

# The Australian Friend

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## Peace



# Editorial

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**W**e have had our second Yearly Meeting by Zoom. The articles in this issue show how we have improved our technical skills, and completed our essential business. Discussions at Yearly Meeting expressed our gratitude for the work that went into keeping us all in touch, and our recognition of our many privileges. Even so, we expressed our longing for more face-to-face contact. During our latest lockdown I have found that zoom is an excellent way of sharing information, but not for sharing experiences.

One of the highlights of Yearly Meeting was hearing about the Disrupt Land Forces campaign against the Arms Fair in Brisbane. We have two articles about this, plus a statement from a Conscientious Objector. Friends have been thinking deeply about peace, and why we so quickly turn to military solutions to our problems. Adrian Glamorgan addresses this matter in his article on militarism, and Rosemary Morrow writes about the difficult situation of peace activists in Afghanistan.

Another aspect of peace is the need for reconciliation with our Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous people took part in the Disrupt Land Forces campaign, and Chris Highes reviews a book from an Aboriginal Anglican minister seeking to introduce insights from Aboriginal spirituality into Christianity.

While we are locked down, we are called to remember those beyond our shores for whom we still have responsibility. Quaker Service Australia reports on the difficulties faced by our project partner in Cambodia, but shows that the work done there bears fruit in troubled times. Whilst we live restricted lives, the words of Bronwen Meredith remind us that we must 'grow where we are'.

**RAE LITTING  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN FRIEND COMMITTEE**

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## Noted

**This is our occasional 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.**

### Looking for a reviewer

Canberra Friend Andrew Glikson has written a book *The Fatal Species: from warlike primates to planetary mass extinction*, published by the respected scientific publisher, Springer. The publisher says:

This book presents a history which is nearing its nadir, where a species of warlike primates is destroying

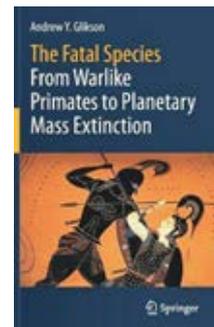
the delicate web of life perceived by Charles Darwin in *The Origin of Species*, committing a war against nature and the fastest mass extinction in the history of nature, with global temperatures incinerating the biosphere by several degrees Celsius, within a lifetime.

Despite this knowledge, Homo 'sapiens' is proceeding to transfer every accessible molecule of carbon from

the Earth crust to the atmosphere and hydrosphere, an auto-da-fe ensues of the terrestrial biosphere.

We would like to publish a review of this book, but first we need a reviewer. If you would like to write a review, please contact us at [caustfriend@quakersaustralia.info](mailto:caustfriend@quakersaustralia.info). We can supply a copy of the book, if necessary.

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Cover: Quaker Peace Garden, Gembrook Retreat



# Challenging war stories

ADRIAN GLAMORGAN | WEST AUSTRALIA REGIONAL MEETING

There is something disturbing about reading news coverage which brings war closer to our consciousness, with not even a few words on how peace might also be built. The presumption is conflict. These articles are popping up in our news feeds and newspapers, under the guise of informative analysis. They are not fake news, because they are facts-based. They draw attention to important details of an arms build-up. By narrowly defined content, devoid of context, their ‘informative’ stories construct a misleading reality, channelling us towards preparations for war, forgetting the possibilities for peace.

One recent example featured in the *Sydney Morning Herald/Age* syndicate, written by Chris Zappone (Digital Foreign Editor) and Eryk Bagshaw (North Asia correspondent) is entitled ‘If the US went to war with China, who would win? It depends on how it starts’ (June 30, 2021).<sup>1</sup> Click on to the page, and the first moving gif image is rows and shoulders of formidable marching People’s Liberation Army. They are a dangerous force to be dealt with, even before the words. We are on notice now of the threat. Read more closely, and there are plenty of facts, necessary for us to know, perhaps, but not sufficient for us to understand. Infographic statistics help us weigh up the two contending nations as if it was a pre-match coverage of the weekend game. Even a winner is predicted.

In this particular case, like so many, the journalists highlight Chinese postures as aggressive, and then lightly ignore or skip over the United States’ illegal wars, and the suffering caused to the nations the US has invaded, and the damage even to its own US troops

and the cost of those wars to everyone’s economy (particularly expenditure diverted from health and education). It is by no means a spectator sport. These disasters wrought on others, far away, have been Australia’s wars of choice, declared using executive full war powers, diverting prosperity away from health, education and the environment. But the biggest burden of these foreign adventures has been for those who have lost their lives, and for the millions of refugees we have helped generate. We have blood on our hands, but not a mark shows on the newspaper page.

The China versus US article alerts us to China’s growing nuclear arsenal, but settles on American formidable kiloton overkill as effective deterrence. It ignores (and thus normalises) the risk to all of us of the use of anyone’s nuclear weapons, for any reason or miscalculation, should even a ‘limited’ nuclear war begin. There is important climate analysis which predicts a hundred low grade nuclear weapons dropped on a hundred cities is enough to cloud the troposphere with soot from the burning conflagrations for several years, which would initially drop global climate temperatures enough to lead to 40% of crops around the world failing: in the first year leading to 900 million deaths from famine alone; over two decades it would vanquish much of humanity. It could all begin in an afternoon, just with China’s weapons, or India’s or Pakistan’s.<sup>2</sup>

Yet no mention in this article, or many others on TV or on the radio, of the

Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons creating the international norm to disarm, and of Australia’s step away from signing this much needed protection for all of humanity.

We don’t need articles that only locate cannon sizes, firepower, hardware, military personnel: that is the stuff of the arms trade, clamouring at the doors of Ministers’ offices, clutching this particular article amongst many.

What we need is context, context, context. We spend mountains of money on ‘defence’ when what we have been funding is foreign misadventures. The Australian government has even bumped up \$500 billion more on armaments in lockstep with US requirements. But money on diplomacy? Cut. Money on studying the causes and ways of peace? None. Foreign aid, to foster good intentions and international benefit? Cut, cut. The actual costs of a future war with China and its aftermath? Not mentioned – except the foolish notion that there could be winners.

A responsible news outlet should be conscious of the boundaries on thinking it fosters. Foster war thinking, and you will have more it. Instead, the media should dare to question, widen our understanding of the choices beyond the war-rattling path.

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# What does being a conscientious objector mean to me?

DAWN JOYCE | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING

Being a conscientious objector means that I reject any notion that war is an acceptable means of settling disputes. War burdens both the vanquisher and the vanquished. The rate of suicide among Australian war veterans should tell us that what is asked of soldiers is extremely damaging.

For me, war is clearly a feminist issue. War is essentially about power and domination, precisely as rape is about power and domination. War is the rape of the land, leaving a sad and long-lasting legacy of destruction and mistrust. That war and rape is so prevalent leads me to speak out to help expose the wrong-headedness of some beliefs that allow this misuse of power to flourish.

There are alternatives. Many people

are surprised to learn that Costa Rica does not have a standing army. If we look to our own First Nations history, we find no evidence of imperialist expansionism. Moreover there was an advanced culture of sharing and inter-nation diplomacy. China has a long history of exploration and voyages made by Zhenghe predate Columbus by nearly a century. Chinese students are taught that Zhenghe respected the foreign lands and cultures he encountered, unlike the 'aggressive and greedy' westerners.

We can also be reassured by writers such as Rutger Bregman, whose book *Human kind; A Hopeful History* lights the path to a brighter future. Our human family is often at its best in difficult circumstances: Even a tiny virus

can teach us that, indeed, we are All-In-This-Together on the blue planet.

War equals waste and war preparations are similarly wasteful, as they actively undermine trust and drain precious resources and energy away from projects that would benefit society. A 'Green New Deal' is welcome, but, by itself, it cannot transform a world suffering from an addiction to war preparations. Instead of a minister for defence industries, Australia urgently needs a Ministry for Peace, where our taxes are invested in sustainable projects and technologies and where visionary leaders seek out and promote common goals and friendships with all nations on this earth.

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The media should add up the price of war, both in opportunity cost and its miserable aftermath. Not only will we sharpen our own thinking when someone plays the dulcet siren sound of the war bugle, but we will know to look for the opportunities for diplomacy, the values of peace, and a different kind of prosperity.

The 'coming war' stories that are appearing may have arisen on their own at the news desk, or they may have been partly seeded – sorry, briefed – by the US military, our own Department of Defence, or the arms manufacturers which stand to gain so much from a militarised economy. Whatever the source, we have been here before. The story is being framed. In a few short months, 'Asia-Pacific' has become 'Indo-Pacific,' an attempt to re-imagine a 'Quadrilateral' narrative that will

embrace the US, Japan, Australia and India in the bonds of war against you-know-whom. There is nothing inevitable about this: it is being forged in the thinktanks, military forces, and by the arms industry before our very eyes, and in our daily news outlets.

