

The Australian Friend

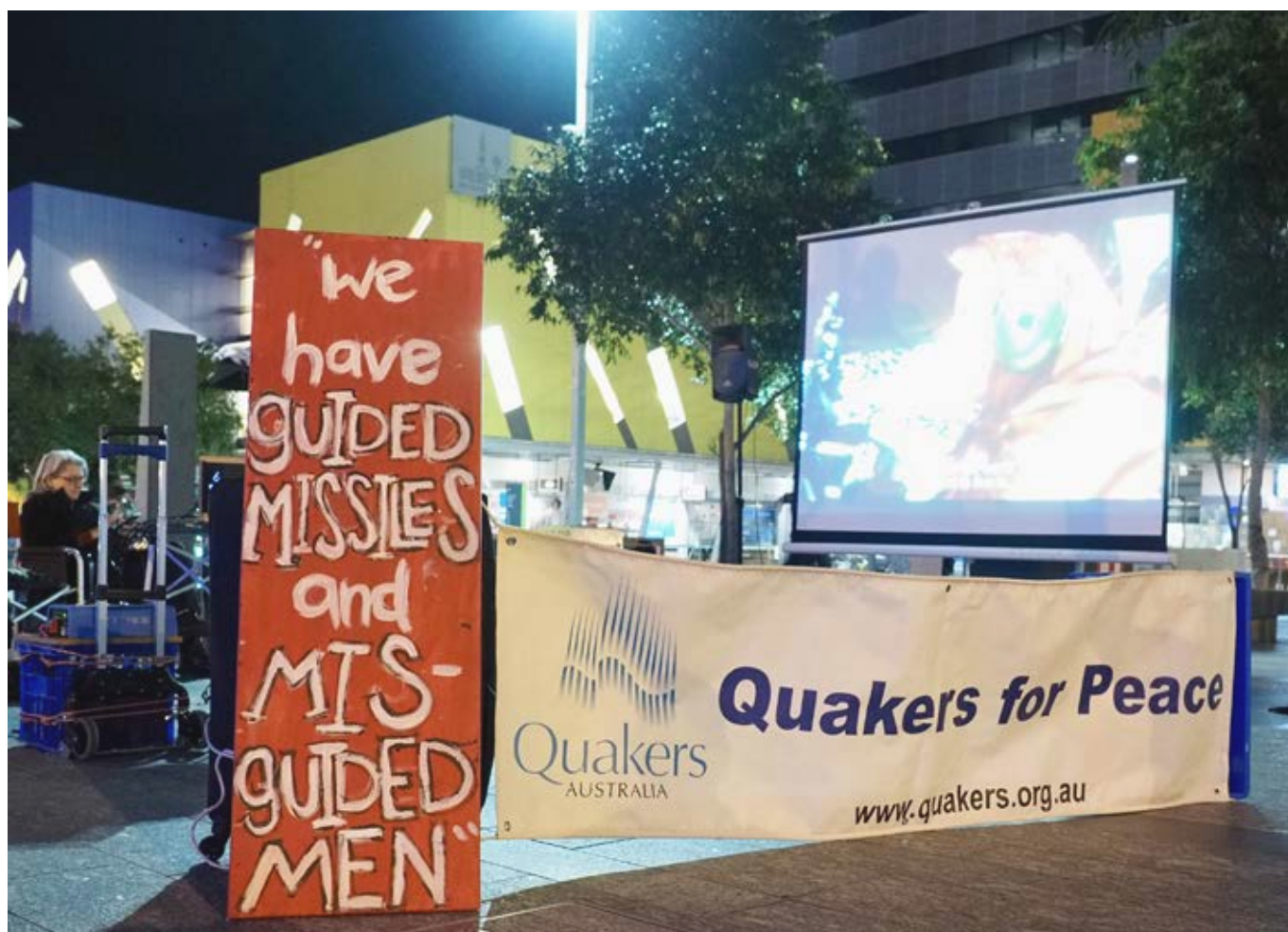
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Quakers for peace



Disrupt Land Forces Campaign in Brisbane

Editorial

A new year can bring with it a variety of sentiments: relief that the old year has departed, the anticipation of better times, the hope for change, to name but a few. The March issue of the Australian Friend offers a selection of diverse articles, which may challenge, confuse and evoke pleasant or difficult memories, but above all engage Friends in the workings of the Spirit among us.

The article *Our Way Forward to a New QA Office* presented by the Transition Implementation Working Group or TIWG – we Quakers love our acronyms – challenges us to see the changes as ‘an Adventure’ and ‘Radical’ which reminds us of Advice 29 ‘Live adventurously...’ and of early Friends with their radical approach to Christianity that so disturbed the established church and government of their time.

Rainbow Friends’ article *Exploring Gender* may confuse and/or challenge some older Friends but gives us all an insight into the difficulties still facing those that question the status quo, even in the 21st century. Again, we are reminded of early Friends who dared to be different at a time when to do so, often led to lengthy imprisonment in appalling conditions.

Memories abound in the text and photographs of *Werona – a place of peace* which serves as both a refuge and an inspiration for many Australian Friends.

The review of the IPAN report: *Charting our Own Course: Questioning Australia’s Involvement in US-led Wars and the United States Alliance. The results of a People’s Inquiry by the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network* (IPAN) gives us up-to-date information and much food for thought, vital as the war in Ukraine enters its second year.

I finish with a quote from *The Brothers and Sisters of Jesus*. How I smiled as I read Rae Litting’s interpretation of Jesus’ response to Peter’s question, how many times should I forgive my brother? as I envisaged ‘a man who shared a small sleeping space with four brothers, all treading on each other’s toes and borrowing each other’s possessions? Surely seven acts of forgiveness would hardly get you through the week.’

We trust Friends will find every segment a worthwhile read.

**SUE PARRITT
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN FRIEND EDITORIAL COMMITTEE**

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Our way forward to a new QA office

KERSTIN REIMERS | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

Friends in what we call Australia have embarked on an adventure. We are about to make the transition to a different way of running our national office with the new structure being implemented mid-2023. We encourage you to be open to some changes, big and small (such as different names for familiar work), to embrace the concept of a team (there will no longer be ‘a Secretary’) and to support the new staff.

We’ve all known for some time that something had to be done about the Australia Yearly Meeting (AYM) Secretary’s role and workload, which had not only changed in nature but greatly increased.

During 2022 one working group mapped out the range of duties (14 categories of tasks!) and the complexities of communications, then another group consulted widely (including at our last Yearly Meeting) to create comprehensive recommendations for

a cluster of four paid and three unpaid roles.

Their wish was that ‘Friends would be open to doing things differently and willing to invest in our infrastructure’. Standing Committee in September approved the new direction, while recognising that the movement of the Spirit might alter the form as the vision evolved and was further refined. This was our task.

We, the members of TIWG (affectionately pronounced ‘Twig’ even though that’s not how it’s spelt!)—the Transition Implementation Working Group—picked up the baton in October 2022.

Informed by the previous group’s report we were to develop role descriptions and liaise with the Selection Committee (we’re calling it that rather than ‘Search Committee’) who will be responsible for advertising the paid positions, interviewing applicants and making appointments.

This is the stage we’re at now, in February 2023 (at the time of writing), since TIWG’s many recommendations were accepted with some modifications at an Urgent Decision-Making meeting in January. The Selection Committee is now finalising the contracts and the new jobs will be advertised early March.

The new framework has a smaller cluster and a different configuration compared to the previous proposal, yet many of the elements remain the same. Some tasks have been moved, others removed. Some reshaping has arisen out of fresh considerations leading to other priorities—a different emphasis

or balance. What primarily drove our discernment was a concern for good governance and responsible duty of care towards our employees.

