

The Australian Friend

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Peace and reconciliation

Quakers

Salam
Shalom

Peace

Editorial

As the war in Ukraine enters its third year and images of bombed out starving Palestinians fill our TV screens, I am reminded of a recent online philosophy class (U3A) where three Quakers among others, discussed a segment of Plato's Republic entitled The City of Pigs. Beginning with the concepts of justice and injustice, Socrates debates the evolution of the state from meeting basic human needs – food, shelter, clothing – to a greed-driven society that inevitably leads to war.

Before we lament the lack of progress towards global peace over two millennia, let us remember the thousands throughout the world working for peaceful resolutions to current conflicts and all those that live by answering the question, *What does love require of you?*

In this edition of the Australian Friend, we offer articles that consider these matters such as: *A listening pilgrimage across these lands now called Australia* by Lisa Wriley, a companion piece *Where spirituality and justice meet* by First Nations author Brooke Prentis, A letter to Quakers (about Palestine) by Aletia Dundas and Reg Naulty's book review of *The Palestine Laboratory*. Other articles, among them David Johnson's *For it is the light* and *The sense of presence* by Noel Staples, afford beacons of hope for a spirit-led future.

I conclude with an extract from my poem *Hope Rekindled* written following Meeting for Worship in July 2000.

As I dwell on youthful naivete	I rejoice in the power of worship
And enduring evils thirty years on	Give thanks for the love in this room
Ministry enters the silence	For wisdom imparted
She speaks of poverty war violence	Knowledge gained
The endless evidence of six o'clock news	Hope rekindled
The need for action	
The need to know the right time for action	<i>Sue Parritt</i>
The need to pass on the faith the hope the love	

THE AUSTRALIAN FRIEND EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Letter to the Editor

Dying to be Green

During the mini-Yearly Meeting in January, Katherine Purnell raised the issue of how to dispose of corpses so as to minimise damage to the environment. I explored this topic in a letter published in *New Scientist*.

Graham Lawton who writes for *New Scientist*, says that cremation is extremely bad for the environment. 'An 80 kg body contains approximately 14.4 kg carbon which is all converted to carbon dioxide when combusted. Crematoriums also use natural gas to burn the body and coffin... a single cremation produces 240 kg CO₂, about the same as burning 100 litres of petrol.

'Cremations also produce toxic pollutants, principally mercury from dental fillings. Filtration can prevent this venting to the atmosphere, but not all crematoriums have them.' (He is writing

about the UK; I don't know the situation in NSW or elsewhere in Australia).

'Traditional burials are less damaging but don't get a clean bill of environmental health either. If the body is embalmed the formaldehyde leaches into the soil as the body decomposes. Coffins usually have metal fittings that also pollute... Making coffins and headstones consumes considerable amounts of energy.' (*New Scientist* 2022-10-08).

Lawton was able to arrange a woodland burial for his wife but found it extremely expensive.

My letter (published 2021-10-23 p54 and again 2022-10-29) says: 'On the subject of green funerals, my husband co-edited the book *Biochar for Environmental Management* and says one good option is to pyrolyse a body to turn it into charcoal. That is what I want to happen to my remains. I hope that,

after my funeral and when my biocharred body has cooled down, my friends will take some charcoal home to use in their garden. This will help store carbon away from the atmosphere and build soil health.' My husband has done research for the NSW Dept. of Primary Industry on pyrolyzing dead pigs and found it worked well environmentally.

Unfortunately, I don't know of any funeral directors anywhere who provide the option of pyrolyzing corpses. Also various state Environmental Protection Authorities may not be sympathetic. I would be delighted if someone pursued this option – a lot of work, and well worthwhile. Not for me at the present time.

Helen Gould, New South Wales Regional Meeting helen.e.gould@gmail.com

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Quakers
Salam
Shalom

Peace



A letter to Quakers

Principled impartiality

ALETIA DUNDAS | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING



Dear Friends,

I feel like I'm standing up in meeting with my heart racing and a heaviness that I can't shake. Friends, over the past few months when the humanitarian crisis in Gaza has come up in conversation, I've found myself feeling at odds with other Quakers, and I've sat with the question of why this might be. It seems to me that the ongoing situation for Palestine is the one justice issue where we are not in unity. Some might interpret our peace testimony as leading us to remain neutral in conflicts and wars and our testimony to equality as seeing a conflict as having two equal sides. I don't see it that way. I see this situation in the same way that I see many social justice struggles – there is long-lasting violence, oppression and injustice together with significant power imbalance, and then there are some incredibly courageous people desperately trying to speak truth to power.

I was in Palestine as an Ecumenical Accompanier in 2016, sent by the World Council of Churches as part of a decades long endeavour to respond to urgent pleas from the churches in Jerusalem for international support. The model used

by the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel (EAPPI) is called 'accompaniment', a theological framework for acting justly in the way of Christ, providing protective presence, monitoring violations of human rights, standing with local peace and human rights groups, using principled impartiality, supporting nonviolent efforts and then engaging in advocacy back home to encourage international action for change.

The reason I participated in this initiative was because, as a Quaker, I believe we should not be passive in our pacifism. If we believe in peace, and we refuse to take up weapons, then we should be willing to stand up unarmed but well trained to support nonviolent resistance to oppression and an enduring solution to a protracted conflict.

I particularly appreciated the focus of EAPPI on principled impartiality. It was emphasised to us during training that this does not mean remaining neutral in the face of injustice, even though EAPPI doesn't take sides as such. Instead, principled impartiality means being on the side of justice and human rights,

standing alongside those who are poor, oppressed and marginalised. Often during my 3 months in the South Hebron Hills we stood alongside both Palestinians and Israelis who were working together non-violently to oppose the unjust military occupation. And indeed, those Israelis who risked their lives and showed up every Saturday without fail to offer solidarity for Palestinians won my deep admiration.

So, Friends, every week there have been protests across Australia against the bombardment of Gaza, against what can only be called genocide. I know that Palestinian civilians are disproportionately represented in the unequal death toll, instructed to flee yet given no avenue to escape, denied basic humanitarian assistance including medicines, food, water, and watching their beloved educational and health institutions come crashing down around them. They are rapidly losing hope. And so, I am there at these protests, continuing my commitment to be on the side of justice and human rights, and to stand with those who are marginalised and oppressed. All my life I've been attending



similar protests. When I was a child we were protesting nuclear weapons, then it was for justice and recognition for First Peoples in their struggle amidst the colonial and racist legacies of invasion 240 years ago. In the early 2000s we marched in huge numbers for an end to the invasion of Iraq. Several times Quakers joined the Mardi Gras, and more recently we advocated for marriage equality, again standing alongside those who have been marginalised and discriminated against here in Australia. In all these actions there has been a sense of comradeship amongst those marching, there are creative and witty banners, and our common humanity is evident.

These weekly protests are exactly the same. I have heard the phrase 'miracle of kindness' used to describe Palestinians. It is so apt. I remember visiting Palestinian homes recently destroyed by bulldozers in the West Bank in 2016, and being offered tea and a place to sit, despite the fact that my hosts had just lost their entire home. At the peaceful protests I attend at Hyde Park each Sunday there have been so many small acts of generosity, community and kindness: a Palestinian friend was seen smiling warmly as he drummed away as part of a marching band, banners cleverly and tragically pointed to the horror of a war that has taken the lives of thousands of children, and a Jewish contingent display watermelon signs and kippah in solidarity with their Palestinian fellow humans. (When Palestinians were denied the right to display their flag, they

displayed images of watermelons instead, depicting the same colours as their flag in quiet and creative defiance.)

Quakers before our time have engaged in nonviolent direct action about a range of peace and justice issues, including against the Apartheid regime in South Africa, which the international community now recognises as so racist and wrong. I had the privilege of meeting and working alongside a Quaker woman in New York who was one of the original sit-inners of the civil rights movement in the USA. Quakers, being mostly white, supported this movement and were influential allies (social justice allies, not allied forces!) Quakers assisted Jewish refugees fleeing the holocaust, and indeed some of our members today are from that refugee cohort who were grateful for Quaker support when they feared for their lives. I know that at least one of these people displays the Palestinian flag in her home, and has been a valiant supporter of Palestinian justice for decades. Our history is not one of remaining neutral in the face of injustice, violence, oppression and power imbalance. Indeed, Desmond Tutu said 'when we are neutral in situations of injustice, we have taken the side of the oppressor'. Is that how we want history to judge us in this situation? I want to address claims that these protests are violent or are somehow inciting violence against Jewish people. I've never heard anyone at these protests say anything negative about Jewish people. In fact I have noticed and appreciated

the Jewish people who regularly attend and speak at these protests to condemn the atrocities being committed by Israel against Palestinians and to say 'not in our name'. Since returning to Australia in 2017 and becoming involved in advocacy about the occupation, I have made many Jewish friends. These are people who share a passion for justice, who condemn oppression, and who can be relied upon to show up time and time again in solidarity. And in my memories of conversations with Palestinians in the West Bank there is definitely frustration bubbling away at the ways that their rights are curtailed and the violence of Israeli settlers and soldiers, but never any wish to kill them. What was expressed repeatedly was a longing for a time when the three religions will live together in peace again in the Holy Land.