If the mainstream media won't widen the story, then it's up to peacemakers. Consider whether your Meeting is called to challenge the 'coming war' coverage in the media, or moved to convene peace groups, or even to write and go and see your local MP (for your local area) or Senator (covering your state and territory). Especially look out for the parliamentarians who are yet pledged to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, as well as those who believe the arms trade buildup is going to be good for us and the region. We need money spent

on diplomacy and shared security, on trust-building measures, and goodwill foreign aid. The media has been selling us fear. Friends can offer strategies so much better.

Adrian Glamorgan is Secretary of the Friends' World Committee on Consultation, Asia-West Pacific Section.

1. <https://www.watoday.com.au/world/asia/if-the-us-went-to-war-with-china-who-would-win-it-depends-how-it-starts-20210617-p581s2.html>

2. Robock, Alan and Toon, Owen Brian, 'Self-assured destruction: the climate impacts of nuclear war', *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (2012) DOI: 10.1177/0096340212459127).

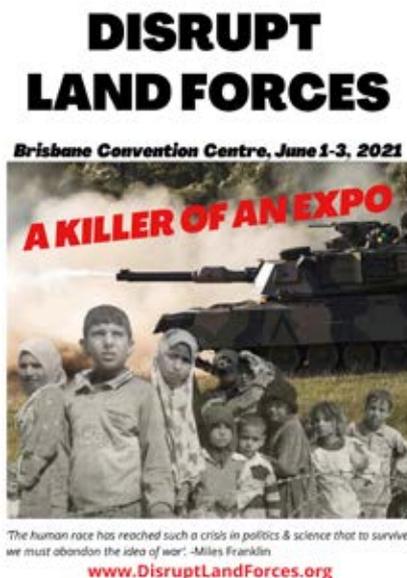
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# A Quaker inside view of a major collective peace action

## *Brisbane Disrupt Land Forces Campaign*

CHRISTINE VENNER-WESTERWAY | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING



Disrupt Land Forces pamphlet

The Disrupt Land Forces (DLF) Campaign swung into action early October 2020 in response to the announcement that the Land Forces Exposition (LFE), postponed in June 2020 due to COVID, would now be held at the Brisbane Convention Centre 1-3 June 2021.

Land Forces is a biennial international industry event to showcase equipment, technology and services for the armies of Australia and the Indo-Asia-Pacific: in essence an Arms Trade Fair.<sup>1</sup> The DLF campaign began as a single entity (Quaker led) and later morphed into multiple satellite groups acting under the guidance of Wage Peace. This report focusses on the Quaker-led dimensions of the campaign.

The QRM Peace & Social Justice Group, at the prompting of various Brisbane peace groups and urged on by its own deep commitment to the Quaker Peace Testimony, accepted

a leadership role in bringing various peace groups and activists together to mount a collective action. The challenge was to work out how we might not only oppose this specific event, but highlight what it signified and promoted, namely rising militarisation in Australia and the manufacturing of wars for profit. A letter of introduction and invitation went out to, what we considered, interested parties. Of the 37 identified, 19 responded. Predictably numbers dwindled as time went on, though many reappeared at events on the ground, down the track. We met online every 3 weeks for 6 months and then fortnightly for a further 2 months for 1.5 hours. Time was spent brainstorming how to gain momentum, fulfill our aims and objectives, reporting back on actions done between meetings, refining them and deciding on new ones. We also acted as a clearing house for information and campaign updates for various representative and interested agencies (e.g. Just Peace, WILPF, Friends of the Earth).

Two major aims of this arm of the campaign were to raise public awareness of LFE and expose the Brisbane based companies engaged in weapons designing, engineering and/or manufacturing and exporting. Within that cohort, we zeroed in on those companies who were sponsoring and presenting at the expo, in receipt of significant grants from both levels of the Australian government and which had partnerships and dealings with highly lucrative overseas defence industries and governments. An initial key strategy therefore, was the production of an information handout. Over the

months up to 5000 pamphlets were printed and distributed and Quakers, in particular, took to the city streets, selected train stations and weekend markets with impressive regularity and passion! Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of people knew nothing about it. In the lead-up months, a Quaker presence - albeit at times very small - was brought to every nonviolent direct action conducted at selected suburban weapons manufacturing sites. That presence strengthened during the final crucial Resistance Week of the campaign.

A limitation for the group as a whole was our unfamiliarity and general lack of confidence in and usage of social media platforms and its accompanying technological requirements. From the beginning we were regularly encouraged to post and refer to Facebook and relevant websites and in the latter months, urged to join *Signal* and *Telegram* apps to simultaneously receive important 'in the moment news, updates and directives': many of us did not! As a result, it was very difficult to keep everyone in the group informed and engaged, as the ground shifted too quickly from day to day and from action to action. Some had a sense of being left out or certainly left behind and try as we might to keep everyone on the same page, through emails and texts, we couldn't and gave up trying as it was too time consuming and ineffective. In our defence, we drew people's attention to the *Wage Peace*, *Disrupt Land Forces*, and *Make West Papua Safe* websites and Facebook Pages for information, live-streaming and photos and acknowledge the power and potency of these



Picketing at Thales



DLF Fasting vigil

platforms to garner wider attention and support and the necessity for some of us, at least, to become more proficient. We invite the reader to visit these sites to learn more.

The conducting of a public meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> May launched the campaign into its second phase.

It was hugely successful and attracted many new people to the campaign. It also marked the coalescing of the various satellite groups, many unbeknown to us and of a much younger generation. They had been meeting regularly with Margie Pectorious from Wage Peace and planning 'secret disruptive business'. The gathering was held at Jagera Hall, Musgrave Park, West End – a First Nations stronghold located in a Greens' electorate. The hall went on to serve as the campaign's base-camp over the crucial 'Resistance Week' 28 May – 3 June. It was literally 2 minutes away from the Convention Centre, with a functioning kitchen to provide meals, hold workshops, a space to debrief, and store dozens of banners and placards. Quaker funds received from the YM Peace & Social Justice Fund paid for the hiring of the hall in both instances.

The initial, loose collective had one more meeting after the public event, after which members proceeded to plan and stage actions under their separate banners, either in support of, or in conjunction with what had now become a full-scale state and interstate Disrupt Land Forces Campaign. Due to its mushrooming, both in terms of

numbers and actions it was impossible to keep abreast of everything that was happening. In fact, it was a deliberate strategic decision for certain individuals and groups to remain anonymous for fear of compromising actions that were planned for the final 6 days. In particular those to be conducted on the 'inside'. Consequently, everyone involved was invited to form or seek out an affinity group whom they could feel safe and comfortable belonging to, acting with or alongside.

A Quaker Affinity Group of eight naturally formed, which now included an interstate and a regional Friend who had so much to offer. We held zoom meetings every week during the countdown month, to prayerfully discern what our individual and collective contributions and nonviolent direct actions might be, immediately prior to and during, the 3-day expo.

In true Quaker fashion many were quiet and unseen. The more public ones included

- A decisive 'Tank Action' on the first of the weapons 'bump in', with one Quaker arrested
- Two early morning Meetings for Worship outside the Convention Centre
- Meeting for Worship outside the front door of Thales, a French based weapons maintenance site in the suburb of Pinkenba, which led to the arrest of 2 Quakers
- Participation in a Climate Angels action

- Conducting two workshops on Christian and Quaker Spirituality and Nonviolent Direct Action principles and processes
- A 24-hour Vigil and Fast held adjacent to the busy South Brisbane railway station
- Distribution of a 'Statement from the heart of a Conscientious Objector'
- Organising and partaking in a Singing Installation on the final day

These actions attracted the participation of a number of non-Quakers who resonated with our Peace Testimony and the way we conducted our peace business!

As Quakers we were in the unique position of being able to move between and engage with, almost everyone who held a stake in disrupting Land Forces: from those who found nonviolent direct action too challenging all the way to those who thought it possibly wasn't enough. Our understanding and history of nonviolent peace witnessing and civil disobedience rooted in the act of holy obedience, enabled us to balance that tension, stand alongside others and be there when the police moved in to roughly quell some protestors and make arrests. The chief architects Wage Peace and Make West Papua Safe found our support and physical presence on the ground strategically invaluable as well as emotionally grounding, as we

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# Friends, witnessing and privilege

GREG ROLLES | QUEENSLAND REGIONAL MEETING

In 2014, I was lucky enough to travel to Chicago and undertake a 4-week intensive training program with Christian Peacemaker Teams. My plan was to travel to Palestine later in the year to do full time work with CPT. I was surprised that more than half of the training was not on how to live in a war zone, or survival tips in dangerous violent situations (though this was touched on). Most of the training was in 'undoing oppression'.

