

# The Australian Friend

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# Isolation



# Editorial

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It's been a different couple of months, and this is reflected in a somewhat different *Australian Friend*. We have been astounded at the activities that Friends have been able to carry out during the COVID-19 shut-down. This has let to us all having to do things in different ways, but the Spirit managed to come through, even through sometimes shaky Zoom connections

And there is the challenge of Yearly Meeting, where we will not be able to meet in the flesh, so to speak. We wish our Canberra Friends all the best in their efforts, and encourage all Friends to join in to the best of their technical abilities. After Yearly Meeting we would like to learn from Friends what they gained and what they missed from this very different experience.

The articles on Speaking in Meeting continue to come in, expressing the wide range of views on the topic. We feel inspired by the views of the more 'spiritual' Friends. At the same time, we welcome the input from more 'worldly' Friends who would possibly follow the words of Henry Cadbury quoted in Reg Naulty's book review: 'Speaking for himself, he writes that his religion "rests largely on a life of honest thinking, and kindly dealing" and responding to social issues.'

Until next issue, keep healthy and *wash your hands*.

**THE AUSTRALIAN FRIEND EDITORIAL TEAM**

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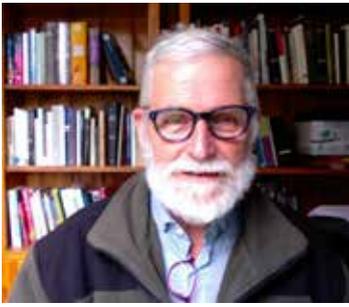
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Cover photo: Isolation



# Zoom Meetings for Worship

MICHAEL GRIFFITH | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING

When the lockdown for Covid-19 arrived on March 15th I was immediately given a Zoom Room by the university at which I work so that I could continue my teaching via Zoom with all students. No restrictions were imposed on my use of Zoom at this time, so it became a clear possibility to offer this Zoom Room (with no time constraints) for our local Sunday Quaker Meetings. As soon as this possibility was advertised we had members and attenders far and near wishing to join. There was a Friend who had ended up being 'trapped' in New Zealand, there were many from Wahroonga Local Meeting as well as some from the Central Coast. Over time we had visitors from Hobart, Bega, Canberra, Newcastle ... and New Zealand!

Zoom Meetings for Worship took off wonderfully, reuniting Friends and making it possible for remote Friends to join in a way that they could not have, had meetings remained in the Meeting House in Wahroonga. The format of the Zoom meetings each week has been straightforward. To begin with there is some conversation before the meeting as Friends arrive in the 'Zoom Room'. Then meeting starts strictly at 9.30 with Rose Griffith (co-clerk) reminding Friends to mute themselves – only unmuting should they feel moved to speak in ministry. This has progressed to a bell sounding to indicate the start and end of the meeting.

The silent meeting was for 40 minutes during the first weeks of Zoom but has recently been extended to 60 minutes – as requested by the majority. The meeting closes with a

bell and then Rose reads out Notices (which are posted onto a shared screen) for all to see. Other notices are then called for, any new attenders are invited to introduce themselves and then there is an opportunity to go into 'Break-out rooms' for around 15 minutes to catch up with others. These 'Break-out rooms' are randomly created with 4 or 5 people to a room. (People are able to leave the meeting at any time, and there is no disturbance caused; and for those who are made tense by seeing themselves and others on the screen it is possible to turn off the video picture for a while).

These 'Break-out' sessions have been very popular because it has given Friends an opportunity to be 'in contact' and share their experiences. When these small gatherings close all Friends come together again in one large group and then there is further opportunity to share experiences in a larger forum for 10 minutes or so.

Helen Gould has also now created a space after meetings, in the Zoom Room, for Quaker singing. This allows Friends to join in singing favourite Quaker songs. The way this has worked is that one person who can hold the melody well is invited to sing with others muted. This is in order to prevent dissonance created by time lapse in the digital stream. All can then sing along with the melodist. This is working really well, and all Quakers nationally are invited to take part. This occurs at exactly 11am E.S.T. on Sundays and goes for around half an hour.

## Rose reports about her experience as follows:

At first sitting in front of the screen trying to gather myself

was uncomfortable but as the weeks have passed my sense of strangeness has started to subside. I now value this new way of being together.

The Zoom Meeting for Worship is still a work in progress. How can the hand shaking at the end of the meeting be replaced? Words do not cut the mustard. Also there is an unfilled need to interact with the two young girls who, at the end of meeting sit with their mother and watch us sitting in silence. They look so joyful, waving at us and their grandmother. Their presence is a joy yet there is a need for a deeper contact with them that we have not yet established. We will work on this. Nothing worthwhile can be rushed.

Kay and Jocelyn Woodhouse took part in this Quaker meeting for worship for the first time last Sunday.

## Kay's report on this is worth listening to.

Jocelyn and Kay Woodhouse joined the Wahroonga Zoom Meeting for Worship for the first time on Sunday 10th May. Jocelyn has not attended meeting for several years because of difficulties posed by age related disabilities. She has a great deal of quiet time by herself in her own unit. Kay has said that during the current lockdown they have held Meeting for Worship at home with just the two of them and it was a good experience.

This is how Kay described their experience of joining their first Wahroonga Zoom meeting: From our landline we phoned the local

zoom Australia number. When prompted we punched in the meeting ID followed by #, and the participant number followed by #, which had been given to us by our zoom meeting host Michael Griffith. We were immediately welcomed to the Wahroonga Zoom meeting by Rose Griffith who helpfully told us the names of six friends who had already 'arrived'. Not having a screen meant that we were coming to meeting like blind people. So it was good to have this kind of assistance. Jocelyn is almost blind now anyway, so this has become normal for her. Rose entered our names in the black box on her screen so that those members with screens would know we were at meeting with them.

I put the phone on 'speaker', muted it, and placed it on the table between us next to the African violet and the usual selection of books. We centered quickly into meeting. Jocelyn began to recall the various meetings she had visited over the years and their different characters and here was a new one. We both found the hour very rewarding and a moving experience to be reconnected, especially so for Jocelyn for whom it had been such a long time. We also both had a strong feeling of 'coming to meeting for worship with heart and mind prepared' (Advices in Queries No 10).

It was a revelation to us that by simply dialling a zoom Australia number we were so easily able to participate in the Zoom meeting without having to grapple with other technology or download anything. We can highly recommend that those who are unable or disinclined to join meetings 'online' try this option of participating in 'on the line'.

## Quaker Zoom Poetry Group

As well as the weekly Meeting for Worship, I decided in the first week of lockdown that this would be a wonderful opportunity to initiate a weekly poetry group. This was something that Rose and I had been talking about well before the lockdown occurred. We had been discussing ways in which local Quakers might find other occasions to come together meaningfully during the week. This seemed a perfect opportunity to create a space for people to share poems that they have loved, especially because so many of us were suddenly thrown onto our own resources and also suddenly isolated.

Rose and I decided that Fridays from 5-6.30pm EST would be best. The response to this was wonderful, in the first weeks we again had John from New Zealand, Peter and Marilyn from Bega, Helen, Lisa, Cathy from the Central Coast and many others. The format here was quite simple. Friends who wished to join the group were each week invited to send in a poem of their choosing; this is not a mandatory requirement: Friends can attend the meeting just to listen. The poems are then placed in a digital document and this is sent around to all members so that they can read the poems before the next meeting.

At the meeting, members take turns to briefly introduce the poem they have chosen (the order of poems is determined by whose poems came in first). They are then invited to read out their poem aloud. Then the group as a whole, or smaller groups created via the Zoom Break-out room method, discuss the poem for five or ten minutes. When discussion has finished, the poem is read aloud once again. This is then followed by a two-minute period of silence and then the next person is invited to introduce their poem. Overall this has been a wonderfully refreshing exchange of ideas and experiences. Much has

been shared about our difficult times in lockdown and many of the poems chosen have reflected the mood of these unique times. Poetry is a unique vehicle for linking people's experience. It is a medium for holding the attention, for bringing into focus what is miraculous in our experience and for sharing in the joys and sufferings of humanity.

