

The Australian Friend

ISSUE 0919 SEPTEMBER 2019 ISSN 1326-0936

The Australian Friend is a web journal published on line at: AustralianFriend.org. This printable version does not include the full range of content available at AustralianFriend.org

Visit AustralianFriend.org to:

- Comment and read comments about articles in this issue
- Browse or search back issues from 2011.

Australia Yearly Meeting 2019



Editorial

At our Yearly Meeting held in Hobart in July, our main concern was climate heating and the associated species extinctions. Yearly Meeting issued a statement outlining the scale of the problem, things we can do personally to alleviate the problem, and the need to maintain our spiritual resources for the task. The statement is to be found on our website <https://www.quakersaustralia.info/Earthcare>.

This concern dovetailed with the Backhouse Lecture in which Jason McLeod looked at ways of assisting and learning from indigenous people, based on his association with the indigenous people of West Papua. We include a review of the lecture by David Purnell.

Another important issue was the challenge to find the best ways of incorporating our children and younger Friends into the life of Yearly Meeting. We resolved to find ways to assist Brisbane to cater for all ages despite their limited resources of Friend-power and time.

The Australian Friend committee is delighted to welcome Peter Jones who has taken on the role of producing the Know Thy Friend section. Not knowing that he would hit the ground running, we had already sourced an article for this edition. As a result we are pleased to offer articles about two Friends this time, highlighting how Friends come to us by different paths and bring with them different gifts.

We thank all the Friends who have shared their spiritual reflections and lives of service with us. We hope that many of you are planning to share with us in the next edition which will come out in December.

THE AUSTRALIAN FRIEND EDITORIAL TEAM

Contents

FEATURES

- 4** We are Earth
- 6** Review: Backhouse Lecture 2019
- 7** Know Thy Friend: Maddy Walker
- 8** Know Thy Friend: John Beattie
- 10** Notes from QUNO NY
- 12** The Word of God?
- 14** QSA Notes
- 18** Spirit-led writing

REGULARS

- 13** Noted
- 17** Book Review:
On Eating Meat
By Matthew Evans
Review by David Swain



Cover photo: Australia Yearly Meeting 2019

We are Earth:

What is Earth hearing and feeling?

KENISE NEILL | SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND NORTHERN TERRITORY REGIONAL MEETING



Kenise Neill has been attending the Quaker Meeting for worship at Leabrook in South Australia since June 2018. Kenise is a Sister of St Joseph and has worked in child protection for many years, mostly with Aboriginal children, families and communities.

In quiet moments since my first Yearly Meeting (2019) I hear the words, ‘We are Earth. What is Earth hearing and feeling?’

On the Sunday following our meeting the reading was the story of the Good Samaritan. (Luke 10: 25-37) Jesus told us of two men who, living purely by the law, walked past a seriously injured man and left him to die. Then a Samaritan, a social and religious outcast, was moved by compassion and tended the man. His merciful and tender response can move us from the cycle of separation to inclusion. There is no ‘they’— we are one.

A highlight of our time together was Jason McLeod’s 2019 Backhouse Lecture, *Animating Freedom: Accompanying Indigenous struggles for self-determination*. He presented a prophetic treatise on the way forward for Indigenous people and, more broadly, an invitation for all of us as we heal from our own colonial experience. How do we stop the cycle of transgenerational trauma and heal ourselves and others?

Over generations many peoples have been violated and subjugated and ultimately removed from their land when a dominant group took control. This has happened for Aboriginal people in Australia since 1788.

Many non-Indigenous peoples are descendants of cultural groups whose countries of origins were invaded and their inhabitants were dispossessed of land and basic human rights.

When Jason spoke about animating freedom in the context of historical and continuing colonisation he said, *the colonial project is alive and well —around and within us—even when we are clueless of its presence... empire is war in a concentrated and permanent form. Dismantling empire should be our core business.... In a country such as Australia, deep in denial about the frontier wars and the ongoing effects of colonialism, a shared commitment to animate freedom could be balm of our collective soul.*¹

I am wondering how I/we move from the place of privilege and power, dismantle patriarchy and change hierarchical structures that no longer serve us or our world. How do I/we elevate all from subjugation to freedom? Sadly, across the world, opportunity, choice and outcomes are increasingly linked to skin colour, postcodes and/or the country in which people reside.

Jason invited a community movement from *colonisation* that contains *tradition, invasion, warfare, poverty and welfare* to *decolonisation*

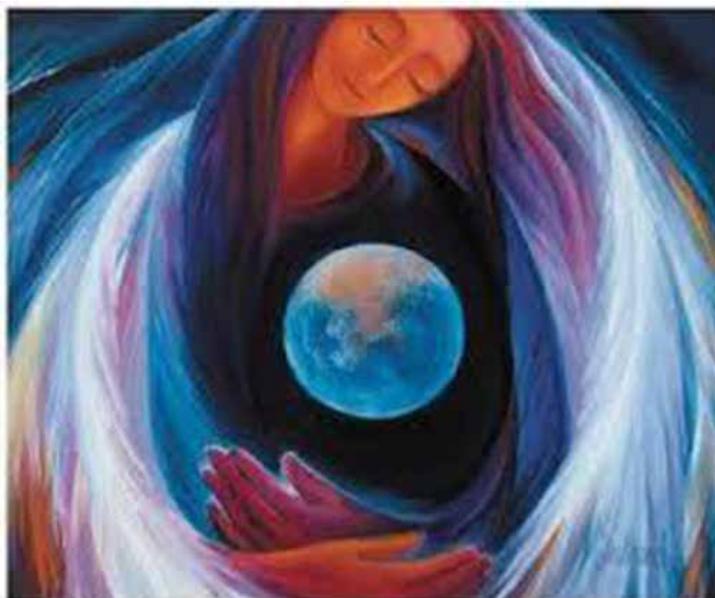
that will bring into being *a new society, culture and organisation.*²

Jason’s powerful depiction of a ‘healing’ cosmology gives us a clear direction for the way forward.

