

Quaker Voices in C21

a project of Australia Yearly Meeting
in the care of Canberra Regional Meeting

2008



mandalas drawn at Northern Rivers QV workshop

a document by Helen Bayes & Katherine Purnell
summarising input and posing questions
for ALL Australian Quakers to ponder and discuss

FUTURE OF QVC21 into 2008

Introduction

On this page 'we' means Helen and Katherine. Elsewhere 'we' means all of us.

We rejoice in the many voices given to Quakers. We believe the Quaker Way is really important for other people as well as for ourselves, HERE & NOW.

Quakers, indeed all people, are in-spir-ing, breathing in and out the breath of God. A great source of empowerment is available! With discernment, Friends can get on with it. At YM08, the phrase "the Spirit is bubbling up" was used many times.

We are noticing that Quakers are already re-skilling and renewing for a dynamic movement for change. By re-exploring the Testimonies, rethinking the Christian message and reaching out to world faiths, Australian Quakers can 'live experimentally'. We are in good company. This prophetic movement is being felt throughout Australia, just as it is a global trend of spiritual exploration eg British Friends Questionnaire Dec 07 and Canadian Friends Consultation and Renewal Report http://www.quaker.org.uk/shared_asp_files/GFSR.asp?NodeID=110147, <http://www.quaker.ca/cnr/#reports2007>. We catch a sense of being swept along to somewhere unknown by a surprising excitement, seriousness and urgency.

An essential part of the task of Quaker Voices is to strengthen the Community: a blessed community. By listening with each other in safe meetings, words, illustrations and personal stories come to be shared. Leadings become real. Friends can become courageous and articulate about describing to each other and the world, their spiritual and mystic experiences, convictions, and sense of priorities.

These papers are for ALL Quakers.

In them is the distillation of the BIG IDEAS we have gathered on our visits. We ask KEY QUESTIONS.

The ideas are grouped in six sections and several appendices, for separate study and discussion.

We rejoice in the confidence that there are many other elements and angles that Friends will be inspired to add.

There are website references for background Information and we hope you will explore them.

These papers also appears on www.voices.quakers.org.au with hot buttons to the references.

Section 6 will seem to be more prescriptive than the earlier material. It is more to do with obstacles that we see in our governance that may be stopping the Quaker Voice from being more active in Australia. The suggestions come after looking at some processes adopted by USA and Canadian Yearly Meetings <http://www.quaker.ca/>. Other ideas came from discussions with individuals and from current writings

We hope that during 2008, meetings all round Australia, will arrange many opportunities for worship sharing about the observations, references and questions offered in this kit.

We ask everyone to send us their original writings, discussion reports, photos and drawings because we are beginning to see potential for a new AYM publication – perhaps called '*this we are saying*'.

We hope there will be a dynamic interplay between our observations, the questions we have posed, new Australian writings and worship-sharing over the rest of this year.

With loving greetings Helen Bayes baymor@cyberone.com.au

Grace and peace Katherine Purnell katepnl@alphalink.com.au A.C.T. April 2008
Key Themes and Big Ideas - for Study, Discussion and Creativity

On these pages 'we' means the group discussing the issues.

1. SPIRITUAL NURTURE

Worship is the seedbed for new openness to Love and Truth. The greatest gift we can give is to listen deeply. The greatest gift we can receive is to be heard.

1.1 There is a renewed awareness of the practice of the presence of God within our Meetings

Do we allow enough time and a range of opportunities for Meeting for Worship? Can we rethink where, when and for how long?

Can this involve time away for spiritual nurture?

1.2 The Leadings of the Spirit require all our gifts of intellect, intuition and emotion. There is a new appreciation of Elders as midwives for spiritual rebirth.

<http://www.fgcquaker.org/traveling/>

What spiritual direction helps our daily practices?

How do we see this developing in our Meeting?

How do we use the Testimonies when testing a concern (inner &/or corporate)?

What processes do Friends have for right ordering of concerns?

1.3 Finding Quaker Voices may mean seeking the eternal meaning in both new language and in old.

How can we listen deeply to what seems strange?