We consulted widely and much of that work is continuing in the background (especially regarding key stakeholders and funding sources). Along the way we discovered that the Secretary (and others employed to assist from time to time) had no real authority to act, nor clear channels for communication about workplace matters.

Here is TIWG’s model for the Quakers Australia Office

(Note that we’re encouraging the use of ‘QA’ rather than ‘AYM’ now):

Coordinator (paid) starting in July;
Communications & Publicity Manager (paid) starting in August;
Staff Oversight & Support (unpaid); and
Probity Adviser (unpaid).

There is the potential for other volunteers or co-opted Friends to be involved short or long term. A specific unpaid or volunteer position is suggested in the separate sphere of Finances to assist with work that has been moved out of the QA Office.

The Coordinator, an ongoing position, (note the new name to help us break out of our old patterns) is responsible for supporting the internal business operations of Australian Friends as an organisation—Yearly Meeting, Standing Committee, the Annual General Meeting.

The Communications & Publicity

New framework

- Coordinator paid 27hrs @ \$40ph + on-costs
- Communications & Publicity Manager paid 17hrs @ \$40ph
- Staff Oversight & Support unpaid
- Treasurer unpaid
- Bookkeeper paid
- Probity Adviser unpaid
- Other QA Roles mostly unpaid



Manager (C&PM or Comms), a contract position, deals with the website, social media, community connections and outreach and is the first point of contact for external enquiries. The newsletter currently produced by the Secretary would fall within the C&PM's scope, if it were to continue. It may be that there are other ways to fulfil this wish in future. (Didn't we talk about rationalising our publications at YM21? See the final paragraph in Minute YM21.35.)

We have created a model that is non-hierarchical as far as the two paid Office staff go. Both will liaise with members and attenders, and our clerks and committees, but for different purposes. These two staff members will collaborate, but each is accountable to the Presiding Clerk.

The actual day-to-day (or fortnightly) supervision rests with the Staff Oversight & Support Friend (yes, that's 'S.O.S.!'), who can monitor how things are going and be a port in a storm.

This unpaid role will keep an eye on the welfare of staff, their workloads and the effectiveness and efficiency of work arrangements and processes, answer any

human resources queries and provide support.

Another vital unpaid role is the Probity Adviser, who will take care of QA's compliance obligations—the annual Child Protection audits are just one of these requirements. This person will ensure mandatory reporting and record keeping are undertaken to a satisfactory standard.

Financial tasks, for example payments and reimbursements, will in future be handled by someone under the Treasurer and/or Finance Committee—this could be an additional and important unpaid role if not taken up by a Finance Committee member.

Apart from spreading the work, we have attempted to trim the roles to reduce and simplify the load. For this reason, we've dropped the notion of 'ex officio'. Instead, the C&PM (or Comms) will be an active member of the Information Technology (IT) Committee.

We felt that representing QA on other bodies (like Quaker Service Australia) could be dispensed with. This removes some functions from that long list of duties, but you'll find the rest of

them shared amongst the various roles.

TIWG's task will continue, working alongside the Selection Committee over the next few weeks and months and then with the new Office staff for the first couple of years, monitoring, refining and supporting the process of transition and implementation as these employees settle in and adjust. We have put in as much care as possible to anticipate potential issues and prepare for a smooth way ahead. All the same, Australian Friends are setting off on a radical venture. Let's move forward with courage.

Note: If you would like more information and a chance to ask questions, please feel welcome to come to TIWG's Information Sessions in March and May or contact any one of us. You can find details on our web page here: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/organisation/aym/transition-implementation-working-group>

This article has been prepared by Kerstin Reimers (TRM) on behalf of TIWG, whose other members are Jennifer Burrell (NSW RM) and Jonathan Benyei (C&RQ).

AF



Disrupt Land Forces Campaign

December 2022

CHRISTINE VENER-WESTERWAY | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING

In many respects the June 2021 Disrupt Land Forces Campaign never ended. It continued on with actions occurring at different Brisbane-based weapons companies, conference events, site locations related to military influence and activities. The nexus between world-wide militaries, weapons corporations and governments is powerful and frightening. The toxic mix includes police forces who in themselves have become increasingly militarised and often oversee fossil fuel extraction on First Nations' land. It is a David and Goliath scenario of massive proportions.

With the announcement that the Land Forces Expo would again be held in Brisbane at the Convention Centre 4-6 October 2022, a core organising group under the banners of Wage Peace/DLF 2022 was quickly established and embarked on a series of regular, intense meetings.

We wanted to draw down on the lessons we had learnt, broaden our base, try new strategies, hone our nonviolent action skills, be creative, and work on deepening our relationships with other like-minded protest, peace and faith groups.

We sought to highlight the direct role played by the military in climate destruction, by adopting the theme Earthcare not Warfare. We worked hard to make the voices of our own First Nations peoples and those from West Papua central to our actions and message. On the Friday night prior to the expo, we held a Solidarity Fire ceremony where affected groups from West Papua and the Philippines zoomed in and lit fires in tandem with us: emotions were high, not to mention the stakes, if detected.

The primary aim was to disrupt and make proceedings uncomfortable and unprofitable for all those involved in the expo, at whatever level. The police presence around the Brisbane Convention Centre precinct more than tripled this year. We faced surveillance cameras, higher rail barriers covered in thick blue plastic to conceal those

registered to attend; we were pulled over in our cars as we arrived and departed and the Jagera Hall and drive-way were frequently monitored by the police. Prescient or not, the DLF organisers had, very early on, decided that the campaign would not simply be a repeat of last year. The strategic decision to de-centralise a number of significant actions meant that we were at times one step ahead of the police, enabling us to sufficiently make our mark and deliver our message. Due to participants' adherence to the campaign's nonviolent direct-action principles, police were often reduced to observing on the side-lines. We strove to practise what we preached and ensured our actions were creative and threaded with merry mischief making! The collective expertise in the use of social media meant that our messaging and actions were broadcast throughout Australia and around the world.

Intel from inside Land Forces 2022 tells us our disruptions were a success:

- 2 VIP presentations cancelled
- Reduced number of participants overall
 - Participants not returning after the first day
 - Massive increase in police and security which meant extra money spent because of our protest (nothing compared to the cost of sponsoring and hosting the event in the first place)



- (H)arms¹ dealers ‘intimated’ by truth-telling
- (H)arms dealers failing to staff their stalls

Specific Quaker support and participation came in the form of

- Quaker representation on the Core Organising Group
- \$5000 donation via the YM Peace & Social Justice fund. This money was earmarked for the hire of Jagera Hall for an entire week and a contribution towards accommodation costs for inter/intra state supporters. (As was the case last year, Jagera Hall is a crucial base for the campaign, a place of safety and solidarity with our First Nations peoples who continue to be directly impacted by colonisation, over-policing and growing militarisation)
- Miscellaneous costs covered by

QRM PSJ fund e.g., printing

- Organising a 24 hour Fast & Vigil in Reddacliff Place Brisbane
- Pre-expo distribution of information flyers at train stations and markets
- Standing in witness and being a supportive presence throughout the week-long Festival of Resistance
- Serving as a bridge between those less inclined, with those more inclined to direct action, but who nevertheless wanted to express their dissenting voices.

