



Give Your Own Unique Gifts

You each have your work to do on different levels. Therefore never try to compare yourself with anyone else, or to compete with anyone else, but give of your own unique gifts in your own unique way. You are not all of the same mould; you are all different. Realise this, give thanks for it, and then go and use those gifts which are specifically yours for the benefit of the whole.

Judge not what you have to give, just give it. Too much time is wasted weighing up the pros and cons. Let your actions be spontaneous, prompted by the freedom of the spirit and not carefully calculated and worked out. Let go, enjoy life, and let God work through you.

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EDITORIAL

IN THIS ISSUE, THE MAIN FEATURED ARTICLES ARE:-

- Epistles from AYM and JYM; Quakers and the peacebuilding commission, and peacebuilding efforts in Friends Center in Ramallah.

The other short pieces include news about S. Korean Conscientious objectors getting help from the UN and a short piece by Harvey Gillman about making connections the Quaker way which points to the essence of Quaker faith in practice!

This brings to my mind what [Thomas Merton](#) works some of which I have been reading recently. Thomas Merton says—"Whatever I may have written, I think it all can be reduced in the end to this one root truth: that God calls human persons to union with Himself and with one another in Christ" One way of finding God's purpose for us is as Jesus has shown us ,that we must learn the habit of watching and listening; that is to say attending to God's living Word and docility to his Spirit living and active in our daily lives; in other words, having a consciousness of God and his purpose in our daily lives!

Near the end of his life Thomas Merton also combined this search for man's true identity and the traditional metaphor of life as a journey together. He wrote:-- "Our task now is to learn that if we can voyage to the ends of the earth and there find in the aborigine who most differs from ourselves, we will have made a fruitful pilgrimage... Mere sitting at home and meditating on the divine presence is not enough in our time. We have to come to the end of a long journey and see that the stranger we meet there is no other than ourselves—which is the same as saying that we find Christ in him"

If the Triennial is soon upon us, can our own section gathering be far behind. So please watch out for announcements about the details of our Section Gathering in Bhopal August 2008, the theme of which as approved by the committee:--*SEEKING TOGETHER WITH HOPE: WORKING TOGETHER WITH DELIGHT*

Your Friend and servant, Kenneth Co

WHAT IF GOD SAID

By Joann

**Take this and hold it close,
That I believe in you.
I who know you well.
I have stood beside you, in your hell;
I have watched you stumble, learn and grow;
I have seen you stub your tender toe.**

**Others judge you, criticize, condemn,
And you will help them;
You may say -yes- you're right,
I failed. I am no good.**

**With ease I can forgive the others
Because they do not know, but you.....
You and I we know the Power and the Glory
That only sometimes you let show**

**So if in days to come
Your fears rise up anew -
Then – take this and hold it close
That I believe in you.**

**I know that you believe in me,
In what I feel, in what I see,
So if you love me, hear me,
My faith fights your fears;
Take this—and hold it close—
I believed in you for years.**



AUSTRALIAN YEARLY MEETING EPISTLE

QUAKERS AUSTRALIA THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY
OF FRIENDS (QUAKERS) IN AUSTRALIA Inc.

Australia Yearly Meeting Epistle from Yearly Meeting January 2007 Hobart Tasmania From a drought-ravaged land we gathered at the Friends' School in Hobart, Tasmania, on a day of steady downpour. Inconvenience went unnoticed; we rejoiced to feel the blessing of rain on the earth and on our faces, a fresh reminder of our connection to the whole Creation. This relationship to the Earth was reaffirmed in our first session when we were privileged to be welcomed to the land of the Mouheneener people by Aunty Eva Richardson.

Our Yearly Meeting of 316 people aged from 9 months to 99 years was enriched by the presence of visitors from Aotearoa/New Zealand, Britain and the United States, by Friends who have come to Australia from Burundi and by a Muslim guest. The many diverse and creative sessions of Summer School were collectively titled Finding the Way, a phrase that expressed our explorations throughout the week. The 2007 Backhouse Lecture emphasized the need to nurture the space where leadings flow through silence and simplicity, while the State of the Society address asked pertinently: Is our Quaker everyday life too full to take time to support the concern for wholeness of body, mind and spirit? Are we overtaxing our energy and resources? Along with the need for inner nurture came a reconsideration of our relation to the world outside the Society. Presentations by members of the British Quaker Quest program challenged us to explore what we, actually, can say from our experience to those enquiring about Quakerism. The exploration of how 21st century Quaker voices might speak revealed the complexity and challenges involved, overturning some cherished assumptions but offering new opportunities. This healthy discomfort was reflected in discussions of the future use of property owned by the Society. The Maori name given to Aotearoa/New Zealand Yearly Meeting, Te Haahi Tuuhauwiri, translated as 'the church that shakes in the winds of the