This poetry meeting will probably continue well past the end of lockdown as it is meeting a real need. If Quakers from interstate wish to take part then please contact myself (michaelgriffith1@gmail.com) or Rose (rosegriffith@bigpond.com) and we will give you the Zoom details for joining the meeting.

It is worth finishing by quoting one of the poems presented close to the start of our sessions together:

### And the people stayed home

*Kitty O'Meara*

And the people stayed home,  
And read books,  
And listened,  
And rested,  
And exercised,  
And made art,  
And played games,  
And learned new ways of being,  
And were still.  
And listened more deeply  
Some meditate.  
Some prayed.  
Some danced.  
Some met their shadows.  
And the people began to think differently.  
And the people healed. And, in the absence of people living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways, the earth began to heal.  
And when the danger passed, and the people joined together again, they grieved their losses, and made new choices, and dreamed new images, and created new ways to live and heal the earth fully, as they had been healed.

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# Growing community among Friends during a pandemic

## *NSWRM workshop*

JENNIFER BURRELL | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING

This online workshop was facilitated by Sheila Keane, Jennifer Burrell, and Aletia Dundas. Some 20 Friends attended, at least for part of the time, and although it was targeted to NSWRM Friends, four Friends from other RMs attended.

The first thing to say is that it was fun! We shared laughter and conversation.

The online session was plagued with technical glitches ... a pre-prepared survey vanished overnight, a video bumped with poor connectivity – but the breakout rooms worked well and we shared an amazing list of ideas for deepening our Quaker communities (not necessarily online). We could do this again ... within smaller Meetings or across Australia.

We talked about the core ways we deepen and nurture community:

1. Worshipping together
2. Learning together (e.g. Quaker Basics)
3. Looking after one another (pastoral care)
4. Doing meaningful actions together
5. Doing necessary things together
6. Enjoying each other's company.

We agreed we could do all these core activities online.

**Ideas, some of which were new to Friends attending, included:**

1. A number of Friends spoke of the richness they had found

in online meetings for worship, including breakout rooms afterwards to catch up socially.

- One Friend commented that online meetings seemed to encourage new Attenders and a wider range of people, especially male Friends.

- One Friend spoke of the depth of Spirit when attending Margaret Woodward's Gathering.

2. Attending an online course as a group, and setting up a discussion meeting room afterwards to share our learnings (one Friend is attending the Ben Pink Dandelion course on Quaker history, and mourned the lack of small discussions afterwards
  - This could be done by a whole Meeting, or by a group of Friends from anywhere in Australia
3. We spoke of how we do pastoral care for each other: keeping in touch by telephone, email, or other means. This needs to be tailored to the recipient's preference. One Meeting has a WhatsApp group, one uses Messenger to keep in touch
4. Letter-writing groups and direct online action were suggested by some Friends
5. We spoke of the necessary things we still need to do, including care of premises, committee work, setting up Zoom meetings

6. We spoke of simple breakout rooms after meeting for worship, coffee meetings, lunch meetings, home gatherings, discussion groups, book discussion groups (SWQC is meeting online to discuss *A testament of devotion*), creative groups (poetry groups; a group akin to Victoria RM's *Writing* group; singing groups after meeting for worship). Canberra RM runs a regular coffee morning by Zoom.

Our Friendly community is a precious thing. We need to cherish it always, even more when we do not meet physically – remembering this is always true for many, many Friends who do not have a nearby Meeting, or who worship in a small Meeting with a smaller range of activities.

The lock-down required by COVID-19 has been an opportunity to explore a wider range of opportunities to nurture each other in a group unlimited by the tyranny of distance.

We do not forget many Friends do not or cannot take advantage of these, but we welcome the opportunities for those who can.

And it was fun!

AF

# Lock down, lock up, lock in, lock out

WILMA DAVIDSON | CANBERRA REGIONAL MEETING



This was my tenth year visiting The Cliffs Retreat Centre in Shoreham, Mornington Peninsula staying in silence and alone in my little hermitage.

This year has been a bit different. I intended going for 5 weeks, however I left Shoreham on the third day – by ambulance. I slipped on the wet rocks and smashed my left (dominant) shoulder on the cliff. Frankston Hospital, I was transferred by air to the Canberra Hospital for surgery resulting in my now having a replacement shoulder.

I was home late February, in time for the Corona virus lock down. In the first few weeks I had carers and friends come every day to assist me as I healed and as I needed less care, more friends isolated themselves.

What this time is mainly doing for me is confirming my journey to a more contemplative life. My Tuesday silent days are precious and it is a joy to wake up each day to see the gradual changes to the leaves in the tree outside my window and see how the king parrots blend in with change in the colour of the leaves.

I still have friends help me with what I can't yet do and take me for walks in beautiful places, however I do walk alone each day and marvel at what there is to see within a few metres of home.

I do feel overwhelmed by the number of Zoom meetings each day, yet find the several Meetings for Worship I attend in the week are often gathered meetings. Sharing the silence with Friends all over the world in the warmth of one's home is such a gift.

There is a Facebook page called *the kindness page* and this has made me be aware of little kindnesses that arrive at my doorstep: the young delivery man bringing my box of fruit and veggies right into the kitchen, the friend who chops those still too difficult for me to manage, the Friend who facilitated a silent retreat day on the theme of *gratitude*, with us meeting at the beginning and the end of the day by Zoom and us having the time in-between to reflect on gratitude in our own way, and the Friends that send quotes and writings that are gifts of and for the spirit.

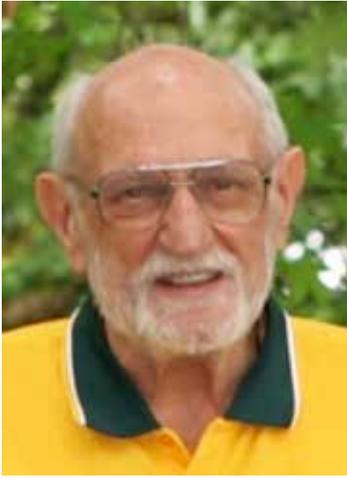
Having said all this about the

blessings of the lock down I do look forward to meeting with my Spiritual Nurture group face to face next week and also, joy of joys, meeting with my book group in the flesh again!

In this time of both recovery and isolation I have thought a lot about this very different year. I do believe things happen for a reason and have been pondering on the learnings spiritually, physically and mentally that I am experiencing now. During my annual times in silent retreat at Shoreham I've been led to think about love and gifts and gratitude and the importance of being in the present, and for some years now I have been working on learning to receive – which I find much more difficult than to give. I have been getting better at this and being in the position I'm in now, I'm made aware of the love and gifts I'm experiencing constantly.

Every experience is a gift and this experience will no doubt lead me forward in love and grace.

AF



# COVID-19-20-21-22-23

DAVID EVANS | SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND NORTHERN TERRITORY REGIONAL MEETING

*'We had a family gathering. My Dad died.'*

*'We went to choir practice. 60 choristers were infected and two died.'*

COVID-19 has emerged from a sea of coronaviruses in animals and humans able to take over the tissue cells naturally lining our respiratory systems and wreak damage before the immune system gets going. The damage may be fatal. In 2020 COVID-19 continues to evolve with new strains that each have their own potentialities.

Oldies like me have a high mortality rate and need to be careful. The world stopped to save the old and I am most grateful. We now distance ourselves, go into isolation and get tested when we have colds and 'flu. The light at the end of the tunnel is a long way off. It will come when the whole world is vaccinated and is immune.

Vaccinations do work. Do you remember the last case of smallpox? In 1975, Rahima Banu, a three-year-old girl from Bangladesh, was the last person in the world to have naturally acquired smallpox. Poliomyelitis is now mostly eradicated. Only Pakistan and Afghanistan have reported cases in 2020. Never was it more true to think globally and act locally. Vaccination of everybody is our best hope. Research scientists are looking for a Nobel Prize chasing an effective vaccine. Essential epidemiology studies are being done in haste to elucidate parameters such as whether there is a carrier status. Associated syndromes such as brain damage in young children are being investigated. It will be interesting to

see how well countries with little or no infections manage to keep control. They may set models for the future.