I realise that some Quakers might have been influenced by deceptive narratives and formed the view that the war in Israel and Gaza is between two equal sides, both hurting, both partly in the wrong, and that therefore impartiality is about being neutral, or condemning the actions of both in equal measure. But the facts speak for themselves. As I write, the number of Palestinian casualties sits at 27,708 while the Israeli numbers are still 1,200. Just the other day the last university in Gaza was destroyed. And following unsubstantiated claims by Israel, several Governments have withdrawn funding to UNRWA, the key humanitarian institution supporting

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A listening pilgrimage *across these lands now called Australia*

LISA WRILEY | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING

'May the gum tree from its roots to its branches remind us to dig deep and reach high in our action for justice.'
(from an 'Aboriginal Blessing on Country' by Brooke Prentis, Wakka Wakka woman)



The day before the Referendum in Naarm/Melbourne – I was glad to join the vigil

The Wellspring Community Listening Pilgrimage across these lands now called Australia aimed to nurture peace and healing of communities and creation. The Pilgrimage took place in a tumultuous time for the nation of Australia. In the very middle of the Pilgrimage was the Referendum on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament.

The Pilgrimage experienced the Australian nation approaching this Referendum and seeing misinformation and disinformation and racism towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as well as experiencing the Australian nation after the result and facing the open wound that is the ongoing injustices for First Nations peoples. Let us remember the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' voices and leadership, and that nearly 6 million Australians voted YES.

The Pilgrimage team was led by Ruth Harvey (Iona Community Leader and Quaker) from Scotland, Nick Austin, Ruth's partner, Brooke Prentis (Aboriginal Christian Leader), Joy Connor (Co-leader of Wellspring) and myself, Lisa Wriley (Wellspring co-leader and Quaker) from NSWRM and Central Coast Worshipping Group. Brooke also advised on cultural protocols and led with Acknowledgements of Country, prayers, blessings and stories

and Nick supported with recording, photography and video and provided a visual record of the Pilgrimage.

The Pilgrimage involved 27 events and two place-based live-in Pilgrimages (in Arrernte Country, Central Australia and Gunai-Kurnai Country, East Gippsland Victoria) across seven states and territories over 5 weeks. At least 30 First Nations peoples were listened to and were part of leading conversations across the country. Feedback from participants indicated that the Pilgrimage did nurture peacemaking and justice for Creation and First Nations peoples. Both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and later comers reported that they felt energised and affirmed in their work for Reconciliation and caring for creation. Brooke taught us the importance of using the original ('Aboriginal') place names wherever possible, focussing participants' minds on place and story – the stories that have been with



The Weeping Mother statue at Colebrook Reconciliation Site, Tarnantya/Adelaide



Uncle Neville Collard led us in a Smoking Ceremony on Wadjemup/Rottneest Island

Aboriginal peoples for millennia and the shared story of the last 250 years. We believe that the Pilgrimage did deepen awareness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' perspectives. At several events, especially in Meanjin (Brisbane), participants mentioned how little they knew of Australia's history around First Nations peoples and of the quality of their spiritual relationship with Country. The Referendum showed us that there is a lot of work to do in building understanding of the true history of these lands now called Australia and the impact of colonisation on the oldest living continuing cultures on earth. We hope to build on the relationships we began.

I joined the Wellspring Community in about 1995 and have been a member ever since, feeling at home with the peace and social justice, interfaith, fair trade and environmental interests and efforts of other ecumenical members. Wellspring members have supported me in prayer for all this time. Pre-Covid Wellspring Gatherings have fed my soul, much as Quaker Yearly meetings have since 2011. I love having time with kindred spirits, living in community and being re-inspired and encouraged

to work for the common good for my fellow humans, other species, and this sacred earth.

Wellspring Community is a dispersed community with a few hundred current members across Australia. We are linked together through a Prayer Diary and shared Areas of Concern. We could not have done the Creation Care Listening Pilgrimage on our own and are so grateful to the Quaker Thanksgiving Fund, the Peace & Social Justice Fund and the Jan de Voogd Peace Fund for their support. We acknowledged the support of Quakers at every event or gathering.

Two years ago, Joy Connor convinced me to accept nomination as Co-Leader of the Wellspring Community with her. As Wellspring Community is inspired by the Iona Community in Scotland, it has been our practice over the years to invite the leader of Iona to come to Australia. Some links between Iona and Wellspring have been very significant. One especially so was Peter Millar (past Warden of the Abbey on the Island of Iona and our Wellspring member in Edinburgh) and his wife Dorothy Millar who spent 12 months living in Australia around 2000 and much of

that time in western Sydney in Bidwill, involved in a community ministry with Wellspring leader Anne McPherson, working with local people including Aboriginal peoples. I remember going to see a musical the community put on in Bidwill, *The Song Sings on* – the life and legacy of Maria Locke, when I was very pregnant with James. <https://historyofaboriginalsydney.edu.au/west/1990s>

When Ruth Harvey responded positively to our invitation, we began discussing the possibilities for a speaking tour but realised that wasn't what was needed. The most important issues we felt our nation was facing were First Nations justice and climate justice and it was more important to listen than speak. Care for Creation was a theme that brought these two injustices together.

We did struggle with the issue of travel and the irony of caring for creation and flying. I began the pilgrimage by taking the train to Broken Hill and then coach to Tarnantya (Adelaide) before flying to Boorloo (Perth). We did purchase 'carbon offsets' and travelled

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Where spirituality and justice meet

A pilgrimage

BROOKE PRENTIS | A WAKKA WAKKA WOMAN AND MEMBER OF THE WELLSRING COMMUNITY



The pilgrimage on Gadigal Country with Uncle Dr Pastor Ray Minniecon

In October 2022, I had a phone conversation with Dr Diane Speed AM, inviting me to participate as a curator of an online seminar for the Wellspring Community. The discussion was to hear from Aboriginal Christian Leaders on the theme of 'Identity and Country in a First Nations Context'. I had connection with the Wellspring Community through my dear friends Neil Holm and Margaret Holm (dec.) who had been long time supporters of Aboriginal ministry and were members of the Wellspring Community.

I had also been a guest speaker at the Wellspring Community national gathering in 2019. In my conversation with Diane, I heard that the Wellspring Community were embarking on a pilgrimage in 2023 across these lands now called Australia and wanted to listen to First Nations peoples with a focus on Creation Care with Rev Ruth Harvey, the leader of the Iona Community. I was intrigued and interested. Fast forward to 29 September 2023 and a month-long pilgrimage commenced of which I co-lead with Ruth and with Lisa Wriley and Joy Connor, the co-leaders of the Wellspring Community.

The Wellspring Community was

founded in 1992 and is about 'where spirituality and justice meet', an Australia-wide Christian ecumenical community inspired by the Iona Community. The Iona Community is a dispersed community of people working for peace and justice.

In a year where we seemingly returned to a pre-COVID era and in a year of an Australian Referendum, and perhaps for my whole life, I have thirsted for the places where spirituality and justice meet. I had heard people who had been to Iona or had been interested in Celtic spirituality talk of 'thin places'. As an Aboriginal person, a Wakka Wakka woman, I know my places of cultural and spiritual significance, and have been to other Aboriginal peoples' nation and Country to places of cultural and spiritual significance. I'll never forget being with Aunty Rev Dr Denise Champion on her Country, Adnyamathanha Country, in Ikara, the Flinders Ranges, watching the sun rise in the place of the Adnyamathanha story of the first sun rise. Aboriginal places of cultural and spiritual significance are always a reminder of what Aunty Rev Dr Denise Champion says in her book *Yarta Wandatha*, 'the land of Australia is like one gigantic storybook.'

The Creator's story embedded in the landscape.