*From non-renewable energy to renewable energy; from hierarchical, unequal and competitive social relations and a society based on private ownership to a non-hierarchical, equal and cooperative social relationship, to a society that enables high levels of participation and is based primarily on common ownership and stewardship; from an underlying philosophy based on separateness and competition and a view of nature that sees human beings as selfish and aggressive, to a philosophy that is based on equality, cooperation, interconnectedness, sanctity of life, diverse ways of knowing and a view of human nature that recolonises variability and finally; from resolving conflict with strategies that are violent and focused on elite interests, to strategies that are non-violent, based on human needs and that protect life systems.*³

We cultivate an expanding heart that will sensitise us and others to the tragedy of separateness, violence, greed and pain. We focus on a heart-consciousness where we rejoice in

Right: 'The Treasure's Within'
© Mary Southard CSJ



Below: 'Children Are Asking'
© Mary Southard CSJ

Images displayed with permission.



the unity of life, and suffer over the violation of the gentle, tender and merciful? We will co-create the 'good life' for all. Together we hold in love the Indigenous people from West Papua. We know that we hold and are the 'sacred heart' within Earth.

I am grateful for the time in Hobart where I experienced a different way of being in conversation together. It was a profound experience of listening, adjustment and a deep respect for each voice and especially the heartfelt concerns from 'the edge'. One powerful example of unity and consensus was the

community discernment on children and young people being included in Yearly Meeting. I was deeply moved by the powerful witness to love and communion in this interaction.

A Jesuit, Teilhard de Chardin spoke about a planetary movement of people undergoing a radical change towards deeper respect and love. There is much evidence of an ancient spirit rising as we continue to work together to let go of our separation from nature and reconnect to close relationships with Earth and all Creation. What are we hearing and feeling? We are Earth!

Today, something is happening to the whole structure of human consciousness.

A fresh kind of life is starting. Driven by the forces of love, the fragments of the world are seeking each other, so that the world may come into being. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

1 Jason McLeod, *Animating freedom: Accompanying Indigenous struggles for self-determination* pp 55,57,58.

2 McLeod, *Animating Freedom*, p. 10.

3 McLeod, *Animating Freedom*, p. 29

AF



Jason Macleod

Review Backhouse Lecture 2019

Animating Freedom: Accompanying Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination, by Jason Macleod

DAVID PURNELL | CANBERRA REGIONAL MEETING

This Lecture represents the results of a decade of reflection, practice, reading, conversations and walking. Since Jason's first visit to West Papua in 1991, his life has been changed. Jason has felt called by the Spirit to build relationships and accompany West Papuans in their struggle, in order to strengthen the power of nonviolence. Australian Friends have supported Jason, initially through a Donald Groom Fellowship and later by personal contributions. The Lecture charts his path in creating a map on his journey of self-discovery. It draws on five elements – earth, air, fire, water and spirit – and uses personal stories from his experience to prompt reflection by the reader.

Papuan ways of knowing have survived colonisation, and resistance to the impact of outside intervention remains strong – mostly nonviolent but occasionally by guerilla fighting. Regrettably many NGOs, aid agencies and religious organisations collaborate with the Indonesian government and large corporations to direct support away from real development and resistance. Self-determination is sacrificed to charity. There is another way towards a new society, and Jason sees his role as waiting for invitations to accompany, listening, absorbing anger, learning where to place his energies, not taking sides and being accountable to those involved in the struggle. He has worked mainly with *Pasifika*.

Part of Jason's journey has been to

trace his own roots in Scotland, and to lament the loss of his own Celtic people's language and culture. At the same time, it has given him motivation and insight to draw from the past in his current work. He reminds us that we all have intergenerational stories that affect our ways of living, especially in relation to our response to Australian Aboriginal dispossession. His religious faith has been nurtured by West Papuans, to share with others the task of transforming the world for all of us.

To animate freedom, you need a dream. In West Papua the word *merdeka* (freedom) expresses this. The dominant force in world history has been 'empire'; what is needed is a cosmology that involves participation, equality and nonviolence. *Pasifika* is a model of this way – using stories, myths, images, voices to articulate their vision. Jason operates as an unpaid activist, a professional with clear boundaries, and a friend. Decentralised networks seem to suit best for a movement that exists in an atmosphere of repression. A positive development at the political level has been the acceptance of the United Liberation Movement of West Papua (ULMWP) as a member of the Melanesian Spearhead Group of countries.

Turning his attention to Quakers, Jason questions whether maintaining the 'lofty principles and testimonies' in the absence of hard-headed strategies will ever help those (such as West Papuans) who need solidarity in the

face of violent exploitation. There are four dimensions of nonviolent action – strategy, ethics, dialogue and prefigurative politics. The West Papua campaign benefits from all four, and young people have played a major role in unifying the movement, engaging in civil disobedience, building mass support and lobbying political leaders. Jason identifies the importance of different approaches at different times – sometimes highlighting the 'goodies' and 'baddies', sometimes suffering, and sometimes healing and reconciling. The goal is to achieve particular objectives, build movement power, and change the political weather.

The Lecture ends with an affirmation that there is a universal spirit of love that animates Jason's walk towards freedom and unity. We are then faced with a series of questions in the form of *Advices & Queries* – to help us listen to the 'still small voice', to avoid being co-opted by the 'shadow' side of wider society, and to use our Quaker traditions and tools to contribute to a just and sustainable peace. This is a book to digest and use to re-inspire us when we are in danger of losing energy for peacemaking.

Animating Freedom: Accompanying Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination, by Jason MacLeod can be purchased as a paperback or an e-book from Quaker Publications at <http://www.ipoz.biz/quaker-publications/>

AF



Know Thy Friend: Maddy Walker

PETER JONES | TASMANIA REGIONAL MEETING

Maddy Walker is Tasmanian, although she was born in Canberra when her parents were working there. Like many other Friends, denominationally she came from elsewhere, in this case, a strong Catholic upbringing, but always rebellious as a child, she asked too many questions and continues to do so.

Today, the mother of three girls, she is teaching Comparative Religion to Years 10-12 students at The Friends' School in Hobart where she is also a co-clerk of Tasmania Regional Meeting.

Her parents had defied the order of the day by getting married when her father was a devout Catholic, while her mother was an Anglican. Her dad came from one of those traditions where there was always a priest in the family so not surprisingly she got sent to a Catholic primary school.