Local lockdown is necessary whenever a new cluster appears. There is mention of the R factor: how many other people get infected from one sufferer. It is obvious that social/physical distancing lowers the R factor. So keep your distance. Wash hands often. Get tested with cold-like symptoms.

Personally I have enjoyed the isolation and adaptation COVID-19 has brought. But now being able to see the family in the flesh again is marvellous.

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To Westminster Hall, where the Hall full of people, the King being come to speak to the House today. One thing extraordinary was this day, a man, a Quaker [Solomon Eccles], came naked through the Hall, only civilly tied about the privities to avoid scandal, and with a chafing-dish of fire and brimstone burning upon his head did pass through the Hall, crying, 'Repent! Repent!'

*Samuel Pepys 29 July 1667*



# What I hate about the lock down

RAE LITTING | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING

I have read so many articles lately by absolute saints who seem to be enjoying the lock down. These people are re-examining their lives, learning to bake, repairing their houses, discovering how to do wonderful things on-line. They are 'self-isolating'. I am not. I am isolated against my will. I can see the need for it, but I don't have to like it.

It's not just that I don't want to bake or clean my house, and I have a very small garden. I hate doing things on-line. And I do not wish to examine my life and get to know myself better. I fear I will discover that I am a cranky old woman and not a nice person to know. How will this help?

I have done my best to amuse myself indoors and I have not been very successful. I have read a number of books, most of which did not speak to my condition. I have completed numerous jigsaw puzzles. I am a grand master of Free Cell. I haven't that much time left in this life and I am wasting most of it.

Those of us who are of riper years are especially urged to stay indoors due to our vulnerable condition. As we do not contribute much to life, it is better we don't go around being a nuisance

and spreading disease. But even older people like to feel useful.

In order to have some excuse for living I am continuing to do bush care once a week, dragging my poor husband along with me. We don't meet many people in the bush, other than the occasional dog walking its owner. And as most of the shops still open are food shops, I am buying extra food and taking it to a centre for asylum seekers once a week. We meet other people doing the same, and asylum seekers out in search of food. In fact, a lot of hungry people seem to be out scavenging for food. Self-isolation is the privilege of the well-fed.

I don't like Zoom meetings, and I don't respond well to on-line worship. I know that it has been a life-line for many people, especially for those Friends who were isolated even before the pandemic. But I decided that I would go to the Meeting House every week (dragging along same poor husband) and sit outside with the trees and the birds.

After the first week I decided to read one of the *Advices and Queries* every week. We have now read eight of them (one week we joined an on-line meeting). Hopefully I will not get to

number 47. One or two other people have joined us.

After meeting for worship we do some gardening or general upkeep. I feel better watching the light reflected off the leaves than watching the light flickering on a screen.

Is there no upside? Well, yes there is. The air is cleaner, so our view of the Blue Mountains is clear – and blue not fuzzy brown. Best of all, on a clear night you can see the stars. I woke at 4 am one morning and saw stars out the window. I went outside and saw an arch of stars across the sky. I haven't seen that in Sydney for about 50 years. I woke the aforementioned poor husband and made him go and see them too.

I am relieved that we can now have guests in our house, and am making the most of it. The only thing that makes me do housework is the thought that guests are coming, so the vacuum cleaner has come out and the bathrooms have been spruced up.

One of my granddaughters went back to school for one day, and announced that she wanted to go every day. The school has permitted this. She is a lass after my own heart.

AF

# Australia Yearly Meeting 4–10 July 2020

## *Virtual, inclusive and connecting*

MALCOLM WHYTE | CANBERRA REGIONAL MEETING

Hosted by Canberra Regional Meeting (CRM), this year's Australia Yearly Meeting (YM2020) is coming to you directly, online and with new ways of doing business and connecting with each other.

While some parts of the AYM experience will be new, we believe that Friends will come away from the six days refreshed, renewed and rejoicing in the power of the Spirit to move among us, even in these times.

### So, what's new?

Since YM2020 is to be wholly on-line, the business of YM will be done in a different way, with additional pre-YM opportunities for Regional Meetings and Friends to be in touch with the YM committees about their reports in *Documents in Advance*. This should reduce the number of items coming to the business sessions for discernment.

In an effort to avoid Zoom fatigue, not all of our usual features of YM are being transferred to the online environment over the main week of 4–10 July.

There is scope for additional 'meetings' to be arranged more spontaneously during the week, by committees or individuals, for specific meetings or socialising. Technical support for this can be arranged. Similarly, should interest groups want to meet beyond the week that could be made possible.

Wherever possible, the hosting group is taking into account the time differences across Australia to enable as much participation as possible.

### And what's familiar?

Friend Fiona Gardner will deliver the annual James Backhouse Lecture on Monday 6 July at 7:00pm. Her topic is *Seeking Union with Spirit: Experiences of Spiritual Journeys*.

The focus of Friendly School will help us to look at the spiritual and human dimensions of how Quaker business is done, and how to make our discernment processes work well. It will involve both a presentation by Murray Short, former Presiding Clerk of Aotearoa/New Zealand, and small group discussions.

Share and Tell sessions are opportunities for Friends to share with others their personal interests and concerns. This year three virtual sessions will be offered concurrently each day for 45-90 minutes. The Zoom host for each session will coordinate the technology, including the option to move people into smaller groups, and the Presenter will lead the presentation and manage discussions. Because it is likely that there will be many S&Ts offered, and limited sessions in which way they can be held, we may ask some to combine, or be unable to stage every one asked for. It's also likely that the number in each session will be limited, so that the online group does not become unwieldy.

If you are interested in presenting an S&T, please fill out the relevant space on the on-line registration (link below) *no later than 31 May*.

Children and JYFs are also part of our planning and will have virtual opportunities for fellowship and fun.

### So, should I register? And what about technology?

Yes! To help us plan we're asking people to please register for AYM

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc42UapjZQ3\\_HgrjpGNCNTDcA7ZTLTb\\_MXFpphBVAci1xfQ/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc42UapjZQ3_HgrjpGNCNTDcA7ZTLTb_MXFpphBVAci1xfQ/viewform).

The registration form is also linked from the page *Registering for YM2020* at [www.quakersaustralia.info/yearly-meeting-2020](http://www.quakersaustralia.info/yearly-meeting-2020)

Prior to YM we encourage Friends, especially those new to Zoom practices and etiquette, to participate in the many free Zoom learning sessions offered through Silver Wattle <https://www.silverwattle.org.au/zoom-resources>

While most Friends have direct access to Zoom (including the additional security measures put in place by the company), we are aware that it is not the case for everyone. It's hard to predict what physical distancing and isolation measures will be in place in different states/territories in early July. We're asking Meetings to consider

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# Backhouse Lecture 2020

*Fiona Gardner*

SUE PARRITT | BACKHOUSE LECTURE COMMITTEE

In *Seeking Union with Spirit: Experiences of Spiritual Journeys*, Victorian Friend, Fiona Gardner shares her spiritual journey, beginning with her childhood sense of spirit influenced by her family’s religious practice as Scottish Presbyterians.

Born in Scotland, Fiona came to Australia with her parents when she was nine. The family continued to worship with Presbyterians in Australia, which gave them a sense of community.

For many years, Fiona, together with her partner Drew Lawson, has lived in a small intentional community in Bendigo, central Victoria. She values the spiritual nurture and learning gained by living in community.

In the lecture Fiona explores *life*

*in union with spirit* using her own experience and the wisdom of others including contemporary Friends.

The metaphor of a journey is employed along with extracts from *Advices and Queries*, poetry, story and Celtic prayer. There are two main themes:

*First what I see as the central pillars often experienced as tensions or paradoxes of the spiritual journey: having and reflecting on spiritual experience, the influence of history and social context, the challenges of darkness and light, and of love and truth and the value of paying attention to both our inner and external worlds.*

*The second main theme is around how we can nurture our spiritual selves as*

*we travel though life. Here I will focus on the centrality of silence, the qualities of openness, honesty and humility, recognising gifts and discernment, paying attention to the ways of knowing that deepen your knowledge of self.*

Fiona also explains why she seeks to live a life in union with spirit, and how doing so has influenced her long career as a social worker and her current work as a university lecturer.