But places of cultural and spiritual significance in these lands now called Australia also hold the shared story of the last 250 years. And so, on 29 September the Wellspring Community and Iona Community First Nations and Creation Care Pilgrimage began in Boorloo, Perth and especially started as we stepped off the boat on to Wadjemup, Rottnest Island, Nyungar/Noongar Country.

The Pilgrimage had us walk softly and gently on these ancient lands now called Australia across Nyungar/Noongar Country to Kurna Country and Ngarrindjeri Country to Arrente Country, to Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung Country, Gunaikurnai Country, to Ngannawal and Ngambri Country, to Cammeraygal Country of the Eora nation, to Gundungarra and Dharug Country, to Gadigal Country of the Eora nation, to Darkinjung and GuriNgai Country, to Turrabul and Yuggera Country and finishing on 1 November 2023 on Quandamooka Country. So that is to Perth, Rottnest Island, Adelaide, Raukkan, Mparntwe/Alice Springs, Naarm/Melbourne, Gragin/Raymond Island, Gippsland,

Canberra, Chatswood, Warrang/Sydney, the Blue Mountains, the Central Coast, Newcastle, Meanjin/Brisbane, The Gap Brisbane, and Coochiemudlo Island. From Western Australia to South Australia to the Northern Territory, to Victoria, to the ACT, to New South Wales, to Queensland.

Many people of all cultures joined us on the way and we were led by incredible Aboriginal Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leaders. I take a moment to honour all of these leaders and encourage you to get to know them, Uncle Neville Collard, Della Rae Morrison, Uncle Frank Wanganeen, Uncle Allen Edwards, Uncle Nelson Varcoe, Bishop Chris McLeod, Uncle Clyde Rigney, Auntie Rosemary Rigney, Uncle Ken Sumner, Auntie Bev O'Callaghan, Dr Kathleen Wallace, Shirleen McLaughlin, Auntie Elaine, Doreen, Rob Morrisson, Rev Canon Rhyllis Andy, Rev Kathy Dalton, Cath Thomas, Shay, Uncle Tony Linton, Auntie Sally Fitzgerald, Samantha Faulkner, Uncle Dr Pastor Ray Minniecon, Auntie Ali Golding, Auntie Beryl Van-Oploo, David 'Dingo' King, Tim Selwyn, Auntie Dr Jean Phillips, and Uncle Alex Davidson.

The bible verse I carried with me on the pilgrimage is Job 12:7-10, one I have written theologically on before in my chapter, 'What Can the Birds of the Land Tell Us?', in the book, *Grounded in the Body, in Time and Place, in Scripture: Papers by Australian Women Scholars in the Evangelical Tradition*:

*7 But ask the animals, and they will teach you,
or the birds in the sky, and they will tell you;
8 or speak to the earth, and it will teach you,
or let the fish in the sea inform you.
9 Which of all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?
10 In his hand is the life of every creature
and the breath of all mankind.*

Country, as I say and teach is all lands, waters, sky, trees, plants, animals, birds, fish, rocks, mountains, and all peoples. The pilgrimage had us connecting and deep listening to Country. We found places where spirituality and justice meet.

Spirituality and justice met in places and at times like on Wajemup where the cuteness of the Quokka called with the clinking of the chains and the haunting of the Aboriginal prisoners where tourists unknowingly cycle past an Aboriginal burial ground. Or on Kurna Country where the eastern rosella called me to the water springs of the tears of Tjilbruke Dreaming and brought together creation and the sadness of the Pool of Tears and the grieving mother at Colebrook Stolen Generations home. Or at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture in front of the Holy Spirit, the white owl, of the Gija people. Or sitting beside Samantha Faulkner, hearing poetry of the Torres Strait Islands filled with the terror of the effects of rising sea levels on land, language, and culture. Or the lookouts with the grasstrees and the rocks and the mountains on Gundangarra Country in the Blue Mountains. Or the fish of Sydney Harbour recalling the woman Barangaroo of the Eora Fisherwomen on Gadigal Country – Gadi Grasstree – gal peoples – Gadigal – the peoples of the grasstree. Or the critically endangered, far eastern curlew, whose wetlands are at risk of being destroyed due to a property development on Quandamooka Country.

The pilgrimage enabled the unique and important opportunity to listen, to learn, to share, and to connect with and build community. As I say, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice and Creation and Climate justice cannot be separated. Being led by First Nations peoples for creation and climate justice we hear strength, resilience and courage, a need for coming together and building relationship, but also of urgency.

As the Wellspring Community and Iona Community have led the way, may we all listen to and be led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in these lands now called Australia, seek out the places where spirituality and justice meet, and find a way together to take action in a time of climate crisis.

For more information visit:

Wellspring Community Facebook: @wellspringaustralia, Instagram @wellspringcommunity_australia and website <https://wellspring-community.com/>

Iona Facebook: @ionacommunity, Instagram @ionacommunity and website <https://iona.org.uk/>

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AF



The haunting beauty of Wadjemup/Rottne Island Nyungar/Noongar Country



The interconnectedness of all life

What does love require of us?

JENNY TURTON | VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING

We do not own the world, and its riches are not ours to dispose of at will. Show a loving consideration for all creatures and seek to maintain the beauty and variety of the world. Work to ensure that our increasing power over Nature is used responsibly, with reverence for life. Rejoice in the splendor of God's continuing creation.

Advices and Queries Number 42 (Britain Yearly Meeting)

From September 2022 to September 2023 I participated in Meeting for Learning, with the week-long retreats being held at the beautiful venue of Seven Hills Retreat Centre in South Australia. Like many other Friends I have spoken to about Meeting for Learning, I found this to be an enriching experience, which enabled me to take time out of day to day life to focus on what the Spirit is asking of me. Amongst other explorations, it presented a wonderful opportunity to explore in detail a concern which has been increasingly on my mind and heart: the connection between humans and other animals. This article has arisen out of that concern, and a desire to share it with Australian Friends.

My background

A deep and abiding passion for animals led me to a career as a veterinarian, working in Australia, southern Africa and Asia. While I started out as a large animal veterinarian (my dream was to become a James Herriot style vet), my varied interests and career choices have encompassed a variety of roles in the animal industry, in shelter medicine, small animal practice, government work, information development for farmers, research into traditional veterinary medicine, vaccine production and quality control testing, technical support in the pharmaceutical industry, disease control policy

involving transboundary diseases, the crocodile industry, sheep and goat value chains, and currently teaching veterinary nursing and animal studies in the TAFE sector.

From the very beginning of my career, I was committed to improving animal health and animal welfare. My work in developing countries stemmed from my awareness of the impact of animals on food production, improved livelihoods and poverty alleviation. This work led me to undertake post-graduate study in international development.

Over time my concern for animals has led to an increasing awareness of how we view them and relate to them, with an increasing animal rights perspective. In particular, my ongoing spiritual journey has enabled me to see that of God in all living beings, which has profound implications for how we relate to, and utilise, non-human animals.

I consciously use the term 'non-human animals' as viewing the world through a spiritual lens enables us to see the interconnectedness of all life and the fact that we are one species amongst many animal species, not the pinnacle of creation suggested in the Genesis account. This shift in my awareness has resulted in significant life changes including choosing to no longer work with farmed animals or to eat animals.

The interconnectedness of all life

If we accept the Big Bang as the origin of our universe and life on earth, a fundamental concept is that all living beings developed from the same source. If we then accept evolution as the means by which the breathtaking diversity of life (it is estimated that there are 8.7 million species of animals in the world) has developed over time, and continues to develop, then all living beings are connected at a genetic level. Humans share a staggering 98.7% of our DNA with the bonobo ape.

If we consider earth's history as a 24-hour timeline, life on earth would have appeared at 4 am, land plants at 9:52 pm, dinosaur extinction at 11:41 pm, and human history would have begun almost at the end of the 24-hour period, at 11:58:43 pm. Evolution is continuous, and we cannot envisage what future life forms will look like from our moment in time.

A long history of relationship

As long as humans have existed (it is estimated that modern *Homo sapiens* evolved around 160,000 years ago), we have been in relationship with non-human animals. Early humans lived immersed in their environment alongside non-human animals. Some of the non-human animals were a source of danger to humans. In early hunter gatherer societies humans hunted

wild animals for food. A significant societal change for humans was when they started to live in settlements and domesticate plants and animals for food and non-food purposes.

Humans have utilised non-human animals for a range of purposes: companionship, food (meat, milk and other dairy products, blood, offal), byproducts (hides, wool, fat), transportation (horses, donkeys, cattle, camels), agricultural cultivation (draught animal power), sport (horse racing, greyhound racing, hunting, dog and cock fights), entertainment (zoos, circuses), research, as service animals and in therapy. This has generally been an unequal relationship.