What might open if we were to create our own media: fiction, news reporting, choir, documentary, screen-play, poetry, music, teaching materials?

1.4 What new ways - through technologies – are there of nurturing each other? Are we open to variations to old traditions that technology offers?

1.5 There are fresh understandings about the gifts of our bodies, our physical flexibility, sensuality and sexuality? How do these connect with our spiritual lives? Can

yoga <http://www.comparativereligion.com/Yoga.html> and expressive arts

<http://www.interplayaus.com.au/> liberate an awareness of beauty in creation?

1.6 Do able-bodied Friends underestimate the spiritual gifts and wisdom that disabled and chronically-ill Friends can offer the meeting? Do we ask all Friends what they want for their support and nurture?

1.7 We are living in noisy times. Does fear of Silence hold back the spread of the Quaker Way?

How does quiet confidence in the Divine show in our lives?

Are we finding new meaning in Healing Ministry? Are there changes from skepticism to a deeper recognition of wholeness?

Can the Spirit heal fear and depression brought on by environmental concern?

1.8 The more openly the Truth is spoken, the more troubled people can be.

How do we pay attention to the prophets "in our own country"? Are we optimistic about Australians finding 'their soul'?

How open are we really to new Light? How can we gird ourselves not to take attack and criticism personally?

Listening only to own voice can lead to arrogance. How do we keep from becoming precious about ourselves?

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over to Appendix 1

APPENDIX 1: Spiritual Nurture offered by Drew Lawson

*Expanding Our Tent
contemplative peace making*

*"Widen the space of your tent,
extend the curtains of your home, do not hold back."
Isaiah 54*

That is to say, open your hearts to include all of God's creation.

A journey from "us" and "them" to "we" and our sacred relationship.

Some of the words on the wall in the genocide memorial in Kigali, Rwanda, are these:

"If you knew who I was and you knew who you were you would not kill me."

The spiritual journey is an invitation to become one with each other and with God. For in knowing who we are ourselves, with each other and with God we help create peace on earth.

This experiential program will enable pilgrims to see others as their brothers and sisters. This is a program in contemplative peace making through inner transformation of our own hearts.

The program is designed for a week-long live-in retreat.

The theological underpinning is that all people are fundamentally good and by their very nature spiritual.

When we explore our spiritual life we discover that the invitation is to dig wells as opposed to building fences. Through an expansion of the awareness of our own heart we will discover our true selves and see each other in a new way and will gladly expand out tent.

Some of the themes/questions to be explored are:

When you look at others how do you react internally?

Who are you?

Do you know your own goodness?

Will you allow God to love you?

How large is your heart?

What are the blockages that constrain your heart?

The program will also include ongoing opportunities for private reflection and group sharing. We will end by considering the invitation God is now giving us and what vows we may wish to make to ourselves, our brothers and sisters, and to God.

A typical day will be -

- * breakfast
- * worship
- * morning session with input, spiritual exercise and sharing
- * lunch
- * time after lunch to reflect on the mornings experience and what is arising
- * late afternoon sharing session
- * evening meal
- * evening session [shorter than in the morning]
- * epilogue.

There will be silence from the end of epilogue until after worship the following morning.

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Drew is willing to travel in order to facilitate this program.

Maximum number of participants: 8

He is one of the founders of the Daybreak retreat house in Bendigo [Victoria] and of a Monastery Without Walls.

Drew works with people of all traditions. He is a member of the Religious Society of Friends [Quakers].

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2. TEACHING; TRAVELLING; LEADERSHIP

2.1 Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP <http://www.avpinternational.org>, <http://www.avp.org.au> , <http://www.avpusa.org>) has a philosophy and a process that affirms that all are teachers as well as learners. AVP has become a medium of growth for Friends and others. How does this successful process challenge the laissez-faire idea that 'anything goes'? Do we recognize that we have a valuable body of knowledge?

2.2 Adult schools were a feature of C19th English Quaker outreach. <http://www.infed.org/walking/wa-quak.htm> They taught basic literacy (which was the need of the time) and conveyed Christian values. www.infed.org/association/educational_settlements.htm

In early C20th, First Day Schools were important. Some Quaker adults and young people came to them for instruction in their faith and some preferred them to Meeting for Worship.