When white explorers found lands inhabited by non-Christians, they were given the right to seize the lands, based on the use of the Doctrine of Discovery, a doctrine that was first used during the Crusades when the then-Pope decreed that lands could be taken for Christianity if there was no ruler in those lands who professed Christianity. By this deceit, a statement could be read on the border or shore of the (new-found) land, in the European language and if no local person responded that their ruler was Christian, the land could be taken. They could then convert, enslave, or kill the First Nations People who lived there.

By a chance of luck, Europeans mostly conquered through a mixture of disease (often spreading smallpox and venereal disease deliberately through warfare and rape), steel for guns and swords as well as gunpowder. The 'Doctrine of Discovery' also gave these thieves, rapists, and murderers what they believed was the moral right to slaughter people who did not have white skin and comply fully with their wishes.

As the economy of theft and murder spread, so too did the arms industry. They fuelled each other like symbiotic

parasites straddling a dying host. In so-called Australia, these weapons were used to slaughter First Nations People of the more than 500 nations that spanned this continent. Some historians claim circumstantial evidence Arthur Phillip and the First Fleet gave smallpox ridden blankets to the Gadigal People of Sydney Harbour. This 'Great Dying' spread quickly across the continent through intricate trade networks and killed 1 in 3 of the people living here.

Over 200 years colonial Australia seized the lands, slaughtered people, and destroyed culture, banning language that connected people to country and their familial culture. We enslaved peoples from the Pacific as well, to work our farms and homes. We also supplied troops to other colonial quests.

Of course, the way all of this is stolen now is through violence and threats of violence from history's largest weapons arsenal. So when the builders of the weapons that enforce this world order met at Kurilpa on the south bank of Maiwar, (south bank Brisbane) at the Land Forces armaments expo and trade fair in early June 2021 some vestige of resistance was expected. People directly affected by the violence broke bread with people scared for our climate future in the West. A small, but disparate group, compared to the presence of Queensland Police and the business people, military people and politicians lining up to gawk at the expo of death inside.

Looking at the huge history of violence, death and destruction faced by people across history, tensions can sometimes be high. Peace protectors swore, peace protectors got in the face

of the warmongers' security guards (police). Personally, this behaviour doesn't appeal to me. I keep my hair short and refuse to get tattoos because I like to build bridges, to appear somewhat normal and to create space where people might want to dialogue some of the facts and their feelings.

I come from a lower working-class background. Due to PTSD and poor mental health, I have not worked for a wage in over 3 years, subsisting on the dole and money I got from my superannuation fund during COVID. Indeed, in the 5 weeks before the expo, I failed to help organise, crippled with trauma, depression and panic attacks. I barely left my bed to get a minimal bit of exercise to stave off the worst of those isolating depressive cycles. At 39, my own personal future is highly insecure, hovering between the patience of people to give me cheap housing and the looming threat of homelessness. I want and need a strong peaceful community for my own security. It would be in my own personal interest to condemn those who swear at police and those who yell loudly.

But then I look back over that short history of the world I just outlined; people and earth dying for the profits of those in suits and with white skin in the west. I cannot separate myself from those who are hurting so much they lash out in anger. They are my kin. For me simplicity, peace and earthcare is a call not to grow my own wealth and standing in communities like Friends by turning my back on those who yell and scream in fear, pain and anger. I am called to feel their pain. To walk amongst them. To stand next to them.



Greg and Jarrah protesting on a drone

To squeeze a shoulder to know they have a presence with them. To take their feelings on my own shoulders at debriefs, to cry with them – to be them.

On the first day of the Land Forces expo, two First Nations elders walked into the police line. One demanded to be let into the arms expo:

‘This is my country; I want to go in there and buy guns too!’ he said, waving a fistful of 50 dollar notes around in the air. Uncle Kev Buzzacott, on a walking stick and slightly frail, walked straight into the police line too. At first, they gave way, then pressed around him. Uncle Kev swore at the police not to touch him, swore at the suits and ties going inside. I know this because I stood next to Uncle Kev. When the police pressed in on him, I put my arms and body right in the way. When Uncle Kev sat down, I helped lower him. With a dozen large police bodies around, I sat next to him and whispered ‘If they arrest you, they arrest me too Uncle’. He nonchalantly patted my hand before turning around to swear at police pushing their boots towards his body. And I sat there in silence, slowing my breathing, listening for the small still voice in me. Police gang pressed on top of me and Uncle Kev. Eventually they grabbed the other Elder and arrested him. I had to take a deep breath again as police started giving warnings to me. I selectively

ignored them and focused on Uncle Kev. He said ‘I want to get up.’ Police grabbed at me as I put arms around Uncle Kev’s shoulders. ‘What are you going to do Greg, are you staying here or walking off?’

‘I’m just following Uncle here’ I said without looking at the police.

‘Na, you gotta make your own mind up!’ About four uncertain arms reached out to grab at me. More went for Uncle Kev, I gently lowered my arms to block their egress. Adrenaline and fear rose in me, for a person with trauma, the same thoughts arose ‘Will they hit me? Will they lock me up again?’ Instead of addressing my well founded fears I whispered to Uncle Kevin ‘Hey Uncle, if you stay, I’ll stay with you’.

‘Let’s go son’ he said and we started back through the police line.

I kept my arms around Uncle’s shoulders, not pushing him, not restricting him. Just keen to put myself as much in between him and the police as possible.

I was nerve-wracked and anxious and walked my energy off, crying and howling as the mood hit me.

Some friends felt that Disrupt Land Forces was too violent and aggressive to be around. The site of two First Nations elders swearing at police and threatening to try and buy guns (to highlight the hypocrisy of

the expo) would have been gruelling for some F/friends to bear, I am sure. But given the wealth, of F/friends that can be linked to the theft from First Nations People like Uncle Kev, what is our responsibility? The violence that companies inside have inflicted on their lands and on their bodies – how does that compare to swearing and yelling by hurt people outside?

Any separation from oppressed people places us in line with the silent complicity that allows these atrocities to continue. It risks betraying the testimonies Quakers cherish, simply because it is uncomfortable at best, or pins us with the noisy troublemakers at worst.

Friends need to urgently consider setting up workshops for undoing our own oppressions similar to those run by Christian Peacemaker teams. We need weeklong attendances at workshops for racism, sexism and classism to be held at Silver Wattle and other centres around Australia. As a group, we have access to a lot of money. Paying it as rent is simply not enough. We must hand over our hearts and bodies to the work and that will, I guarantee it, be uncomfortable. But it will also be honest.

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# Why Afghanistan is different

ROWE MORROW | NEW SOUTH WALES REGIONAL MEETING

As Quakers we watch the events in Afghanistan from a slightly different perspective from most other religions and citizens. We are/want to be a people of Peace. It is our first testimony and most of us retain strong spiritual consciousness and attachment to it throughout our lives. It has, and is urging us, to greater witness for Peace in word, thought and action.

When Vietnam fell and the USA evacuated, the North Vietnamese occupied the south and immediately began to restore and rebuild their country. The terrible civil war had created deep divisiveness in the country. The North accepted this and established camps – very uncomfortable camps, and sometimes distressing, but there was not the mass killing and torture that sometimes follows such a war and which the people of the south feared.

I taught classes with men and women who had been fought on both sides. At first there was discomfort at being in the same room. Then as they intermingled, discussed how to restore homes and land better than before, they found common purpose, common values, and a future. By the end of the course everyone was sitting next to their 'friend', not their former enemy.

In the case of Afghanistan we, Quakers, have a special interest. Dale Hess, Martin Reusch, Donna Mulhearn, myself and others have gotten to know as friends, a group of young women and men, the Afghan Peace Volunteers. Non-Quakers involved include Mark

Isaacs, author of *A Peace House in Kabul*, and Eunice Neves, a Portuguese permaculturist working for the Peace Volunteers in Portugal and doing the night work because we were on alert 24 hours a day for the first few weeks. Some of us have been privileged to visit Kabul many times. These young people are more tested than we are, having been born into and lived their lives in war and inter-tribal hatred. This group has put Peace into practice, they ran lessons for street children, employed women to make doonas for distribution to homeless women, made gardens, implemented permaculture, ran a food bank and other social projects including peaceful demonstrations against war and violence.

They worked equally with young women, and worked across traditional ethnic boundaries.

The last government did not really like them but they were tolerated.

Most of all, they knew and understood non-violence. They studied all the great thinkers and actors of non-violence which they internalised and tried to live it under stressful circumstances. Like us, they were often misunderstood or condemned. They probably went through all the phases of non-violence: from a strategy, to rejection of violence, to absolute spiritual embrace of non-violence.