This year’s Backhouse Lecture is a courageous endeavour to define a spirit-led life and challenges readers to nurture their own spirituality on a daily basis, a difficult task in an increasingly secular world.

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## AUSTRALIA YEARLY MEETING 2020— CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

linking Friends with Zoom access with those Friends without such technology, or even gathering in small groups to participate – if possible.

During YM there will also be a help desk that will be contactable by phone (the number will be available closer to 4 July).

While AYM2020 will not be the same as in previous years, we are very excited about the many opportunities to try out new technologies and frameworks for improving the robustness of AYM going forward in the post-pandemic,

but still climate crisis, future. We hope that many Friends will join us on this journey and we look forward to seeing everyone 4-10 July!

### Stay informed:

The AYM2020 website contains a great deal of useful information, including Documents in Advance reports and an evolving timetable as activities are added (<https://www.quakersaustralia.info/yearly-meeting-2020>).

AF





# Friends and the National Redress Scheme (NRS)

JENNIFER BURRELL | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING

## January – May

I have been working since 20 January to prepare ‘Australia Yearly Meeting Participating Group’ to join the NRS – a more complicated task than it may seem.

First of all, we had to determine who would be included in the Group. It’s AYM, all regional meetings, and four ‘associated bodies’: Australian Friends Fellowship of Healing Charitable Trust; Kangaroo Valley Friends Properties P/L (Werona); Quaker Service Australia; and Silver Wattle Quaker Centre.

Secondly, we had to work out how we would pay if and when an applicant’s claim against any member of the Participating Group was successful. It’s AYM.

Thirdly, we had to work through the documentation and other things required of us by a federal government department. You’re right: Kafka lives again.

However, we hope it’s done – by the time this article goes to press, I hope we will have been Declared as a member of the Scheme by the Minister.

## What comes next?

Once we have been Declared, a person who believes that they were abused as a child in a Quaker context can lodge a claim against us. Individuals lodge their claim with the NRS, who then contact us and ask if we have further documentation (apart from that already submitted) relating to the allegation – time, place, person, circumstances. Unlike a court of law, the burden of proof is on us, not on the claimant. The NRS is victim-oriented in its processes.

If the applicant’s claim is upheld by the independent decision maker,

we will be invoiced for the financial payment made to the applicant. This is capped at a maximum of \$150,000. All applicants are offered counselling, if they wish it. An applicant may also request an apology, a meeting, or other personal communication.

The Scheme is open for claims until 30 June 2028.

## My learnings

I have learned the importance of respectful and thoughtful language in discussing child abuse.

The word ‘victim’ should be avoided. The word ‘survivor’ should be avoided. Both words make an assumption about the individual’s own self-perception. Neutral terms, e.g. ‘person who was abused’ are better unless you know the individual’s own preference.

Avoid phrases which could imply that the child had responsibility for the abuse, e.g. ‘AB had sex with CD as a child’. Better: ‘CD was abused as a child by AB’.

Avoid referring to the NRS as ‘compensation’. Redress, even when it involves a financial payment, is not ‘compensation’. It is validation and support.

I have learned that discussions about child protection may well trigger an emotional reaction in another Friend and among Friends. I encourage all Friends to be both tender, and forgiving, with each other.

I have been struck by the manifest good will of Friends. As a Society, we do not have many children’s meetings or programs (although we do have some independent teenagers attending our meetings for worship: they too are children), but we clearly cherish our

children and carefully craft offerings and programs for and with them.

**Query:** How is it that, although we care deeply for our children, the annual audit of certified child carers does not reliably reach the AYM Secretary from all RMs within deadline?

I have been struck by the generosity and support offered by Friends across Australia, as I have contacted them to provide me with arcane information about where and when we held Meetings and family camps. We have had to provide information from as early as the 1930s, because someone who was a child then may wish to come forward now – and each person has every right to do so. Archivists are wonderful people! We are lucky as a Society to have so many competent and dedicated archivists among us. We probably think of this as a ‘back room’ job, but a situation like the NRS proves the incredible value of stored and accessible records, and of the Friends who manage them.

**Query:** How do we encourage confidential documentation of issues, and to whom are confidential records sent for retention and archiving?

I would like to believe that all this work and preparation will be unnecessary. But we are all human.

Should the worst possible scenario be true, and a Friend worshipping with us has committed child abuse, we recommend that that our first response will be (a) to ensure the safety of other Friends (b) to support our errant Friend, possibly by a ‘Circle of Trust’ or ‘Circle of Friends’. This is Quaker practice in Britain and in some other YMs.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



# Know Thy Friend

DAVID EVANS | SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND NORTHERN TERRITORY REGIONAL MEETING

Now aged 84 for both of us, it is 50 + years since Topsy and I moved to Tasmania, sent by my employer to work at the Commonwealth Pathology Laboratory in Hobart. After 10 years of moving from here to there I said to Topsy as we were travelling on the *Empress of Tasmania* from Sydney to Hobart, 'travelling with you is staying home'. We thought we would stay if we liked it.

We had married at Holy Trinity Anglican Church in 1960 after a long engagement whilst I finished my studies. A year later we left Adelaide, returning after 41 years in 2002 to be near senior grandchildren. SANTRM welcomed us and we attend Eastern Suburbs Local Meeting where I am currently Clerk of the Meeting. The 50-year membership of the Religious Society of Friends has been great for both of us. We took our three children, Susan (9), Rowena (7) and John (5) to the Hobart Meeting to see what Quakers were like, and we were more than pleasantly surprised. My feelings were that I liked the meditation, the freedom to speak, the tolerance for differing opinion, and especially good positive people to associate with.

Later I took on Editorship of The Australian Friend following on from Ross Cooper. Our committee would sit around the dining room table individually scoring the contributions as In, Out, or Possible, and later I would

put it together. Although enjoying the exercise greatly, after three years I decide to hand over, and, being conscious of proper Quaker procedure, asked around the local Meeting for a Hobart Friend to fill the void. No response. So I referred my wish to AYM Nominations. At YM that year Margaret Hodgkin came up to Topsy and asked if she would agree to be editor. Topsy said yes, and the committee carried on for another four years.

Quakers have given me the chance to integrate my work, enthusiasms, concerns and pleasures with religion. A side issue of my work in Hobart was to develop a special interest in Sexually Transmitted Diseases. The laboratory started HIV/AIDS testing in Tasmania and I was given opportunity to do a study tour visiting research centres in Europe including Belgium where African AIDS was discovered. Later going to conferences in Africa, I went armed with Quaker contacts which always paid off in local orientation. As Chairman of the AIDS Advisory Committee, I became spokesperson for STD related issues in Tasmania. There is a reference in Hansard of me getting upset debating with the then Minister for Health at an Australian Medical Association meeting on the need for Gay Law Reform. Later, volunteering with Pathologists Overseas, I was given the opportunity to work for short periods in Nepal. Once again work

and Quakerism combined when I met up with our Nepalese Friend Pradip Lamichhane who has been a visitor at AYM.

Although writing up various work-related papers, opportunity to do formal research in my field did not come. However, retirement is different. I can sponsor myself, and I studied Humanities with the Peace Unit at The University of New England. The theme chosen was domestic violence towards eloping couples in India and Nepal. This has led me to become involved with the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) which is currently publishing my contribution at a recent conference in Ahmedabad, India.

A wonderful happening for me is that my small book *Marriage for Peace* ([www.ddeevans.org](http://www.ddeevans.org)) is being published by The Friends Girls School in Sohagpur, India. A current concern of mine is possible working visas for those in long term refugee camps, like Dolo Addo on the Somali/Ethiopian border.

I love to share interests. However I tend to bore people asking if they know about GO, Real Tennis, and Barbershop Singing (more at <https://ddeevans1.com/>). Retirement suits my mental frame. A piece of advice given me by a 100-year-old man in our Retirement Village was, 'Keep on keeping on'.