Are we to rethink our attitudes to instruction, for adults and children? Are there possibilities for communal service?

Would your Meeting consider supporting a traveling team (voluntary or paid) using various methods to encourage new or flagging Meetings? <http://www.fgcquaker.org/traveling>

We understand, from John Woolman's experience, the need for loving persistence when http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Woolman, we need to change. Friends have a long history of traveling in the ministry, of accompaniment and hosting travelers.

Have we listened to the experiences of those who travel under concern? Have we considered what it means to have a traveling companion?

over to 2.3

mandalas drawn at Brisbane QV workshop



2.3 As we encounter the ideas of Emergent <http://www.emergent.blogspot.com> and Convergent Friends we are offered ways to update our relationship with Jesus. <http://www.robinmsf.blogspot.com/2006/01/robinopedia-convergent-friends.html>. We remember the history of trauma and hope in Christianity. How do we talk about God and Jesus? If we became more aware of our distinctive Quaker theology, could we speak and share about it more courageously? Have we found ways to express our awareness and gratitude as learning about cosmology unfolds the story of the Universe? What Quaker certainties and ethics can we speak of and demonstrate when we work in the world? How do we stay firm on essentials?

2.4 Building links with other faith groups is part of our culture in C21st. How do we avoid the pitfalls of binary thinking, eg. right and wrong, peacemakers and aggressors? What can help us explore and accept essential differences, and not just seek similarities? Can we lovingly resist all fundamentalisms? What if we stopped hiding the fact that we listen for, and sometimes really hear, the divine voice? Why wouldn't we want to share this treasure? Maybe evangelism is about sharing. Our unique worship, distinctive history and theology, and splendid methods of creating community have led many of us to radical resistance. Are we informed enough to be realistic about our Quaker past?

2.5 Some Friends would appreciate a directory of interests whereby we can keep in touch and share in active supportive networks. Do we recognise and use (interstate and internationally) the expertise from many fields that is among us?

2.6 Care for our children seems to weigh on Friends. Some Yearly Meetings run school holiday programs and family camps <http://www.quakerinfo.org/quakerism/camps.html> where learning for growing up in C21 is the core curriculum – and fun. Some parents want local Quaker parenting courses <http://www.quakerparenting.org/> or play groups <http://www.fum.org/worldmissions/FriendsPlayCentrePalestine.htm>, where Quaker families can share their values.

Couple enrichment courses were held and welcomed in 2007. <http://www.fgcquaker.org/traveling/couples/index.html>
How can we learn of and respond to the needs of different Friends?

2.7 Communities are often resistant to change and those who stimulate change or take initiatives are often misunderstood. Leadership for change is challenging, full of dilemmas and tensions and doesn't come from those in authority. How do we nurture those who put themselves on the margin, in the Meeting or in society, for the sake of a greater good? <http://www.fgcquaker.org/library/fosteringmeetings/0402.html>

2.8 The Peace Testimony <http://www.quakerhouse.org/peace.html> implies a commitment to unity. The Spirit brings us together in oneness. Looking for a non-violent path is an essential part of spiritual discipline. How do we behave when we are in unity? What mechanisms do we have to deal with rifts? We used to have a book of Quaker Discipline. Australians do not like being told what to do, but what disciplines do we need?

2.9 How could YM committees increase their instructional and leadership roles for Friends?

(A fun website about Quakers in Shoreditch – song included!
www.mdx.ac.uk/WWW/STUDY/Quasho.htm)

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3. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN COMMUNITY

3.1 Seeking in the Silence and Nurturing the Spirit are gifts that can be cultivated. We have diversity among us. Our narratives/stories come from our experience and form our sense of what is real. Wisdom does not necessarily flow from intellectual and academic styles of thought. Intellectual pride can have the effect of blocking the Spirit and creating barriers between people.
Intellectual gifts + emotional intelligence + faith + body awareness = a mature religion.
How can we help each other find our own balance?