Some of us knew that Kabul would fall, a week before, while the Australian government was talking about, having a month. Within that short period of time

we started organising ways in which the APVs could escape the dangers of the impending chaos. Although we were able to arrange for placements in India, circumstances prevented the APVs from taking them up.

What happens now that Kabul has fallen and Afghanistan is cut off?

We guess the challenge and reality is, as George Fox knew, that belief in and action for non-violence will not necessarily bring Peace, nor will it bring personal nor group safety, but once it is known and accepted one can do no other. Some AVPs feel betrayed that their supporters have not and cannot assist them more; that foreign governments do not recognise their contribution to the former society and commitment to peace.

Today this group fears for their lives, and most are in hiding. The majority are Hazara Shi'a, a minority group that has already been singled out in the past and suffered severe violence from the Taliban. Like Peace people everywhere they cannot change their deep convictions, and like Peace people everywhere during violence and war, they may suffer to the extent of losing their lives.

What would we do, Friends, in this situation, and what is it our conscience asks of us now? What can we say to them?

EDITED BY DALE HESS

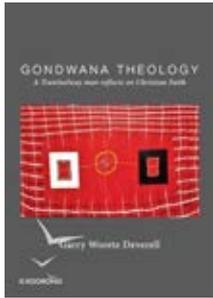
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# Reconciliation or Makarrata

*We will be judged on our deeds not words.*

CHRIS HUGHES | VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING



I have just finished reading *Gondwana Theology: A Trawlolway man reflects on Christian Faith* by Garry Worete

Deverell, an ordained Anglican Priest and a Trawlolway man.

He, like many First Peoples, offers a way forward to coming into a right relationship with this land and its people. He does so through the prism of Christianity and particularly Aboriginal Christianity.

Through theological interpretation of both the New and Old Testaments he advocates for a reconciled Australian Christianity that acknowledges and includes the divine relationship between creator and created on this land. By exploring the Trinity of God he claims the creation stories embedded in First Peoples spirituality have as much validity of expressing the connection between the creator and created as those of the Western Christian tradition. He advocates for the inclusion of language, flora, and items such as coolamons into the liturgy, as well as references to totems. This would indicate a true acceptance and inclusion of Aboriginality Christianity into the faith, and embed it into this continent and its peoples.

Garry wants to see ordained Anglican priests that happen to be First Nations People as Anglican priests

for all Anglican parishes, not just for Aboriginal parishes or parishioners.

He also calls for the Christian Churches to seek genuine Makarrata by acknowledging the truth of colonisation and their role within it, the theft of land, servitude of Aboriginal people, denial and suppression of culture and language by many denominations. He calls for the churches to pay reparations and make amends by including and integrating Aboriginal Christian spirituality into the Church, rather than the empty words and casual racism currently offered.

While his orthodox Anglican way of worship doesn't speak to my condition, his critique of the Christian Churches and how Australian Governments and most settler Australians engage with the call for Reconciliation or Makarrata by First Nations People and their allies, in this late colonial (his term) era does.

He does not sugar-coat the reality of colonial invasion, its brutality and the intergenerational trauma inflicted on First Peoples by the initial and continuing colonial agenda and the inability of most settler people, governments, and Western Churches to hear and acknowledge this truth. He cites the continuing gas-lighting of First Nations People, the claiming that their lived experience and truths are not true, or worthy of acknowledgment. That their pain, mental anguish, dysfunctionality, and poverty are a character fault, not the direct result of deliberate colonial policy of genocide, to create a homogeneous society of

western values and norms. This denial feeds and continues this trauma. It enables the continuing colonial harmonisation plan to continue.

He calls out the racist claims that pure blood and dark skin colour Aboriginality and living a traditional way of life are criteria for what a real Aboriginal is, held by many settler Australians. Mixed heritage and an evolving culture do not mean Aboriginality no longer exists. It has been damaged and changed by colonisation, but not eradicated. There are still Traditional Owners/custodians to Makarrata with, to participate in truth telling with, to offer reparation to, and to forge a new bi-cultural Australia future with. The dysfunctionality of many Aboriginal families or communities are not character faults or cultural faults but the intergenerational and on-going trauma of colonisation on Australia's first Peoples

He calls out the continuing failure of our institutions to recognise their embedded racism in seeing western culture including Western Christianity as normative and correct; in considering that this ancient land and people have nothing to enrich western Christian culture. A failure to acknowledge Country still calls out for relationship which colonialism has not completely severed.

I hope Garry's project to have Aboriginal Christianity accepted and integrated into the Anglican liturgy happens. The tokenism and empty

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# Reflections on Yearly Meeting21

*from the YM21 Host Committee*

SIENEKE MARTIN | VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING<sup>1</sup>

It was a nervous time for the Yearly Meeting21 Host Committee when Victoria Regional Meeting decided that YM21 was going to have to be held on Zoom in December 2020. How were we going to do that?

In spite of all this anxiety, the outcome was far better than the Host Committee could have hoped for. Strategic individual assistance came from Friends from other Regional Meetings. Excellent IT skills offered clarity around the time-table, registration and provided individual advice when needed. Victorian Friends being clear about what they were responsible for made all of it come together well. We also learned a great deal from the Canberra Friends, who organised YM20.

The Host Committee consisted of about 36 Friends, who included the Clerking Team, the AYM Secretary and a number of Friends, who had offered to be responsible for particular parts of YM as well as Friends holding us all in the Light.

The Host Committee met monthly, sharing information how each part was being developed, on problems being encountered and solved.

The Clerking Team dealt with the business agenda, Regional Meetings took responsibilities for Meetings for Worship, for Epilogues and for social opportunities and provided Elders and Pastoral Carers. The Children/Junior Young Friends Coordinators and other Friends focussed on a program for children and JYFs and organised parcels to go to each C/JYF beforehand.

An IT Committee was also formed to focus on the Zoom part – collecting a wide range of Zoom accounts to be

used during YM21, providing zoom training for Friends, providing hosts for all those different sessions, organising the registration process and answering IT questions and solving IT problems before and during YM21.

## Feedback from participants:

Clear and organised leadership. It was fantastic that the decision to be an online meeting was made early. A cooperative group came together and everyone took their roles to heart. I thought it was a full and interesting program. I loved Sheila's zoom lessons each Sunday building confidence in new zoom hosts.

*My experience of YM21 was unexpectedly positive. Prior to YM I had been feeling very stressed – YM work, Backhouse Lecture, Lockdowns, etc. – but at the end of the week I felt spiritually nourished rather than worn out. I believe this was due to the Tech team's excellent work. Everything ran smoothly and I attended far more sessions than I usually do at a face-to-face meeting.*

This was the most rewarding AYM as I was able to attend all the formal sessions, The State of The Society, and the Backhouse lecture were great and everything worked seamlessly. I am not good with the technicalities but was able to use the Calendar and Zoom Links with confidence.

*The coordination worked seamlessly and involved the contributions from a great number of Friends. The hard work of so many people was evident during Yearly Meeting. This resulted in a very rich experience at Yearly Meeting.*

Having the event online meant

that I could attend exactly what I wanted, while still being able to work on something else which can't be put aside. I volunteered to create and amend content on the YM21 website, and I very much enjoyed interacting with dear Friends from around Australia. The highlight for me was having content I'd posted just two minutes before, read out to all by a weighty Friend. Useful information, and just in time! I also enjoyed the informal socialising sessions.

*What I missed was social interaction with people not seen for years. The little intervals between main meetings didn't work for me.*

Queensland Friends enjoyed being able to contribute to YM21. We offered facilitation of the coffee and chat, and on our one designated day, the epilogue and the assistance with the Meeting for Worship and would be happy to offer these services for future Yearly Meetings.

## Share & Tell from Peter Williams

Eighteen Share and Tell sessions were offered by Friends during the week. They were scheduled at six different times with three concurrent sessions at each time.

Unlike in 2020, it was decided for YM21 not to have either a system of pre-booking for Share and Tell sessions nor limitations on the numbers registering. This worked well and gave Friends the opportunity to make last minute decisions about the sessions they wanted to attend.

The number of Friends attending ranged from 9-43 per session. Some Friends reported they would have liked

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# Some reflections

## *on coordinating the IT for Yearly Meeting 2021*

EM CHANDLER | VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING

Since Yearly Meeting 2021 concluded, I have received a lot of kind comments thanking me for my ‘considerable part’ in its organisation. ‘Considerable part’ are other Friends’ words, not mine. That’s not to say it’s not true. A fully online Yearly Meeting requires a great deal of IT support. While I did the sizeable task of coordinating this support, there were more than 20 other Friends who also worked to ensure everything ran smoothly.