There is an increasing awareness of the Human-Animal Bond as beneficial for both the human (exercise, physical and mental health) and the animal. This is a move in the right direction for a more equitable and mutually beneficial relationship.

What does love require of us?

If we accept the interconnectedness of all life from a biological and spiritual perspective, I believe that this has profound consequences for how we relate to non-human animals, and the life choices we make around the role and uses of animals. I would like to explore the Quaker peace, equality and earthcare testimonies and pose the question of what love requires of us for each of these testimonies.

Peace

The peace testimony is one of the core Quaker commitments and

practices. It comes from our belief that love is at the centre of existence and that all life is of inestimable worth. If we consider the interconnectedness of life, then our peace testimony should extend to all living beings. We should not harm non-human animals or cause them to be harmed. We should not kill them, other than for compassionate reasons in euthanasia.

Equality

The equality testimony is also a core Quaker commitment, which has encompassed involvement in the abolition of slavery, acknowledging the rights of indigenous peoples, and promoting gender equality. Species equality is the concept of the unity and equality of all beings. Every living being has inherent value, independent of its usefulness to humans.

Earthcare

Earthcare has increasingly been acknowledged as a fundamental testimony with the increasing impact of human settlement on our earth and, climate change and species extinction. It replaces concepts of sustainability and stewardship. The following Advice and Query from AYM articulates the earthcare perspective on animals better than I can:

All life is interrelated. Each individual plant and animal has its own needs, and is important to others. Many Australian species, and other species worldwide, are now extinct, and countless more are endangered. Do you treat all life with respect, recognizing a particular

obligation to those animals we breed and maintain for our own use and enjoyment? In order to secure the survival of all, including ourselves, are you prepared to change your ideas about your relationship to your environment and every living thing in it?

Advices and Queries number 44 (Australian Yearly Meeting)

Quaker perspectives

Quakers have a long history of concern for animals. George Fox condemned hunting and hawking. James Backhouse chose to walk rather than use horses because of concerns for their welfare, as did John Woolman.

One of my favourite historical Quakers is John Woolman, an American Quaker who lived a life of deep integrity, and commitment to the abolition of slavery, the recognition of equality with Indigenous Americans, and a concern for animals. He stated:

To say that we love God and at the same time exercise cruelty toward the least creature is a contradiction in itself.

Quaker Concern for Animals (QCA) was founded in 1891. <https://quaker-animals.co.uk/>

What canst thou say?

How might you respond to the interconnectedness of life, in your relationship with non-human animals, your beliefs and your practices?

I would love to hear from you: jennyturton1963@gmail.com.

AF



Pat Mavromatis

Know thy Friend

Pat Mavromatis

PETER JONES | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

Pat Mavromatis comes from an illustrious Quaker ancestry as her great-great-grandfather, Henry Propsting (originally a Congregationalist from Middlesex), came out to Van Diemen's Land as a convict around 1834 – his offence was stealing two geese which had attacked him when crossing a common – and having met James Backhouse and George Washington Walker, joined the small Hobart Meeting in 1836 where he became an elder. He spread his genes far and wide with 28 children from two wives. One of his daughters, Eliza, was Pat's great grandmother. Henry ran into trouble for 'marrying out' when he married his second wife, Hannah Cater, but soon afterwards, Quakers decided to drop this prohibition once English Friends had done so in 1859.

Henry was subsequently part of the committee that organised the setting up of The Friends' School (1887) and died in 1901 on his 91st birthday. One of his sons, William Propsting, became Premier of Tasmania (1903–4), continuing the family association with the Friends' School.

Pat's mother, Nancie Hewitt, was originally a Methodist like her husband, Jack, but influenced by Bill Oats (headmaster of The Friends' School from 1945 to 1972), became a Quaker. As a little girl, Pat attended the Hobart Meeting at the original Meeting House in Murray Street before it moved to its present site in North Hobart in 1972.

Born in 1940, Pat was a boarder at the school for a while, when her mother was ill, and finished her studies there in 1956. She went on to study mothercraft then took up nursing before heading to England to take up midwifery in

Oxford and Winchester.

Pat attributes her career with children to enjoying books on children in other countries, especially the *Jungle Doctor* books by Paul White. She had met a well known Friend, Lucy Burt (who had worked in China for many years), when she visited Hobart and later took up her offer to spend two terms at Woodbrooke College in Birmingham in 1964. Returning home via the United States she met with American Friends and undertook child health training. Offering her service to the London based Friends Service Council, she took up a position as nurse at The Friends' Rural Centre in Rasulia in Central India, where she worked till 1972. Pat was the first Australian Quaker to be supported and funded by Australian Quaker Service.

The Centre near the River Narmada and the town of Hoshangabad, was based on 35 acres of land bought by English Friends in 1900. Originally it was set up to meet the needs of local people at the time of a severe famine but since then it has undergone many changes. Donald Groom – first secretary of Australia YM till his tragic death in an air crash in 1972 – was based there with his wife, Erica, from 1940 to 1956, and Marjorie Sykes spent her latter years there till her return to England in 1994. Both had worked with Mahatma Gandhi and his successor, Vinoba Bhave, and the Friends Centre was heavily influenced by Gandhian ideas.

When Pat was there, it had focused on rural development concentrating on fighting disease, poverty, malnutrition and illiteracy. She had to learn Hindi to communicate with villagers and apart from running the clinic, Pat developed

an early feeding programme for babies. She tells the story of how the authorities came to check if they were 'missionaries' but when asked for a definition of a missionary were told it was someone 'who eats five meals a day and goes to the hills during the hot season.' While conceding they were Quakers, Pat and her companion, Dorothy Rule, said they certainly were not missionaries by this definition.

On return to Hobart, Pat met another Friend and health professional, Colin Wendell-Smith, and at his invitation, set out with him to promote family planning in Tasmania for the next twelve years, despite the usual opposition from more conservative forces in the island state.

Her next change was to take up a position at the Botanical Gardens in Hobart to assist disabled people do some gardening, where she encountered another Friend and horticulturist, Sue Wells. Moving on, and after meeting Peter Mavromatis, who she met at Meeting in Hobart and where they got married in 1987, Pat returned to Aged Care as a nurse assessor for the next ten years. Her involvement with the local Meeting had continued after returning to Hobart where she took on the role of an elder and then of clerk, while also serving on the Board of Governors at The Friends' School.

Today, Pat lives at Derwent Waters on the Cadbury Estate overlooking the River Derwent and continues to attend Meeting in Hobart where she has so many friends going back a long period of time.

AF



The sense of presence

NOËL STAPLES | PETERBOROUGH MEETING, CAMBRIDGESHIRE AREA MEETING, UK



Some time ago I remember ministering about how my sense of the presence seemed that morning to delight in itself, and how I shared in that delight.

It isn't always thus – sometimes I seem to sense pain, sometimes joy or the utter, utter peace of which Thomas Kelly speaks. Sometimes the sense of presence is so overwhelming I just weep helplessly. The sense of presence is subjective, of course, but so many people down the ages record similar experiences I must give some credence to mine. This sense of presence grew imperceptibly over the years to occupy a central position in my life – not so unusual of course.

I've come to think over the years – and this sounds rather like Neale Donald Walsh's *Conversations with God** – that the spirit created the material universe in order somehow to recognise itself. Thus we and the rest of the material universe are part of that spirit, or God. That might account for the sense of delight in itself. The pain I sometimes sense might result from the gradual degradation or dispersal of energy implied by the law of entropy (second law of thermodynamics) which is a painful thought for humans at any rate!

What is worth pondering, however, is the difference between the way this *experience* influences one's life and the way *belief* does. For many, perhaps most, religious people, their lives revolve

around and are influenced by their *belief* in God, or Allah, the divine or the eternal spirit. It may be that what is meant by *belief* is really experience, but belief, or to believe, means accepting something on the authority of another source, perhaps a minister of religion or a holy book. To *experience* something is much more like *knowing* it, though I often say that one can only really be said to know something if one can tell it or explain to others. Try telling someone what 'knowing' God, or the sense of the presence is like!

With beliefs as one's guide there is almost always something written down by others, perhaps inspired by a sense of the presence of God. Once written down it is fixed, unchanged by subsequent times and circumstances.

We Quakers, who try to live our lives guided by our unwritten sense of presence experienced in silence, often in unprogrammed meetings for worship in Britain, depend on trying to share our mystical experience with each other, testing our guidance in this way as it were in 'real time'.