spirit', has a strong message for us all. The concerns of peace, justice and responsibility for the environment were powerfully presented by our Donald Groom Fellow and the Peace Committee, by a personal account of peace-making in Hebron, by the Indigenous Concerns group, by Quaker Service Australia and in the urgency of the move to formulate an Earth Testimony. Throughout, we were prompted again and again to listen to the earth, the sky, the wind, and each other, acknowledging our interdependence and responsibility. The South African greeting Sawubona, meaning 'I see you/I see that of God in you' expressed succinctly the mutual respect and deep connectedness that we seek. The energy and creativity generated by our children, Junior Young Friends and Young Friends gave us a profound trust in the renewal of the Society and our responsibility to nurture and receive Truth from our young people and to share in their gladness. The Chorale, Peace, composed especially for this Yearly Meeting provided a joyful description of peace in terms of natural beauty. In celebrating the ten years since the completion of the UK Quaker tapestry, reflected in the intricate steps of Scottish dances, and in looking forward to the possibility of an Australian tapestry, we were reminded that, like the changing weather patterns of rain, cloud and sunlight, the darker threads of our anxiety, even despair, about war, continuing injustices to our Indigenous peoples and throughout the world, and the destruction of our environment are interwoven with the bright threads of courage, hope and empowerment to make up the rich fabric of our Meeting.



JAPAN YEARLY MEETING EPISTLE

To Friends Everywhere:

The two- day gathering of the annual session of the JYM was at the Tokyo Meetinghouse on Saturday, November 11th, and Sunday 12th. For our common theme we choose: "To be worthy of 'Friends.'"(John 15:15)

The first question we dealt with was that of whether to prepare our own version of "Faith and Practice." We have not had a publication of this sort in our yearly meeting. Suggestions were made and the outline detailing our beliefs, practices and structures was discussed in earnest.

This year marks the 120th year of Quaker mission in Japan. We deliberated the issues which are meant to meet the changes of time. They included a restructuring of the yearly meeting, the financial difficulties, and the renovation of the Friends Center Building which was built way back in 1922. Sometimes discussions were very heated. However, it was agreed that the renovation of the FC building. will be commenced, the cost covered mainly by donation we have received from Akasaka Church with whom we have a long association and to whom we have given the piece of land long in their use.

The shrinking membership and the deficit financing running over the past five year span are dual problems with which we are most concerned. In our deliberations during the session we have discussed these issues open-heartedly. Admitting there are differences of opinion, we have renewed our commitment to search and reach a united view upon these and other matters as well. This is a test measuring whether we are living up to our faith as members of the Society of Friends.

The Nitobe Memorial Lecture for this year following the annual session was given by a noted social worker, Kyoko Matsuoka... We will yet encounter difficulties, large and small, but we shall go forward with renewed trust in divine guidance and strength rendered us.

Yours truly,
Sachiko Yamamoto,
Clerk, The JYM of the Religious Society of Friends.



HUMAN RIGHTS IN SOUTH KOREA

Human Rights Action Taken by the UN.

Conscientious objection has been recognised by the United Nations as a human right protected by international law.

Two South Korean conscientious objectors, imprisoned for refusing to join the army, had had their right to free expression of their religious

beliefs violated, said the UN's Human Rights Committee. It ordered the government to compensate them and ensure this does not happen again.

A full analysis of this case appeared in a briefing paper produced by the Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva. It is available for download from www.quno.org. For the first time the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations has unequivocally stated that conscientious objection to military service is a right protected by international human rights law.

The decision came about as the result of a case brought to the Committee by two South Korean conscientious objectors (COs). South Korea has compulsory conscription with no alternative for COs and the two men, both Jehovah's Witnesses (who are pacifist), argued that their right to free expression of their religious beliefs was being denied.

After their case was rebuffed by every court in South Korea, the men, Yeo-Bum Yoon and Myung-Jin Choi, took their argument to the UN. On 3rd November 2006 the Human Rights Committee, which oversees and interprets the relevant treaty (the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)) stated that South Korea's practice of denying any alternative to military service and imprisoning those who refused to perform it violated their rights under Article 18 of the ICCPR and ordered the Korean government to compensate the men and ensure that this does not happen again.

Tom Coyner.



FIC IN RAMALLAH

Friends International Centre, Ramallah, Palestine
A lot of exciting initiatives are being taken by Ramallah Quaker Meeting. Details are in the first issue of their electronic Newsletter which came out in early February.