AF

## NRS – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

### Our way forward: what does Love require of us?

I have written a background paper on child safety, outlining some of the challenges we will face in this area as a Society which will be a member of the NRS. These concerns are relevant to our duty of care for *all* vulnerable people.

We are all vulnerable in different ways at different stages of our lives.

I understand that a Working Group is to take this forward with a view to reporting to Standing Committee in January 2021.

*The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia Incorporated is*

*committed to providing a safe and secure environment ... The core beliefs of the Society require us to treat all people with love and dignity and to care for those who are less powerful and in need of nurture and protection (AYM Child Protection Policy & Procedures)*

AF



# QSA Notes

## Refugee Amir is an Ideal Permaculturist

BONIFACE S. GOMES | BANGLADESH ASSOCIATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (BASD)  
ALL PHOTOS BY BASD



I am **Amir Ali** (35 years old), living in Cox's Bazar Rohingya Camp No. 19 in Bangladesh since August, 2017. Before starting this camp life, I was growing up in a very respected family in Myanmar with parents, 7 brothers and 8 sisters. Although our family was large, we were living happily: there was no tension for food, clothing and necessities. I worked few years in Malaysia before coming to Bangladesh, so our family was very happy and respected. When we came to Bangladesh, all family members could not come at one time, they came at different times and enrolled in three different camps and locations in Cox's Bazar.

In 2018, luckily I was listed by BASD Staff for a Permaculture Follow-up project. Then, with 25 other refugees, I received 14 days Permaculture Design Course (PDC) by Rosemary Morrow from Australia. In the training session I was very attentive and keen to

learn more and more, and I was named as a creative man. Then I was selected as a Community Volunteer of BASD in Camp No. 19. I tried to educate the refugee youth, men and women whole heartedly what I had learned from the PDC and Rosemary. I also started a small Permaculture garden near my home, beside the tent.

As a Community Volunteer (CV), I guided 15 other CVs in Camp No.19. CVs were working among 1,500 families in that Camp and helping them for permaculture gardening, waste management, composting, planting home-based medicinal plants in pots or hanging. Gradually Camp No. 19 was transformed into a mini Permaculture Farm. I feel and understand that the PDC changed my life and lifestyle, gave me an aim and destination in my life.

I began educating my neighbour families after the PDC which I never did at Myanmar. I was thinking

of developing a slightly bigger permaculture garden. I was searching for land among the neighboring Bengali families. I got a lease of 120 decimal lands [about 1.2 acres] from a family. I invited 5 refugee youths who attended the PDC and jointly started gardening. We are now cultivating varieties of seasonal vegetables round the year. We are eating vegetables from the garden, distributing to the communities and selling the surplus in the market. Many are coming now to our garden for learning and visiting. We are really very happy now, as we are proudly producing, it gave us happiness and peace in our mind, it gave us respect in the society. We wish to teach more refugee youths, men and women including children in our camp and other camps in the future. Thanks for the great assistance and cooperation from BASD and education from Rosemary didi, Ruth didi and Jed bhai, and funding support from QSA.



Amir Ali at his vine-covered home (left), and working on his leased land (above).

## COVID-19 and other QSA supported communities

### JACKIE PERKINS, QSA COORDINATOR

For those Friends who follow QSA's projects in QSA Notes and the website, you may be wondering how they are coping with the pandemic. Ai Leen is in regular contact with the project partners in India and Uganda, and Fleur, our new staff member, is keeping in contact with our partners in Cambodia. All have reported stay-at-home rules, which are in some areas being enforced with brutal beatings if not adhered to. On the other hand, stress and anxiety levels in the home are generating a big increase in family violence. Obviously all training workshops which had been planned are not able to happen, but QSA has been very impressed by the flexibility shown

by our co-funder the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the care and brave willingness of all of our partners to continue supporting their communities during this difficult time. The remaining funds in the projects have been 'pivoted' to address COVID-19 so that posters, radio broadcasts and public announcements about frequent hand washing, keeping distance from non-family members and other more localised instructions can be shared in the remote rural areas, as well as distributing soap, hand sanitiser and face masks purchased in the country, many made locally. Project partner staff in preparing for this and new ideas have continued to receive a wage so that they and their families can buy food.

No one knows what the future holds, but as our project partner staff

in Cambodia, India, Bangladesh, and Uganda are permitted with precautions, they can visit individual households of project participants and their neighbours. By adjusting quickly to the evolving situation our project partners are facing, QSA can continue to make an effective contribution to addressing these problems faced by the communities under the constraints posed by COVID-19.

As a reminder, any donations greater than \$2 to QSA are now fully tax deductible, and we encourage Friends who are more fortunately situated to consider what additional support they may be able to give to help QSA continue to support these communities in need.

We're all in this together!

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](https://facebook.com/quakerserviceaustralia).

Unit 14, 43-53 Bridge Road, Stanmore, NSW 2048 Australia • [administration@qsa.org.au](mailto:administration@qsa.org.au)

PHONE+61 2 8054 0400 • FAX: +61 2 9225 9241 • ABN 35 989 797 918





# Some thoughts on ministry in Meeting for Worship

FELICITY ROSE | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

**W**hat an awesome, amazing thing that it should be possible to access that space where Spirit (insert all your favourite words such as God, Christ, the Inner Light), can communicate some wisdom that, if heeded, can guide us in our lives. In Meeting for Worship, true Ministry, given through someone who feels urged to stand up and speak, is not likely to arise unless within a gathered meeting.

Let's start at the beginning.

We are asked to come to Meeting 'with hearts and minds prepared'. Thus, *Advices & Queries*, number 10 tells us: 'In worship we enter with reverence into communion with God and respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Come to Meeting for worship with heart and mind prepared. Yield yourself to God's guidance...'

So, we come to Meeting with an attitude of openness, letting go all our busy thoughts, plans and worries to create space to be perfectly still and silent, inside and out. When all or at least many are prepared to do this, we can wait in hope and expectation that as our Meeting moves into a gathered communion the Holy Spirit will be there amongst us and vocal ministry may occur. In an hour-long Meeting we are unlikely to be 'centered down' to this level in less than fifteen or twenty minutes.

Many Meetings have an appointed elder, or it may be someone who feels led to take on this task for the Meeting. They come early to start the silence and hold the space, so that people come into a hushed and worshipful space which they can readily join. During the Meeting the elder continues to hold the Meeting with deep concentration.

Now the stage is set for Ministry to arise. The cue for this varies a lot. For me I start to 'see' a word or idea and at the same time I feel somewhat woolly in the brain as if I have had a sudden drop in blood pressure. I'm receiving an urge to get up, trust, words will come out. That is scary and I will usually resist it especially if it is not a fully formed

thought. I also need to apply the test: is this something just for me, or is it to be shared with the Meeting? When I cannot resist any longer, I stand up and start to utter the words I've been given. Sometimes it takes form into something quite beautiful and may develop into a complete statement. Other times an awkward sentence tumbles out and then I go blank. I sit down feeling a bit foolish, but I have been approached afterwards by someone who has thanked me and told me how amazing those words were for them. At other times, while I am still in the 'testing' stage someone else has got up and said exactly what I had been struggling to express. How amazing! How wondrous!

Sometimes after a good period of time, someone else may rise and add to or expand the first Ministry. It is usually clear that this is not just a comment or desire to discuss the subject, but a truly deep elaboration. The Meeting receives it remaining at that deeply gathered level, not being jerked up into analytical thinking.

A completely silent Meeting should not necessarily be considered second rate. In fact, a deeply gathered Meeting where there is no spoken Ministry can be just as nurturing and encouraging

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

# I've been thinking ...

DAVID SWAIN | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING



**W**ell, I'm sorry, but I have. And I've been reading the articles on Speaking in Meeting in the last couple of issues of *The Australian Friend*.

Apparently, the last thing you should do when preparing to speak in Meeting is to think. This is a bit worrying, as Quakers have been known for centuries as the religious group who think – right back from when George Fox said 'What canst thou say?'