Our New Zealand counterparts tell us that it took them four attempts to produce the desired outcome: viz the cessation of the weapons expos. As Robert Fisk, the well-known but now deceased fearless English war correspondent said, ‘Follow the weapons. If you don’t cut the weapons

off, wars will never end.’ (Quoted in *Love in a Time of War*: Lara Marlowe 2021). We know our effort is miniscule but we also know our brothers and sisters in those countries and communities who are the victims of war and conflict take strength from our actions, experience our solidarity. It gives hope, it proves the effectiveness of citizen-based protest – the power of standing firm and raising the voice of dissent. Truth-telling and for the Quaker contingent – living out our Peace Testimony. We are compelled to act, to bear witness, to be the best we can be and never give up.

1. We used this term to emphasise the link between arms and harm.

AF



A Quaker's response

– to a man who is a bully

KAYE WRIGHT | VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING

I had known my neighbour, Kelly, for over twenty years. He was a tall, gruff man who was born overseas. He spoke English, but poorly. He once told me that he often felt frustrated because he could not always make himself understood.

He loved his garden and his animals. He never had his cats desexed and three gorgeous orange male cats wandered away... But I knew he still loved them.

He was very concerned about the money that was spent on community projects. Kelly believed that (for most of the time) we were being over-charged and cheated by our Owners Corporation Management. His way of voicing his concern was by yelling.

Kelly's behaviour became much more volatile in the recent Covid times. I was on the Owners Corporation Committee, and one day he came to my house yelling (literally) about something and was mostly incoherent. I listened but then slowly I lost my temper and raised my voice as loud as I could (without yelling) and told him to 'get away from my house and not come back!'. I remember this day as it was the day of the earthquake... a tumultuous day in more ways than one.

After this confrontation, I felt very shaken. I knew that Kelly had mental health problems. I knew he was in distress. I knew that he was not at peace. But I was afraid of him.

I have come to know that I have a propensity for paranoia when I feel

threatened or unsettled. I had to do some swift talking to myself to stop my fear getting out of hand. He was still my neighbour. He was still a man who was not at ease with himself or the world.

During our 'altercation' neither of us swore or made nasty personal remarks about the other. I believe this may have saved us.

I lay on the bed and wondered how I should approach this. I prayed for Kelly and for me and our relationship. I covered us all with light. I could not really see a way forward.

Meanwhile, two other members of the Owners Committee resigned. One moved out! I thought of resigning too but that would only leave one kind and gentle man left on the committee and that did not seem right.

I kept thinking of Kelly off and on and always sent him light but still felt sad and uneasy about our relationship and the state Kelly must be in.

One day, I was driving out of the complex and saw Kelly coming in (on foot). Our eyes met. Neither of us looked away. Neither of us smiled but we did not look away from each other.

I knew enough to know that I did not want to create an 'us and them' situation. I did not want Kelly to be my enemy. I did not want to be Kelly's enemy. By looking away, I would have treated him as invisible. I knew this was not Spirit's way.

About a month after this, I was going out of the communal driveway

by foot and Kelly was coming in by foot. I could see him approaching. We were going to pass close to each other. I wanted to do something but did not know what. Suddenly, (without my knowing it seemed) out popped a 'hello' from me. To my surprise, Kelly responded with a 'hello'. There were no other words spoken. There was no smiling. But it was something. We had noticed each other. We had shown each other a modicum of respect. We were 'us'.

About two months after this, I heard (to my shock) that Kelly had died. He had just had a fourth Covid vaccination and it had adversely affected his heart.

My reaction was interesting. My major feeling was one of relief. Now we would have peace in our complex. But I also felt some sorrow and even shed a few tears. His healing had been cut short. But I also felt glad that (at last) he must be in peace which I believed he never was in life.

I came to realise that Kelly was one of my most important teachers. I learnt about how powerful my fear could be. I learnt how easy it was to create an enemy. But I also learnt that there is another path and my experience with Kelly taught me this.

When Kelly died, we were not friends but we were not enemies either. I will always be grateful for this.

AF



Jenny Spinks

Know Thy Friend

Jenny Spinks

PETER JONES | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

Jenny was born in 1951 into a Quaker family in England, with roots on her father's side going back to the early days of Friends in Wensleydale. During the 1st World War her grandfather on her mother's side had been imprisoned as a conscientious objector in Durham jail, and her grandmother was a suffragette. Both became convinced Friends and important role models for Jenny – having the courage to live being true to themselves.

Jenny and her younger sister Judy were born in Bristol where their father, Roger, worked as an engineer and their mother, Joyce, was a primary school teacher.

When Jenny was eight, Roger got a job as 'Master on Duty' at Ackworth (Quaker co-ed boarding) School – a major career shift. This was a hard but enlightening change for Jenny, moving from a middle class suburb in the South of England to a Yorkshire mining village, where her Primary School friends had very different lives from hers.

Around this time her Mum, Joyce, spent 6 months in a Quaker 'mental hospital' in York with a 'nervous breakdown' – caused by medication for high blood pressure. When she came home, Joyce became Ackworth School's Mistress on Duty.

With her parents in loco parentis to her peers, being a day student at Ackworth from 1962 had its challenges

for Jenny. She became aware, in one Meeting for Worship, that she wanted to do any sort of work that supports people.

She moved, for sixth form, to boarding at Friends' School Great Ayton and got the school involved in supporting SHELTER, the 1960s campaign for housing in England.

Jenny successfully applied to be a Quaker Overseas Volunteer at Wesley Girls High School in Ghana in 1969-70. Back home, she studied Social Administration at Nottingham University. After a year she had joined the University Peace Society and was on the path of Non-Violent Revolution. Jenny saw doing unpaid community work as her future.

In 1973 she moved to Pitsmoor, Sheffield and started nursing – a trade she planned to practice part-time in disempowered communities. Jenny became involved in the feminist movement, revelled in community living, grew food on an allotment and met her future Australian husband, Chris Allen. She helped organise the first National Women's Health Conference – stirring her interest in midwifery, and was a founding member of the Association of Radical Midwives.

Ailsa (1978) and Peter (1980) were born at home in Sheffield. In 1981 the family moved to a village in Cornwall where Jenny was employed as a District Nurse/Midwife and Chris was house-husband.

While there they were active in the village peace group and decided to visit Australia.

In 1984 they based themselves in Milton-Ulladulla in New South Wales and soon decided to stay in Australia. In 1985 and 1986 Jenny worked as a Nurse/Midwife in Amata on the Pitjantjatjara lands.

They moved to Koorool community farm in Tantawanglo near Bega in 1987, with three other households, building earth homes. Jenny and another midwife attended home births and Chris became involved in the campaign to stop logging.

Jenny's facial spasms started in 1988, and in 1992 were diagnosed as Cranial Dystonia. When they prevented her from driving and she had to give up midwifery, she was grateful that Koorool had bought a Wholefoods business in Bega, where she could work.

During this time Jenny reconnected with Quakers. She went to YMs with Ailsa and Peter who got involved with Junior Young Friends. Jenny saw herself as an isolated, newly convinced, Friend and started the Bega worshipping group. She also became involved in Re-evaluation Co-counselling, which has continued to provide a solid theoretical framework and practical support in her life.

Leading up to the millennium, Ailsa and Peter left home, and Jenny's

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23



Exploring gender

COMPILED BY VIDYA | RAINBOW FRIENDS AND ALLIES MEETING

Our Rainbow Friends and Allies Meeting invited personal contributions on gender. The pieces below show our diversity of gender identity and the ways we have found to put this into words. We hope this will inspire you to explore your own gender identity. Could this become a booklet? Would you like to join us on this journey?

Growing up I didn't really conform to gender as an idea: I don't know if kids do. When I was a young girl I was active, outgoing, honest, and confident.

Growing up, society sort of crushed this in me.

When I reached double digits as a female bodied person, I began getting labelled and told what I should and shouldn't do with my body. I was also told what's normal and not normal for me and my body, and as kids are, I was influenced by the adults around me.