Her parents came back to Hobart when she was six and dutifully she took her first Holy Communion then got confirmed. At her Catholic girls' school, she got into trouble for asking too many questions when the teacher's response was always a reference to a Biblical text which is not a useful starting point for a thoughtful teenager who wants to know why.

Not surprisingly, she left the Catholic Church at 14 but Religion remained a topic for table talk at home, fairly unusual in this day and age.

Fortunately her parents knew Peter Underwood, then Chairman of the Board of Governors at The Friends' School and later Governor of Tasmania

before his untimely death. He suggested that Maddy switch to Friends where she arrived in Year 10, still alienated from the education system but in her own words, 'Always a Questioner'.

Once again, serendipity played a part in her life, as she had three inspiring teachers in her final year at school and opted to do Religion as a Humanities subject, attracted by the inclusion of Buddhism and Hinduism in the syllabus.

Her father suggested that Arts/Law would provide a suitable starting course for her at the University of Tasmania but having decided on her own priorities, she switched to Psychology and Philosophy. Her thesis was on how Religion was being taught in southern Tasmania, though she admits she never finished it.

Her interests then directed her to pursue her commitment to yoga and meditation so, having graduated, she headed off for three months to Osho's (formerly The Bhagwan) community in Pune in India, though the guru himself had died some years earlier.

A relationship blossomed into a partnership with Ben Walker and two babies were born in rapid succession, while Maddy as the main breadwinner in her household, took up various teaching posts around Hobart. When a temporary Religion teacher was needed at Friends' School, she took up the position and this rekindled her interest in Quakerism and she started to attend Meeting for Worship.

Despite her alienation from her

Catholic upbringing, she liked the feeling of belonging to a religious community and decided to become a Member. Maddy moved on to another teaching post at a private girls' school after her year at Friends', then took up the challenge of teaching 'Kids at Risk' before moving back to Year 11-12 college classes in the state system – and having another baby.

At this point, John Green as principal at The Friends' School, was looking for another Quaker coordinator and offered Maddy the job. This involved working with teachers across K-12 levels, organising Gatherings for year groups once a week (too complicated to explain here but it does involve a time of silence and reflection) and explaining Quakerism to the wider school community.

While working at another college, she had been involved with international students, where she admits she felt bad about her lack of qualifications when it came to listening to their problems but was impressed by the counselling skills the college offered.

Ever practical, Maddy then took on a Masters Degree in Counselling, on top of her work at a state college and then Friends' as well as being the mother of three growing girls.

After five years as Quaker coordinator, she returned to full-time teaching at Friends' that included teaching Studies in Religion, the course she had taken herself as a teenager.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16



Know Thy Friend: John Beattie

JOHN BEATTIE | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING

I'm a 77-year-old retiree. I've been married to Lorna for 52 years. We have three children and four grandchildren. I've been a member of QRM for 16 years.

I was born in Northern Ireland during the dark days of the Second World War; the only child of a rural schoolmaster. The teacher's residence in which I spent my childhood was surrounded by a patchwork of green fields whose hedgerows sheltered numerous birds' nests. A new generation of lambs would appear each spring to gambol on their lush pasture. From my bedroom window at the rear of the house, I had a 'picture postcard' view of a river valley with snow-clad peaks rising behind it.

Of course, like everyone in the district we didn't have electricity, running water or a sewage system. We were fortunate, though, to have access to a reliable well from which we could pump water as necessary. Without electricity, there was, of course, no television or other electrical appliances.

Despite the often inclement weather, I spent a lot of time outdoors. I enjoyed fishing in the nearby lake, looking for birds' nests in the hedgerows and taking my dog into the fields to chase rabbits. In the evening, I would read by the light of a kerosene lamp or listen to our battery radio. Sometimes my mother would play the piano and sing.

Few people had cars in those austere post-war days, and we were no exception. So, I walked to school and church, rain, hail or shine. There was a rural bus service which we occasionally used to go to town.

Such excursions were, however, infrequent as consumer goods were rationed and, like other families, we had little money available for discretionary spending.

Like most people in the local community, we attended our local Presbyterian Church without fail every Sunday. I arrived around 10 am for Sunday School, where we did a lot of rote learning.

For a start off, there was the Catechism which contained at least one hundred items. We also learned to recite portions of scripture, known as 'Golden Texts'. Even today, I find myself quoting some of these 'Golden Texts' written in the evocative language of the King James Bible.

After Sunday School, my parents arrived for Morning Service. We all squeezed into our own wooden pew, which for some reason had a little door which remained closed during the service.

Like many rural Presbyterian churches in those days, ours lacked any kind religious icon or adornment. The Morning Service was an extended worship experience. Every so often, the

Minister would lead us in prayer. He also delivered the children's address, followed by bible readings from the old and new testaments. We sang a variety of hymns, paraphrases and metric psalms.

As there was no instrumental accompaniment, our vocal performance was at times cringeworthy. Then came the announcements followed by the sermon.

The Minister knew that there would be complaints if the sermon was brief so he would often 'pad out' his performance by monotonously reciting poetry. By this time, many of the children would have become extremely bored and fidgety. My parents would often bribe me to keep quiet by discretely giving me peppermints or toffees.

I soon learned how to manage this to maximise the number of sweets I received. Too much fidgeting, however, risked subsequent punishment.

Looking back on these childhood years, I realise how simple and predictable our lifestyle was. Yet I don't recall ever feeling deprived, dissatisfied or bored. Indeed I often wish I could re-create the contentment that I enjoyed during those uncomplicated days.

The Presbyterian worship of those days now seems overly puritanical. However, the Ten Commandments provided people with a moral compass,

and the church community gave its members a sense of connectedness and hope for the future.

Starting my secondary education at Friends School in Lisburn proved to be a significant turning point in my life. In this new environment, I met pupils from diverse backgrounds. Some, like me, were unsophisticated country kids: others from urban backgrounds were much more worldly-wise.

To my surprise, some came from wealthy families. I was an unmotivated and at times, a disruptive student. I excelled neither in the classroom or on the sporting field.