Towards the end of YM21, a Friend told me how they were amazed that I never seemed anxious through all the preparation and during the week itself. The truth of the matter was that I had been quite anxious in the lead-up, I just didn’t show it. Instead, I was able to put it aside and speak about it to family, a select group of f/Friends, and my counsellor, outside of the planning and preparation.

While others were impressed with my ability to keep cool under pressure, I was deeply impressed with how much Zoom skills had improved within Quakers. Formal Sessions and Meetings for Worship aside, more than half the remaining sessions’ facilitators were either able to Zoom host their own sessions or had found additional Zoom hosts independently.

I also certainly felt there was a lot less, ‘You’re on mute, Friend’ than last year. It still happened of course, and it will continue to happen; it comes with the territory. However, as a rule, everyone is far more familiar with Zoom after twelve

months, as you’d expect. I hope that Quakers throughout Australia continue this trend of improving and expanding their Zoom and IT skills. Zoom can be challenging and frustrating. Ann Zubrick reflected on this during YM21 Formal Sessions. But it also allows us to connect over vast distances, make us and our practices much more accessible, and has significantly less impact on the environment.

I wouldn’t have been able to attend my first Yearly Meeting in 2020 unless it had been online. This wasn’t (just) due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was simply how my life was scheduled at the time. I’m incredibly glad that I was able to attend then and feel so connected to the wider Quaker community. Had I not been able to attend then, I wouldn’t have been able to undertake the role I did this year.

I know that Friends often take issue with the word ‘volunteer’. Particularly when connected to undertakings within Quakers we, ‘do not volunteer, but are called by the Spirit’. For myself, though, volunteering and doing what the Spirit calls us to do is not incongruent. I have been called to both paid and volunteer positions throughout my life and will continue to be called in these ways.

It may come as a surprise that my job and career have nothing to do with IT. I’m a writer, actor, singer and magician; equally as at home in stage management as performing. Being a freelancer in the performing arts sector, I always have to be strategic about what I spend my time on.

I was grateful that I was paid for some of my time as IT Coordinator, but that is not why I stepped into the position. Discussions and discernment on whether I should be paid did not begin until April 2021, well into preparations. I would have willingly and ably undertaken the tasks required of me if the job remained a volunteer one. Knowing that I was being paid for a portion of my time, however, firmly allowed me to dedicate time each week to the job. Coordinating a Yearly Meeting is no different than project managing or coordinating other events of similar size and complexity.

Like all large-scale events, there were hiccoughs during YM21. Almost all were resolved quickly and efficiently. Nothing brought Yearly Meeting to a standstill. For the most part, there were no concurrent sessions on the timetable (except for Share and Tells), which was a very deliberate choice. The more concurrent sessions, the more Zoom accounts and Zoom hosts needed. The more complexity, the more likely something will go wrong.

One major challenge that arose was transitioning between Meetings for Worship and Formal Sessions. Initially, these sessions were on the same link. This turned out to be much more work for the Zoom hosts than we anticipated, so during the week, this was changed. Meetings for Worship were on one account, and Formal Session on another. Online Formal Sessions continue to be

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# QSA Notes

## 12 months into the pandemic, how are Cambodians faring?

| QSA PROJECT MANAGER



A gift of gardening equipment and watering cans, Cambodia.Cambodia

With the COVID-19 crisis, we have seen a dramatic increase in extreme global poverty, with up to 100 million people added to the existing population of 648 million in 2019. Despite being relatively unaffected by the health aspects during the first 12 months, Cambodia has been disproportionately affected due to its trade exposure and reliance on international remittances.

From early on, an economic slump led to widespread dramatic income losses. In rural communities characterised by abject poverty, the impact has been most severe. Families have resorted to desperate coping strategies, including cutting food and health expenditures and taking out high-risk loans to cover expenses.

Rising food prices have increased food insecurity among families with little or no savings, food stores or land, high debt levels and insecure housing. The pandemic also exacerbated the risks for children in terms of malnutrition, dropping out of school, exposure to domestic violence, child labour and child marriage.

Two recent surveys provide an insight into how COVID-19 continues to impact Cambodian families: QSA partner, Khmer Community Development (KCD), conducted a study in May 2021 to assess the magnitude of the problems caused by COVID-19 in Kandal Province, and in March-April 2021, World Vision surveyed 621 households in three provinces and Phnom Penh.

### Livelihoods diminished

KCD's target community was highly reliant on agriculture, with 56% of households depending on agriculture, but one-third had a second source of income from casual day labour. Ninety-five percent reported a significant impact on their livelihoods, and one third had lost jobs and had no income. More than 50% relied on savings, over 50% also borrowed money, 15% could not repay loans, and 15% sent their children to work. The World Vision survey that included urban households found three-quarters of respondents lost their primary source of income or had it reduced, with average weekly family incomes dropping to \$35, down from \$63. Households in Phnom Penh were



Fish farming.

more affected due to more severe closures in the capital, with 95% reporting their income had been lost or reduced.

### Reduced food security and nutrition

KCD found that more than 25% of households were only eating two meals per day. Nevertheless, 80% of households had not reduced the

quality and quantity of food because they had savings and access to protein and green vegetables from home gardens. Eighty percent had one week of food stock or less.

KCD respondents retained access to nearby markets during COVID-19 restrictions, but they reduced food spending by up to 40% with price increases.

World Vision's findings show only half of the families have sufficient income

to cover food expenses fully and 38% reducing spending on food. In Siem Reap, average weekly household food spending declined from \$25 to only \$16. Overall, 44% of respondents had no food stocks at home, and 70% now rely on less preferred and less expensive food, 50% reduced portion sizes, and 34% reduced the number of meals per day.

### What's next?

KCD's research has informed the direction of their assistance programs in target communities, and several of the recommendations are already integrated into their work.

It's encouraging that families supported by QSA partners to implement home gardens with new permaculture techniques have fared relatively well during the pandemic. In project areas supported by QSA, reports indicate households have maintained food security or lessened the impact of food shortages and price rises with homegrown fruit and vegetables.

QSA's Living Gifts catalogue will be available soon. It's a practical way to directly support families across QSA's projects, however, any donation, no matter how small, will go to support communities in need.

**NOTE:** An expanded version of this article is on the QSA website at [www.qsa.org.au](http://www.qsa.org.au)

QSA is a member of the Australian Council for International Development and is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. The purpose of QSA is to express in a practical way the concern of Australian Quakers for the building of a more peaceful, equitable, just and compassionate world. To this end QSA works with communities in need to improve their quality of life with projects which are culturally sensitive, as well as being economically and environmentally appropriate and sustainable.

Find us on Facebook for more photos and stories: [facebook.com/quakerserviceaustralia](https://facebook.com/quakerserviceaustralia).

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MEMBER



# ‘Grow where you are planted’

## Remembering Bronwen Meredith

ANN ZUBRIK | WEST AUSTRALIA REGIONAL MEETING

Awakening and beginning the day with silent reflection the phrase ‘Grow where you are planted’ arose strongly within me. Why this invocation? I recalled the context in which I first heard the phrase.

Bronwen Meredith – a Tasmania Regional Meeting Friend – used these words in a conversation we had some fifteen years ago. I was at The Friends School for an AGM in May. My TRM host family invited Bronwen for Sunday lunch following Meeting for Worship.

I had recently completed a degree in Ageing and Pastoral Studies and was teaching some units. I was interested to hear of Bronwen’s experience as a resident in an aged care hostel. Bronwen was then in her late 80s and had lived in the hostel for five years. Leaving the family home after more than 50 years was a wrench; family members had moved from Hobart, and she now needed daily assistance.

She told me: ‘As a teacher I reminded students that life wasn’t always ours to control as we wished but that we could always grow where we were planted. I continue to reflect upon what that means for me.’

After moving into the hostel, she quickly made the assessment that the diversional therapy assistant ‘needs encouragement to do the job well. But she’s quite young, so there’s time.’ She regularly provided ‘ideas’ to this young woman ‘as politely as I can’. However, finding her ideas ignored, Bronwen spoke to residents about their interests, phoned the library and arranged a fortnightly drop off/collection of books, videos and CDs.

Some residents had significant cognitive changes. She commented ‘it’s hard to find people with whom to have conversation for very long.’ Her solution to this dilemma?

Well, I now have staff seat me at different tables for lunch and dinner each day so by the end of each week I’ve managed to talk with all the residents at least twice. It’s hardest with a resident who’s deaf and blind, but I make time in between to see her on her own and then introduce topics to share. We are coming to know one another. I convey the conversations back to her later, in our time together. We do not need to remain strangers.

She recognised that ‘the care workers – most of whom come from different parts of Africa – receive little encouragement or support and they need this to continue to care for us, as they do. So I make time to listen their stories.’