It's interesting how a lot of those beliefs have stayed with me and coloured my understanding of myself. Up until recently. At age 29 I am rewriting what womanhood is for me and what I feel I can be. How I can celebrate and appreciate my cycles, my curves, and my intuition. How I can win and run and dance and learn to take up just as much space as anybody else.

Society didn't teach me this, my chosen Aunties have through their stories and their fights for their womanhood.

This I can say: The future is female.

S, VICTORIA RM

Mostly I am a woman. There's a male aspect too, in the background, quietly present. Every now and then, a switch flicks and I become a man - for a few days, or a few hours. People comment that my voice sounds deeper, I wear guy's clothes. And then the switch flicks back again. Sometimes when I dream, I am masculine, but still me.

D, KAURNA LAND

Gender... as opposed to biological sex...

How intertwined these are probably accounts for some of my confusion in the formidable M's sociology unit 'Gender, Sex and Sexuality'.

Where do I start?

With my childhood gravitation to androgyny and the freedom of imagined adventures? With my teenage despair at the practical implications of having a female body?

Later, in the heady lesbian feminism of the 1980s, I rejoiced in being woman-identified.

When I think about pronouns this connection with 'she/her' is strong and I'm reluctant to let it go. Yet for some time I've been very comfortable using 'they/them' where sex is unknown or when disguising identity for confidentiality or privacy.

Since pronouns have been talked about more openly, I've felt unsure.

Do I have the right to use 'they/them' in my own way, if I'm not claiming to be non-binary or in the process of transitioning?

I was reassured about expressing my own truth by a wonderful book I read, but I'm still shy about publicly broadcasting labels for myself even in safe settings.

Labels I haven't quite grown into—despite understanding the importance of ally support in breaking open societal assumptions, despite the warm encouragement of those more courageous who are further along this path.

R (SHE/THEY)

My gender is my own. Like a cat, I rather like boxes – provided that I get in them myself. Heaven help someone who fervently decides to put me in a box of their own choosing. Well, the reaction is rarely that dire, but I will be a most disgruntled feline. I don't think about my gender a lot. I know that I have one.

Generally, there are boxes I know I like getting into. Woman, non-binary, sometimes bigender or genderfluid. Never male.

Day to day, what I really think about though is my presentation. My gender expression.

Gender expression, for me, is the actualisation of what my gender means. Discovering how I express my gender is joyful, quietly thrilling work. It's my physical appearance, clothing, yes, but it's also the furnishings in my house, the songs I sing, the tales I tell. My gender, and exploring it, is discovering who I am more fully. A joyous, confusing, euphoric, endless task. When someone else deliberately or accidentally puts me in a box I did not choose, the task changes. It becomes a defiant act of protest, rebellion, and utmost integrity. I wouldn't change it for the world.

EM CHANDLER



Spirit-Spark

Immersed in nature,
ancient trees and the land,
expanding
through space and time
into the Everything.

The question
“What is my gender?”
is limiting and reduces the self.
Beyond questions
of gender or species.

VIDYA

A few years ago at work, we heard from a speaker for International Men’s Day. As he spoke about his experiences recovering from toxic masculinity, I became increasingly uncomfortable. This was no fault of the speaker. It dawned on me that as a gay man I recognised in the Australian notions of masculinity he spoke about the lingering feeling of menacing hostility that I have had to learn from a young age to navigate around for my own safety. And yet I am perceived as male, and at some levels and in some contexts I feel entirely comfortable with this. The irony. What I think this means is that there is no one way to be male and, indeed, there are no hard lines between masculinity, femininity or other gender identities. We are each unique and gender is as diverse and fascinating as humanity itself.

EVAN GALLAGHER, CANBERRA AND REGION QUAKERS

Before I am a man,
I am so many other things.
To name but a few: a person,
a sailor, a mountaineer,
a mathematician, a writer,

a designer, an engineer,
a maker, a geek,
a thinker, a dreamer,
a Friend,
a friend.

MARTIN

Although I live alone and celibate for many years, identifying as a lesbian is very much part of who I am.

I came out as a lesbian after several years of fraught and abusive heterosexual relationships. I identified as a feminist long before my first lesbian relationship. I was involved in many feminist political and activist groups and studied Women’s Studies at ANU in the nineties.

Addressing the oppression, equalities and violence to women was and still is paramount to me.

Identifying as a lesbian for me clarifies who I am, that is, a woman centered woman, and being clear on my identity, I hope, assists me an accepting other people and their chosen/named identity.

Some years ago, when I was actively writing fiction it was important to me that who the characters were and how they related to others was not determined on their sexual attraction.

At the time I was aware of how writers and musicians who weren’t identified as men were labelled as women – woman composer or woman writer and the like, and I am encouraged now to hear that this happens less, for example a musician is acclaimed for their music and their gender is immaterial.

I notice for example the ABC presenters are using the pronoun ‘they’ oftener and I welcome the introduction of us stating our chosen pronoun.

Maybe we are getting closer to gender identity being irrelevant. I do hope so.

**WILMA DAVIDSON,
NGUNNAWAL/NGAMBRI LAND**



Werona

a place of peace (1969–1982)

HEATHER SAVILLE | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING

This is the first of a two-part contribution about Werona, the 38-hectare property at Kangaroo Valley that was purchased in 1969 and is now majority owned by NSW Regional Meeting. Some 10 years ago Katrina Hasleton and Margaret Littlewood, who are central to the running of Werona, began investigating its story. Their efforts are what forms the basis of both articles, enhanced by records held by Anne-Maree Johnston (the company secretary) and photos provided by Tim Sowerbutts.

How it all began

The NSW Quaker newsletter of March 1969 records that 'some Sydney Friends together with others and the Sydney Bushwalkers have made an offer to purchase a farm in Kangaroo Valley'. Following a meeting at Wahroonga Meeting House of 17 interested folk, Rudi and Hannah Lemberg and Dougald and Carole McLean wrote to Quakers explaining their intentions:

Some of us have had a concern for some time to provide a rural site for conscientious objectors, war tax resisters, and others needing a temporary retreat from the alienating effects of this supercharged society.

After purchase the property was subdivided into two lots; one belonging to Sydney Bushwalkers and the remainder (38 hectares) to be owned by a newly established company, Kangaroo Valley Friends Properties Pty Ltd. The purchase price was \$9995 and was achieved by donations from Friends and kindred spirits with the sale being completed late in 1969. Those who

provided funds were issued shares in the company - \$100 per share.

As Eileen Barnard Kettle wrote in an article for the English Friend, those who funded the purchase intended Werona to be a place for subsistence farming, for conscientious objectors, a study centre and retreat to further Quaker concerns and awareness - to meet for the purpose of study, recreation, fellowship, recreation and conservation.

What happened next?

The description of 'farm' was somewhat grandiose. Much of the 38 hectares are natural bush and sandstone rock formations, with a steep slope down to the cultivated land and below that the Kangaroo Valley River. Included in the purchase price was a small cottage and outbuildings. Access to the property is across an area around the electricity sub-station that provides power for the township.

One of the shareholders, Ed Stanton an English Friend with agricultural experience, moved into the cottage, began basic farming, including bee-keeping and selling honey locally and organising rural craft weekends. He remained there for several years, joined for some time by Evelyn Spencer. Ed, a dedicated vegetarian, was interviewed by Earth Garden magazine in 1972 where he spoke of his aim of self-sufficiency and his vision for the property.

With the sale completed and the formal legal company established it was possible to begin developing the ideas for 'the future Australian Study

Centre'. Newsletters of 1970 talk enthusiastically of a simple building that could be used for meetings of all sorts, as well as a shower and toilets. Both electricity and water would be needed and plans were made about how this could best be achieved.