Some Friends have discovered a deeper silence through semi-programed meetings. A serious prediction is that Quakers will have a music-led recovery worldwide. We note the contribution Burundian Friends are already making to our worship. We have increasing connections with Asia-Pacific Friends. There are many Friends with USA experience, returning ex-patriots, new arrivals from the UK and a scattering of others who have had Quaker experiences while overseas.
How can we actively engage with the gifts of Friends from other countries and unfamiliar cultures?

3.2 The Web and new technology have opened new ways of connecting and nurturing us all, including new possibilities for isolated Friends.
How can we support the formation of new Meetings where isolated Friends live?
How do we learn how to be a Meeting?
We have been a 'do it yourself' religion but we can be open to asking for help in our learning curve. Beliefnet http://www.beliefnet.com/story/76/story_7665_1.html has shown that potential Quakers can find their affiliation through a questionnaire. Perhaps personality type tests (Enneagram, Myers Briggs) can clarify our identity, affiliation and outreach.

So much about the Quaker Way involves our Testimony to Community.
Healthy meetings are places for life-long belonging. Is our Meeting in a healthy state?
What might foster adventurous developments?

3.3 What does 'membership' of the Society mean, locally and beyond?
Is it mainly about questioning different ways of committing to the Spirit and the community?
Friends want to be open to all-comers, and we also ask 'open to what?' Is it so the Meeting can hold in a nurturing place those not ready?
Or is it about the journey of commitment and how we name our connectedness?

3.4 Inspired seekers, radical prophets among us do not necessarily find our Meetings safe for sharing their insights. How do our communities avoid dulling the brightness, extinguishing the sparks?

Our meetings are containers for people who are living with mental health disturbances. These experiences can lead to clarity about injustice and discrimination as well as the Presence of the Spirit. How can the Meeting accept spiritual clarity from wherever it comes?
Can Meetings flourish while spending a lot of energy on containing tensions and disturbing behaviour? How do we articulate the principles and practices that uphold spirit-led, egalitarian community?

Some people believe that being quiet about conflict is a way to keep the peace.
Is the vitality of community being held back by conflict and old wounds in Meetings? in individuals?
Can we identify some areas of conflict in our meeting which would be best brought into the open?
Worship-sharing on a past conflict which has present implications can help resolution and healing.
In what ways can Meetings help us address conflicts in other contexts?

3.5 Are we ready to create Quaker residential communities? long-term co-housing? places for short projects done in live-in community?
Is Meeting for Learning the base from which to build a Quaker teaching/learning/resource centre?
an Australian version of Woodbrooke or Pendle Hill - virtual, on-the-road, or a building

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4. PEOPLE CONNECTED BY SPECIAL INTERESTS

4.1 People in the Society are not homogeneous. Are we aware of many sub-groupings? How are our spiritual lives enriched by close sharing with like-minded Friends? Perhaps as we look at the issues around young people, some of the same questions arise around other interests or lifestyles.

4.2 Among Young Friends there are many who grew up in Quaker families, knowing each other. These Young Friends model a collective culture – an intense but occasional opportunity to nurture each other and themselves. What happens in their networks and gatherings that underpins their love for each other and their bonds of support? There are others who came as new attenders. Do convinced young people find a home among the ‘tribal’ Young Friends? How can connections be nurtured?

How does the Society recognize the potential of Young Friends to energise our Meetings? How does Young Friends being part of Standing Committee offer opportunities for mutual exchange and sharing?

How can we make safe creative spaces to share our experiences of the Spirit, beliefs, questions and visions, skills and perspectives?

4.3 While growing towards independence, many young adults don’t attend Friends Meetings. How can we open our community be vital and available, especially as young families make choices among many options?

4.4 Is it time to ask Young Friends and others with special interests to present a Backhouse Lecture - as a collective? a representative? or an individual voice? Would Australian Friends offer financial support for the process?

4.5 What are the conditions where special interest groups don’t become divisive?

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QV workshop participants at Northern Rivers NSW



plaque to indigenous pre-occupation, at Brisbane Meeting House

5. TESTIMONIES AND ETHICS www.quaker.us/testimonies.html

5.1 Faith comes first – then action flows. Therefore we need to consider the Testimonies on a spiritual level as well as the action level. Service is a leading, not a choice.
<http://www.quakerjane.org/spirit.friends/spirituality-glossary.html> How can our lives be patterns and examples for future human community on Earth?