Our Quaker Faith & Practice is regularly revised to record more recent divine inspiration but, as the Elders of Balby reminded us about our Advices and Queries:

these things we do not lay upon you as a rule or form to walk by, but that all, with the measure of light which is pure and holy, may be guided; and so in the light walking and abiding,

these may be fulfilled in the Spirit, not from the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.

This may seem a rather uncertain and woolly way of guiding our lives, but it has worked for over three centuries and allows us to adapt and change with the realities of the world around us as we in turn change and adapt that world.

It is obvious there are problems – perhaps dangers – inherent in trying to interpret written down statements of belief that may have been inspired by God, or the spirit, in relation to days and events long gone by, so as to make them relevant to today. Certainly there is a security to be had from codified beliefs, but whether the value of such security outweighs the problems of constant reinterpretation is open to question. As I quoted in a review of the late chief Rabbi Jonathon Sacks' 2015 book *Not in God's Name*

Every text needs interpretation.

Every interpretation needs wisdom.

Every wisdom needs careful negotiation between the timeless and time. Fundamentalism reads texts as if God were as simple as we are. That is unlikely to be true.

Perhaps what Quakers have, uncertain or woolly as may be, is a precious gift which the world could do with much more.

**The Complete Conversations with God*, 2005, Hampton Roads Publishing, p27ff

AF



What is this light?

DAVID JOHNSON | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING

For it is the light which makes all things visible (Eph. 5:14 NIV)

So what is this light? It is not the normal daylight of the Sun shining upon the world. Nor is it the light of mental reasoning in our minds. It is the Inward Light which we experience in our conscience – it is that light which makes us aware of something inwardly, it is the light which shows us something we had not understood or been unwilling to face about ourselves. It is the light which reveals new understandings or aspects of the mysteries of God.

We may suddenly, in a ‘lightbulb’ moment, come to ‘know an inward truth or what it is all about’ --- that is the light showing us things we did not know before and could not have come to by rational thinking. It is as if a layer of darkness has been lifted, and a Truth has been uncovered. In 1600s language it has been discovered to us.

We can be tempted to take credit for these inward revelations and say ‘my intuition says...’, though it is more honest to admit ‘it occurs to me’ or ‘I suddenly became aware’. Even better to admit that the Light of God just revealed to me, and to let go of our ego-centred habit of claiming credit for ourselves.

This inward, sudden, mystical knowing is so different to the knowing we have from the outward learning from books or other people. That is the knowing that fruit grows from flowers, the learning of what different words mean, the knowledge that some substances dissolve in water and others do not, the knowledge of how to repair

an engine, that Shakespeare wrote Romeo and Juliet, or how to bake a loaf of bread.

The Light shows us our darkness

When we close our eyes and sink inwardly, the experience is darkness – how do we notice this darkness? It is like starlight on the night of the new moon, and yet we can notice the night is dark. In the same way, we are aware of our inward darkness, for with an inward ‘seeing’ we perceive the inner darkness. If we learn to sit silently within the darkness, and let go of our own vain imaginations and bright ideas, that is, opening the doors of our heart in receptive silence. Rather than speaking inwardly to ourselves, we are beginning to listen with our inward ears. The Quaker experience is that in such waiting worship, God will convey to us many things. God is able to do so, because we are finally listening.

George Fox saw this turning toward the Inward Light as the core of his ministry, and he emphasised from his own experience that this inward guidance and power was a gift, a grace, it was infallible and was available to everyone:

I was sent to turn people from darkness to the light, that they might receive Christ Jesus; for to as many as should receive him in his light, I saw he would give power to become the sons [children] of God; which I had obtained by receiving Christ. I was to direct people to the spirit, that gave forth the scriptures, by which they might be led into all truth, and

so up to Christ and God, as those had been who gave them forth. I was to turn them to the grace of God, and to the truth in the heart, which came by Jesus; that by this grace they might be taught, ... I saw that the grace of God, which brings salvation, had appeared to all men [people], and that the manifestation of the spirit of God was given to every man [person], to profit withal. These things I did not see, by the help of man, nor by the letter, though they are written in the letter; but I saw them in the light of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by his immediate spirit and power, as did the holy men of God by whom the holy scriptures were written. ... I was glad that I was commanded to turn people to that inward light, spirit, and grace, by which all might know their salvation and their way to God; even that divine spirit which would lead them into all truth, and which I infallibly knew would never deceive any. (George Fox, 1648, aged 24) ¹.

We may receive a sense of inner rest and peace, or emotional stability. We may receive a prompting or a leading. We may be cautioned or reproofed for something we have said or done amiss. We may receive guidance. We now have the opportunity, we have the teaching to let go of old ways and to become Children of Light, re-born in the Light, sustained by the Light, keeping our inward eye on the Light, that we may be guided and quickened and faithful. When we are tempted to eye other

ways, the Light will caution us. We feel the caution against over-indulgence and the rightness of simplicity, feel the restraint against speaking too much with frivolous or vain words, and the rightness of clear and honest language. The tendency for judgemental and critical thoughts and words, is replaced by plainly spoken and tender counsel, with a spirit of loving kindness and mercy.

With this Inward Light, when it is accepted and believed in, comes a mysterious Life and energy, a spiritual power, that enables us to do things we could not do beforehand. We become changed people.

The Light is ever present

The first place a person may become aware of the Light is in the conscience and the deep feelings of the heart.² As we practice being centred and attentive to the Light, initially we sense only a small measure, yet the awareness of the light increases, our measure increases. This was the early Quaker experience. Thomas Evans, an Orthodox Friend in Pennsylvania wrote *A Concise Account of The Religious Society of Friends* which summarises the ministry of early Quakers, and of the threefold work of the Light as the main message Fox preached: to reprove sin, to reveal duty to God as an Inner Teacher and Guide, and then to enable us to be faithful and joyous.

The message of George Fox appears to have been, mainly, to direct the people to Jesus Christ, the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls (1 Peter 2:25), who died for them, and had sent his Spirit or light into their hearts, to instruct and guide them in the things pertaining to life and salvation. To the light or Holy Spirit of Christ Jesus, in the conscience, he and his fellow-labourers in the gospel endeavoured to turn the attention of all, as that by which sin was

manifested and reproved, duty unfolded, and ability given to run with alacrity and joy in the way of God's commandments. The preaching of this doctrine was glad tidings of great joy to many longing souls, who eagerly embraced it, as that for which they had been seeking; and, as they walked in this Divine Light, they experienced a growth in grace and in Christian knowledge, and gradually came to be established as pillars in the house of God. (Thomas Evans, 1870).³

We commonly, at first, feel the work of the Light as an inward reproof or of being chastened in our conscience. We may feel uncomfortable and want to shy away, yet what Truth is telling us inwardly is making us aware of something which needs to be rectified in the sight of God. If we welcome that truth about our inner reality, the Light will then start to show us the next steps and begin to heal us. Fox's advice was to love the Light. That is just the start, and the Light has much work to do to bring us into a deeper communion with God.

The second work of the same Light is to show us what God is asking of us, or requiring of us. In this Light we become aware of Truth instructing and guiding us into a new path. We have been shown what was in error and are now being invited into ways of doing well. George Fox emphasised this second step because he knew it was important people did not get stuck in rejecting any inward admonitions of the first step. This method is clearly enunciated in Fox's Journal:

I directed them to the divine light of Christ and his spirit in their hearts, which would let them see all the evil thoughts, words, and actions, that they had thought, spoken, and acted; by which light they might see their sin, and also their saviour Christ Jesus to save them from their sins.

This I told them was their first step to peace, even [specifically] to stand still in the light that showed them their sins and transgressions; ... and by the same light they might see Christ ..., and their way to God. (George Fox, 1652)⁴

Then, thirdly, the Light will enable us to do what is asked or required, that is we are given the Life and power to do what is righteous, forgiving, kind, charitable, wise counsel. As we do what is asked we find a sense of inner peace, calm and happiness, that we are of single mind, rather than the divided and troubled heart of previous times. We have been opened a little so that the work of God can proceed through us without being blocked by our self-centredness – whether that be excessive reliance on our own knowledge and what we think is right, or by our fears or by baser inclinations.

It is not we who do it. It is the love of God working through us. It is the love of God for us that we are changed that it may happen, and the love of God for others that they receive the help and care and counsel they need.