Bronwen astutely monitored and chose times in the day when the workers were less busy and while they washed her hair, gave her a manicure, or were engaged in the daily care routine in her room, she invited them to share their experiences – past and present – and offered her perspectives. She apologised for the ways in which some residents and family members spoke to care staff. She sometimes offered a ‘thought for the day’ to staff and residents she encountered – ‘something positive for people to think about as they go about the day’.

Learning of an unmet need – a care-worker who cannot afford football boots for a fifteen-year-old wishing to

play soccer; a child who needs someone to hear them read English; a resident who has no family visitors – she might email someone in her network to explore assistance. One of Bronwen’s gifts was seeking and asking for what she needed.

*The residence provides me with my work in the world. And I am embraced with love: the love of family and Friends, and most of all divine love. Love so immense it surrounds me, strengthens me and grounds me.*

There are many faces to loss and loneliness. I encounter it often in my pastoral work in aged care. The glaze in lonely eyes that once beamed with delight. And I remember Bronwen and her delight enabling new pathways and deepening connection.

There are experiences of loss and also opportunities for transformation as the pandemic unfolds.

While preparing for YM21, I wrote a quote in my diary. Foolishly, I did not note at the time from whom or where the offering came. And I’ve not been able to find it.

*There’s a gift in practice that can help us know what we can respond to; know what is beyond our control; know what is manageable; and figure out how to survive along the way. It is the gift of vibrant attentiveness–epiphanies of a vital presence: what the mystics called ‘the sense of heaven.’*

Can I, can we, harness this gift as we plan for our next Yearly Meeting?

AF



# Quaker mysticism

REG NAULTY | CANBERRA REGIONAL MEETING

There is a strong interest in mysticism out there. That is shown by the huge public acceptance given to the work of Eckhart Tolle who writes about Zen Buddhism. His first book *The Power of Now* made the New York Times best seller list and was translated into thirty languages. A later book, *A New Earth*, has been published in forty-four languages, and an in-depth webinar he made with Oprah Whitney about its main themes has been watched thirty-five million times.

Friends have a strong mystical tradition, and it has been there from the beginning. A mystical experience is a powerful inward feeling which the person who has it spontaneously believes to be an experience of God. Thus George Fox as he was led away to jail:

*I was ravished with the sense of the love of God, and greatly strengthened in my inward man. But when I came into the jail where those prisoners were, a great power of darkness struck at me; and I sat still, having my spirit gathered into the love of God.*<sup>1</sup>

The word 'ravish' has connotations of being overwhelmed and delighted. Among first generation Friends such experience seems not uncommon. Thus Marmaduke Stephenson in 1655: 'I was filled with the love and presence of the living God... for it did increase abound in me like a living stream.'<sup>2</sup> There were other mystics in the early heroic period of Friends, Isaac Pennington and William Ledra, for example, so that the time seems to have been something of a Pentecost.

Mysticism keeps recurring in Quaker history. In the eighteenth century, John Woolman had 'fresh visitations of heavenly love' which flowed through his various concerns into the social environment. In the nineteenth century there was Caroline Stephen, who identifies a pejorative sense of 'mystical' employed by bluff, hearty defenders of common sense:

*...a mild term of reproach, to convey a general vague dreaminess. Nothing, certainly could be less applicable to early Friends. They were fiery, dogmatic, pugnacious and intensely practical...*<sup>3</sup>

In the twentieth century there were two prominent Quaker mystics, Rufus Jones (1863–1948) and Thomas R. Kelly (1893–1941). Jones wrote books about mysticism; Elizabeth Gray Vining devotes a chapter to his mysticism in her biography of him. Jones believed in a state of unification met with 'a burst of joy, of rapture and of radiance'. Those who had seen God, he held, should gird themselves for service.

Thomas R. Kelly wrote vividly about mysticism in his book *A Testament of Devotion*. 'I have been literally melted down by the love of God'<sup>4</sup> he wrote, and, at greater length:

*... Holy Fellowship reaches beyond {intellectual assumptions} to the immediacy of experience in God, and seeks contact in this fountainhead of real, dynamic connectedness.*<sup>5</sup>

Why do Friends have this mystical tradition? The habit of centring down in Meeting for Worship has a lot to do with it. Once we have centred down, it is easy to move into deep prayer, which

is one of the main pathways to mystical experience. Many of us, when we pray, pray in a perfunctory way with the top of our minds, which is no way to mystical experience.

Some Friends have the idea that mystical experience is reserved for famous people, not for ordinary people. That is not the case. The Quaker writer, Howard Brinton, had three hundred journals by non-famous Quakers in his personal library, and he wrote that they were as valuable a source of material on the history and nature of mysticism as are the writings of many more famous mystics.<sup>6</sup> A good book on mysticism is Douglas Steere's *Quaker Spirituality*.

1. Rufus M. Jones[ed] *The Journal of George Fox*. Friends United Press. Richmond, Indiana. 1976.p.116
2. *Christian Faith and Practice in the Experience of The Society of Friends*. London Yearly Meeting. 1972. Entry 32.
3. Douglas V. Steere. *Quaker Spirituality*. Selected Writings. SPCK London. 1984. p.248
4. Thomas R. Kelly. *A Testament of Devotion*. Quaker Home Service. London.1979. p. 19.
5. Thomas R. Kelly op. cit. p.77
6. Howard H. Brinton. *Quaker Journals. Varieties of Religious Experience Among Friends*. Pendle Hill Publications. Wallingford, Pennsylvania. 1972. p.25

AF



# Humble yourself in the arms of the wild

## Gembrook Retreat

SAMARA PITT AND JANE HOPE | VICTORIA REGIONAL MEETING

*Humble yourself in the arms of the wild  
You gotta lay down low and  
humble yourself in the arms of the wild  
You gotta ask her what she knows and  
we will lift each other up  
higher and higher  
we will lift each other up  
higher and higher  
(song lyrics Bob Hudson)*

For the past 20 years in a quiet corner of Boon Wurrung/Wurundjeri country in the Dandenong Ranges outside of Melbourne, a small retreat centre has been emerging.

In 1964, Quakers Maggie and Bob Dunkle bought 22 acres of a former dairy farm. Their vision was to revegetate and rehabilitate the land. During 1980 they built a house that Bob had designed to use the solar energy technologies he had developed during his career. Maggie planted extensive fruit and nut orchards, flowering exotics and native species.

In the year 2000 with the death of Bob some years earlier and her own increasing frailty, Maggie created a religious trust so that Gembrook Retreat would be held in perpetuity as a place of spiritual retreat, renewal and healing.

Today the main house onsite is known as the Black Cockatoo House of Welcome. The land now holds a mixed fruit orchard and chestnut orchard, protea and waratah plantings, a large veggie patch, native bushland and open fields. Many bird and animal species can be found, including black cockatoos, wallabies, wombats, lyrebirds and even the occasional goanna.

There is a small Christian Quaker based residential community living onsite at the Black Cockatoo House of

Welcome and down the road at Blue Tongue House. We invite people on to the land to encounter God in creation and equip each other to live a soulful life.

### Inviting people on to the land

*Wood is stacked, thanks to my fella and the kids. The wood is from a few different trees. Mainly a blackwood, a messmate and a grey gum. They all grew from seeds, naturally, on our property. The blackwood maybe 20 years ago, and the gums maybe 60-80 years ago. At some point they withered, died or had branches come down. They were then cut up by my fella and son, moved to a woodpile to dry out for about a year. Now they are brought into our house so we can warm the place up over winter. This whole process is about connection to land, and connection to the resources we use in our daily life. Most of the ways our society has set up our lives is about disconnection. Interestingly, the more disconnected we are, the less our lives find spiritual meaning, and the more we destroy God's creation.*

(Jane Hope @rewildingchristianity)

The land here is on the border between Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri country. Due to colonisation the boundaries are not clear, but high on the ridge close to where we are, the water runs to the salt-water of the ocean (Boon Wurrung), and inland to the Birrarung river system (Wurundjeri). This may have been a place of meeting and exchange.

Aboriginal people who have visited the Retreat have often been drawn to one area where there used to be a scar

tree. It fell down and was cut up decades ago. We know and honour the place where it used to stand, and by naming this, we also name the damage and destruction that our own forebears have participated in, and benefited from. These stories are so often hidden and lurk beneath the surface to haunt our histories. By bringing them to the light and experiencing the feelings of guilt, shame, helplessness and confusion, we can come to a place of acceptance that enables us to open up and listen with compassion.

We host people for overnight stays and day visits. David's cabin is a simple, cosy two-room building. It uses solar power, tank water and wood fire stove for heating. Guests pay what they can afford so that all are able to access the Retreat. Many appreciate being surrounded by nature, and the break from technology and unnecessary conveniences.