The first large event took place in early 1970 when Young Friends held their annual gathering at Werona. It took the form of a camp with tents clustered around the farm cottage; at that time the only source of drinking water. One of those attending was Peter Buscombe, who had building experience. He began designing a building some distance from the cottage, that could be used for large groups. Several working bees were held at the site that had been chosen, and within an impressively short time there emerged the building that was first called Young Friends hut and eventually became known as Friends Hut.

Connection to the electricity grid was achieved largely with the voluntary labour of Canberra and Sydney Young Friends over many work weekend camps. This was followed by a bush shower and a much-needed pit toilet. The latter had become urgent when both Ed and Evelyn indicated that they preferred their toilet to be used only by fellow vegetarians! The new toilet was christened by someone at the time as The Backhouse. Within 3 years a bark hut on a rocky shelf above the Friends Hut had been built and Ed had erected an A-frame sleeping hut using similar materials.

A cleared open area gradually developed into an orchard where



Friends Hut and the much-loved fire



The bark hut that burned down in 1982

Ed had planted a range of fruit trees. Situated between the farm cottage and the new large communal building, the orchard proved a popular camping spot, with the added advantage of being close to the bush shower, and views out over the river.

What followed

These simple but important improvements meant that the twin aims of living simply off the land and providing somewhere for study, recreation, fellowship and worship in the serenity of the bush was proving possible. Throughout the 1970s Werona gradually became a sanctuary in many ways for Quakers and others. Families came for weekends, various anti-violence organisations booked training weekends there and schools brought groups of students for short camps.

Among the other groups who discovered and were welcomed to Werona were women's refuges that brought children down for holidays. They reported the delight that the children had in the bush, something new to many, together with the sense of space and freedom.

Young Friends continued to hold their annual gatherings at Werona throughout the 1970s, and the newsletters which they produced spoke of hard physical work (including trench digging for installing electricity)

swimming in the river, music, spiritual regeneration and contemplation of future uses for Werona.

Photographs of the time show people just sitting around the fire, either at the Bark Hut or Friends House, something that many spoke of fondly in their reflections of the time. A variety of walking tracks existed, leading in one case to a sheltered area near a spring which was often where silent Meeting was held.

For several years Martin Mulligan, (Margaret Tuck's son) took Social Ecology students from the University of Western Sydney there as part of his course in Wilderness Values and Landscape Conservation. Martin also recalls times when the whole group of Young Friends would attend bush dances in Upper Kangaroo Valley community hall. Another of those first Young Friends was Tim Sowerbutts.

Katrina Hasleton first encountered Werona as an eleven-year-old when it was winter with grey skies and tall trees. It was wild and rugged. Friends Hut was there and on the verandah were Eric and Enid Pollard drinking tea. That first visit of Katrina's was followed by many more as a teenager with a group of junior young friends who named themselves Friends Freaks and were joined by others who came just because they loved the place. Music, shared meals and swimming in the river

feature in everyone's reflections.

The 1970s were a time of significant interest in moves back to the country and simpler living. In 1973 the National Review published a long article entitled *Down Quaker Country*. One of the most significant Quaker gatherings of the period was when Charlotte and Stewart Meecham, American Friends who delivered the 1976 Backhouse Lecture, were able to join over 100 Friends for a weekend at Werona. That resulted in a program by the ABC also called *Quaker Country*.

The Aboriginal Dance Company – Bangara – were another organisation that booked Werona for their work. They, too, featured in the ABC program.

With 'conservation' being one of the original aims for the property, Werona was gazetted as a Wildlife Sanctuary in February 1974.

Changes over time

By 1979 Ed had moved on, farming had ended and the bush had begun to return to much of the cleared land. Of the original share-holders few continued to spend time there and the day-to-day management of the property devolved to what has now become known as the Users Group, only some of whom are Quakers. This involved raising funds to pay council rates, electricity, insurance, etc., liaison with the local bush fire

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23

QUAKERS AUSTRALIA COORDINATOR

Quakers Australia (QA) is revisioning its support structures to assist organisational effectiveness and vitality within the Australian Quaker community.

We invite applications for the role of QA Coordinator to support the work of Quakers Australia, the body representing the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia.

ROLE

This is a key role which provides assistance and support to the QA Presiding Clerk, the QA annual gathering, and other key committees and functions of QA. Key responsibilities include active engagement and wide liaison with the Quaker community, as well as coordinating papers, following up decisions, developing reports, and other duties as required.

Other functions associated with the role include:

- Maintaining and providing access to key documentation, including that requiring the guidance of the QA Archivist
- Supporting committees and other groups
- Maintaining lists of office holders and committee members.

CONDITIONS

This ongoing position is for 27 hours per week and attracts an annual remuneration of \$62,338 including 11% superannuation. In addition, workers compensation and other employer costs will be paid by QA. The remuneration package will be paid monthly or fortnightly (as preferred by the successful candidate). Remuneration will be reviewed annually in line with CPI increases.

The leave entitlements include twenty days recreation and ten days sick leave for each full year of appointment (pro rata) and all public holidays gazetted in the State or Territory in which the Coordinator resides.

In addition, there is payment for reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, for instance that are incurred in the establishment and ongoing operation of a home office.

SKILLS, EXPERIENCE AND PERSONAL QUALITIES

Applicants are expected to be in sympathy with Quaker values, to demonstrate respect for the spiritual practices of Quakers, and to be prepared to further Quaker witness in the contemporary world as part of their role.

This position requires demonstrated excellent communication and active listening skills as well as excellent interpersonal skills, including in online environments. Proven ability to supervise volunteers would be an advantage. It is expected that applicants will have excellent office skills, including managing databases and conducting online conferencing.

Familiarity with the practices and organisation of Quakers would be a strong advantage; an induction will cover this if the successful candidate does not have this knowledge.

While there are support structures in place, it is expected that applicants will be able to discharge their responsibilities with minimal direct oversight.

As this is a 'position of trust', the successful applicant will be required to comply with the QA Code of Conduct and Child Protection and other safety policies.

APPLICATIONS

Enquiries and applications for the position should be directed to the QA Presiding Clerk [clerk@quakersaustralia.info]

The closing date for applications is 5.00 p.m. AEST Friday 6 April 2023.

It is anticipated that the successful candidate will take up their role on 1 July 2023.

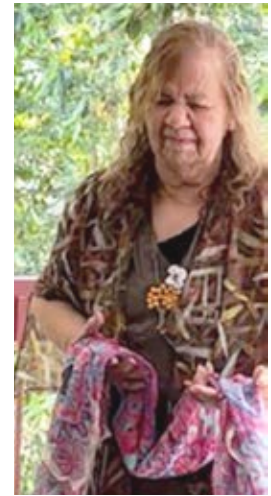
A forever armistice

in the war against children

CHRISTINE VENNER-WESTERWAY | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING



The Armistice Day gathering



Aunty Delmae weeping for the children.

Armistice Day 2022 clocked up a seven consecutive year tradition of holding a people's way of marking Armistice Day and four consecutive years holding it at the Kelvin Grove Meeting House. Mervyn Landford (Muriel Langford's son) began this tradition together with Aunty Delmae Barton (Bidjara Elder and Song-Woman), Trish Ferrier and Anna Heriot from BrisWest (an independent voluntary organisation), and myself from the Quaker community. We spend many months each year discerning what the focus will be and crafting a ceremony around that. The theme that arose this year was 'a forever armistice in the war against children'.

