

The theme for Yearly Meeting 2005 was: "Friends' Witness and Ministry in Central and Southern Africa"

Mystery, Mysticism and Daily Living

A Quaker Adventure in difficult times

I find daily living difficult, very full of mistakes even at my age, so a few years ago I was encouraged to hear in Meeting: "We are not creatures learning to be spiritual; we are spirits, learning to live". We are also told in Advice and Queries to "Live Adventurously"¹. I am going to share with you some of my Adventure, some of my experience of daily living, suffused with the experience of bliss.²

Jesus told a story; his disciples told their stories; Paul and some Saints told their stories and people in libraries have built on those stories for 2000 years. But we need to keep the story, the myth fresh, so I will tell my story. Each person's story of how he or she experiences the mystery is called "myth". We have to keep the corporate myth fresh – to "remythologize the Christ"³.

I was brought up as a Quaker which meant no dogma or theology. I inherited a simple belief: that God loves every one of us deeply, and guides and helps us all, personally, so we must be kind to one another and look after everything in creation.⁴ My mother told me God loves me and just as importantly, my family gave me the experience of love, so I could believe her.

Daily Life includes Spiritual Life.

Quaker worship is spiritual not sacramental.⁵ It is mystical worship – direct connection with the Source. We do not deny the material world, but we look to the spiritual dimension and constant heart to heart contact with the Source, in order to bear Fruit.

Mysticism occurs in all religions and involves a perceptive power common to all human beings,⁶ including the Jewish prophets, Jesus of Nazareth, his first disciples, particularly John the beloved disciple, George Fox, Richard Gush, and the members of Johannesburg Meeting⁷.

This is what has made my daily life bearable and interesting and fun. We are in our own small ways connected heart to heart with each other, and with God.

Sharing Our Stories - Our Experience:

I have learnt that being a Quaker mystic means I must look at my daily experience, consider it, learn from it, and prepare for the next experience. I must put my experience into words and talk about it. How else can we learn, develop our brains, help others, and without putting experience into words?

Even more than other primates, we are highly social animals; clawless, toothless, hairless, our only defence against enemies is communal shared living: teaching, worshipping, loving and caring for one another.⁸ Social living is not easy, but it develops character, skills, self awareness, consciousness and spiritual maturity.⁹

How can I explain my adventure as a Quaker in words that mean something to me, but come loaded with something else to you? Again I can only ask you as a Friend, to sense where the words come from, and accept that my and your brains are limited; they are only one of our tools.¹⁰ We also need heart and spirit for understanding.¹¹ We need divine wisdom to understand each other.

My social life began in a small Quaker family. I was born in Pretoria, brought up in Johannesburg but had strong rural roots¹². I was taught to be respectful to all people and all things, and to be especially respectful of the humble and poor, and the small and frail. By example we learned to value beauty - in nature, the sky, the earth, the rocks and beauty of character. My Quaker grandmother and mother practiced hospitality, so we met a stream of interesting and varied people, gleaned from Meeting on Sundays, and the neighbourhood, and townships on the outskirts of Johannesburg.¹³ We had few rules – only to be truthful, considerate and kind. We were often told “to be wise” and so grew up valuing Wisdom.

For us as Quakers, even in those days, colour, race and wealth merely made people interestingly different – we valued diversity. I was born during the depression and we were very poor. We had only just enough to eat. Our toys were chiefly flowers and sticks, stones, mud and water.¹⁴ We had a lot of old books and a set of Children’s encyclopaedia which I read from cover to cover. I grew up in a time of great conformity, everyone was judged by their behaviour, success depended on manners, dress and accent and diligence in memorising, agreeing and being pleasant. Nevertheless because we were always spoken to respectfully and courteously, we had a strong sense of self-worth. My Quaker grandmother told me about God’s love while it emanated from her, so I have always recognised Constancy and Love. My mother said “Never tell a lie, if you do not tell a lie you need never be worried”. This is a fearful discipline. This is the basis of all learning and wisdom. I tried to be truthful, but I now wonder, “How can one conform but not live a life of lies?”

I found senior school hard. I now realise that it was probably because I was used to being treated with respect, and I shrivelled at the tone of voice of the teachers. I was so frightened and hostile towards my teachers that I became a silent mouse, trying to be unnoticed by any authority figure.¹⁵ I liked my class mates but as I walked out of school on my last day, I thought “At last my life has begun”. I was still unhappy and resentful. .