Testimonies are said to come out of struggle and conflict. They are worked through by community, as it follows leadings with discernment.

There are many contemporary issues that offer challenges to our testimonies and need wise, seasoning by Friends. Friends are concerned about many Burning Issues (see list attached) that challenge our understanding of the Testimonies. Do the issues facing humanity show where the Spirit is leading today? Many Friends are on the cutting edges of progressive thought. How can we learn from them?

5.2 Peace

Some of our struggles in Australia come from our history as a colonising nation, which took land from the original owners. What happens when we fail to notice the effect the dominant culture has - in ourselves and in society more broadly – on our indigenous and migrant neighbours? At the same time, we Quakers are also a minority which resists the dominant culture. How and what do we try to reform and influence? How do we see our minority status: a gift or a limitation? The Quaker family world-wide is multicultural, and with many ways of expressing our faith. How can we engage with these parts of our heritage?

<http://www.richmondfriends.org/History/AAQuakers.htm>,

<http://www.fgcquaker.org/library/racism/billbrown.html>

Many Friends work with secular agencies and faith groups on mediation and peacework. How often do we turn to them for help in solving disputes within Meetings?

How do we see religion in relation to immigration and race relations – the peaceable community?

Alternatives to Violence Project and Help Increase the Peace Project are very important to many Friends - why?

5.2 Equality

In what ways does this testimony help to

a) learn from Gay and Lesbian members, <http://www.quakers.org.au/files/pamphlets/G&L3.pdf>,
<http://www.swarthmore.edu/Library/friends/ead/4091flgc.xml>

b) respect our Burundian and Rwandan Friends' evangelical tradition
<http://quakereastafrica.blogspot.com>, www.aglionline.org and knowledge of the Bible?

over to 5.2c)

- a) their trauma?
- b) build links between faiths http://www.quakers.org.au/about_interfaith.shtml
- c) respect the differences originating from social class and less education
<http://www.quakerclass.blogspot.com/>
- d) include marginalized people.

5.3. Simplicity and Integrity

These Testimonies affect our attitudes to money. We make many compromises. Our differing attitudes to material things may seem inexplicable. How much do they account for divisions in Meetings?

Are we ready to question our attitudes to Meeting property and money and see how our differences are standing in the way of living experimentally?

Do we see Meetings-without-property as 'real' meetings?

How are our Meeting Houses being used today? How will they be used in the future? How do we divide our own cake?

Ending poverty and affluence is a personal aim for some Friends - for our spiritual health and for the sake of planet's health. How do we underpin the witness of those who choose not to accumulate goods (car, computer, mobile, house)?

Poverty, population and ecology have global implications and Quaker Service Australia is working against globalisation and capitalism (sugar, salt and debt).

How does QSA http://www.quakers.org.au/about_quaker_service.shtml demonstrate to us the present-day issues of development and peacemaking? Does QSA skill us for choosing priorities for our own labour and gifts?

The passion of a few has helped us create an Earth statement.

http://www.quakers.org.au/about_earthcare.shtml. Australian Quakers have world leaders in Permaculture <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/encounter/default.htm> and climate change

<http://www.quakers.org.au/> How can we use their knowledge to develop our corporate witness to the Australian environment? How can we help each other to change our ways of living, whatever the costs?

We are experiencing the value of improved means of communication and computer technology. How high on our list of priorities is helping people get computer access?

The work of some Australian Friends means they are seeing the impact of climate change, corruption and global finance on small, poor, neighbouring nations. How do we hear these Friends?

Do we get full value from the exchange visits between AYM and Aotearoa/NZ YM, and how can we collaborate with their experts? <http://www.quaker.org.nz/>





6. National and regional arrangements

Relationships between Meetings

6.1 Our theology requires us to rely on the movement of the Spirit in face-to-face meetings for worship – first and foremost locally.

Are we asking the Spirit what it requires of us as a Quaker community?

The Religious Society of Friends is not a 'top-down' organisation. Friends avoid fixed hierarchies.