Once again, we had a full house and were gifted with fine weather, enabling full use of the Meeting House grounds for individual nourishment and reflection as part of the day's gathering. The driveway was lined with the 'Children of the Gulf War' photo exhibition on loan from Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF); journaling, reading and drawing spaces were set up and the magnificent rain-revitalised forest beckoned.

We spoke about our children because we need to understand that all the young offspring of the world, of whatever species, are **our** children, **our** responsibility, **our** beloveds and **our** future. The question to ask is, **how can we love all the children?** Mine, yours, theirs, all the young of every being and entity. We reminded the gathering that across the world our children are abducted into slave labour and the sex trade, raped within their own families and communities, forced to become child soldiers and suicide bombers, are fleeing their homelands as refugees of persecution, war or climate catastrophe, and are held in detention in camps under appalling conditions.

Here in Australia, through our ill-named Youth Justice system, children as young as ten are subject to violence and unconscionable solitary confinement. The majority of these children are from First Nations families and communities. In all these situations, the way out is all too frequently severe mental collapse, physical illness and death, self-harm and suicide.

Aunty Delmae spoke and sung an acknowledgement of country, and shared her heart wisdom and heartache for our Earth's children. Eleven bells

were struck carving out a 2-minute silence. Participants were then invited to spend 25 minutes by themselves silently exploring and expressing their own grief, longing, honouring and hope for our children. Many took advantage of the spaces and materials provided within and without the Meeting House. After which the exquisite voices of the Brisbane Threshold Singers gathered us back indoors to share our personal reflections to the wider group akin to the 'manner of Friends'.

This two-part process was book-ended with the recordings of the late Archie Roache heart-rending songs 'Weeping in the Forest' and 'Took the Children Away'. We concluded with the sound of Aunty Delmae weeping for our children, many of whom are no more.

Each year we hear that those who attend do so out of a need, a hunger even, for silence, calm, and deep listening and sharing. There is strength in collective grieving, remembering and honouring. Earth's children unreservedly need and deserve our intentional holding up, our deliberate gaze, our nurturing and protection. We hope you will journey with us in 2023.

AF



QSA Notes

Helping communities meet the challenge of climate change

FLEUR BAYLEY | QSA PROJECT MANAGER, CAMBODIA



Water pit construction in Uganda SOURCE: St Jude Family Project

Earthcare is a Quaker testimony, and Quakers seek to 'develop a culture of caring for the planet, preparing for future generations of living things, and honouring the gifts of sustainable life offered by the earth.' Climate change and environmental impact are critical criteria for assessing all QSA projects, most of which are agriculture based, aiming to help participants adapt to climate change and reduce the impact of natural disasters through training in new agricultural techniques. In **Tamil Nadu, India**, QSA partner PBRC focuses on environmental education, sustainability, and organic agricultural reforms. This region experienced extreme weather events in

the past year which seriously reduced crop yields – cyclonic winds and intense monsoon rainfall far above previous years. Training in organic methods encourages farmers to maintain a close relationship with soil health and structure so plants develop deeper, stronger roots to withstand climate extremes. Crop variants have been trialled and assessed for different climates, and training in seed-saving techniques provides more options for farmers. Cattle and goats standing in water has increased the risk of spreading foot and mouth disease in areas subject to flooding. Immunity-enhancing herbal compounds within this project have kept this disease from the region

despite its prevalence in nearby areas. Using low-fuel stoves for cooking is encouraged to reduce emissions and deforestation. In addition, indigenous trees are planted in denuded forests to provide fruits, medicinal products and shade and to increase carbon absorption. In **Cambodia**, most agriculture involves a single weather-dependent rice crop that uses large quantities of pesticides and fertilisers. Three projects teach permaculture techniques including crop selection, seed-saving, water use and management, and the development and use of natural fertilisers and pesticides. Participants (mostly women) establish home food gardens



Watering young indigenous trees planted in denuded forests to increase carbon absorption SOURCE: QSA



Pump wells for household use and home food gardens in Cambodia. SOURCE Department of Women's Affairs, Kampong Thom

achieving year-round food security. These skills enable farmers to reduce reliance on traditional agriculture susceptible to climate change. A declining water table is an ongoing problem in Cambodia due to climate change and increased demand. Water levels in streams, ponds, rivers and underground are declining, and many farmers have problems sourcing water, even if they sink wells. Projects in Pursat and Kampong Thom prioritise pump wells that provide much-needed water for households and to irrigate home food gardens. They also prioritise growing low water-use vegetables and using household wastewater during the dry season.

In **Kandal Province**, Khmer Community Development encourages participants to plant trees around their homes to reduce dust, provide food and reduce the impact of increasing heat due to climate change. Climate adaptation and resilience is integral in the farming methods taught in **Ugandan** projects, particularly soil and water conservation, to reduce the impact of extreme and unpredictable climatic variations. Most methods also mitigate climate change as they contribute towards carbon sequestration, retention of moisture, lowering of ground temperatures, and slowing of deforestation.

The intensity and duration of drought

affecting parts of Uganda increasingly challenges achieving year-round water security. Dream Farm's farmers in Kiruhura have not experienced droughts as severe as in many parts of the Greater Masaka region where St Jude's farmers are situated. Apart from rainwater harvesting methods practised by farmers, St Jude also advises farmers to save and invest in household water pits.

These projects are supported by the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP)

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.

Unit 14, 43-53 Bridge Road, Stanmore, NSW 2048 Australia • administration@qsa.org.au

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



ACFID
MEMBER

Charting our own course

Questioning Australia's involvement in US-led wars and the United States Alliance

DAVID PURNELL AND MARGARET CLARK | QUAKER PEACE AND LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

The results of a People's Inquiry by the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network

The primary aim of this Inquiry was to build dialogue and pressure for change to develop a truly independent foreign policy for Australia. The Inquiry focused on eight broad areas, each with an expert panel leader who compiled a chapter and recommendations for the final report. The eight areas were: Impact on First Nations People; Social and Community; Political including Democratic Rights; Environment and Climate Change, Military and Defence, Economic; Foreign Policy and Unions and Workers' Rights.

Submissions from members of the public were received between November 2020 and September 2021. In total 283 groups or individuals provided submissions. The final report was tabled in Parliament, and launched in Parliament House in November 2022.

The full report is now available to read or order at <https://ipan.au>. IPAN is working to get copies into the hands of all federal politicians, and to encourage journalists to write about it. Copies will also be made available to libraries and universities across the country.

Kellie Tranter, a lawyer and journalist who chaired the Inquiry, highlighted the following points in her summary:

- The report imagines citizens placed alongside Parliament at the centre of Australia's defence and foreign policy decisions, in achieving an independent policy through reason, diplomacy and common sense.
- For too long Australia has facilitated US hegemony and engaged in fighting and losing wars for which there is little popular support, and at huge personal and national cost. As a result Australia has lost international standing and respect for our values and domestic governance systems.
- 'Australia must decide what it wants in the world, work out how to get there, and take steps to achieve these goals'. The report shows various ways in which this can be done.
- War is a choice rather than an inevitability.
- An independent Australian foreign policy would increase the likelihood of resolving trade conflicts through diplomacy and

mutual goodwill.

- The proposals put forward in the report would mark Australia as a peaceful nation whose people aim to cooperate with all countries in a multipolar world. The only hope for humanity is a unified spirit of international cooperation.
- This report is a roadmap for the people and governments of Australia.

Using the Report

The Report is a most valuable resource for peacemakers. It contains up-to-date contributions from a wide range of people throughout Australia, and it shows clearly the strong desire by most of them for a change of approach by our political, bureaucratic and academic establishments. It is also a challenge for all committed to a peace-oriented foreign policy to implement the changes proposed in the Report. And to go further in our advocacy for non-military solutions.