Despite my lack of enthusiasm in class, some of my teachers encouraged me and found me extra-curricular activities which engaged me and boosted my flagging self-esteem. At the end of my final year at Friends School, I qualified for admission to the University in Belfast.

Relatively few of the pupils and a minority of the teachers at Friends School were actually Quakers. The headmaster, who was a Quaker, was a quiet, thoughtful man who was widely respected by the pupils. It was said that, earlier, in his career, he had taught in an English 'Approved School' for young offenders. This, no doubt, influenced his decision to enrol some students with special needs due to physical disability or behavioural problems.

Connecting with these 'different' kids made a lasting impression on me.

During our religious education classes, we learned about major world religions. There was no attempt to prescribe any particular beliefs and certainly no attempt to convert us to 'Quakerism'.

This was the first time in my life that I had been allowed to actually think about religion.

Going to University was the next major turning point in my life: but not in the way that I expected.

During my first term, I was overcome by severe symptoms of anxiety and depression. For a time, it looked as if this would mean the end of my chance for a University education. Fortunately, my parents were very supportive, ensuring that I received first-class professional treatment. The University authorities agreed that I could recommence my first-year studies. Eventually, I finished my degree and a postgraduate diploma in Applied Social Studies and started a career in Social Work.

I spent several years working at the front line of the civil disturbances in Northern Ireland. Then, I took my wife and young children to start a new life in Brisbane and established a career with the Queensland Government. We eventually built a comfortable family home on a rural acreage with enough room for poultry and goats. This was a

welcome opportunity to enjoy some of the simplicity that I had experienced as a child.

As I was to learn, mental health problems have a way of returning when you least expect it. Now with a happy home life, a professional career and a comfortable acreage lifestyle, I was ambushed by depression. To make matters worse, as a result of foolish attempts to self-medicate, I had become dependent on alcohol.

At times I would feel that life had lost any sense of meaning or purpose, and I was pessimistic about the future. Fortunately, my professional training had taught me how to place boundaries around my personal life so that it would not compromise my professional activities.

Again I sought professional help and, after a few weeks' sick-leave, I was able to continue working and support my family. I began to attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings to obtain support in my struggle with alcohol.

There was to be no quick resolution to these problems. Each period of improvement was followed by a disappointing relapse.

The AA program emphasises that one of the prerequisites for recovery is a willingness to believe in a Higher Power – a God of one's own

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

Notes from QUNO NY

ALETIA DUNDAS | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING



The Annual face-to-face meeting of the New York Quaker United Nations Office Committee (QUNC) began on 28th March 2019 at the beautiful Quaker House in New York, a 4-story city dwelling with a delightful courtyard out the back.

Representatives from the four Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) regional sections, representatives from American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), and staff gathered in fellowship and were graced with dappled spring sunlight gently streaming through the window.

The Quaker United Nations Office in New York (QUNO-NY) together with the Geneva office represents the concerns of Friends about global peace and justice to the international community.

The Friends' World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) is granted 'consultative status' with the Economic and Social Council of the UN and this

allows QUNO in Geneva and New York to attend UN conferences and meetings, and engage with diplomats, other civil society actors and UN bodies on concerns related to peacebuilding, the prevention of violent conflict, human rights, disarmament and sustainability through quiet diplomacy, research and creating space for dialogue. QUNO-NY focuses mainly on the areas of peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict.

We heard from the Director, Andrew Thomlinson, about the challenges and opportunities of the current United Nations landscape.

The USA's increasing resistance to the United Nations poses a challenge while the Secretary-General's new peacebuilding framework and the upcoming 75th Anniversary of the United Nations both provide opportunities to reflect on the role of the UN and Quakers in working towards a more peaceful world.

A breakfast with the Program Assistants (PAs) gave committee

members an opportunity to show appreciation for the work of PAs, and a chance for the PAs to network with committee members from around the world.

On the second evening, a bus took us all down to Pendle Hill in the quiet Pennsylvania suburb of Wallingford, where we woke to the first blossoms and birdsong of spring and were served home cooked, healthy meals. During our time at Pendle Hill we heard from the Director of QUNO Geneva, the AFSC fundraising team, and from the committee leading the QUNO-NY strategic planning process.

Strategic Planning for QUNO New York was a significant focus area in this meeting. We heard about the process of developing the strategic plan for the next few years, which would be conducted in the style of a clearness committee.

During a session where all those present shared words that came up when they thought of QUNO, we realised that words and phrases like



The committee at Pendle Hill (minus Aletia, who took the photo).

power to influence, quiet diplomacy, enduring presence, advocacy for people/human rights and trusted partner came up for quite a few of us.

We heard from Joyce from AFSC about the financial challenges facing the organisation, and how these have had a follow-on effect on QUNO.

QUNO and AFSC share a number of values and visions, and climate change is a particular area that both see as a priority.

We also heard from the different FWCC sections, and learned of the concerns in the Africa section for conflicts in the region, concerns in the Section of the Americas about the treatment of immigrants, and a growing

concern about troubling government developments in Europe in the Europe and Middle East Section.

The World Office has been concerned with global sustainability and climate change and addressing privilege and historical injustice.

We heard reports from the program teams.

The peacebuilding program has worked hard to ensure civil society involvement in UN peacebuilding activities, particularly ensuring civil society engagement at the High Level Event on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace.

The prevention activities have seen the third China-Swiss seminar take

place in Beijing looking at the role of China in mediation, peacebuilding and multilateralism.

The third area of work – holding the space – has seen QUNO support the peacebuilding capacities of a diverse group of diplomats from around the world.

Throughout our weekend together, I was inspired yet again about the work Quakers do in the pursuit of peace in the multilateral space, and the way they go about it – quiet diplomacy, patient persistence and always in a spirit of discernment and reflection.

AF



The Word of God?

RAE LITTING | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING

In church services, it is common for the minister, after reading from the Bible, to say 'This is the word of the Lord.' Australian Quakers don't do this, for good reason. Many passages of the Bible look too much like the words of men.

The problem is not that the ancient writers did not have modern scientific knowledge. Some passages have meaning for us even if they are scientifically inaccurate. The problem is that some passages are morally reprehensible.

