



1. The Inward Life of Worship and Discernment

“If we are to have even a glimpse of the innermost and unspeakable joys of the spirit – if we are to rise above pain and sorrow and bitterness into the pure serenity of heaven within – if we are to “know that He is God” – we must be still ... No clear impressions, either from above or from without, can be received by a mind turbid with excitement and agitated by a crowd of distractions. The stillness needed for the clear shining of light within is incompatible with hurry.” Caroline Stephen (1908)

This year the Meeting has continued its rebuilding journey, as the wider community also adjusts to the presence of COVID variants. At the end of September 2022 there were 82 members of CRQ, 84 attenders and 36 children and JYFs of the Meeting were living in our area, as were 19 members of other RMs and YMs. Twelve of CRQ’s members live outside CRQ’s area. The Membership Secretary distributes information to Friends by email, and maintains the membership records. One Friend was accepted into membership. There were no transfers or deaths of members.

The over-commitment experienced by many in our society extends to many in the Quaker community also. The call for quiet reflection and discernment is sidelined for some Friends by the attention required by work, family and other commitments. Even those in our community who have retired from employment, are challenged to find time for private worship and reflection as they attend to the diverse needs of family, Friends and community.

The Meeting gathered feedback in May from Friends about the provision of online Meetings for Worship. As with many other aspects of our Meeting, the need for additional volunteers to facilitate the online meeting was identified to relieve the reliance on a few. A large flat screen and AV system was donated for the Meeting Room of the North Canberra Meeting, and the auditory experience has improved for people with hearing impairment. This will be tried for 6 months, and reviewed in December 2022.

In-person Meetings for Worship resumed in the region late in 2021, and numbers are starting to build again. Most meetings in North Canberra, both for worship and committee work, offer a hybrid format. A mid-week Meeting for Worship is held for half an hour early every Wednesday morning, currently via Zoom. This attracts a small but faithful group, with some visitors from interstate.

The 9.15 am Sunday meeting in Canberra is in person only. The Southside Meeting meets twice monthly in the Senior Citizens Centre in Tuggeranong. The worshipping group in Wagga Wagga meets monthly, and usually includes lunch and discussion of a passage from “This we can say” in its gatherings. The Ministry Committee, which includes a member in Wagga, continues its monthly learning circle, during which elders discuss writings from Quaker and other faith traditions.

As a result of COVID, the Ministry Committee has maintained contact with worshipping groups beyond North Canberra, inviting in turn a representative of each of the worshipping groups to join online Ministry meetings to report on how the Spirit prospers in these places. Ministry has also organized bi-monthly conversations about topics which impinge on the lives of Friends such as Quaker parenting, and Quakers in the workplace. These sessions are in-person and also online in order to offer this spiritual nourishment to Friends outside Canberra.

Ministry initiated a consideration of the nature of vocal ministry, with notes being circulated with the e-notices for the guidance and reflection of Friends. Beginning in August 2021, Ministry has offered a weekly session at the Meeting House in North Canberra to discuss *Advices & Queries* which will continue until December 2022.

The Library Committee has continued to provide spiritual fodder for the Meeting's nourishment, adding purchased and donated books to the collection at the Turner Meeting House.

Some Friends also belong to spiritual nurture groups which have met for years, nourishing the spiritual wellbeing of members.

CRQ benefits from its close proximity to Silver Wattle Quaker Centre, which opened its weekday online meeting for worship to Friends during the pandemic lockdown. Canberra Friends also volunteer in various capacities at SWQC, helping to develop and sustain this remarkable place in the national Quaker firmament. In these ways, we recognize that the spiritual basis of our community is fundamental to all our activities.

2. The Interior Functioning of the Church Community

Quakers bear out the saying that in our communities there is no laity: we jointly carry out the work of leadership. Many Friends are led to offer their gifts to the service of our community. Nevertheless, Nominations Committee has been challenged to find Friends who are able and willing to commit to carrying out the many roles that support our fellowship. One Friend compiles the weekly e-notices to members and attenders which are one means by which Friends learn what is happening across CRQ, 'helping to reach out, to connect and to inform'. Another skilled Friend maintains the CRQ website, which is the main way that seekers find the Meeting, and the CRQ page (and sub-pages) on the Yearly Meeting website. This year a statement of inclusion and diversity was adopted by the Meeting and placed on the website, in recognition that many people now research organizations online before coming along in person, to gauge what sort of welcome they will receive.

Friends missed the opportunities to gather in person during the height of the pandemic, and Friends continued to offer pastoral care to each other in all the meetings in our region. The Oversight and Pastoral Care Committee has been actively engaged in supporting Friends in need of assistance during times of illness, and the Wagga Wagga Worshipping Group has an informal OPC committee. The CRQ OPC committee includes a member from Wagga, who brings news of Friends from outside Canberra. Three specifically social events were organized in Canberra, including a walk followed by afternoon tea. Wagga Wagga Friends gather for "Quoutings" to local places of interest.

The official register of children and young people in CRQ belies their general absence from our meetings. Children and young people already spend much of their time online, even more so during the lockdowns, and vaccines were not initially available for children. This also affected the Children's Meeting in North Canberra. We see that the support and fellowship enjoyed in community is a vital part of keeping young people engaged. At a Yearly Meeting Prep session we were asked whether we consider the small numbers of children with love or fear?

