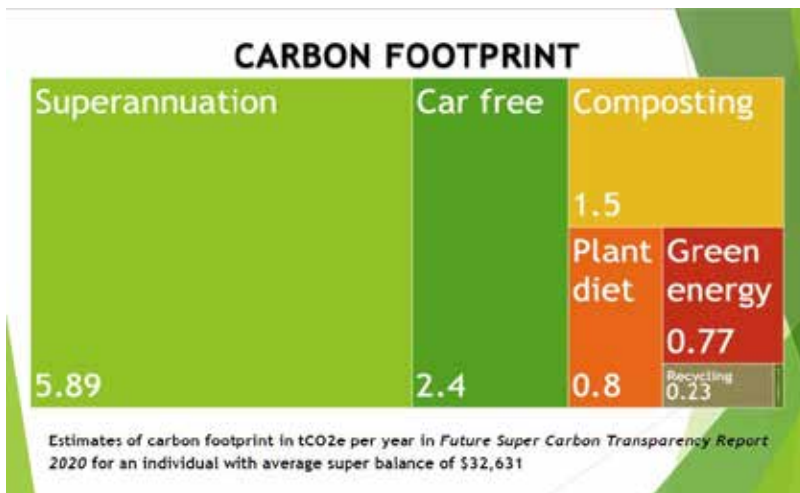


## Meeting to learn how your money impacts the climate crisis

DO YOU know where and how the financial products you use – banks, insurances, superannuation – contribute to global warming? Through your investments in your superannuation, are you part owner of a coal mine? As a person of faith, does NOT knowing these things excuse you from investigating better alternatives? As a Quaker, doesn't our commitment to Stewardship require us to protect the earth with our own actions?

Finding answers is not difficult with knowledge and a will to change, Friends can make better choices for their finances that are a more positive legacy for the next generation rather than a legacy of a harmful portfolio of fossil-fuel-based investments. And "change" is not another word for "too hard".

Consider the following graph which illustrates how super funds can finance the carbon imbalance humans have created on the planet. In this example, super fund investments are financing nearly six carbon tons per year in emissions. It is clear that super funds invested wisely can be one of the most effective means by which individuals can lessen their carbon footprint/CO2 output compared to other carbon offset measures like doing without a petrol car or composting all one's household waste, or following a vegetarian diet.



\* ACCRR Divestment Group (<https://www.arrcc.org.au/go-fossil-free>) graphic created from: Estimates of carbon footprint in tCO2e per year in Future Super Carbon Transparency Report 2020 for an individual with average super balance of \$32,631. The dark green you can't see is 'Keep Cup'.

Tasmanian Friends will have an opportunity to learn the story behind what financial institutions do with our hard earned money. TRM Peace and

Justice Committee have arranged for a visit from well-known Green Ethics Friend Sue Ennis on the 17<sup>th</sup> March at 11:40 AM at the Hobart Meeting House (in lieu of the scheduled QP&J Meeting itself) to give a presentation that will outline the information needed for individuals to make informed choices about money and how it can be a 'force for good'. Sue will stay with the Meeting through a shared lunch and answer questions.



Canberra Demonstration 2023. Sue is pictured on far left

Friends will know Sue from her work with the ARRCC's 'Divestment Group', her ongoing support for Market Forces.org.au information website, her participation in Religions for Peace, her thought-provoking presentation on Green Investment at AYM 2022, and as one participant in Quaker's 'Integrity in Public Office' demonstration in Canberra last year.

Sue's carbon emission 'debt' incurred by return travelling to Hobart from Melbourne will be carbon offset through a contribution to Greenfleet.org.au. This is in line with the AYM Travel Guidelines policy recently approved by the regions.

Plan ahead to attend Sue Ennis's visit to Hobart on 17 March 2024, at 11:40 am at the Hobart Meeting House. Staff at Friends School and new Principle Esther Wilkes Hill will also be invited to attend. Check the TRM e-notices weekly to see if a

ZOOM link will be available. Everyone is welcome.

*Janice Blakeny*

## News of Friends

### **Lisa, Nelson and Spencer File**

Lisa and I are doing well – re settling into our home in Hawaii. We are reconnecting with family and neighbours. We arrived shortly before Christmas and the 7 weeks or so have passed quickly. I do not feel ‘retired’ yet – just on a long vacation at our home – although clearly we are not returning to Hobart in the near future.

Lisa and I have been very busy around our home. We have not had the opportunity to spend this much time here in about 12 years. We have been spending much of our days cleaning and sorting, gardening and doing handyman repairs around the house. After a long absence, much is needed. Our town, Waimea,

### **Rudi Thurmer**

When we arrived, Rudi was asleep. We woke him and after a few moments he realised who we were (not our names yet) . Then he pointed at me and said “The calendar ran out” at which point I remembered that I had a stitches calendar ‘somewhere’ at home waiting for him. When I found it, I highlighted his birthday and also George Fox’s birthday and James Backhouse’s.

Circumstances prevented my taking the calendar to him yet. Now I can organise to print an enlarged copy of the Stitches newsletter to take to him with the calendar.

**HOW TIMELY!!!**

Peace and hugs

*Julie*

is hosting a cherry blossom festival that we hope to attend today if the weather cooperates. Ornamental Cherry trees were gifted to our town about 100 years or so ago from Japan, and this celebration is an annual event much like it is in Japan. Spencer is also settling in. He has quickly found work in hospitality – all within walking distance of our home. It is lovely being here now.

We think of Hobart and the members of the Meeting frequently and fondly. Please pass along our warm alohas to everyone at TRM.

With Friendship,

*Nelson*



A photo of Rudi Thurmer and two Friends taken two days before his 92nd birthday.. Photo: Caitlin Street

## St David's Floral Festival

ST DAVID'S Floral Festival or 'Blooming Church' is on Regatta Day Weekend, the second weekend in February.

About 10 years ago, Jane Walker and I began making a display of work by Hobart Embroiders' Guild in the Cathedral during that weekend. Noticing that the floral displays came from all denominations and groups, I asked if one from Quakers could be included and we were welcomed. The essence of the Festival is welcoming, a group of practical Cathedral members with the Dean Christopher Humphrey.

Tasmania Regional Meeting agreed so I have been making a display of flowers or plants each year.

I am not a maker of huge, complex displays and a small simple one suited the Quaker ethic. Mostly I use plants from my garden so each year during the two weeks before I watch what may flower. I made and embroidered a linen mat with the words 'Peace, Love, Tenderness and Helping' around the edge.

This year the display would have to last from Thursday until Monday so a couple of visits were needed to top up the water and rosebuds. The theme was 'Oasis' so I used dark green bay leaves, rosemary sprigs (for remembrance), dark red sprigs of a tea tree, with the white rose 'Francis Phoebe', and 'Lion' rose, which is white tinged with pink. Also a green euphorbia, a green succulent and a white flower in sprigs whose name I don't know, which came originally from Pat Mavromatis' garden.

The Embroiders have a roster on Saturday and Monday to sit and sew. I always enjoy this time, meeting visitors from all over the world telling their stories, hearing the organ play and absorbing the atmosphere of the Cathedral. It brings memories of Lichfield Cathedral in my early days, which was an intensely spiritual place at an intensely spiritual time of my life. I have changed, the Anglican ritual has too much of God. Now the Quaker faith of peace and a belief in that inner love in us all speaks to me.

*Jenni Bond*



Photos: Jenni Bond