For an example one cannot go past Exodus 21, verse 20:

If a slave owner takes a stick and beats his slave, and the slave dies on the spot, the owner is to be punished. But if the slave does not die for a day or two, the master is not to be punished. The loss of his property is punishment enough.

So if we cannot be guided by simply plucking a verse from the Bible, how do we receive communication from the Spirit?

The Bible itself suggests a number of ways of understanding God's Word. In the creation story, God says, 'Let there be light' and there was light. Here the word of God is not speech (who could God be speaking to?) but action. We know something of God from the world we live in. The Psalmist says (Psalm 19 verses 1-4):

*How clearly the sky reveals God's glory!
How plainly it shows what he has done!
Each day announces it to the following day;
Each night repeats it to the next.*

No speech or words are used, no sound is heard

Yet their message goes out to all the world.

In St John's Gospel (Chapter 1, verse 1) Jesus is depicted as the Word of God. *In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

What this means to me is that by looking at Jesus we can see something of God. The Quakers say that there is that of God in everyone, and we write testimonies to That of God in the life of departed Friends. But in the presence of Jesus his followers had an unusually strong sense of the Divine.

Sometimes the Word of God does come in the form of words. Often, the prophets claim to speak for God. They begin by saying 'The Lord says.....'

My thoughts,' says the Lord, 'are not like yours, and my ways are different from yours. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways and thought above yours. (Isaiah 55 verses 8-9).

Some of these statements are great poetry and seem divinely inspired. But I think we must not confuse divine inspiration with the Word of God.

Any statement which springs from an earnest search for the truth may be divinely inspired, but that is not to say it is without error. Any statement which inspires compassion may be divinely inspired, but it probably tells us more about human potential than the vast mystery which we call God.

And there are times when the Biblical prophets give commands from the Lord which one finds frankly

repulsive. Here is Samuel passing on a message from God (1 Samuel 15 verses 1-3)

Now listen to what the Lord Almighty says. He is going to punish the people of Amalek because their ancestors opposed the Israelites when they were coming from Egypt. Go and attack the Amalekites and completely destroy everything they have. Don't leave a thing: kill all the men, women, children and babies; the cattle, sheep, camels and donkeys.

The incident for which the Amalekites were to be punished occurred many hundreds of years before – if it was not entirely mythical. Does this passage tell us anything about the will of God, or does it tell us that Samuel was a nasty piece of work? (I blame it on his parents who gave him away to the priest Eli as soon as he was weaned, and thereafter only came to see him once a year to give him 'a little robe'.)

All this may seem long ago and far away, but the problem of distinguishing divine messages from the effluvia of our own brains is still a problem today. This is particularly so for Quakers, who depend heavily on direct revelation.

We wait in silence to hear what God requires of us, and if we receive a message which is not just for us but for the meeting we are asked to rise and minister to the meeting.

It is obvious that not many of us have the confidence to do this, especially if we are warned that when in doubt we should remain silent.

(When in doubt I ask three questions: Is it true? Is it kind? Is it helpful? If the answers are 'yes' I don't

think one's ministry can do any harm.)

Let me diverge at this point to say something about language.

All human languages spring from human experience and need. They are not the language of God, although all faiths have a tendency to assume that the language in which their scriptures are written is God's native tongue.

We have no idea how the mind of God works, but it cannot be anything like the operation of the human mind.

If I might speculate wildly into the realm of complete ignorance, I imagine the mind of God working inversely to the mind of man. Human languages begin with naming the concrete – the ox and the orange, and work upwards to the abstract – the right angled triangle and the Rule of Law.

The creator who made the universe from nothing must have started with the abstract – the rules of mathematics and physics – and worked downwards to the peanut and the porcupine. But to return to things we know something about.

The *Advices and Queries* tell us to 'Pray that your ministry may arise from

deep experience, and trust that words will be given to you.'

The importance of personal experience is central to Quakerism, though I think it is a mistake to equate experience with emotion.

When John Woolman rose to speak about the evils of slavery he was not just saying that he felt bad about it. He had also thought deeply about it, and found it to have no justification.

The question I want to ask here is: will words be given to us?

There is scriptural precedent for this belief. In Matthew 10 verse 18-20 Jesus tells his disciples:

For my sake you will be brought to trial before rulers and kings, to tell the Good News to them and to the Gentiles. When they bring you to trial, do not worry about what you are going to say or how you will say it; when the time comes you will be given what you will say. For the words you will speak will not be yours; they will come from the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

I know that some people say they have been given words in difficult

situations. I also know that words which come from deep experience can be powerful even if halting.

Personally, I find that the Spirit gives ideas, not words. I have to find my own words to express the idea in a way that suits the audience.

People like John Woolman who have a deep concern which they think about all the time will probably have words at the ready.

The early evangelists who spread the gospel would also have had words at their disposal. But at a time when many of us are struggling to adapt traditional concepts to modern world views, I think a fair bit of head work may be called for.

We should not shrink from this.

Of course words are not everything. Jesus, in order to preach, spent much time alone with God in silence. We need to do the same.

But where would we be if Jesus had come down from the mountain and said nothing?

AF

Noted

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

A Quaker's Understanding of Earthcare is the title of an essay by Gerard Guiton in which he looks at the beliefs and practices in the Christian and Quaker tradition which support the right caring for our planet. The essay concludes that:

When the planet and its perennially captivating grandeur and enchanting energy is the actively shared concern of the Presence

and humanity, we will know it is functioning properly with no one person, group or community subduing and dominating its bio-systems. Such a happy interdependence will indeed eventuate if this blue miracle we inhabit, this single country called Earth, crammed as it is with Heaven and on loan to each generation, continually enjoys our dedication to its welfare. The Way, our Home and

inspiration, whose constellation and texture is silence, is, along with its peace, justice and compassion, the key to this commitment in which we answer the call of Infinity where Heaven and Earth are one.

If you would like a copy, contact Gerald through his website at: <http://www.gerardguiton.com>.