Once a year we have a Chestnut Harvest Open Day where more than 150 people from all over Melbourne come onto the land to collect chestnuts, and picnic under trees. Events like this express our gratitude for the abundance that the land offers, and the generosity of Maggie who understood that land was not for owning and hoarding, but for sharing.

### Encountering God in creation

We have tried to create places that invite our guests to stop and consider what the land is saying to us. The Quaker Peace Garden was established in 2016 with a donation from Northern Suburbs Quaker Meeting. This garden forms part of a cycle of contemplative stations on the land inspired by The Work That Reconnects. This is a

network developed by Joanna Macy to help people who are exhausted from trying to change our world's destructive ways to experience our interconnection with all things, thereby transforming our despair into collaborative action. She focuses on four practices: Gratitude, Honouring your pain, Seeing with new eyes and Going forth.

In the Quaker Peace Garden, we have a cairn of stones. We are invited to take a stone and hold it as a physical sign of the weight of sorrow and suffering in our world that we are carrying. We have a culture that can try to repress pain, or hurry us over it. Here we recognise that pain may have something to teach us, and that we are not alone.

This year we celebrated the winter solstice. We touched the earth, washed our hands in rainwater, breathed the air and fed sticks into the fire, singing 'earth my body, water my blood, air my breath and fire my spirit'. These rituals remind us that we are not separate from the land, that we are created from the dirt and that our living bodies are part of the darkness and the light.

*My wander this morning took me to a stump on our property that gives me the best view of the wallabies if they are about. As I sat down the sun shone brightly on my face and body, giving me much appreciated warmth, but blinded my sight. As I looked out I could not see anything...*

*During this month I have felt the presence of God move through my body more than ever in my life, a bit like the sun's presence this morning. But I can't necessarily see that much in front of me.*

*After a while of trying to strain my eyes to see the familiar wallabies, I give up and turn to the left. In the distance are lyrebirds. A new wild creature to learn from. I'm heading into new terrain. It's unfamiliar, but with the sun by my side and wild animals to teach me, my eyes begin to see a little bit further along the path I must take.*

(Jane Hope @rewildingchristianity)

## Equip each other to live a soulful life

*When I was younger, I was a city girl through and through and I found silence unbearable. Oh how times have changed. But that change has happened over a long time, and it's been with the support of my community.*

*Today when I went out in the rain, it is only because I have learnt from one of my children the delights of being in the cold and rain, and from another how to live in the present, and then I have a spiritual companion who has often risen from sleep and prayed with me in the middle of the night.*

(Jane Hope @rewildingchristianity)

During the long lockdown in 2020, we developed a rhythm of work and prayer to help us live deeply and soulfully in the day to day. Using a simple liturgy of singing, Quaker Advices and Queries and silence, we pause three times a day to remember that it does not all depend on us. During this time we have looked at how we here at Gembrook Retreat can respond very practically and directly to some of the big challenges our society is faced with, such as climate change and the Black Lives Matter movement.

This year we are opening our beautiful 'new' Meeting House. It has been built using many recycled materials from the bones of Tom's old hut which had lots of character but was falling down! It has a meeting room, and dining room, a kitchen and disabled access. Like the cabin, it is powered by solar, heated by fire, and uses tank water. Groups of up to 20 people can book the space for their activity and be surrounded by nature. We hope to have a regular meeting for worship as well.

Some questions Quakers have about the way forward for an ageing Society might be addressed here where the spiritual and practical elements of life are integrated, where prayer is linked with action, practices of discernment are encouraged, alternatives to capitalism are explored, responses to the climate



crisis are implemented, and connection with the land is at our doorstep. Let's not struggle along on our own.

The Gembrook Retreat residential community is Jane Hope and her family, Samara Pitt and Shannon Ormiston. The Hope family are members of VRM and Shannon is an attender who grew up attending QLD RM.

## There are lots of ways to connect with Gembrook Retreat.

- Book the cabin or the Meeting House
- Join FRoGR (Friends of Gembrook Retreat)
- Donate – in 2022 we need to increase our donations to pay for much needed land care and building work
- Become a resident at Blue Tongue House, our sister house in Gembrook
- Follow us on social media  
Instagram: [gembrook\\_retreat\\_rewildingchristianity](https://www.instagram.com/gembrook_retreat_rewildingchristianity)

To find out more, go to [gembrookretreat.org.au](https://gembrookretreat.org.au)

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# The timeless hour

DAVID EVANS | SOUTH AUSTRALIA AND NORTHERN TERRITORY REGIONAL MEETING

## *The timeless hour*

Let action go; and with it all the thought  
Of action. Even when the world is racked  
It may be worthier to refrain from action  
Than it is to act.

Forget the world one hour; when you return  
Its beauty will be there, its tragedy;  
And though the past and future shake their chains,  
The now is free.

Think yourself out of thinking; exercise  
Even that ghost of thought, the echoing word  
Till in the haunted chamber of the brain  
No sound is heard.

Then when its windows open on a world  
Beyond the world, when all its walls are dumb,  
Into the silent room, the wordless mind,  
The Word may come.

**Clive Sansom.1957**

**You can read Clive Sansom's <sup>1</sup> poem on p76  
of *This We Can Say*.**

In my early Quaker days at the Hobart Meeting House I listened enraptured by Clive Sansom's Ministry – deep religious thought expressed simply like his writings for children. Quietly spoken and unassuming, he always left me wondering and longing for more.

Sometime later *The Timeless Hour* was read in Meeting. Joan Roberts went over to the piano and played a verse of the hymn *Dear Lord and Father of Mankind*. There followed a deep silence in the meeting that I treasure as a memory, and as an awareness of spiritual life. In my 50 years or so with Quakers, these moments of deep silence, when 'The Word may come', are like a personal collection of jewelry, treasured forever.

Moments of Deep Silence also happen with inspirational music in concert or recital when you could hear a pin drop. One I remember especially was in an orchestral concert in Hobart conducted by Stuart Challender<sup>2</sup> in 1991. It was his last concert, as Challender had developed acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) and died soon after.

Clive's timelessness, and moments of inspiration reassure me that the greater world is alive, all around me and you. We ask the same philosophical questions when we are old, as we did when we were young, e.g., what is goodness? The title for the current Storytelling Guild Meeting<sup>3</sup> at this time of writing is 'Thank Goodness...' The invitation is there to present a short talk about goodness. Let's go for it.

The ocean of light is alive and well.

1. Clive Henry Sansom - Australian Dictionary of Biography  
<https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/sansom-clive-henry-15760>

2. Stuart Challender: Australian Biography  
<https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/challender-stuart-david-29678>

3. <https://australianstorytellers.org.au>

The Storytelling Guild of Australia has branches in each state and is part of a global network of storytellers. In South Australia we have monthly meetings, a newsletter 'The Pied Piper', and special events. People come along, members and visitors, and generally make a presentation of five to ten minutes related to the theme of the meeting.

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# Writing from the heart

DOROTHY SCOTT AND CAROL MCDONOUGH | AUTHOR AND ACTIVIST

*We were inspired by the Silver Wattle Quaker Centre online course, Writing from the Heart, led by Kerry O'Regan, in which we had been gently invited to let our writing become courageous. While living a couple of hundred kilometres apart, a friendship has been forged between us as we support each other in 'writing from the heart'. We wrote the following poems out of justice-felt experiences which shocked us.*

## *Homeless*

Deep church hall porch, hidden.  
I have not walked past here at this time of day without it being empty.

Today,  
one of the many women sleeping rough in our town. 50s?  
She is smoothing cream on her leg, unaware of me behind her,

I walk quietly. Will I walk into her sight, speak?  
Or, swing out, look down, but...  
she'll see me after I pass.  
I pause, reflect, shy, I decide.

'Hullo, I hope I do not intrude?'  
Lightning fast, dropping her cream she swivels face to door,  
hunched back to me, so still.  
(I am reminded of an animal caught in car's lights' glare)  
'I'm so sorry, I want to share I know of a public housing vacant unit.  
It's a block away. Would you like to know of it?

She tenses, hunches lower.

Breathe, silent, hesitate...  
I bow, reverencing her silence, her privacy – invaded.  
'I wish you well.'  
Walking on, stricken, I wonder her story,

her fear of an offer of possible home, my voice unwelcome.

I circle to home another way.

Tonight, it is cold, winter is here.

Postscript:  
Weeks after, a hesitant woman, riddled with fears...  
Should I live there? Would I be healthy?  
Do I allay her fears, recounting practical kindnesses for my well-health?

**This poem was written by Carol McDonough, a day after the death of her 94-year-old neighbour in her home of a quarter century, knowing she would want the next person to dwell in safety and quiet happiness.**

## *Palm Sunday at the Park Hotel, Melbourne*

Faint lights moving back and forth,  
Held by men invisible behind a tinted window,  
An arc of light silently communicating with protestors below  
On this day, the start of Holy Week.