1. George Fox 1648. *Journal of George Fox*, 1831 Ed., p. 90; Nickalls 1975 Ed., p.34-35.

2. David Johnson, 2023. *The Fundamental Principle of Quaker Spirituality: Light in the Conscience*. Pendle Hill Pamphlet 483. Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill Publications, 2023.

3. Thomas Evans, 1870. *A Concise Account of The Religious Society Of Friends, Commonly Called Quakers; Embracing a Sketch of Their Christian Doctrines And Practices*. Reprinted by Authority of The Meeting for Sufferings. Philadelphia: Friends' Book Store, 1870, p. 10-11.

4. George Fox, 1652. *Journal of George Fox*. 1831 Ed., p. 148; Nickalls 1975 Ed., p. 117.



QSA Notes

Highlights from the 2023 Annual Report

CRESSIDA HALL | QSA EXECUTIVE MANAGER

I have now been in the position of Executive Manager for around four months. My first few months were a blur of learning, meeting people and trying to understand the essence and culture of QSA. In these months, I've realised what an extraordinary organisation QSA is. I've found an organisation that performs well above its resources, has committed and skilled staff, an engaged Management Committee, and a loyal band of supporters in the Quaker community. As many of you know, QSA is a fully accredited organisation that receives support from the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP). Indeed, I believe that we are the smallest organisation with this accreditation, a testament to the hard work and vision of former Executive Administrator Jackie Perkins and her team. ANCP accreditation means some of QSA's international projects are delivered in partnership with the Australian Government through the ANCP. The 2022-2023 financial year saw us receive a 17% increase in funding from the ANCP due largely to the new government's expanded commitment to international aid and development. These welcome additional funds have enabled QSA to increase support for our partners and significantly expand our reach and impact. In 2022-2023, the number of people

directly participating in international projects funded through QSA was 11,352, an increase of 250% from the previous year. The cohort seeing the largest growth is children and young people. During this year, 6,484 children and young people benefited from our programs, up from 847 the previous year. These young people are being engaged in projects around peacebuilding, environmental education, sustainable agriculture, food security, and education and empowerment on child rights. Our project partners have been working hard to inspire, engage and inform the next generations. However, there is more to do. One area where we saw a decline in participation was for people living with disabilities. Here we saw a drop in participation from approximately 1.5% to 0.45%. This statistical drop is due to the increase in participant numbers, but is still of concern. Increasing the involvement of people living with disabilities is something we will continue to work on with our partners as appropriate. In our last annual reporting period COVID-19 was still very much affecting how we and our partners worked. While the direct health impacts of COVID-19 have now decreased in most international locations, our project partners continue to work with communities for whom the economic impact is still very apparent. Lacking formal support

structures, many families need help to recover from income loss caused by the pandemic. We expect that the pandemic will continue to inform our work and projects over the next few years.

Annual Report Highlights

Following are some highlights from the recently published QSA Annual Report, October 2022-September 2023. A copy of the Report, including a full set of financial accounts, is available for download from the QSA website at www.qsa.org.au/about-us/annual-report

Our Reach

QSA worked with partners to support twelve development activities in Uganda, India, the Philippines, Cambodia, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan and two refugee and asylum projects in Australia. Together, our achievements included:

- Over 290 smallholder farmers and their rural households in Uganda have enough food (3+ meals) to eat every day following two years of hard work improving their land management practices with climate-resilient agriculture.
- 17 Afghan peace activists were supported to resettle in Portugal, learning practical permaculture skills and receiving language, eco-social, cultural, legal, financial, personal, and professional training to promote a successful integration.



Making traditional hand fans in Tamil Nadu, India

- A new business unit (the Enterprise Project) established in Pursat Cambodia will implement systems and practices that can be used in the broader handicrafts organisation to achieve self-sufficiency.

- More than 50 women in Tamil Nadu (India) improved family health and income through entrepreneurship training and learning about collecting and processing indigenous herbs for traditional medicines.

Project Statistics

- Project expenditure by country - With five projects, Cambodia was the largest region for QSA project

spending, accounting for one-quarter of QSA's total funds. Uganda and India were the next largest countries. Most funds are allocated directly to international projects and activities, with a small proportion channelled through Australian-based organisations to overseas locations.

- Project expenditure by activity (Strategic Development Goals): The largest share of QSA's project expenditure went to activities designed to achieve Zero Hunger (33%), No Poverty (20%), Gender Equity (15%) and Climate Change (15%).

- Project participants by gender, age, and disability – 57%

of participants in QSA projects were women and girls, and 52% were under 18. People living with a disability made up less than 1% of the total project.

For more information about QSA's work, and profiles of the individual projects, download the QSA Annual Report 2023 from the website, along with a full set of financial accounts.

If you have any questions or queries, please contact us at administration@qsa.org.au

If you would like to support us and our projects, you can donate at <https://www.qsa.org.au/donate>

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.

Follow QSA on Facebook to see more photos and stories [facebook.com/quakerserviceaustralia](https://www.facebook.com/quakerserviceaustralia)

and to download a PDF version of this edition or to view previous issues of QSA Notes

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ACFID
MEMBER



Yearly Meeting 2024

Saturday 6th to Saturday 13th July

JO JORDAN | SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND NORTHERN TERRITORY REGIONAL MEETING

MARCH UPDATE

A unique opportunity

The organisers are delighted to hear that many Friends are planning to come to Adelaide in person in July, the first face-to-face Yearly Meeting for five years. In addition, this Yearly Meeting will also be accessible to Friends online, the first hybrid Yearly Meeting in Australia. We don't know when the next face-to-face gathering will take place. We encourage all Friends to register for YM24 as soon as possible, whether you are coming in person or online, for this unique opportunity.

Can you help?

We need extra helpers to volunteer for one or two hours to be on the Help Desk, to help with morning and afternoon tea, and to assist with online or on ground I.T. We need some volunteers to be with the children up to 11 yrs of age when their carers take lunch and tea breaks. Why not share a story, an activity or a game and get to know some of our youngest Friends? There is still time to apply for the required SA Working With Children check at: <https://www.dcsiscreening.sa.gov.au/SCRequestApplicationIndividual>

Travel to and from YM24

We know Friends will be making their own arrangements to travel to Adelaide. Please consider travelling by train, bus or car rather than flying as ground travel has much less impact on the environment. You can read on the QA website the Yearly Meeting Travel Guidelines, which were adopted in September 2023: <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/speciesandclimate/guidelines-travel-australia-yearly-meeting>

Accommodation before and after YM24

Our stay at the venue for YM24 is from 1pm Friday 6th July until Saturday 13th July at 10am. Please note that if you need accommodation before or after those dates Friends are asked to make your own arrangements. Bookings can be made for a shack at The Retreat, or for alternative accommodation close by at the Big 4 Caravan Park, through this website: <http://westbeachparks.com.au/> Please be aware that the price of booking a shack at The Retreat before and after YM24 may be higher than it is during Yearly Meeting.

Excursions

We are keen to hear from Friends about excursions they would like, within about 20km from Adelaide, for Wednesday afternoon 10th July. Some already suggested are: Wittunga Botanic Garden at Eden Hills, the Quaker Burial ground at West Terrace Cemetery in the parklands of Adelaide, The Quaker Shop at Kensington, Friends' Meeting House at North Adelaide and the mangroves at St Kilda.

But what about...?

For questions about YM24 in Adelaide please contact any of these Friends from the SA Yearly Meeting organisers: Topsy Evans topsy104@icloud.com

Jo Jordan josephinaj@icloud.com, Betsy Holden betsymrh@hotmail.com

Harald Ehmann wildworks@bigpond.com

For questions about online participation and hybrid tech at YM24, please contact Vidya and Clint de Young, Co-Convenors of the Yearly Meeting Organising Committee: cymorganising@quakersaustralia.info





The Palestine Laboratory: How Israel exports the technology of occupation around the world

BY ANTONY LOEWENSTEIN

Published by Scribe. Melbourne & London. 2023. P. 265. \$35.00 ISBN 9781 1 922310 40 8 [Australian Edition]

Antony Loewenstein is an Australian Jew who is disturbed by how far Israel has fallen from its aspiration to be 'a light unto the nations.' The book was published before the current war in Gaza. The book's main argument is that Palestine has become a laboratory for methods of control and separation of populations. Loewenstein claims that Israel has 'exported' the occupation, and he explains why it is such an attractive model for states trying to control resentful people. One of the first regimes with which Israel colluded was the apartheid state in South Africa. Its similarity to Israel was compelling. They were both located in a predominately hostile world inhabited by dark people. South Africa was an object lesson in how to treat unwanted populations, with its Bantustans in which its black residents lived without autonomy in non-contiguous areas.