I don't want to argue with any of the authors. Their articles are all interesting, deep and, above all, wise. Each is true Ministry. Each provides guidelines that should be considered before any of us rises to speak in Meeting for Worship. I would be concerned, however, if these were treated by Friends as rules, rather than guidelines. They doubtlessly describe ideals in a perfect Quaker world, but I am afraid that in our imperfect world they may well lead

to uncomfortably silent meetings, and restrict truly spiritual Ministry.

We are counselled that Ministry should be spontaneous, and arise during the meeting. It is true that the quietness of the Meeting, when we are surrounded by loving Friends, will be more conducive to spiritual contemplation, but Quakers do not restrict the actions of the Spirit to any specific time and place. A Friend may receive inspiration anywhere, any day of the week. Should not this inspiration be shared at the next Meeting for Worship? Even Hoffnung's lady in our March issue would not be in right ordering. And if this inspiration arises at least partly from something read or heard, can this not be mentioned, even to the extent of quoting a sentence or two?

Politics, we're told, is forbidden. Certainly we don't want party political broadcasts, but politics at its best is

based on spiritual, or at least ethical, values. The great Quaker reformers such as John Woolman undoubtedly spoke in Meetings about slavery, one of the day's major political topics. Even the 2019 Quaker Earthcare Climate Emergency Epistle that we were urged to read in Meetings is in some respects political.

Cathy Davies, in her article in this issue, writes of the varied forms Ministry, and her disappointment as fewer people rose to speak. 'Popcorn' Meetings can be annoying, but routinely silent Meetings can leave some Friends wanting.

Perhaps the best advice comes from a well-known (at least to me) Friend: 'When in doubt I ask three questions: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it helpful? If the answers are 'yes' I don't think one's ministry can do any harm'.

AF

## SOME THOUGHTS ON MINISTRY – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

when we all share in a loving silence too deep for words. However, it can be a hindrance to experiencing the full gift of Meeting for Worship if we become too comfortable there and don't allow the further openness to happen which encourages spoken Ministry. The life of a Meeting and the Ministry emerging can go through cycles with highpoints of spirit-led Ministry seeming to open the way to others to speak their own opinions and ideas and it may become acceptable in a Meeting, to such an extent that elders are moved to explain to friends that not much of what is

being said is really Ministry at all. Then the Meeting may go silent for a while because there is a fear of being wrong or spoiling what others are preferring to experience. Apathy and fear will quench the Spirit.

Finally, in these days of being prevented from gathering together physically, a word about Ministry in Meetings for Worship on Zoom. If the intent is the same then the outcome can be just as powerful and once we are familiar with the technology and are over our nervousness about turning our microphones on and off again we

can take part in just the same way, 'with hearts and minds prepared.' It has been wonderful to see isolated Friends in our Zoom Meetings and receive their contributions. I wonder if, when we are able to gather physically again, we will continue to invite those friends who are unable to join us physically to take part by Zoom set up in the Meeting House. It is certainly a time when we are invited to 'live adventurously' (*Advice & Query* number 29).

AF



# To speak or not to speak

CATHY DAVIES | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING

**W**hen I first started attending Wahroonga Meeting – many, many years ago – there were a number of teachers and other exceptionally educated Friends amongst the large group. They were extremely confident, used to speaking in front of others, able to work out their arguments clearly and with interesting viewpoints.

Over the many years since then I can still remember some of what they had to say. What a delight to be able to remember some clear, well-articulated message.

But had those messages actually been channelled from God? I don't know, but who am I to doubt them? We are asked to check ourselves before speaking. There is no doubt that some of the speakers in Meetings at this time were probably very troubled by their day-to-day existence and spoke about it. Our charity for them always seemed

to help them by listening to what they had to say, and perhaps afterwards to speak over coffee with them, letting them know they had been heard.

Sometimes the speaker spoke about Quaker or ecumenical things. I guess some amongst us found this irritating, whilst others allowed the words to flow over us. I remember Jocelyn Woodhouse saying, with tears in her eyes, 'That is the first time since I left my dear English Meeting that I have heard someone speak in Meeting about an ecumenical gathering.' Surely not? How do we know what we say will not influence someone or be important to them? We never know when it is going to be the only thing that will comfort someone.

We are asked to be a conduit of God's word. I have asked people from where their words came. A quite surprising number would say that they really can't remember what they said; it just came. But for someone else listening in the Meeting those words were vital. Were they God's word spoken through someone for the listener?

On one memorable occasion a well-known overseas visitor came to Wahroonga Meeting. At the end he stood and said, 'I had come with a prepared message to give you all. Three times I was preparing to rise and speak and each time someone else in this Meeting stood and gave my message for me. One after another people seemed to know what I was about to say. In the

end there was no need for me to speak at all. My message has been given to you by others.'

A wonderfully gifted speaker, Rae Litting has constantly managed to fill her spoken ministry with humour so that the Meeting House would rock with laughter. Often Ministry would take on a theme. For a considerable time 'kindness' was the main topic, so that week after week, apparently spontaneously, this would come up. Another subject that came up often was 'generosity'. Or the Friend who spoke about 'happiness', and even now, thirty plus years later, I still debate with myself whether being happy is a duty!

Now, if like me, you believe that this idiosyncratic situation is God-led, then why? Was there someone in the Meeting who needed reinforcing, who needed 'their hand held' and to be reassured God was there beside them?

Was there no occasion when things went wrong and the meeting was bogged down with tedious speech? Of course there was. I remember when someone droned on for many minutes about some boring point of Biblical law. After twenty minutes when everyone was almost snoring one of the elders broke in with that well-known phrase, 'Friend, thou hast spoken enough'. Zap!! Everyone in the Meeting woke up with a start and shuffle, shuffle, everyone sat up straight. Meeting began again into the silence.

Is noise also a form of

communication? One very elderly gentleman who was profoundly deaf would wear a plastic raincoat that crackled with every movement. Throughout Meeting he would unwrap toffees and suck them noisily. What about the people who really did fall asleep in Meeting and snored loudly? Oh dear! Or the babies and children who would coo or sing to themselves. (Wasn't there a famous Quaker who as a child asked her sister in Meeting if she liked her new red boots?) Or the little boy who insisted on going around the Meeting room shaking hands with everyone when he was ready to leave the room.

I remember Valerie Joy actually speaking about speaking. She stood up, sat down again quickly, stood up again, then sat down. Up, down, up down. Her face reddened and I'm sure, if like me on similar occasions, her pulse was racing and her legs trembling. There is no doubt that when one has to speak it is a very daunting activity. It really isn't a 'presentation' to the Meeting, although the poems quoted, the prayers uttered can be so delightful. After all, the 'daffodil' Ministry which is often looked down on, (you know, 'On the way to Meeting I saw a field of daffodils') is really a prayer of thankfulness for a magnificent world.

But gradually as the years and Friends passed Wahroonga Meeting became more and more quiet. The days of going home with a discussion in my

head about something someone had said had gone. No one spoke. No one seemed to act as a channel to God's word any more. Whilst I am sure I am wrong with this, I felt strongly that it was frowned upon to speak, and this was voiced to me in this way on several occasions.

After the Meeting concluded Friends now were asked to speak on any spiritual matter that had arisen for them in the Meeting. Is this the same as God speaking through them? I miss the spoken ministry, the channel into minds far clearer and more God-centred than mine. I miss not being able to turn away from my own mundane concerns to think about others', articulated by them. I miss the love that seemed to stretch out from people who I wouldn't normally communicate with, and the various roads to God they opened up with their spoken ministry.

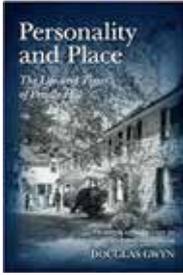
I don't like being completely quiet. Like many people I feel I 'am not worthy', and I can easily persuade myself that I should never speak in Meeting. We need, I believe, to encourage people to speak if they feel God wishes to speak through them, not to silence them. This is the love of God speaking to us and through us.

Grace Noble, a dear elderly lady of Wahroonga Meeting, would quote to the Meeting at least once a year, the Douglas Stewart poem *Brindabella*. This was my introduction to Australian

poetry, even before reading Banjo Patterson.