Seven years imprisoned on a distant land,  
Despairing and struggling to comprehend.  
And now confined in hotels for over a year.  
Some released, but these men left to suffer.

Whose idea was it to tint the windows?  
Who ordered it to be?  
Who did this task  
So those in the street should not see?

One among countless acts of cruelty,  
Oh, the banality of evil.  
Faint lights moving back and forth,  
Oh, the fragility of hope

**This poem was written by Dorothy Scott on the day of the Palm Sunday March (28.3.21) in support of refugees and asylum seekers.**



sought to hold the action space in the Light and bear peaceful witness and have conversations with attendant police, employees and fellow protestors. Our strength too, lay in the combined and comprehensive skill set amongst the Quaker members of the group. We were thus able to fill the array of necessary roles to make the group run its course consistently, competently and confidently, take up where others left off, and provide a source of financial means to help cover campaign costs such as printing and laminating, large banner productions, art and craft materials and food supplies. What funding and individual donations were remaining we gave to help cover the impending court costs of those arrested e.g. travel and non-pro-bono legal work.

QRM Peace & Social Justice group thanks wider Friends for their acts of support in the form of providing morning and afternoon teas, cooked meals and fruit during our 6-Day Festival of Resistance, monetary donations throughout, distributing the information handout within their circles of influence and holding us and the campaign in the Light for 8 months.

The Expo officially finished 3 June 2021, but the campaign is still being played out in many ways. Chief amongst them are the court hearings of those who placed themselves wittingly

or unwittingly in the path of arrest, during the final days of the campaign, and offering them as much information and support as possible to negotiate what can be a stressful, confusing and convoluted process. Also where possible, emotionally supporting those individuals who bore the brunt of or witnessed police violence, or were the subject of intimidating Watch-house processes.

I was fortunate enough to walk beside Margie Pectorious for most of the 8-month long campaign, as a support person, a companion. She is a seasoned nonviolent peace activist and one of the Peace Pilgrims that ventured onto Pine Gap and faced arrest. It was an intense time of listening, learning, brainstorming, debriefing, scoping out weapons manufacturing sites together, late night meals and conversations, building trust, offering encouragement and ideas. She became my mentor, pushed my boundaries and deepened my understanding and appreciation of nonviolent direct action. Margie was the crucial connecting bridge who brought all the activist groups, the generations, the different ideological positions, the cultural communities together in one bonding and single focus. Through that process we, as Quakers became more visible to, and acquainted with a whole range of individuals and groups

that we otherwise wouldn't have, but the reverse was also true. It was said that the effectiveness of the campaign wouldn't have happened to the degree that it did, if we as a Meeting and as individual Quakers had not heard the call, embraced the concern, followed the leadings. We give humble thanks!

The work goes on; it does not end here and it behoves us as Quakers to continue to discern for ourselves and as a Society where and how we will place ourselves in this work for Peace, for whom, and especially with whom. I believe above all it must be with First Nations people and the younger generations. We encourage Friends to become involved whether by prayer, background work or actual public witness, and to seek to draw from people the spiritual energy of the Beatitudes: *Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness ... Blessed are the peace-makers...* for this is vitally needed in the world we face together. We do not do this work of ourselves, by ourselves, but through us, God can and does weave small miracles.

1. <https://www.landforces.com.au/index.asp>

2. <http://www.disruptlandforces.org>

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#### REFLECTIONS ON YM21 – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

to attend more of sessions that were scheduled at the same time. For future online Yearly Meetings the possibility could be considered of offering the Share and Tell sessions over several weeks, not just during the week of Yearly Meeting itself.

#### Friendly School from Bruce Henry

Friendly School was organized by 5 VRM Friends, mainly meeting online. The theme was Quakers in the World: how are we led to take action in the world? How do we live out our testimonies in the world? Mark Deasey facilitated the session.

After a reading on the theme, Adrian Glamorgan and Aletia Dundas then went 'in conversation'. They asked each other about their motivations for action and activism and shared perspectives on the tension between doing and being. They then answered questions and comments that appeared in the chat.

In breakout rooms, Friends addressed a number of relevant questions and feedback was gathered from these groups. This included discerning and following leadings; waiting for a way to open; supporting others in their concerns; acknowledging that there are many ways of being involved, including

administrative, moral, financial and prayerful support of those involved in action.

We discovered that 12 facilitators was not enough, it would have been better to have about 16, so that there could be about 6 in each group.

We very much appreciated the Zoom support for screen-sharing and allocation of people to groups. We thought that the conversation between Aletia and Adrian and most of the breakout groups went very well.

*For more detailed reports please read Documents in Retrospect.*

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a challenge, but we will continue to make improvements. We can't expect perfection within two Yearly Meetings – if ever.

One reoccurring piece of feedback I received during YM21 was accessing the timetable. We hosted the online timetable on the site Keep and Share. For an online Yearly Meeting, you must have an online timetable. There are occasions where Zoom links needed to be updated or changed. The strongest advantage of an online timetable is that it can be updated almost instantly. For those using the timetable, it 'doesn't change'. It's always found in the same place and looks (basically) identical. It was suggested beforehand, and during Yearly Meeting, that the timetable

could be emailed out as a PDF. It was a very deliberate decision to not do this.

Emailing out a timetable would have been laborious and confusing, particularly if and when the timetable needed to be updated. An online timetable is much more reliable for users. There's never an issue of 'which timetable' because it's the only timetable.

Keep and Share allowed us to do all this. However, while not terrible, it could be more user friendly. Changing the 'view' can be confusing, as can be finding the correct day (i.e. Finding 'Monday' on the timetable). While Keep and Share can print a PDF of itself (which I strongly suggested against for the reasons above) this was not an intuitive process, even for

me. Keep and Share certainly did its job. However, I think finding another service for an online timetable, that's more user friendly, is the next step forward.

Organising a Yearly Meeting is a mammoth task. The still unfamiliar territory of an Online Yearly Meeting, even more so. There is so much more I could reflect upon. There is still much to learn and explore about incorporating IT in our Yearly Meetings – and our practices and experiences more broadly. Over the last year, however, we have made tremendous headway, and I'm certain this trend will continue.

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## RECONCILIATION OR MAKARRATA – CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

words he speaks about within his own institution are found in all our current institutions. The rest of this article is my reflections on the issues raised in the book.

The myths that 'Aboriginality' is about pure blood, skin pigment and living a traditional life, is a dominant view held by many, and used to deny the continuing connection to Country and culture of mixed-heritage people who identify as First Nations people, particularly in NSW, Victoria and Tasmania, where the colonial invasion has been its most devastating and where many First Nations people live in urban centres off Country.

They are still connected to the fragments of culture saved from the initial invasion. The reality is the Traditional Owners and custodians still exist and are still connected to Country all over the continent.

The Colonial attempt to absorb First Nations Peoples into the colonial plan has failed. We live on a bi-cultural continent with the original owners and custodians of the land, which was stolen.

This generation did not still steal the

land or commit the massacres; however, it does benefit from that theft. It still allows the exploitation of Traditional Country without informed consent or genuine negotiations.

It still practices institutional racism that only recognises, imposes, and enforces western norms. It stills gas-lights First Peoples and enables poverty, poor health, removal and incarceration through its silence. Unlike First Peoples, it can't critique another culture to absorb its positive qualities and reject its harmful ones, to blend into a stronger culture.

It imposes its social norms. The fact this is not uncommon, does not make it right.

This felt truth is at the heart of settler guilt and inability to face the true history of Australia. It is what drives the undermining of First Nations peoples self-determination and is expressed in the desire to control and dictate what reconciliation means and how it is to be determined.

Such a process will fail, and the guilt will continue to haunt us as settlers. Only acknowledging the truth and providing reparation acceptable to the

wronged party will remove this.

Politicians and corporations will not lead on this. They have vested financial interests in maintaining the status quo, the incarcerations and exploitation of Country for corporate profits. The Gap continues and in many categories is increasing because of the institutional racism of Australian culture and institutions.

However more ordinary Settler Australians are beginning to engage with First People and building local Makarratas and calling for truth telling, recompense and treaties at a local and National level.

What are we called to do? Exactly what First Nations peoples have been asking of us since the 1930s: educate ourselves on the true history of the area we reside in, acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

The Frontier wars happened and First Nations peoples fought to defend their country, culture and families and continue to do so the best way they can. The Traditional Owners and Custodians still exist wherever we live.

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## *Haiku*

What a lovely planet!  
Let's try to hurt it a bit  
Less than we do now.

*Stephen Hodgkin*