Does the three-layer structure (local/state-based/national Meetings) express the theocracy we claim?

How are small country meetings thriving? http://www.quakers.org.au/pubs_handbook4.shtml

Are capital city meetings over-burdened by business?

Would Australian Friends be better served by having several smaller Yearly Meetings, some not being centred on a capital city?

Alternatively, could Regional Meetings be more autonomous?

6.2 The role of the RM Clerk is becoming more complex.

What can we do when we see the RM Clerk becoming exhausted?

Could local meetings take more responsibility for the work of Friends and be more autonomous on locally-discerned concerns?

How would we maintain a national voice? How would this change Yearly Meeting events?

Do we want our large gatherings to be mainly devoted to worship, programs for children and young people, group study and sharing, rejoicing in fun and play and being creative together?

When might we try a biennial or triennial general conference?

Our huge cities have many villages in them. How can we come to terms with big city costs? Are we classist or prejudiced about where we might meet? Are we willing to plant meetings in new places?

<http://plaininthecity.blogspot.com/2007/08/karl-marx-carl-communist-quakers.html>

National processes

Australia is blessed by having the national tradition of a strong annual gathering which carries forward the business of the Religious Society of Friends, as well as providing a time for meeting in the things that are eternal. Because the event rotates around the States, many have the opportunity to make Friendships across state boundaries. The effort is also shared among many Friends and so experimentation is possible through the one-off use of different venues. However, Friends question the financial and ecological cost of travel, and the effort involved in finding and adapting to each different setting.

The priority given to the national event has kept the Yearly Meeting body simple and low-cost. We employ one person to do the daily administration with some part-time assistance, but everything else that keeps our national body functioning is done voluntarily.

6.3 What are our feelings about our current priorities and ways of holding Yearly Meeting:

- the spiritual depth,
- balance with business,
- frequency,
- time of year,
- community-building,
- accommodation?

6.4 The YM Secretary works 100 hours in the 9 days of a YM event, and so participates in only a few parts of the program. Some of her work requires specialised skills and cannot be done by short-term

volunteer helpers. We want to have her presence and input at many YM activities.
How can the load and the privilege of this service to YM be spread more widely?

6.5 The YM Secretary's monthly Newsletter is sent free (by email or post) to all who ask for it. The Australian Friend is sent quarterly to Members and those who subscribe to it. These two forms of national communication are important for sharing news, spiritual life and support of concerns.
How might we use creatively all media – website, video, film, blog, writing, translations for AWPS?

6.6 Many Friends do not see the work or relevance of Standing Committee. This may not be surprising since its role is limited to finalizing decisions on matters referred by YM and already discussed by Regional Meetings. Many USA YMs delegate a lot of decision-making to an equivalent of Standing Committee and rely on paid staff for administrative work. (check handbook)

Does Standing Committee limit and slow down the Australian Quaker voice?
Is it a mechanism that could be extended to relieve the annual YM event of decision-making?

Decision-making

6.7 Friends around the country feel a pressing need for time and opportunities to explore their gifts, passion, perspective and vision. Sometimes, painfully, their need is not met, or even known, in their own meeting.
Do we feel that some leadings have been lost or discouraged recently in our meeting?

6.8 Some Yearly Meetings allow new issues or proposals from the floor.
How do we attend to the Spirit's work in all the business that arises?
How can emerging ideas be tested at YM?

6.9 Members of the Church of the Savior, Washington DC, can take action if there is one other member willing to work on it too. This leads to a rich brew of small innovations to which people can contribute while they feel led.
Do we respond well to individual and small group leadings? How can we use our processes to encourage the energy and skill of Australian Friends?
How do we affirm, support and learn from the achievements and dilemmas of Friends whose work is their main expression of Quaker faith?

6.10 YM committees are formed for different purposes and hosted by a Regional Meeting for an agreed number of years:
- to manage national finances and support the National Office
- to perform national activities for AYM (such as Publications, Australian Friend, Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) Asia West Pacific Section (AWPS), book sales, Meeting for Learning, and to administer special-purpose Funds owned by Yearly Meeting.
- to represent Australian Friends' concerns, eg. Indigenous Concerns, Peace, often acting with local knowledge and contacts, and the leadership of individual Friends.