AF



QSA Notes

Spirituality, and visiting QSA projects

JACKIE PERKINS | QSA ADMINISTRATOR



Larger puja display on the land at Nadukuppam, Tamil Nadu. Photo PBRC

The project partner organisations with whom QSA works and supports are not Quakers, making Quakers unlike our colleagues from the Church Agencies Network who only work with those of their faith-based communities overseas. QSA does not try to convince its partners to become Quakers. Occasionally however, QSA works with a partner organisation which has a Quaker in its midst, such as Joss Brooks at Pitchandikulam Bio Resource Centre in Tamil Nadu in southern India, Stephen Hussey in Dabane Trust Water Workshops in Zimbabwe, and Margaret Bywater who lives in Phnom Penh, Cambodia and provides support to our projects when possible. Visits to these projects means a chance to have a Meeting for Worship in some wonderful and unusual settings, a chance perhaps to appreciate nature from a new perspective.

Visits to other partner organisations also provide opportunities to join in spiritual events with other faiths, gaining a new outlook on part of the lives of others. In Cambodia, it may

mean saying a silent, personal prayer in a Buddhist temple or wat, lighting incense sticks and appreciating the architecture. Wall paintings and statues need something of an explanation to be fully appreciated, and partner staff are always willing to explain. A visit to a monk in the wat may also mean something else – a glimpse into the future. What would be an auspicious day to start a long journey, or start building a house? What does the future hold for me? This is not fortune telling in a commercial or base way, but an extension of their spirituality.

India is an interesting mix of different faiths, beliefs, gods and approaches to spirituality. Travelling around the country, it is possible to see examples of ashrams, Buddhist, Islamic, Sikh, Hindu and Christian sacred architecture – all very different in style, use and noise levels, from a Quaker meeting house. For people going about their daily lives, spiritual expressions of their faith are very usual. This may take the form of wearing a 'bindi' or red powder applied to the brow with

a finger, a mark to remind people to access their inner wisdom. It was once used to denote a married person, usually a married woman, but now bindis are applied by everyone, using a powder made from red turmeric, sandalwood paste, ash and clay and perhaps some ground saffron and other flowers.

In many Hindu households, a daily method of worship is called a 'puja' and this is also performed at the start of significant events, such as a long journey, starting a new building or job, and on certain religious days during the month or the year. It may be performed as an offering to the family deities, to seek divine intervention, to overcome a problem, or as a celebration. It may even take the form of a simple flat bowl containing a little water and an arrangement of flowers, placed near the entrance to a building – a beautiful, welcoming sight.

A more elaborate puja would include offerings of water, food, incense, special prayers and mantras. People are invited to attend and participate, and I have taken part in a number of them for



Cambodia's most well known wat – Angkor Wat. Photo QSA



Floral puja outside the eco-dorm building at Pitchandikulam Bio Resource Centre, in Tamil Nadu. Photo QSA

various reasons – to pray for divine assistance during a difficult time, to celebrate a success, laying special bricks in a corner of a new site for a building (in particular, the construction of a toilet block at Nadukuppam School, and a new community centre). These ceremonies are seen as part of everyday life; spiritual consideration is given to everything.

One other feature, more commonly but not exclusively seen in Tamil Nadu,

are kolams. These are decorations on the pavement and doorways of buildings, and made from rice powder which has been artificially coloured. The design may be a more traditional mandala pattern, may include gods and goddess' figures, or be more abstract. They begin with a grid of equidistant dots and then the fine power is used to fill in the design or left empty to build up the design. The idea is to welcome guests and to bring prosperity, happiness and

other divine blessings to the building. The process itself is quite meditative, but more simple than the Tibetan mandalas which are made in a similar way over several painstaking days. These Tamil kolams take a few hours to create, and during the day they are washed away by rain or removed by the wind and foot traffic, only to be repeated the next day. In some areas, the creation of kolams becomes a competition, judged by the community.

As you can see from the photos, flowers play a key role in the ceremonies and displays, with certain ones paired with special deities. Everything is done with great reverence and care, and anyone is able to participate and bring their own spiritual beliefs into the ceremony. Within the Tamil culture there is also a keen interest to know what others believe. Some of the conversations around spirituality I have had with project partners highlight so many similarities in belief. There may be a difference in their expression, but fundamentally we can all agree, which is very encouraging and unifies us despite our physical and cultural boundaries.



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



Maddy isn't sure where her life will take her next, given that all her children will have left school by the time she reaches a half century, though travel always remains an attraction – as it does for so many Friends.

She feels that she has found a spiritual home but continues to ask

questions. Teaching Comparative Religion offers the opportunity to examine other faiths, and one highlight of the Studies in Religion course at Friends' School is an annual trip to Melbourne to meet with members of the Islamic and Jewish communities there, including two of their schools.

Her husband, a practical man who works with wood, wants to go sailing overseas in an old boat so if anyone can offer them one in a few years time, you know who to contact.

AF

understanding. Some years previously I had finally abandoned any kind of religious practice or spiritual belief and was content to label myself as an atheist. Thus, I was sceptical of this notion of a Higher Power. However, I had met several AA members who asserted that their recovery was being assisted by this mysterious Higher Power. Perhaps there could be something in it.

Some years later, a colleague asked me to assist her with running a training program. I was surprised to discover that the Brisbane Quaker Meeting House in Kelvin Grove had been booked as the venue. It seemed unusual that this place of worship would be available for rental for clearly secular purposes.

At the end of the workshop, I happened to meet the Caretaker of the Meeting House.

It transpired that he was both a fellow Irishman and a qualified Social Worker. We had a lot to talk about as we walked around the rainforest gardens adjoining the Meeting House. As I departed, I remarked that I might turn up at a Quaker Meeting sometime.

In fact, I attended a Meeting for Worship the next Sunday and soon I had become a regular attender. I found that participation in Quaker gatherings brought me a new sense of serenity and would prove to be a critical point in my recovery from depression and alcohol dependency. I would begin to find some meaning in life, optimism and hope for the future.

While most of the Friends that I met seemed to accept the existence of a God/Higher Power, they recognised it as something to be experienced rather than described.

Although acknowledging the society's Christian roots, there was little pressure to wrestle with complexities and inherent contradictions of the Bible.

Having witnessed sectarian hatred, discrimination and violence in Northern Ireland, the Quaker focus on peace and justice strongly resonated with me. I was comfortable with the idea of faith in action.