The House and Grounds Committee of the North Canberra Meeting has been busy with necessary but possibly unremarked maintenance and care for the premises of the meeting at the Turner Meeting House. Examples include the cleaning of the photovoltaic and Ecoheat panels, and trimming of plants to lessen the shading of these. Some maintenance jobs are now allotted to paid professionals, partly because of the age of the members of the committee. The heating and cooling of the Meeting House continues to challenge the Meeting to provide

for the comfort of Friends as they worship in a way that is ecologically sustainable. A new cleaner was engaged, and other maintenance was carried out by agreement with the Meeting.

The Goulburn Worshipping Group continues to meet regularly in private homes, and the Southside Meeting in Canberra meets twice monthly in the Senior Citizens Community facility in Tuggeranong. This meeting regularly has six Friends gather, and the meeting is small enough for pastoral care to occur after Meeting for Worship.

OPC & Ministry have regular joint meetings, which enhances communication.

The North Turner Local Meeting has welcomed several young tertiary students in 2022, and a social event was organized to provide the opportunity to get to know them better. One of the younger attenders has been the focus of "This is Your Friend", which continues to introduce seasoned and newer Friends to the Meeting on a bi-monthly basis.

The Treasurer of CRQ presented the Meeting with a financial report which shows the meeting to be meeting its financial commitments, despite the ongoing commitment of the quota and the lessening contributions of Friends. The income from investments has also been affected by interest rates. This has required some reduction in the Meeting's expenditure in the budget for 2022-23. The Meeting agreed that its regular charity collections would be reduced from monthly to bi-monthly. Nevertheless, during the year CRQ donated nearly \$17,500 to charities.

The Turner Meeting House is regularly used by other small businesses, such as after-school childcare and yoga, and other groups. Community groups which are too small to carry their own insurance are now asked to sign an insurance waiver.

The Meeting recognizes its duty of care to all members, and upholds the work of the AYM Child Protection and Other Safety Concerns Working Group which produced the draft Code of Conduct and Community Agreement accepted by Yearly Meeting 2022.

3. Living The Social Testimonies, Including Within the Wider Community

Through various channels, Friends are informed about issues directly related to Quaker testimonies. Early in 2022 CRQ was given the opportunity to support the Aboriginal community in marking the 50th anniversary of the Tent Embassy. CRQ provided financial support for the fabrication of flags commemorating the event, which was used in a march involving the only living founder of the Tent Embassy. The North Canberra Meeting decided to make the Climate Emergency and Species Extinction the first standing item on its agendas for Meetings for Worship for Business, in order to keep this challenge before Friends.

The weekly e-notices remind Friends of the many opportunities to support action in support for Quaker events and others which are aligned with Quaker testimonies. For example, every week for two years the e-Notices have included a section 'Climate Crisis and Species Extinction Corner', faithfully compiled by a Friend. This is a substantial report on the week's news about the environment, together with reviews of recent books and films.

One unplanned charity collection which has nevertheless drawn Friends' support, is for Ukrainians affected by the ongoing war. A known and trusted local contact receives the funds collected, and distributes them to those in need. CRQ hosts the AYM Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee, which organized a well-attended national online vigil at the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February.

Wagga Wagga Friends participated in a multi-faith prayer service for Peace Sunday in June. In October 2021 Wagga Wagga Friends made an excursion to two local defence sites near Wagga Wagga in order to gain further knowledge of the military presence in the area.

QPLC continues to meet monthly online and produce flutters, Watching Briefs and Action Alerts which draw Friends' attention to issues requiring Friends' witness and action. Action Alerts (for urgent response) have been issued on National Plan to End Violence against Women, the Sri Lanka crisis, and Immigration Detention; Watching Briefs (longer-term analysis and comment) have covered State Capture, Ukraine, Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty update, and Anti-Protest Laws; and Flutters (short summaries) on post-election government ministry, UN report 'Our Common Agenda', Global Index 2022, and the Death Penalty. Members of QPLC and other Friends also take part in public action in support of steps on climate change, protection of whistle-blowers, freedom of speech for journalists, and refugees. QPLC also supported the Independent and Peaceful Australia Network (IPAN) to apply to the Peace and Justice Fund for funds to enable publication of its report on the national enquiry into the Australia-US Alliance. Friends' increasing familiarity with online meetings has enabled QPLC to offer access to meetings to Friends around Australia.

Many Friends also joined webinars organized by other groups on alternative defence options for Australia and on Myanmar.

The Climate Emergency and Species Extinction Working Group has prompted local action, with fortnightly Cafes being held at the Meeting House in North Canberra, to bring information to Friends. The North Canberra Meeting hosted the Australian Religious Response to Climate Change (ARRCC) stall at the North Canberra Sustainability Fair held at a church in Hackett in September. This provided an opportunity for Canberra Friends to support a multi-faith event in support of action to address the ecological crises. CRQ has resumed its active representation by the Co-Clerks at meetings of the ACT Council of Churches, which is wrestling with its own challenges of communicating effectively in the digital age. The CRQ website provides one avenue for outreach, with an average of 500 visits per month, mostly from Australia and the USA, followed by China and the UK.

The testimony to community reminds us that our capacity to live in alignment with our Quaker testimonies relies on the nourishment and promptings of our individual spiritual lives, and the communal support of Friends. Together, we seek to be a beacon of hope in our wider community.