By my third year out of school I was coping reasonably. But my anxiety and anger grew. My mother had given me a bible, the King James version, which I read from time to time but I could not make head or tail of it. I was angry with God who had let me down. This lovely world was full of bad things, bad people, stupid people, restrictions and dishonesty. The more I argued against apartheid, the more I entrenched my fellow students in what I saw as their unkind and selfish views.

A very British and discreet one week mission came on to campus. An Anglican clergyman¹⁶ spoke in lunch hours on “Love and Marriage” – well attended by students. At 5pm he spoke on Christianity. The parallels were clear: Trust was the most important thing in a relationship, and we could trust God. We could trust Jesus. By Thursday morning I was very conscious of my inadequacies and helplessness. That evening as we came in we were discreetly each handed small card on which was written “I undertake to follow Jesus Christ as my Lord”, a place for signature and the date.

In his very straightforward talk, we were told how Jesus could help us through every situation in life and save us from evil. He said, “if anyone would like to accept Jesus as Lord, I suggest you sign and date your card”. I thought, “Yes, good idea. Of course I want help”, so I signed. At that a flood of light and joy entered my whole body. I lived, spoke, walked and slept in a state of undiminished bliss for three weeks and then the sense of joy simmered down, but I replenished it regularly for the next 20 years, chiefly in Meeting for Worship.¹⁷

The veil lifted – the gift of additional perception

When one opens oneself to the Creator - not only in nature, but also in human form – one is transported to a new vista, and new vantage point. The vista is unveiled and one enters into a new perceptive power that has been latent. This opening and unveiling is gradual for some people, but I was given the strength I needed because it was conscious – a conscious surrender, a conscious receiving, a conscious healing and use of the new perceptive power.

After it happened to Jesus, he went to a wedding with his mother. After it happened to me, I visited a friend of my mother, and found myself feeling kindly towards her, for the first time. I was undemanding towards my own friends and acquaintances; I had a huge urge to read the bible. My anxiety had melted. I looked for a church to go to close by: Anglican, Congregational, then Presbyterian, then I tried Cape Town Friends’ Meeting and found it right – the silence, the acceptance, the respectful friendliness, and the invisible spirituality.

I went on a Christian student’s camp where we were practising life in the spirit, so it was weird when a local Anglican minister spoke to us and give us a quick overview of Anglican theology. I was amazed. I thought had never heard such nonsense: God killed his son because of our sins. Good heavens; God is no butcher. God had blessed and loved me and all creation and wanted us to get in step and love everyone just like Jesus had done.

Lonely years with the “different” view

For my generation and circle, talking politics was not polite, and no one ever even mentioned sex or religion. We did not speak personally. Even Quakers - respectable British in those days - never spoke of “my” first-hand spiritual experience. They would speak of “one”, or “people”, or “early Friends”. I could see that other students were kept churchgoing secret – it would have put me outside the pale, socially. But what had happened? I had no idea, no words for it, no explanation – no myth in the technical sense.

I found that the Bible suddenly started making sense¹⁸. I recognise why early Friends said that it is the Light that enables us to read the bible¹⁹. I experienced what Ezekiel²⁰ and Paul, and Rufus Jones, and much later Deepak Chopra and a host of modern authors wrote about. On Sundays I retreated to the “Upper Room” with a different, peaceful view of the daily life below, described by Evelyn Underhill

I sensed the difference between people who were just building theories on other peoples spiritual experience, and those who spoke from their own personal revelation. Advices and Queries guided me.

I remember my elation when I read that Brother Lawrence, said that although he was not educated and not a priest, and had felt very inadequate being sent to work in the monastery kitchens, he had discovered that he could talk to God while peeling potatoes – that God graciously allowed him to speak to Him, even though he was so lowly.²¹

Back in Johannesburg, I was articled to a firm of attorneys and attended lectures part time. I often went to Anglican evensong on Sundays, until I realised that I had to choose between staying late at parties on Saturday nights, and the experience of becoming re-Centred in Meeting on Sundays. Three years later, I qualified and went to work in England for a year. I went for one term to Woodbrooke, one of the Selly Oak colleges.

At Woodbrooke, leading Quakers, the Moderator of the Presbyterian church, and a Methodist educated us.

I discovered that although I went to Anglican schools, my religious education had stopped in kindergarten.²² The only education I had since then was by example – role models are vital, but not enough. I started getting real bible study and a new vocabulary – Acts of the Apostles was applied to systems of land tenure in Ghana²³; Maurice Creasey, a former Anglican Minister who had become a Quaker explained that the sense of joy, peace and guidance within me was the Holy Spirit, God. I was amazed.