In 2005, a workshop of Ramallah Friends and visiting Friends developed the vision of a Friends International Centre. Their aim is

to lift up and nurture the Quaker presence, to support the local community and to do peace and justice work in the region.

During 2006, funds were raised with the help of Philadelphia and Baltimore YMs to engage a full time worker, Kathy Bergen. Now the FICR, under the care of Ramallah Meeting, is beginning to work with the many NGOs and civil society groups in the region, with its ministry of hospitality, respectful discourse and witness to hope and reconciliation: "We seek to express the deepest values and highest aspirations of the Quaker faith." Ramallah Meeting is small because many Palestinian Quakers live abroad. However it receives lots of visitors, including Christian Peacemaker Teams and Ecumenical Accompaniers. Other visitors are keen to learn about the long history of Quakers in the region. Recent activities include lectures, concerts, and carol singing in Arabic and English. Now the Centre has commenced a campaign against the travel and visa policies of the Israeli Government which prevent Palestinians from leaving and re-entering their country.

A web-page will be launched soon and the e-newsletter is available from <ficr@palnet.com>

Helen Bayes

SECTION FINANCES – THE GOOD NEWS

The accounts for 2006 have been virtually finalised and will be audited soon. We ended the year with a small positive balance, due largely to the generosity of Friends in the Section. Yearly Meetings, Monthly Meetings, Worshipping Groups and individual Friends all rose to the challenge of meeting our commitments for administration. Interest from reserves made up the rest of our income.

So far this year, we are doing well. Please would you ask your 'group' to consider matching their magnificent effort of last year, and send us an annual donation? Regular donations make planning for our work a bit less nail-biting!

I will send out the audited accounts for 2006 to all the affiliated Yearly Meetings as soon as they are available. If any Friend would like a copy, please email me on tevans@c130.aone.net.au and I will send it either by post or email.

Topsy Evans
Treasurer, AWPS



FUNDRAISING EFFORT

Fundraising is always what we hope someone else will do - or we simply hope that money will be donated, without any special effort from ourselves. At the same time, we can't help knowing that if we had more funds we could do so much more to support Quaker meetings in our region, and to offer information and a caring welcome to interested enquirers.

At our last Gathering, in Seoul, we asked Helen Bayes, an Australian Friend, to help raise funds for the Section so that we can carry out what we are called to do. Helen believes we need to set a fund-raising target based on plans we make in advance about our priorities. She also believes we need to put a joint effort into finding sympathetic individuals and asking for generous donations from them, in every country where we have meetings.

Helen and the AWPS Treasurer, Topsy Evans, are now asking for your help with these first questions - how much money do we want and how would we use it if we had it?

There are some ideas which have been often raised and perhaps should have priority:

- **a well-designed and lively Website**

We need to include all sorts of information which would bring us closer together, and increase our understanding of each other's thinking and cultures. Valerie is already working hard at setting up a website, but it

will need maintenance, and in our view, the contents should be available in several languages.

- **translation of basic Quaker documents into our main languages**

Translation is a difficult job, particularly when what is being translated is full of metaphors and mysterious meaning! So we need money for professional help in producing translations for use on the website, and for use by local meetings.

- **intervisitation**

We need funds to encourage travel among Friends in our Section, for example to assist Friends, in pairs, to visit another Yearly Meeting. How could we start some arrangements for regular intervisitation between our Meetings?

- **special support for Young Friends**

Young Friends have been discussing the wish for work camps where they can meet, work and get to know one another. They would need funds for travel, living costs and perhaps the necessary materials.

These are our first thoughts, and we would be very interested to hear what you think of them. Of course if you also have other suggestions, and ideas about fund-raising, we would like to hear them also.

We ask you to give this matter your prayerful consideration, and talk about it with the members of your Meeting. We will be delighted to hear from you.

Helen Bayes <baymor@cyberone.com.au>
and Topsy Evans <em502752@a1.com.au>



SECTION NEWS

Prime Minister Han Myeong-Sook, wife of Joon Park has resigned. It is speculated that she did so in order to prepare herself to be a candidate for the presidential election in December of this year.

Elizabeth Duke has contributed to the booklet for the Triennial in Dublin. Her main theme is that God's prophetic voice speaks yesterday, today, and tomorrow—repent, reconcile and renew. The booklet is to be used in worship sharing groups at the Triennial in Dublin for discussion and also can be used in Meetings for study purposes, in support of the Triennial.