Another country with which Israel has developed close relations is Narendra Modi's India. Modi wants to turn India into an ethno-nationalist State: Hindustan. Making it difficult

for him are long established Muslim populations - 200 million in India and a majority in India-controlled Kashmir, where India has been accused of a multitude of human rights violations. Israeli-made Herons, information gathering drones, fly over Kashmir, just as they fly over Palestine occupied lands.

India has been Israel's largest arms export market. Between 2015 and 2020, India accounted for 43% of Israel's arms exports, and in 2020 India was Israel's largest purchaser of weaponry.

As well as arms, India has been an enthusiastic buyer of Israeli surveillance technology, especially equipment for hacking into mobile phones. Dozens of Indian journalists and activists have been targeted. Police in the state of Pune have hacked into human rights activists' phones and computers to plant incriminating evidence which they then arrested them for.

In 2021, Israeli arms sales amounted to US \$11.3 billion. In 1981, US aid to Israel was equivalent to roughly 10% of Israel's economy, but by 2020, at close to 4 billion annually, it was down to around to 1%. Obviously, Israel has less need of US aid. It is worth noting that Israel's arms production does not lack sophistication. It produces most of its own missile defence technology, and it sells equipment to counter airborne drones.

Israel's arms deals with disreputable regimes go back some time. It sold weapons to the Pinochet regime in Chile, a government notorious for

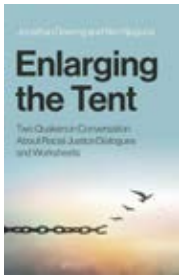
murder and torture, and that when the US supported an arms embargo. An astute commentator remarked that Israel offers an entire political model for asymmetric warfare, a conflict between a state and irregular combatants, which is the idea behind the title of the book.

Loewenstein excels in bringing to light the astonishing variety of shady deals Israel made in foreign lands. One of the strangest was in Syria in which Israel and Russia teamed up in defence of the Assad regime. Russia supplied the bombers and Israel the guidance systems, often drones. Russia fired more than 39,000 airstrikes in the first three years of its operations in Syria, targeting both Islamic State and 'rebels' opposed to Assad. Around 23,000 Syrian civilians were killed by Russian actions between 2015 and 2019.

Humanitarian targets like hospitals and civilian ferries were attacked. There is a legal point. The drones did not directly kill anyone, hence they were not legally weapons. But Israel seems to have been a partner in crime. Many Israeli arms and surveillance sellers doubtless thought of themselves as pragmatists, but the book shows that pragmatism can degenerate into immorality. Loewenstein concludes that as a human being and a Jew, 'I knew that equality and justice between Israelis and Palestinians is the only way to resolve this conflict.'

REG NAULTY

Canberra and Region Quakers



Enlarging the Tent: Two Quakers in Conversation About Racial Justice

BY JONATHAN DOERING AND NIM NJUGUNA

Published by Christian Alternative Books,
Winchester, UK, 2023-3

This book uses the metaphor of 'enlarging the tent' to describe what the two Quaker authors feel is essential for freeing the life-blood of Quaker communities into channels that can help to heal the world.

Both authors were residents of the UK. Nim Njuguna (NN) is of Kenyan heritage and is a retired Baptist minister and former Quaker prison chaplain. He writes on inclusion, spirituality and diversity in a wide range of Quaker and other periodicals. His 1995 PhD was on 'Racism, Black Marginality, the Labour Party and the Church of England in the 1980s'. Jonathan Doering (JD) has been a Quaker for 20 years and has worked in sixth form and further education. His MA thesis on Quaker poetry was recently published in *Quaker Studies*. He has served in a variety of Quaker capacities, including Elder, representative to Meeting for Sufferings, and Local Meeting Assistant and Co-Clerk.

Their book *Enlarging the Tent* was triggered by the horrific murder of George Floyd and the global outcry for social justice led largely by the Black Lives Matter movement. So at its core the book addresses the problem of global racism and seeks ways in which

our responses can be more than mere sympathy or intellectual commitment to change. The book is demanding that Quakers lift their game, that they be more actively inclusive, that they open their hearts more actively and step past their comfort zones. The book is a strong call to action that could transform Quakerism world-wide and that could enable Quakers to be a continuing force for transforming the world.

The book is an edited transcript of an ongoing dialogue in which NN and JD have agreed that the process itself could (and does!) become a mirror for what they are trying to achieve: a gradual opening and deepening to their 'otherness'.

The dialogue format is both a strength and a weakness of this book. Its strength is that it is like listening in to an ever-deepening conversation between two friends troubled by the global situation. Its weakness is that it takes several re-readings to begin to weave together the many random strands of their conversation and get a clearer sense of the underlying structure of their thought. But then this is clearly also part of the intention, that we become part of this ongoing free-flowing conversation and begin weaving our own stratagems in the context of our own worlds (Meetings). For example: NN... how do we translate 'that of God in everyone' in a socially manifest way? JD: I thought the same thing... would you like to kick off this time?

Their book is grounded on a deep appreciation of several key writings that become the guiding principles of their enquiry. First there is the Quaker

'Advices and Queries 7' which at its heart has the injunction 'Are you open to new light, from whatever source it may come?' Their book asks us to take this question very deeply, into our experience, into our feelings and beyond our merely intellectual assent.

The book then quotes from Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: 'To affirm that men and women are persons and as persons should be free, and yet to do nothing tangible to make this affirmation a reality, is a farce.' This quote cuts to the heart of how NN and JD are trying to find ways of navigating their audience beyond the disabling comforts of a tent that provides a place of security and identity. The Brazilian Paulo Freire, one of the most influential philosophers of education in the 20th Century, had as his goal to 'eradicate illiteracy among people from previously colonized countries and continents. His insights were rooted in the social and political realities of the children and grandchildren of former slaves.' (IEP)¹ His life work was committed to ameliorating the living conditions of oppressed people. Through the context of Freire's powerful vision, JD and NN perceive that 'when the oppressed are freed, that frees the oppressors as well. The oppressors are just as oppressed as those they oppress, just in a different way... Maybe that's something that will feed into anything that we write, that in contributing in a small way to someone else's freedom you're actually freeing yourself as well.' (51)² This is one of many examples where the authors try to open our understanding to the real experiential benefits of pushing

beyond our comfort zones, embracing the other as a way of expanding our own conditioned limits. Later in the book the authors return to this in their examination of that core South African concept of Ubuntu as described by Nelson Mandela 'My search for a self takes the form of a quest: I go out to the other in order to come back **with** a self.' (89)

During the course of their conversation, many texts are inspected and radically interpreted. Amongst these are African American poet and writer Jean Toomer, one of the founding members of the Harlem Renaissance and follower both of the Russian contemplative mystic George I. Gurdjieff and George Fox. Jean Toomer's core insight into how we should live from the inside, not the outside, in his article 'Keep the Inward Watch' drives the central energy of *Enlarging the Tent*. Quaker theologian Douglas Steere's paraphrase of Toomer's idea is quoted by JD 'Why is it so difficult for us to go in and become able to live from the inside outwards as whole men... the way is blocked?' (70). And this idea is affirmed by the quote from Audre Lorde (African American poet, feminist, lesbian, teacher and civil rights activist): 'The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable to bring about genuine change.' This is in her book of essays *Sister Outside*. Here Lorde affirms that it is only through deeply acknowledging and allowing the value of difference in the world to speak that fundamental change will arise.

As well as such challenging points of wisdom, the book is full of practical suggestions on how we can expand our

understanding of the issues at the heart of the authors' focus and, more especially how we can take this understanding to transform our own consciousness from being passive, enlightened observers into socially active agents of real change in the world.

This is the core of the book's purpose and outcome which manifests at the end in a series of interactive Worksheets designed to stimulate insights and creative action. The Worksheets provide a plethora of materials that range from prompting readers to telling their own story about Race, through to some wonderful case studies of key African American Quakers. These are presented as a powerful challenge to the tenor of many dominantly White Quaker meetings, globally. Among the writers presented are poet Helen Morgan Brooks (1904-1989), described as inviting 'us into a world of ugliness and beauty, cruelty and grace, pain and love, not a false, enamel world where pain has been removed, but a real world in which God moves among the suffering.' (141). Then there is Barrington Dunbar (1901-1978), born in British Guyana and later educated in New York, who wrote his first article in *Friends Journal* 'Black Power's Challenge to Quaker Power'. Here he identified and celebrated 'the holistic integration between the spiritual power of Quaker worship and the genuine commitment of practical action in the world' (132). He goes on to describe how much of that power appears to have been lost in contemporary Quaker communities:

This close connection between work and worship – between the gathered community of the Meeting and the wider community – seems to be a missing ingredient in the

practice of the Quaker Meeting today, which often tends to serve the purpose of a social club where people meet to pursue their common interests in isolation from the rest of the community... Because our hearts are not stirred or our minds made sensitive to the injustices of the communities in which we live, we accommodate ourselves to a whole system of personal and group relations... a system that has served to reinforce the assumption of White superiority. This way of life denies that there is that of God in every [woman and] man, the vital message of Quakerism that provides the basis for the 'blessed community' in which everyone can achieve freedom from want and fear and can realize his full potential as a human being. (132-133).