I was happy to study the Logos doctrine, and discover that the first Chapter in John's Gospel states explicitly that the Christ spirit which was in the world from the beginning, became flesh in Jesus of Nazareth, but nothing (no-one) was made without the Christ Spirit. So there was no need to worry about people born before Jesus of Nazareth, or who had never heard of Jesus!

Back in South Africa, guided by the Light, I worked for the SA Institute for Race Relations, I married and had two children, and like Mary, "Pondered on these things in my heart."²⁴

I tried to find an explanation for Christianity, words to answer to "What do you believe".

John Yungblut, the Quaker Jungian and theologian, encouraged me to continue seeking. I read Thomas Kelly the 20th century Quaker mystic²⁵, Teilhard de Chardin, and Jung.²⁶ I read in newspapers about the Charismatic Renewal within the Christian Church²⁷ and in 1975, when a friend said she was going to listen to Bill Burnett,²⁸ talk about his Pentecostal experience, I said "I am coming too". Bill told us how he had phoned and described his own amazement and bewilderment to his deacon who said "I think you have had a Pentecostal experience like the disciples in Acts".

At last I knew what had happened, and so I immediately joined a charismatic group, and after 20 years of loneliness found intimate fellowship. I was able to risk transparency and vulnerability. When we started, I was asked what I had come for and I heard myself say, "I have come for the fellowship of the Holy Spirit". I have consciously experienced it with great joy, ever since.

The "Fellowship of the Holy Spirit" and the "Communion of Saints":

I joined seven other people in a charismatic prayer group led by a Catholic housewife and a man who was a devout Methodist. Three years later, there was variable group of 50 of us, including Catholic priests and nuns, the British consul's wife and her cook, people of all colours, and a solitary Quaker.²⁹ We spontaneously prayed aloud and sang, for each other, for the world, for peace, for inter-church understanding, for healing, for South Africa. The only thing we had in common was the Holy Spirit, so we experienced the Spirit cleansed of the social, intellectual, educational and cultural trappings which are unwittingly included in the worship of every church and sect.

Praise and Healing Prayer Group and “Life in the Spirit Seminars”³⁰, showed me that intercessory prayer - when one offers oneself as a channel of God’s power - provides spiritual, emotional and physical healing for the channeller. Likewise, the Quaker prayer groups, fellowship groups³¹, Yearly Meetings, retreats and study groups especially those held in Soweto from 1974 to 1986 were powerful and spirit filled, and brought many of us emotional, physical and spiritual healing.³² Regular worship purifies us from pollution by society and our own faulty thoughts – spiritual and emotional hygiene.³³

Meeting for Worship kept me regularly linked to the Source, the Spirit of the universe, and Friends gave me practical opportunities. Silent acceptance by others, who do not necessarily like my style or activities, is just as important: without it I would have been disabled. The stream of foreign visitors especially in the Apartheid years was inspiring and heartening.

Skills are Necessary

Being “filled with the spirit” and being “born again” may come in an instant or as part of a slow process of growth. They are only the beginning of New Life.

I often think of the Prodigal Son. What did he do when the Welcome Home party was over? He had to learn to be a skilled and dutiful servant on his father’s farm. We have to learn human life skills. I learnt to pray out loud – a very powerful way to communicate. I learnt how to express my love and good will in a reserved and discreet manner which would not frighten people. I learnt to ask God for things – something I had not known I was allowed to do.³⁴

I had never prayed out loud, and I had never asked God for things for myself – not polite. Winifred, A mature member of the meeting, once told me how she had lost her bag, but had asked God to find it for her. I was shocked. God was too important to ask for little things like that. But after reading about God in terms of “the Universal Intelligence’ and the “Universal Mind”, I thought, “Why not ask; it would be very sensible to connect with a Universal Mind”. I still prefer to ask God to guide me to my car keys, not “to find them for me”. I also accept it when God says “No”.

Group and peace making skills: elementary but life changing training in counselling³⁵ and Much later the Alternatives to Violence Programme³⁶ trained me to trust the Quaker process. I could have avoided so many mistakes, such impotence. I describe the AVP process as “Quakerism in action”.