There is scope for widening the dialogue opportunities with our fellow citizens, and for entering the public debate in whatever ways we can. We can present a vision of what is possible, giving examples of creative responses to fear and violence. We need also to practice positive peace in our personal relationships and groups.

Some specific options for follow-up of the Report:

- Gather with others in a study group over an agreed time period to share the Report in detail,

CHARTING OUR OWN COURSE

Questioning Australia's
Involvement in US-led
Wars and the Australia-
United States alliance

A People's Inquiry

Findings of the
Independent and Peaceful
Australia Network
(IPAN) People's Inquiry:
Exploring the case for
an independent and
peaceful Australia.

What are the costs
and consequences of
Australia's involvement
in US-led wars and the
Australia-US alliance?
What are the alternatives?



identifying the areas for possible action, and devising plans for personal and combined steps.

- Focus on a particular strand of the Inquiry, explore it in depth, gathering information and insights from those involved in that area of life. This could lead to preparing audio-visual material to share more widely, and to ideas for advocacy.
- Publicise the Report through newsletters etc and encourage people to get hard copies or on-line versions, then enable the sharing of responses through webinars or workshops.
- Consult IPAN about inviting any of the authors of the Report to an on-line discussion about their area of concern.

- Use social media to draw attention to the Report and its findings, as a way of broadening awareness and generating interactions.

- Make contact with political representatives to make clear your responses to the Report, to ensure they are aware of it, and to put forward action proposals.
- Join organisations that are working for the same kinds of changes as the Report outlines, e.g. United Nations Association, War Powers Reform Group, Pax Christi, Australian Religious Response to Climate Change, aid agencies, human rights and refugee groups, International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), Medical

Association for the Prevention of War, Just Peace, Friends of the Earth, War Resisters International.

- Learn about the location and activities of arms manufacturers in your region, visit their premises and make clear your views about their presence.
- Maintain contact with IPAN through joining the mailing list for its regular newsletter 'Voice'. See www.ipan.org.au

QPLC is interested in any feedback from Friends about the Report and its recommendations as we will continue to seek ways to follow-up on the Report: cqplc@quakersaustralia.info.

AF



The brothers and sisters of Jesus

RAE LITTING | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING



The Holy Family
ca. 1624, Anton van Dyck.



The small Cowper Madonna,
1504 Raphael

I believe that religious art has influenced the way we imagine Jesus more than we realise. If we read the Bible, it is clear that Jesus came from a large family. But we never see images of Jesus surrounded by brothers and sisters. We see him mostly in paintings of the Madonna and Child, or paintings of The Holy Family (mother, father and child). If we find a painting that includes another child, this usually turns out to be John the Baptist. Much of this religious art is very beautiful, but I believe it distorts our image of Jesus in an unhelpful way.

There are two key passages about Jesus' family in the Gospel of Mark. The first is in Chapter 3, 31-35:

Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. They stood outside the house and sent in a message, asking for him. A crowd was sitting around Jesus, and they said to him, 'Look, your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, and they want you.'

Jesus answered, 'Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?' He looked at the people sitting around him and said: 'Look! Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does what God wants is my brother, my sister, my mother.'

This passage makes it clear that apart from his family of followers, Jesus had a natural family. Some commentators dismiss them as a bad lot who did not support his ministry, but considering the fate of John the Baptist I think they were right to be worried about him. The other passage from Mark is in Chapter 6 1-3:

Jesus left that place and went back to his home town, followed by his disciples. On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue. Many people were there; and when they heard him they were all amazed. 'Where did he get all this that has been given him? How does he perform miracles? Isn't he the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters living here?' And so they rejected him.

Again, the family do not get a good rap, but they are plainly his natural family, and not disciples. Mark is the earliest gospel, probably written around 30 or 40 years after Jesus' death. The gospel does not contain any birth stories, and probably predates the doctrine of the Virgin Birth.

The gospels of Matthew and Luke have Virgin Birth stories. Matthew has the story of Jesus' family looking for him (probably sourced from Mark),

but he omits the sisters. However he mentions the sisters in the story of Jesus preaching in Nazareth – in the Good News Bible the translation is 'Aren't all his sisters living here?' which sounds like at least three.

Luke also has the first story, without the sisters. He has the story of Jesus being rejected in Nazareth, but without the brothers and sisters. Instead, people say 'Isn't he the son of Joseph?'

Matthew and Luke seem to believe that the birth of Jesus was miraculous, but that Mary and Joseph then produced other children in the usual way. This was the belief of some early church leaders, and also of some Protestants today.

Although the gospel writers represent Jesus' brothers as rejecting his teaching, the brothers turn up among his followers in the book of Acts. In Acts Chapter 1 verses 12-14 we are told that, after Jesus ascended into heaven:

Then the apostles went back to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is about a kilometre away from the city. They entered the city and went up to the room where they were staying: Peter, John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Patriot, and Judas son of James. They gathered



The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple; 1854–60 William Holman Hunt

frequently to pray as a group, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brothers.

Paul also makes references to these brothers, especially James, in his epistles. In Galatians 1, 19 he records that he did not meet the original followers of Jesus until 3 years after his conversion when:

I went to Jerusalem to obtain information from Peter, and I stayed with him for two weeks. I did not see any other apostle except James, the Lord's brother.

In 1 Corinthians, 7 Paul lists those to whom Jesus appeared after his resurrection, ending with:

Then he appeared to James, and afterwards to all the apostles.

And there is a tantalising little complaint in 1 Corinthians 9 3-5:

When people criticise me, this is how I defend myself: Haven't I got the right to be given food and drink for my work? Haven't I got the right to follow the example of the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Peter, by taking a Christian wife with me on my travels?

Although there seems to be a whole industry trying to prove that Jesus had a wife and possibly a child, no-one seems to have any interest in his nephews and

nieces who must have been numerous. The Greek historian Eusebius does recount a story of two grandsons of Jude who were arrested by the emperor Domitian, but released because they were peasants 'of no account'!

While the brothers of Jesus were active in the early church there was probably no belief in the virgin birth. In any case the Jewish tradition does not put much value on virginity as a sign of spiritual excellence. The belief in the virgin birth comes from the gentile church. Greek gods were given to impregnating human women, and Rome had a tradition of vestal virgins whose purity protected the Roman state. As the belief in Mary's lifelong virginity became dogma, it was necessary to explain away the brothers and sisters. One way of doing this was to suppose that they were the children of Joseph by a previous marriage. This is the belief of some Orthodox churches. Those who follow this teaching generally depict Joseph as much older than Mary, which makes him a safe spouse for a committed virgin.

The Catholic tradition usually explains away the brothers and sisters as cousins.

It seems to me that these attempts impoverish our understanding of Jesus.

In the first place, they give us the Holy Family (two virgins and a perfect child) as a model for ordinary Christians. This is not a helpful model, and no couple embark on a life together with any intention of copying it.

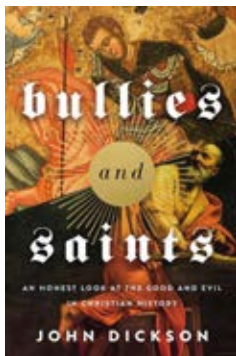
The only story we have of Jesus as a child is the story from Luke Chapter 2 41-51 in which the family visit the temple in Jerusalem and leave without Jesus, not noticing that he was absent until 'they travelled a whole day'. The historicity of this story is doubtful. There is no mention of other children, and it is strange that these perfect parents do not miss their child for a whole day. At the end of the story:

Jesus went back with them to Nazareth, where he was obedient to them.