From time to time, during my Social Work career, I had met people whose

vision, self-sacrifice and courage had inspired me. I would often remark that these were people who had 'restored my faith in humanity'.

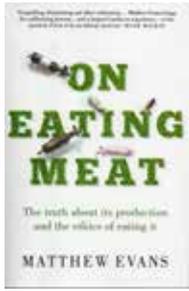
Perhaps what I had perceived had been the inner light that is within all of us.

I remember discussing the possibility of joining Quakers with one of the members who assured me that sainthood was not a prerequisite! So, I applied and was accepted as a member of QRM.

Over the years, I have attempted to serve the meeting in various capacities. This has been an enlightening experience for me. I discovered that the Quaker approach to business and administration is radically different from practices and procedures of the hierarchical workplaces and organisations with which I have been involved.

I am getting used to the idea that the journey may often be just as important as the destination.

AF



On Eating Meat

BY MATTHEW EVANS

Published by Murdoch Books, Sydney and London, 2019

I was impressed with the enthusiasm with which Yearly Meeting 2019 tackled Earthcare and climate change. I was, however, somewhat perturbed with the haste with which the Meeting supported the suggestion that future Quaker gatherings be fed only vegetarian or vegan fare. I thought this decision should have received further research and spiritual discernment.

It was somewhat to my relief, therefore, that my attention was drawn to *On Eating Meat* by Matthew Evans. Evans, a trained chef, then a food writer and restaurant critic, now a farmer in southern Tasmania, has written the book as a guide for the 'Ethical Omnivore'. He treads a well-balanced path between the vegetarian/vegan camp and industrial agriculture. He writes 'I don't see meat as a commodity. I see it as a privilege.'

Evans describes the feedlots, piggeries, and poultry farms (160 000 birds slaughtered a day). He was far from impressed with either the animal welfare standards or the end product. And these were the ones he was allowed to see; we can assume that the others were worse. He argues that animals selected and reared for quick growth and slaughter at a young age produce tender but tasteless meat. Good meat comes from animals which grow slowly and have maximum freedom of movement. From animals that live enjoyable lives, up until the last day – or the last second

if it can be managed that way. He is no callous meat eater. He devotes one entire emotional chapter to his feelings when he has one of his steers killed on the farm.

But, Evans argues, the death of an animal slaughtered for meat, even in a less than ideal abattoir, is probably less unpleasant than deaths of animals in nature. In 'natural' settings animals prey on others, perhaps the greatest predators being feral cats. And yet, he points out, it is 'animal welfare' groups, often led by vegetarians and vegans, who resist measures to control feral animals.

Vegans believe that no animals are harmed in the production of their food, but Evans points out this is far from true. Crops grown in the field are enticing to many animals, and many kangaroos, wallabies and rabbits need to be shot, trapped or poisoned to protect even the innocent lentil. Many hundreds of thousands of mice need to be poisoned to protect cereal crops in plague years, and this is all before we look at slugs, snails and aphids killed to protect vegetable crops. Evans argues that vegetarians who eat dairy products and eggs should also eat veal and chicken to make use of the male calves and chickens that are killed at birth or soon after.

There is a belief among vegetarians and vegans that by avoiding eating meat they are protecting the environment. Evans questions this. Growing mono-specific crops – cereals, lentils, soybeans – involves cultivating the land using fossil fuels, damaging soil structure and reducing soil carbon. Soil fertiliser

is then restored by using nitrogen fertilisers manufactured from fossil fuels, or by applying animal manures. In fact farming is difficult without animals. We depend on the ability of ruminants to digest crop residues and to make use of vegetation growing in areas not suitable for cropping. Yes, ruminants produce methane, a highly potent but relatively short lived greenhouse gas, but Evans argues that we may have to accept this as a by-product of their ability to digest fibre.

Evans's main concern is animal welfare, and he suggests the possibility of a joint action by vegans and meat eaters in this cause. While vegans tend to protest raucously in the streets, ethical omnivores can make their beliefs felt even more strongly at the checkout by refusing to buy animal products produced without at least minimal animal welfare practices.

'What we need is less discussion of arbitrary person choices,' writes Evans, 'and more talk about animal welfare, about lives won and lost, about a definition of suffering.'

'The way forward is filled with light, not dark, with love not hate. It involves compromises and the recognition that your own personal moral compass isn't the only one in the world.'

Surely a Quaker concept.

DAVID SWAIN

New South Wales Regional Meeting



Spirit-led writing – time to reflect

HENRY ESBENSCHADE | WESTERN AUSTRALIA REGIONAL MEETING

My life – so much has passed, but more ahead. The thought of taking ‘time off’ for Meeting for Learning in September 2018 was readily decided upon – how nourishing and peaceful it was to spend a week in the Benedictine monastery at New Norcia! Insights from the Retreat Resource Book 2018-19 and daily sharing freed my heart and spirit for contemplation and reflection. Since retiring in late 2017 from years of landcare and native title work, my days have become increasingly filled with pursuing what had previously been only ‘after hours’ efforts – carobs and Quakers.

How heartfelt the callings are within me to be here now – not distracted by efforts in carob industry development and Quaker life & service! Living my life with integrity and simplicity, being ever calm, healthy, loving and spirit-led are the way forward. Help with my evolving grasp of all this is almost daily practice in accord with ‘the father of mindfulness’ Thich Nhat Hanh’s inspiring 2015 book *How to Walk* (Penguin Random House, UK).

The Meeting for Learning (MfL) program affords the opportunity for Friends to conceptualise a project during the first residential week, carry on with it during the year to hopefully then complete and share during the final second residential week. My project naturally grew from decades of experience with carob production and processing, contrasting with little knowledge about its main market competitor, chocolate – a long-standing

centre-piece product of Quaker family businesses. The focus for this project thus narrowed to the quest for understandings about what might be learned from those English Friends in the 18th and 19th centuries that may be relevant centuries later for this Australian Quaker.