How do we follow, contribute to and learn from the work of YM Committees?

6.11 Short-term groups or networks are also set up to work on a policy issue, such as the Earthcare Statement, http://www.quakers.org.au/about_earthcare.shtml. child protection, sexual misconduct, and nationally-consistent insurance. These attract expert energetic input over a finite period.
Are there new ways in which we can discern and express our corporate voice and uphold our national organisation?

6.12 We also have independent bodies which keep links with the YM event, such as Quaker Service Australia, The Friends School, Fellowship of Healing, and AVP. Reports are received and encouragement given at YM.
Do we want a deeper dialogue?

6.13 Preparatory sessions were introduced into the YM agenda about 20 years ago to give more time for consideration of YM activities and deeper sharing about the plans of committees. They pave the way for the Business session, at which the YM minute(s) can be settled. Some Friends feel that Preparatory sessions have become the real decision-making time and that YM minutes may not reflect the richness of the interactions.

Is this way of upholding our concerns and committees working well? Are modern management expectations affecting our leadings? Do we want to hold longer Summer Schools, or conferences on specific, challenging topics?

6.14 Who follows up on any questions of method or process that come up in the Yearly Meeting Pastoral

Care Committee?

Would the formal recognition of some Yearly Meeting Elders be helpful:

- a) to uphold the worship and purposes of YM events?
- b) to pray for the right use of YM resources?
- c) to discern the need for study, retreats and visiting?
- d) to encourage and uphold Meetings which are struggling with great difficulties?

Appendix 2 to QV 2008 document

BURNING ISSUES of C21st

These are unfiltered, informal Australian Friends' responses to the question:
How do we express our values today in response to the burning issues C21?

Peace

Fear to non-violence
Violence as a public health issues
War and peace X2
How to train ourselves in non-violent crowd management?
Terrorism X2 – individual armed attacks in cities
Increasing Religious fundamentalism X2 and forsaking of thought
Wars and international tensions X2 and peace
Motor sports

Non-violence, prisons & indigenous communities
Peace/violence In/between communities - detachment
Peace over scant resources
Resources into high tech weaponry
Increasing fear of alien - alienation - violence X2
Security built on capacity to cause pain
Arms trade and military spending
Slavery

Global political

Big picture from children to the UN 'we forget how powerful we are'
Global empires
Global balance of power - dying US empire
Finding the way to live with China and India
Western economic collapse – inequality and poverty
Reappraise Western democracy

Indigenous rights and determination
Increasing inequality
Massive unemployment, recession/depression
Too many people – famine, wars slavery
Globalisation, power of corporations
Domination of world's abundance

Environment, Resources and Survival

International, political, moral & spiritual issues of climate change
Environmental crises, consumerism and care of planet
Future of life on earth
Reduction of CO2
Liberal capitalism, means to ends?
Extravagant 'standard of living'
Refugees from environmental disaster X2
Climate change X10, peak oil, food production, relocation, new energy systems, Hopelessness from thought about climate change
Disconnect depression
Environmental depression
International cooperation over climate change
Wild fire risk

Energy production and energy-based economy
Regional food reduced, new organisation needed
Over-population X4 –depletion of non-sustainable resources X2, population movements
Maintaining sustainable communities
Water X4 – shortages, storage, distribution, pollution
City planning
Public transport X2
Technology -> greater exploitation
Technological crises/breakdown eg internetX2, phone

Health

Public health crises X3
Centralised medical services
Mal-nutrition, obesity X2 & starvation
Overuse of medical services by some
Medical indemnity
Major accidents

DNA replication
Aboriginal health
Illicit drugs/alcohol
Ageing population
Pandemics, poison escape

Justice

Human rights over all
Injustice 'speak truth to power'

Equal sharing of world's resources
Equitable distribution of foreign aid

Mix of traditional & Western decision-making methods (Pac & East Timor)
Colonization acknowledged & atoned
Justice for Indigenous
'Pleas for Poor', living with doubt
Refugees' human rights