Overall the book is a wonderful, lively, dynamic interplay of two very lively human beings who have at their heart a profound wish to bring healing to a world in which human relations have often become incredibly broken. While Nim and Jonathan speak of what can be described as **right thinking** concerning our unconscious prejudices, the healing they hope for must come from **right action**, and the nature of these actions are dependent upon individual circumstances and leadings. This book is highly recommended.

1. IEP= Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy.

2. Numbers in brackets are direct references to the page numbers in *Enlarging the Tent*.

MICHAEL AND ROSE GRIFFITH

New South Wales Regional Meeting

Palestinians. When one group of people so blatantly bears the brunt of the civilian casualties, when their children, young people and those my age know only the brutality of life under military occupation and as second-class citizens in their own land, how does being neutral sit with our practice of solidarity with nonviolent responses to oppression throughout history? Do we not see Palestinians as being of equal value and worth to us? How does remaining neutral take away the occasion of war? (Which I take to mean addressing the underlying causes of war and working towards a positive peace and a just peace). Would peace be long lasting and meaningful if not accompanied by justice?

So, my request is for Friends to read these words with a spirit of openness. If you are not convinced by the stories I have shared of what I witnessed, I recommend reading the updates from UNOCHA, listening to UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese's press club speech and accounts from ex-Israeli Defense Force soldiers about the atrocities they committed. Or consider reading about

the situation from the perspective of Israeli human rights groups such as B'tselem and Women in Black who have been documenting and speaking out about the injustices of the occupation for decades. I ask that each of us then looks inward for what love calls us to do. Is it to remain neutral in the face of injustice? Or to speak truth to power?

Aletia Dundas, February 2024

Resources

-UNOCHA Statistics and updates United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs - occupied Palestinian territory | Home Page (ochaopt.org)

-UNRWA UNRWA | United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

-Francesca Albanese Press Club speech. Australia and other western governments 'paralysed' in response to Gaza conflict, says UN expert | Israel-Hamas war | The Guardian

-Machsom Watch: this is an Israeli group, mostly made up of grandmothers who monitor human rights violations at the checkpoints around the West Bank. <https://www.machsomwatch.org/en/>

www.machsomwatch.org/en/

-Jewish Voice for Peace <https://www.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/> - they're active in Australia and elsewhere speaking out against the occupation

-Breaking the Silence - ex Israeli Defence Force soldiers speaking out about the atrocities they committed while serving in the West Bank <https://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/> A post they made on Instagram Hamas's attack and the events unfolding since yesterday are unspeakable. We could talk about their cruel and criminal actions, or focus on... | Instagram

-B'tselem - an Israeli human rights group <https://www.btselem.org/>

-Women in Black are an Israeli (and now Palestinian as well) group who have been holding a silent vigil every Friday since the late 1980s with signs that say 'End the Occupation'. There are other women's peace groups in Israel as well <https://theconversation.com/how-women-in-israel-and-palestine-are-pushing-for-peace-together-215783>

AF

PILGRIMAGE – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

by train when we could, but most of our travel was flying between WA, SA, NT and Victoria.

I contacted fellow Quaker Clare O'Leary in WA, from the First Nations Peoples Concerns committee and was thankful for her support and contacts with the Madjtil Moorna choir to which she belongs. I enjoyed the hospitality of Friends in Boorloo and Clare helped me prepare for a visit to Wadjemup (Rottnest Island) where we began the Pilgrimage with Whadjuk Nyungar/Noongar Elder Uncle Neville Collard who introduced us to the painful stories of Wadjemup. The next day we sang and danced on Nyungar/Noongar Country in Mooro Katta (Kings Park) led by Della Rae Morrison and the Madjtil Moorna Choir and shared a delicious morning tea catered by a local First

Nations company. Brooke has listed many of the Aboriginal peoples who were our teachers over the five weeks in her article, so I won't repeat them here.

In Tarntanya/Adelaide, I stayed with Jo Jordan and attended the Eastern Suburbs Quaker Meeting before an afternoon at the Colebrook Reconciliation Site. In Naarm/Melbourne, I attended the Melbourne Quaker Centre the morning after the Referendum. In Central Coast NSW Friends from our Worshipping group joined the time on Country with Tim Selwyn from Girri Girra and lunch at Kariong Eco Garden where we meet for worship twice a month. In Meanjin (Brisbane) we gathered at the beautiful Brisbane Meeting House and met Aunty Jean Phillips, a Senior Aboriginal Christian Leader with over

70 years of ministry who shared about her Ministry and work for Aboriginal Justice. She spoke of her gratitude to Brisbane Quakers for their support. It was my first time there and I loved the forest!

It was important to engage ethically with all the First Nations peoples who agreed to take part in our Pilgrimage as sharers of stories, music, Welcoming us to Country, sharing smoking ceremonies, worship services, connecting with Country and culture, and taking part in forums. My role involved logistics and administration and offering a peace-making project to bring people together.

The peace-making project became a banner that I created with eight trees

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE 23



Hill of Vision

(A Ballad of George Fox at 400)

Tune: Slane*

It was to the hill of vision
That a young man was called
And upon it he sounded
The day of the Lord
And there he had a vision
Of a people near and far
Who were there to be gathered
And now here we are.

He had spoken with the professors
And spoken with priests
But they all spoke of war
And not justice nor peace
So he turned to the inward teacher
Who been there since the start
The divine Light of Jesus
In all people's hearts.

Well the judges didn't like it
They threw him in jail
But the word kept on spreading
All over the world:
Be patterns, be examples
wherever you may come
Answering that of God
That is in everyone.

It was to the hill of vision
That a young man was called
And upon it he sounded
The day of the Lord
And there he had a vision
Of a people near and far
Who were there to be gathered
And now here we are

**The tune Slane, named after a hill, is variously used for the folk songs With My Love on the Road, By the Banks of the Bann and The Hielan's o' Scotland, and with Christian words as Be thou my vision and Lord of all Hopefulness*

**Thanks to Tim Gee of FWCC
for supplying this ballad.**

PILGRIMAGE – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

in a circle with their roots intertwined in the centre. People we met along the Pilgrimage were invited to write on cloth leaves 'how' they care for creation/Country and to write in the pilgrimage journal 'why' they care for creation/Country. These leaves were stitched onto the trees, and I wrote the 'why' words into the roots and trunks of the trees. A visual reminder of the relationships built along the pilgrimage, the connections to Country, and the calls and actions to care for creation. I will bring the Tree/Forest banner to Australian Yearly meeting in Tarntanya/ Adelaide in July and look forward to sharing more stories and photos with you then.

The feedback from local woman, Celia Kemp, Mparntwe/Alice Springs

Pilgrimage Co-ordinator is revealing: 'just wanted to say that the time here was... very rich and good. It felt like many golden threads coming together and that something that mattered happened. It was a wildly diverse group and a wildly diverse range of input and so it crossed many of the fault lines of our time but, it held together and it was live, it was catalytic and very meaningful in so many ways. And it was a gift to here (this place) and the community here.'

This article contains excerpts from our Report to the Thanksgiving fund. Find out more here:

Wellspring Community Yarning Circle:
<https://wellspring-community.com/new-blog>

ABC Soul Search recorded an interview with Ruth while she was in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/soul-search/iona-community-thin-places-strong-communities/102953468>

Ruth's Postcards from the Pilgrimage and the 2024 Iona Community Lecture we recorded during the Pilgrimage can be seen here: <https://iona.org.uk/iona-learn/>

Polkinghorne Oration 2023 – Rev James Bhagwan, General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches, presented 'Oceans of Justice & Rivers of Fairness - A Pacific Voice in the Wilderness' when we were in Tarntanya/Adelaide and we were so glad to be there: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rThFwS7UbB4>

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The Australian Friend

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- 1 May for the June edition
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