Readings began with findings in our WA Regional Meeting House library – at the outset, a biography of Barrow Cadbury and the *Chocolate Wars* by a Cadbury family member. Also, writings were later obtained from Quaker scholars in England as a result of fortuitous suggestions from a member of my MfL support group. Meetings gave guidance, in the traditional form of Advices, to Friends operating businesses from the 1600s onwards in banking, chocolate, iron, shoes, pharmacy and a range of other industries. An example:

It is earnestly desired that all friends every where be very careful to avoid all inordinate pursuit after the things of the world, by such way and means as depend too much on the uncertain probabilities of hazardous enterprises; but rather labour to content themselves with such a plain way and manner of living, as is most agreeable to the self-denying principle of truth which we profess, and which is most conducive to that tranquillity of mind that is requisite to a religious conduct through this troublesome world.

Source: 1724 Printed Epistles Yearly Meeting of Friends held in London. In

Extracts from the Minutes and Advices of the Yearly Meeting of Friends held in London From Its First Institution (Printed by James Phillips 1783).

A description of how Meetings were involved:

Quaker meetings then were often galvanised to monitor and help Friends to ensure Quaker principles were upheld. In other words, in a largely unregulated environment of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Quaker businesses were self-regulated like no other, with oversight and intervention at the local, regional and national level of the Quaker system of governance. The demands on Quaker businesses were enormous... expected to open their ledgers, show their receipts, reveal their bills and correspondence to satisfy their co-religionists.

Source: Burton, N & Hope, A. ‘What can we learn from the Quakers?’ In Ross, David R. and Snarr Michael T. (eds) 2018, *Quakers, Politics and Economics (Quakers and the Disciplines, Volume 5)*, Friends Association for Higher Education, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA.

I have so much more to learn about this history, as well as its evolution over the years and relevance to present trends in values-led business practices. That an opportunity for opening those doors be advantaged, I quietly await. Through spirit-led writing and discourses with my MfL support group I realise that a leading way well be in the formative



Carob harvest



Carob trees

stages of guiding my living the Quaker Testimonies and growing the carob industry.

But now, what is it that leads to my quest for seeking a way forward based on my experience, linked with learnings from Quaker history, so that carob is more widely consumed and consequently new orchards are planted worldwide? Certainly much of the practical basis originates from years in my family's orchards, Peace Corps work in Sierra Leone that awakened my interest to lessen soil erosion by integrating multipurpose tree crops into farming systems, then co-founding the International Tree Crops Institute and later a PhD in agroforestry.

Ever since the late 70s I have focused on making farmers, governments, scientists and the public aware of the benefits of carob for its drought tolerance and its potential role as a healthy food. Carob has natural sugars, is theobromine free, lowers cholesterol, and, as it is slow to digest, manages obesity – the perfect answer to reduce risks of type 2 diabetes. Anti-carcinogenic properties have also been discovered. In the last decade alone scientists in over 50 academic articles have identified the extent to which the biochemical properties of carob are unique in the plant kingdom

with potential for control of health problems. For further details, see a journal paper which I co-authored with Syed Nasar-Abbas et al. (2015)

Carob Kibble: a Bioactive-Rich Food Ingredient in *Comprehensive Review in Food Science and Food Safety*, 15(1), 63-72 <https://doi.org/doi:10.1111/1541-4337.12177>

The Early days Quaker manufacturers in England virtuously promoted their chocolate products as a healthy alternative to alcohol, apparently unaware of how some consumers could experience health effects from processing raw cacao seeds due to the caffeine-like alkaloid theobromine (discovered in 1841), and also from adding sugar and milk to counter their natural bitterness and roughness. Chocolate became popular and consumption continues to grow with global Easter chocolate production increasing by 23 per cent since 2017 (<https://www.mintel.com/press-centre/food-and-drink/a-feast-of-innovation-global-easter-chocolate-launches-up-23-on-2017>). Excessive chocolate eating leading to weight gain may well be a precursor to obesity, an increasingly serious global problem. Enough is now known about health problems from sugar to lessen public consumption sooner rather than

later – not yet the case for excesses in chocolate eating (whether the dark types with higher concentrations of cacao, or the more processed types). A June 2019 study in *Clinical Nutrition* found ‘There is weak evidence to suggest that chocolate consumption may be associated with favourable health outcomes.’ (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29903472>).

While learnings continue from my carob industry involvement and recent entrepreneurial research into carob food product innovation, within me is a growing awareness of the need for their integration with Quaker principles and practices. Hence, for this project's quest, I am now discerning pathways to understand my concern for that integration – to allow for heart, mind & soul reflection about how best to draw on my inner spiritual resources to follow what may well be a ‘leading’. I truly believe I am called to this – it may be helpful one fine day to test whether this concern is spirit-led through the Quaker clearness process. Indeed, ethical oversight may be warranted, as was given hundreds of years ago by British Quaker Meetings.

AF

The Australian Friend

The Australian Friend is published online at AustralianFriend.org four times a year, in March, June, September and December.

Contributions

Contributions (articles, poems and other items) are welcome as an email attachment to CAustFriend@Quakersaustralia.info. Please ensure that images are sent as separate attachments, and not embedded in word files. We prefer images in jpg format, and a resolution of at least 300 dpi.

Contribution deadlines

Contributions should arrive no later than one month before the publication date:

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

Subscriptions

The Australian Friend is available free of charge online at AustralianFriend.org. *The Australian Friend* is also available by post at no charge to members of Australian Yearly Meeting.

Libraries, other organisations and individuals not associated with Quakers can subscribe to receive *The Australian Friend* by post by contacting: CAustFriend@Quakersaustralia.info. The cost is \$40.00 per year for addresses in Australia and \$50 per year for addresses overseas.

Coordinating editor: David Swain

Editorial panel: Garry Duncan, Rae Litting, Wies Schuiringa

Production

Mailing list CAustFriend@Quakersaustralia.info

Layout Sheelagh Wegman, Hobart TAS.

Printing and distribution National Mailing and Marketing, Canberra.

Copyright

Articles printed in *The Australian Friend* are copyright to their individual authors. Permission to re-publish material in other Quaker publications is hereby granted, provided full attribution of author and source is made. All other requests for republication should be directed to the editors.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in *The Australian Friend* are not necessarily those of the editors or of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).