Aletia Dundas of Australia YM, currently working with QUNO in Geneva, has written a succinct article published in THE FRIEND, a weekly magazine in Britain Yearly Meeting. The title of her article is:-- Quakers and the UN Peacebuilding Commission: the beginning of a beautiful friendship?

Topsy Evans will be traveling to Geneva for QUNO meetings, in October 2007. On her way to Switzerland, she will stop by Hong Kong, and then on her way back she will stop in Johannesburg, S. Africa. Thus she will do a little inter-visitation en-route.

Valerie Joy plans to go to Kenya sometime this summer. The purpose of her visit is to thrash out ways of co-operation with the Section of Africa. It is hoped that FWCC Africa will send two representatives to our section gathering in Bhopal. So Valerie's trip is aimed at discussing, and laying ground work for details of this co-operative effort between Section of Africa and AWPS!

Kenneth Co will be joining the FWCC Section of the Americas annual meeting in Providence Rhode Island, in the U.S. from March 14th to 17th. Besides being present in their midst as a representative from AWPS, one of the aims is to find out from them how their fund raising effort has progressed so far. He will report back to the section committee.

THE FENCE

There was a little boy with a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, to hammer a nail in the back fence. The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Then it gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to hold his temper than to drive those nails into the fence. Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it, and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to hold his temper. The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all the nails were gone. The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said, "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. You can put a knife in a man and draw it out. It won't matter how many times you say I'm sorry, the wound is still there. A verbal wound is as bad as a physical one."



USE OF THE CAR

A young boy had just got his driver's permit and inquired of his father, an evangelist, if they could discuss the use of the car. His father took him to the study and said to the boy, "I'll make a deal with you, Son. You bring your grades up from a C to a B-average, study your Bible a little, and get your hair cut and we'll talk about the car."

The boy thought about that for a moment and decided that he'd best settle for the offer, and they agreed.

After about six weeks the boy came back and again asked his father about the car. Again they went to the study where his father said, "Son, I've been real proud of you. You've brought your grades up, and I've observed that you've been studying your Bible and participating a lot more in the Bible study class on Sunday morning. But I'm real disappointed seeing as you haven't got your hair cut."

The young man paused a moment and then said, "You know, Dad, I've been thinking about that, and I've noticed in my studies of the Bible that Sampson had long hair. Moses had long hair; John the Baptizer had long hair, and there's even strong argument that Jesus Himself had long hair."

To which his father replied, "You're right, son, and did you also notice that they all WALKED everywhere they went?"

IF I HAD MY CHILD TO RAISE OVER AGAIN

If I had my child to raise all over again,
I'd build self-esteem first, and the house later.
I'd finger-paint more, and point the finger less.
I would do less correcting and more connecting.
I'd take my eyes off my watch and watch with my eyes.
I would care to know less and know to care more.
I'd take more hikes and fly more kites.
I'd stop playing serious, and seriously play.
I would run through more fields and gaze at more stars.
I'd do more hugging and less tugging.
I'd see the oak tree in the acorn more often.
I would be firm less often, and affirm much more.
I'd model less about the love of power,
and more about the power of love.



- Author unknown

OTHER QUAKER NEWS – click links to read

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FAMOUS QUAKERS

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INTERESTING PEOPLE

QUAKER MILITARY GENERAL EXPOSES THE WAR RACKET

At the time of his death, the most decorated Marine in U.S. history.



[The Fighting Quaker](#)

MAKING CONNECTIONS

by Harvey Gillman

The Quaker way seems to me to be a unique coming together of contents of which much may be found elsewhere. We are not alone in silent worship; we are not alone in the way we conduct our business, we are not alone in our peace, social, and environmental and other testimonies; we are not alone in talking of the spark of the divine in each person. We are not alone in our stress on what...[is called] "right living". What we have done however, is to make a direct connection between all of these activities and beliefs. In fact, to me they are entirely holistic. The fact that there is something sacred in each person (which I am happy to call that of God or even the spirit of Christ as does our Advice and Queries) leads us to open ourselves to this sacred spark in our worship, and to each other as equals, men and women, young and old irrespective of social status or sexual orientation in worship and business. This means that all are part of the decision process and that none has a more "religious" function than another.

This in turn leads us to go out into the world to share and live out these insights with the whole of the planet and its inhabitants. It is the stress on the interconnection of these modes of being which is at the heart of the Quaker way, and this is the case in other Quaker traditions where connections are made in different ways....It is both a vision of the divine and an embrace of the human. As far as I am concerned, the real question is not how we define God (theistically or non-theistically), but how we answer that of God in each other. All the rest is commentary. Quoted from **THE FRIEND** 14TH JULY, 2006

If undelivered please return to:

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