Actually by wandering off on his own he was not obedient to them, but then Jesus' supposed obedience is stressed in the church's teaching to children. 'Christian children all must be/ Mild, obedient, good as he' according to the Christmas carol. To a child this means 'Shut up and do as you are told', and offers no challenge or inspiration.

The Holy Family would appear to provide a good upbringing for a Holy

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23



Bullies and Saints

An honest look at the good and evil of Christian history

BY JOHN DICKSON

Published by Zondervan Reflective Grand Rapids Michigan. 2021. pp.328, \$24.99 ISBN 978 0 310 11937 1

In its first three hundred years, the Christian Church took seriously Jesus' injunction to do good to those who hate you, since they, too, are made in the image of God. In these centuries, the Church was solidly pacifist. In a manual dated about 200 AD, it laid down that if a fully instructed and baptised Christian 'wishes to become a soldier, let him be cast out... for he has despised God.' [p.127] About one hundred years later, the Christian apologist Lactantius, wrote that 'a just man may not be a soldier.'

Why did the Church change? The first emperor to become a Christian, Constantine [d. 337 AD], had something to do with it, but the change did not come till about fifty years after his death. The great agent of change was St Ambrose [339-97 AD]. Most Christians had come from the lower class, but St Ambrose came from the top, senatorial class. He was an elite statesman, experienced legislator, friend of emperors, as well as a Christian convert, poet and preacher. He, at the top of the church, inter-acted with the people at the top of government, and such inter-action continued. From this came St Augustine's doctrine of the just war, about 410 AD: so long as fighting

is absolutely necessary, and peace is the goal, war can be good. St Augustine was anything but a warmonger. As a bishop, he oversaw farms producing food for the poor, and used church funds to free slaves.

This combination of work for the public good and support for organised state violence was to be repeated in Christian history. Thus Charlemagne was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 800 AD. In 782 AD he had ordered the be-heading of more than 4,500 'Saxons' (they were from north-east Germany) and later deported 10,000 men from there with their wives and children in small groups to France and Germany. Thus were the Saxons pacified. But, as well, Charlemagne established a massive educational program of schools and other centres of learning.

Similarly, Cardinal Ximenez of Spain [1436-1517] did exemplary work in reforming the church in Spain. He did it intelligently and peacefully, rectifying abuses in the religious orders and modernising scholarship. But he also established the Inquisition. In 1492 the Spaniards drove the Moors from Spain, but the government was worried about the loyalty of those who had become Christians and remained in the country. The Inquisition was founded to investigate them.

In its first fifty years the Inquisition killed about two thousand people and in the next two hundred and fifty years, about three thousand. In the Thirty Years War in Germany there were considerably more, twenty thousand

in the siege of Magdeburg alone. They were all a travesty in a church whose founder had instructed its members to love their enemies and do good to those who hated them.

As an aid to perspective, Dickson points out that resolutely secular regimes had a far worse record of violence. Thus, in that expression of the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, in the nine-month period of the Terror, seventeen thousand men and women were killed. In the communist regimes in Russia, China, and Cambodia, untold millions died in the attempt to make the ideal society.

Dickson shows that Christianity had a strong social conscience from the beginning. Hospitals seem to have been a Christian invention. The first was established in Turkey between 368 and 372 AD. By the thirteenth century, there were thousands of European hospitals, leprosaria and similar shelters for the needy.

The book excels in its description of the first thousand years of Christianity. It spread so rapidly that Emperor Nero found it plausible to blame Christians for the great fire of Rome in 64 AD. In the first thousand years, there was a succession of reform movements, sufficient to dispel the myth of the Dark Ages.

The book is enlightening and always readable.

REG NAULTY

Canberra and Region Quakers

concern for the Simplicity Testimony developed.

A Quaker visitor from India, Aziz Pabaney, stressed that we are not to 'live simply' to release resources for developing countries, but to create space in our own lives for nurturing spiritual connection. This helped Jenny communicate her concern for the testimony.

A term at Woodbrooke College in the UK; visiting Aziz in Mumbai; Canberra Regional Meeting adopting Jenny's concern for the Simplicity Testimony; and Meeting for Learning support, led to her travelling by bus down the East coast of Australia visiting Quaker Meetings and isolated Friends

– and eventually to her delivering the Backhouse Lecture in 2007.

2003 saw Chris (newly employed by National Parks) and Jenny living in Bega, as founding members of Bega Eco Neighbourhood Developers Inc, a not-for-profit volunteer group whose aim was to create a socially and economically diverse ecologically sustainable neighbourhood integral to the town of Bega.

The Quaker Peace and Social Justice Fund provided seed funding that led to 10 of the 30 homes being owned by a social housing provider. By 2010 Chris and Jenny were living with their neighbours in eco-friendly homes.

During this decade Jenny had

supported the sale of the Wholefoods business to a Workers Co-operative – still a vibrant ethical enterprise.

Connections with family, friends and neighbours; caring for home and garden; supporting Chris write about koala country; and, most nourishing, being a Meeting for Learning facilitator are Jenny's priorities now.

Having been blessed with clear leadings through most of her life Jenny says she feels at sea. 'It seems I am now led to focus on the here and now with no goals to achieve except to age gracefully, and that is a challenge!'

AF

WERONA – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

brigade and the Water Board regarding the dam to be built further down the river, taking bookings for visitors and ensuring continued maintenance of the property.

All tedious but necessary tasks and achieved by a combination of camping fees and annual subscriptions, drawing on the wide network of Werona supporters. In Kangaroo Valley fire is always a risk. An early newsletter told of a fire that raced through the

upper level of the property, saved the buildings but destroyed similar ones on the Bushwalkers land. Then in 1982 Werona was not so lucky. The farm cottage and outbuildings burnt down, as did the much-loved Bark Hut. Fortunately, Friends House was saved, but this fire prompted much soul-searching about future plans.

The horrors of the most recent fires that tore through so much of east coast Australia three years ago will be covered

in the June *Australian Friend*.

Werona is a place of many and varied stories and experiences. For some the connection has been unbroken for over 50 years for others, after many years of absence, it is rediscovered. We give thanks for those friends back in 1969 whose vision has provided a wonderful place of peace and renewal.

To be continued

AF

THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF JESUS – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

Hermit, but Jesus was not a hermit. He was a sociable man, who always travelled with friends. We often hear of him being entertained in people's houses. He was comfortable in the company of a great range of people, from the teacher of the Law who asked 'what must I do to receive eternal life' to tax collectors, peasants and fishermen. He was a man who had brothers.

In Matthew 18 21-22 Peter asks Jesus how many times one should forgive one's brother. Seven times? Jesus replied, 'No, not seven times, but seventy times seven.' Is this the reply of a pious man who never had a brother,

or the reply of a man who shared a small sleeping space with four brothers, all treading on each other's toes and borrowing each other's possessions?

Surely seven acts of forgiveness would hardly get you through the week. Forgiveness is one of the key planks of Jesus' teaching, and is central to the Lord's Prayer.

Jesus is also comfortable in the company of women.

He was not fazed by the 'woman who had who suffered terribly from severe bleeding' (Mark 5 25-34) or the woman taken in adultery (John 8 1-11) or the woman of poor character who

anointed his feet with perfume (Luke 7 36-50).

He was a man who had sisters, and I suspect they were women of some character!

It is of course true that Jesus spent time alone in communion with God. I do not want to underestimate that aspect of his life. But whatever divine insights he received had to be tested in the rough and tumble of family life, before being also tested during squabbles among his followers. What a pity no great artist has supplied us with images of Jesus' brothers and sisters.

AF

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