Once on a silver and green day,  
rich to remember,  
When thick over sky and gully  
rolled winter's grey wave  
And one lost magpie was straying  
on Brindabella  
I heard the mountain talking in a  
tall green cave  
Between the pillars of the trees  
and the moss below:  
It made no sound but talked to  
itself in snow.  
All the white words were falling  
through the timber  
Down from the old grey thought  
to the flesh of rock  
and some were of silence and  
patience, and spring after winter,  
tidings for leaves to catch and  
roots to soak,  
And most were of being the earth  
and floating in space  
Alone with its weather through  
all the time there is.  
Then it was, struck with wonder  
at this soliloquy,  
The magpie lifting its beak by the  
frozen fern  
Sent out one ray of a carol,  
softened and silvery,  
Strange through the trees as  
sunlight's pale return,  
Then he lifted his black head and  
listened, hunched from the cold,  
Watching that white whisper fill  
his green world.

AF



## Personality and Place

### *The life and times of Pendle Hill*

BY DOUGLAS GWYN

Published 2014 by Plain Press: Philadelphia and Birmingham. ISBN 1500549363

This impressive book by Douglas Gwyn is unusual in that it has something of the character of an encyclopaedia. Pendle Hill, the Quaker Study Centre in Philadelphia, has been operating for eighty years. In the main, each of the chapters in the book is given to a decade of its history. So if the reader wishes to find out what was going on there in the 1960s, which was something of a watershed, one would look up Chapter 7, and one would find out the prominent people in that period and what they were doing. Heroic types abound in the book, which gives it plenty of human interest.

The background briefings at the beginning of each chapter are often economic and political gems. There is one in particular which has implications for Australia:

*By 2004, US dollar assets held outside the US had grown to 11 trillion. The US was now so large a debtor it held power over its creditors, who now had an interest in seeing it remain strong enough to pay on its debt. By 2007, the US was spending \$2 billion daily to balance its account with the rest of the world.* [p.396]

About then, the centre of the world's financial power shifted to East Asia. It may well be that political power follows suit, which will be a new world for us. 'Personality' in the book's title refers not only to the personnel at Pendle Hill, but

also to the philosophy of personalism which has had an abiding influence there. According to this philosophy, what is ultimate are human persons, and the Divine Person, God. Persons find their fulfilment in community, hence it is important that politics supports communities in which people find it easy to do good and to be good. Rufus Jones became an eloquent spokesman for personalism, as did Howard Brinton and his wife, Anna, who were at Pendle Hill for about 30 years. Gwyn gives three chapters to them in the book, 'The Brinton Years' 1936-1952.

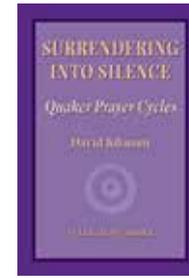
Howard Brinton wrote powerfully about mysticism. Thomas Kelly, a similarly inclined contemporary, gives a useful description of what that is

*the existence of God...is known only through experience... The certainty of experience is of a different order than that of logic. It grows through trust and the practice of continuous prayer.* [p.138]

The phrase 'that of God in everyone' lends itself to two mystical interpretations: firstly, God is always present within us, but only becomes noticeable with constant prayer (Gwyn calls this the Neo-Platonic interpretation); secondly, God is sometimes noticeably present within us, when he comes from beyond us. (Gwyn calls this the mystical realist interpretation).

A contemporary of the Brinton's, Henry Cadbury, reminds us that not all Quakers are mystics. Speaking for himself, he writes that his religion 'rests largely on a life of honest thinking, and kindly dealing' and responding to social issues. [p.118]

Pendle Hill is residential. In 1958



it had 36 private rooms. Considerable attention is given in the book to the governance of Pendle Hill. There seems to have been continuing tension between the governing board, whose chief concern was financial viability, and staff and students, whose aim was community and learning. In its nine years or so of existence, Silver Wattle has had some trouble finding the optimal form of governing board, and, if Pendle Hill is anything to go by, it always will, though, like Pendle Hill, it will come up with a workable model.

Anna Brinton once described Pendle Hill as being like a 'radiant upper story of the world'. Silver Wattle might not be there yet, but on some of the days I've been there, it's been close.

REG NAULTY

Canberra Regional Meeting

## Surrendering Into Silence

### *Quaker Prayer Cycles*

BY DAVID JOHNSON

Published Inner Light Books 2020

There is language which describes an experience.

*Have you ever been to Florence?  
There are fountains and sculptures  
everywhere you look, stone castles and  
vineyards occupying the surrounding  
countryside, ornate churches, murals  
painted on unsuspecting walls.*

Then there is language which foretells an experience and invites you to it.

*You've never been to Florence? Would  
my previous description entice you  
to visit? (pandemics aside). I loved*

*the artistry of Italian doors, even just into a pharmacy. The coffee is awesome. You should definitely go.*

And again, there is language which makes sense of experiences; affirming and consolidating them.

*Welcome back from your trip. Did you see the fountains? Oh, yes, and they were wonderful!*

Johnson's book uses the language of early Quakers and the Christian mystics to:

- describe his authentic experience of the life and patterns of prayer over time (Florence)
- describe the predictable motions of the prayer of silence over time, and invites us to experience it (You should go – it's awesome.)
- affirm and make sense of the experiences we have had, and point to next steps (...yeah, I saw that too).

If you feel offended by Christian language this book will be a challenge to you. Johnson makes no claim to the rightness of Christianity, and points to the universality of faith which lies beyond any system attempting to describe the process and guide people through. But Christianity is his language – also the language of early Friends – and he uses it unreservedly.

*Surrendering into Silence* is in alignment with other descriptions of the life of prayer. For example, Johnson's description of the prayer cycle fits well with Rex Ambler's process of Light Meditation which advises us to 1) Mind the Light, 2) Open to what it has to show you, 3) Wait for guidance,

and 4) Submit to that guidance. Even more succinctly, the gospel of Thomas (logion 2) quotes Jesus as saying, 'Those who seek should not stop seeking until they find; when they find they will be disturbed; when they are disturbed, they will marvel and will reign over all'. This book is a deceptively brief 55 pages. The structure is not readily apparent but eventually it becomes clear that he lays out the prayer cycle bit by bit; each bit being separated from the next by some 'reflections' – carefully selected short quotes to let the concept just given connect with our own experience.

These reflections are to be read and re-read and savoured over time. This is not a book to be read from cover to cover.

Johnson describes the prayer cycle as a process of moving from an external busyness to an inward stillness, and identifies practices to become '...awakened to the possibilities of the spiritual life.' Initially, we experience rest and refreshment through a sense of effort... which gives way to a sense of being found rather than doing the searching ourselves. We begin to yield to the Light.

Next we are met with 'eruptions from the subconscious'. We have sought, and found, and now it's time to be disturbed. The disturbance and darkness we find can continue unabated for some time; Johnson says, 'suffering is a real and essential part of the spiritual journey' and he observes that prolonged periods of darkness are normal. Monastics call this process 'stripping'; being stripped of the unhelpful to prepare us for a more fruitful life. Extended darkness can be regarded, therefore, as making good

progress; discomfort begets change. This is a place where psychology and spiritual practice overlap. The author's advice is to step back and observe and wait to see what the Light is showing you. (Sounds a lot like Rex Ambler)

The cycle of prayer (daily practice, consolation and rest, disturbance, darkness, and transformation) is repeated over and over again, each iteration moving us further in the journey. Johnson encourages us to persevere. As we persist in the process of being transformed, we are prepared to be an instrument for a secret responsiveness, not necessarily of action, which Fox described as walking in the Light. In the author's words. 'As we become more aware, more attentive and more accepting, God can do more with us. We become co-workers with God.'

It is one thing to be passionate about what is good and to respond to the flawed world through practicing our values. It is another thing to be prepared by Spirit to be a Light-powered instrument of God moving in, and responding to, the world around us. Johnson invites us to be there, and shows us a path for how to get there. If you want the quickie cheat sheet, the full cycle is well summarised and illustrated on pages 44 and 45.

You do need to work a bit to understand Johnson's language of experience, invitation, affirmation and guidance, but it's worth the effort.