Accommodating new arrivals
Political change with new federal government
Regain losses – fair go, trust, repentance
Technologies for inclusiveness, learning, discernment

Children & Young People

Children's views and voices
Including children
Child protection
Nurturing young people
Bringing children into joy

Computer skills to young people in developing countries
Education X2 - state
Child abuse

More challenges

Speak our truths
Conflict resolution among Friends
Materialism X2 v spiritual challenge
Spiritual direction

Complacency
Independence of media
Violence without remorse

Appendix 3

Some Australian references

Sandy Parker *The Australian Friend* March 2007 The Meeting Community
Margaret Crane 2008 WARM Friends Futures Report





photo by Sheila Keane

Quaker Voices in the C21 so far <http://www.voices.quakers.org.au/>

1. Care of the Concern 'we' means Helen and Katherine

An AYM08 minute includes an indication that all Regional Meetings support Katherine and Helen's work as 'ministry under concern'. 'We have heard a range of concerns and fundamental issues facing Friends abroad: for example the role of Meetings in supporting ministry particularly from young people; and the price of speaking Truth – discomfort, deprivation and even death. <http://www.quakers.org.au/files/DIR08.pdf>. Each RM has responsibility for QVC21.

We have laid down the Spiritual Nurturers Group and have asked for a Committee of Care of 2-4 Friends (on a model from Canada YM <http://quaker.ca/discipline/Chap5-8.pdf>). Three Friends have agreed to meet monthly with us, playing a midwife's role of accompaniment, nurture, and care. We also expect to consult with individuals and correspondents across Australia, at other times and by email.

In addition, Canberra Regional Meeting has appointed an Accountability Committee, selected by CRM Nominations Committee.

2. How the process has developed

The Quaker Voices process is about re-finding the source of our Voice to action rather than the possible actions themselves. There is work to be done to get the inspiration flowing, discerned and supported so that we can all express our Quaker Voice, both individually and corporately.

We have been excited by the eldering workshops and healing meetings held by Regional Meetings under the tender leadership of Elaine Emily.

We want to explore how each inward leading can be tested, clarified and supported so that everything we do is recognisable as a Quaker Voice.

Steps taken in 2007 and being carried forward:

Communications: We have a blog <http://www.voices.quakers.org.au/> and want to develop and maintain the material on the YM website.

A 50 minute video of 'Peace out of Turmoil' sessions given by Gerry Guiton to Canberra RM in April is in production, being edited by Chris Warner. This will be made available to RMs as an aid to discussion of the Peace Testimony.

In early April 2007, we sent a first mail-out - a study pack of questions and stimulus material <http://www.quakers.org.au/files/Quaker%20Voices%20C21.pdf>, which was designed to open up a very wide canvas of ideas and to encourage worshipping groups to engage in deep conversations and discussions together. We see a need for stimulus and discussion materials for individuals and local meetings.

We gradually gathered names of those very interested in the project and sent them notes of the Spiritual Nurturers meetings. Correspondents are still wanted from each Local Meeting.

Visits: While visiting interstate we held workshops and meetings, and visited Friends informally. We emphasised spiritual growth and deep sharing of Friends' visions as well as trying to hold a trusting space for sharing deeper experiences and exploring difficulties.

In the communication exercises, we using different sized groupings, to demonstrate how effectively new and experienced Friends can be nurtured in an inclusive community. These visit have been a gift.

Retreat for Discernment: During the first week of February 08 we went on retreat and worked for five days, three of them with Jenny Spinks, to consider the material collected during 07 from workshops, conversations, surveys, personal reading etc and to discern our way forward for 2008. After noting and clustering input from a variety of sources, we prepared the rest of this document, including significant ideas and trends, as well as our impressions and inspirations. We felt very excited and honoured to see how this whole experience was coming together

With writings, drawings and reports offered by Quaker Voices participants we are beginning to see a potential for a new YM publication – perhaps with a title '*this we are saying*'.

We expect to lay down this part of the concern at YM 09 and hope that the energy will continue In Regional Meetings for

Are there words or ideas in this document that made you feel uncomfortable? Can you unwrap that uneasiness?

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Quaker Voices C21

April 2008

Canberra