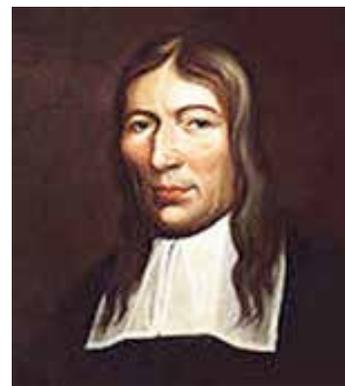
**SHEILA KEANE**

*New South Wales Regional Meeting*

AF

# Noted

This is our regular feature in which we briefly record interesting publications and websites that have come to our attention. Inclusion of an item in this format does not preclude a possible longer review in a later issue. We welcome suggestions for inclusion.



Lodowicke Muggleton by William Wood,

## Liz Field (New South Wales Regional Meeting) has been looking into early Quakers

Some time ago, I was browsing in the Tasmanian University Library, when I came across a huge set of facsimile volumes entitled 'State Papers'. They covered many decades of English life through correspondence. I picked up the 1668 set and looked for references to Quakers and found the following:

### 11 November 1668. Letter Baskerville/Williamson

*... George Bishop, a captain in the late rebellion, the ringleader or archbishop of the Quakers, was buried at the Quakers' burying ground near Redcliffe Church, attended by a more numerous company than I ever saw at a funeral before, most of them of that sect.*

### 15 December. 1668. Letter. Watts/Williamson

*...it is reported that Penn, the Quaker saint has been taken up; he is devilishly cried up amongst that poor sullen faction...*

I assume that Williamson was a person who was among the royal courtiers

### In 1668 a pamphlet was published entitled:

*A looking glass for George Fox, the Quaker, and other Quakers, wherein they may see themselves to be right devils. In answer to George Fox, his book called 'something in answer to*

*Lodowick Muggleton's book which he calls 'The Quakers' neck broken; wherein is set forth the ignorance and blindness of the Quakers' doctrine of Christ within them; and that they cannot, nor doth not know the true meaning of the scriptures; neath have they the gift of interpretation of Scripture'*

by Lodowicke Muggleton, one of the two last prophets and witnesses into the high and mighty God the man Christ in his glory. 4d. Printed 96 pages

The name Muggleton sounded vaguely familiar as I wrote this, so I looked him up on the net, and sure enough, there he was, and a small Protestant group known as the Muggletonians. It all makes fascinating reading and the following is just a short extract:

*Muggleton's opposition to the Quakers, and to all things Quaker, was uncharacteristically bitter for three reasons. Firstly, he believed them guilty of 'spiritual witchcraft' which he saw as a manipulation of that fear from which faith should be free. Secondly, he regarded them as unreconstructed Ranters and the Ranter legacy was a delicate personal issue. Thirdly, they were the seventh, and last, anti-church of the latter days and thus their mere existence was seen as holding up everyone else's journey to paradise.*

*By and large, the charges Muggleton brings against the Quakers are the same as those the Quakers lay against*

*Muggleton. As a result, the exchange of letters and pamphlets rarely rises above contradiction, quibbling and name-calling; the latter Muggleton employs with great verve.*

## Wies Schuiringa (New South Wales Regional Meeting) has been looking into the future

Many of us are wondering what our society will look like when the Covid-19 pandemic settles down. How do we inform each other when the news is saturated by Covid-19? The virus has impacted societies at its core, defenceless against this new virus and functioning in ways that were previously unimaginable or thought impossible. Now that our societal foundations have been rocked, how do we re-build? Many individuals and organisations are reflecting on what a 'better' society looks like. Do we just 'snap back' or is this the opportunity to rebuild our societies: sustainable, more equitable, kinder, free from nuclear threats and nobody really left behind? Below are references to recent reports by two Australian think tanks that have been written during the pandemic and a link to talks from the 'Renewables-led Economic Recovery' symposium. These reports and the symposium actually reflect our Testimonies of simplicity, peace, integrity, community, equality and the environment. 'What canst thou say?'

*Having now experienced two back-to-back crises of epic proportions, we*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

## Sydney Mardi Gras Fair Day

Dear K

Re your interesting report in *The Australian Friend*<sup>1</sup>, I am one who feels a certain reluctance with the use of the word 'queer' for a couple of reasons.

One is that according to two dictionaries the word queer not only means 'strange' but also 'odd, shady, mentally unbalanced, and suspicious' (among other things). All these sound rather insulting to me.

The second reason is that it is hijacking a good English word. 'Gay' has already been hijacked. One example, admittedly a small one, is that no-one ever sings one of my favourite songs anymore, namely 'A Bachelor Gay am I'<sup>2</sup>. I feel sad about this.

If the meaning of 'queer' is about to change, I wonder if it will alter the meaning of the following verse in a favourite poem of mine, 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening'<sup>3</sup>!

*My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake*

*The darkest evening of the year.*

Random thoughts from a self-isolating, except for doctors, chemists, etc., friend.

**HALCYON EVANS**

*New South Wales Regional Meeting*

1 Sydney Mardi Gras Fair Day, *The Australian Friend* March 2020

2 From *Maid of the Mountains* by Harris and Valentine 1917.

3 By Robert Frost 1923.

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### NOTED – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

*Australians will share a dramatically reduced tolerance for bullshit. The old ideological battle lines will continue to seem especially useless in the face of long unemployment queues and industries collapsing. The idea that the 'free market' should rule over all will seem entirely laughable in the face of huge bailouts, public works programs and ongoing wage subsidies. The idea that government itself is largely a game that's about winning things for your side and beating down the other side will strike us as utterly obscene. And while permanent paradigm shifts aren't guaranteed, nor is it written that we must rush back to an old 'normal' that fundamentally does not serve us.'*

<https://www.australiaremade.org/blog/recovery-begins-now>

*The Commission for the Human Future has been set up by concerned citizens of the Earth to:*

- *Alert humanity to the nature and scale of the combination of ten catastrophic risks that face our civilization*
- *Help to devise integrated global solutions to these risks*

- *Identify fresh opportunities that arise from solving the threats*
- *Encourage global dialogue about the risks, their solution and opportunities*
- *Serve as a knowledge hub for the solution of global catastrophic risks*

*Especially, we recognise that solutions to the great risks depend not just on government policy and corporate activity, but also on the actions of billions of individual humans in their daily lives. Much of our present behaviour has to change, if civilization is to survive and prosper. The Commission's goal is to share leading thought and ideas from all over the world about what society as a whole can do to build a safer, better future – and how we can each play our part to limit and overcome these risks. We must empower everyone, young and old, female and male, poor or affluent to help build a safe, sustainable human future. This report summarises the discourse at our first Round Table event, which was held online on March 28, 2020. It is the first of many we intend to share, on the risks we all confront and ways*

*forward for humanity. We welcome your support.'*

[http://humansforsurvival.org/sites/default/files/CHF\\_Roundtable\\_Report\\_March\\_2020.pdf](http://humansforsurvival.org/sites/default/files/CHF_Roundtable_Report_March_2020.pdf)

On 6 March an online symposium was held, organised by the Smart Energy Council and Renew Economy with the title 'A Renewables-led Economic Recovery'. About 3500 people listened to 25 speakers as well as several hosts. Ministers for Energy from three states and the ACT, together with the Premier of Queensland clearly stated that all the States and Territories are in unison to de-carbonise our energy sources, to invest in major renewable energy projects, especially hydrogen and to stabilise the electricity grid. The Australian Business Council speaker said similar things. The other speakers were Ross Garnaut and a company director promoting electric vehicle infrastructures. All the presentations are now online, however not in one 6-hour video but in individual segments.

<https://www.smartenergy.org.au/renewablesled-economic-recovery>

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- 1 May for the June edition
- 1 August for the September edition
- 1 November for the December edition.

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**Coordinating editor:** David Swain

**Editorial panel:** Garry Duncan, Rae Litting, Wies Schuiringa

## Production

**Mailing list** CAustFriend@Quakersaustralia.info

**Layout** Sheelagh Wegman, Hobart TAS

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