Peace making requires preparation and skill. Just think for a moment how much preparation, skill, imagination and effort go into preparing for war.³⁷

For me, Service is merely Prayer in action, and I do what my heart tells me to. The Way is the essence of daily living

But the process is not cheap or easy. It is costly because it requires openness, humility and transparency, and surrender to the Spirit. This is not an intellectual thing, but a life of the heart.³⁸ It is painful to be honest and transparent and I often feel physically as if I am being broken open.³⁹ There is no place for pride or secrecy – discretion, yes, but not secrecy. The fruits are those of the Vine⁴⁰. There is little encouragement. The reward for prayerful service is personal fulfilment and life abundant.

I have learnt from wonderful role models. Being a Quaker was an enormous privilege. We Quakers were not only colour blind, we were age blind, and gender blind. Many Friends have been outstanding role models, sharing information and witness. Monthly Meeting for Business gave me profound training and enabled me to manage in business meetings at work and in many different organisations.⁴¹

Apartheid

When I was in my 30's I was asked to represent Friends on the Inter Church Aid Committee of the SACC, then I was elected on to the Executive Committee to represent the smaller churches (Presbyterians downwards!).

In the 1970's SACC was taken over by black Christians, who constituted 80% of the Christian Church in South Africa. They infused a truthful reality and an urgency which was difficult to communicate to the established churches, comfortable in their traditions, ritual and hierarchy. Our constant effort was to battle the evil of Apartheid, the heresy which divided humankind, tried to divide the Spirit, the soil, the water and the air, from itself.⁴² The creation of the One God and the Integrity of the Universe was being attacked in a cruel, ferocious and cynical way, which encouraged greed, torture and murder.

John Rees was succeeded as General Secretary by Desmond Tutu who said "we black people take Christianity seriously". Desmond made sure that we celebrated Holy Communion every morning and every day was suffused with prayer⁴³. I repeatedly read Isaiah and Jeremiah, Amos and Micah, who lived and spoke in times like mine.

This was the Church of Jesus of Nazareth, the Historical Jesus, the radical reformer,⁴⁴ with whom Quakers are comfortable; the truth speaking prophet who was crucified for the Truth, and would rather die than allow a single act of violence from his followers; the reformer who spoke to women and outcasts, while he was in communion with the Creator spirit; who prayed in silence and in action without symbols and intermediaries; who was a direct channel for the Truth, the Way of Peace and the Fountain of Life; who lived the Life of the Spirit visibly for us all to see what it looked like in human form, without measure.⁴⁵

Ever more vividly I saw that the Spirit of Jesus of Nazareth was indeed my Saviour; that same spirit was daily saving me from error, from evil, from danger, from resorting to hatred and violence, and above all, saving me from fear and enabling me to love.⁴⁶

These were heady days, when SACC workers were being arrested and tortured; when Steve Biko was killed and Tom Manthatha burst into tears in John Rees' arms saying "I hate whites"; when Desmond Tutu led us in dance and song and prayed and poured love on us while we tried to get our accounts right and our systems straight, and to deal with the funds that were poured in from the world wide church to help the prisoners, the widows and the orphans of Apartheid.⁴⁷

When I felt depressed and hopeless, I would visit various friends in Soweto and find myself invigorated and cheered.

Peace making through Alternative life style

For myself, I cannot not see what I achieved during the Apartheid years, but like other Friends throughout South Africa, I was involved in a variety of initiatives. Because of my training I was

asked to serve on countless Boards of NGO's: schools, charitable and religious organisations and trusts.

Most of us went wherever we wished without seeking government permits – which would often not have been granted. I often wished that God called me to nice respectable service like taking flowers and magazines to sick people in hospital, instead of calling me to dusty townships to discuss constitutions on Sunday afternoons. My husband who was a deeply good and pure man, with a great sense of humour once said, “You know Jennifer, your neighbours are also the people who live next door”. But I felt that all I could do was be like Jesus and just be there, in the streets, in the homes, with those of the oppressed people of this world, who wanted me – and I did not like to languish with people who did not want me.

My husband, Colin, was close to Beyers Naude⁴⁸, and in 1978 I was deeply troubled by our affluence and privilege. The only person I could trust to speak truth to me about this, was Beyers, because he himself had surrendered position, affluence and privilege. So I consulted him, just the two of us, because he was under restricted house arrest, and told him of my urge to walk away from our privilege and live with the poor. He simply said to me, that it could not be my decision alone. It would only be right if the whole family was at one on the matter. Immediately I knew that it would not be right even to broach the topic at that time. My husband died not long after. Beyers taught me profoundly, that we need spiritual community to empower, correct and direct us.

What were Quakers doing? What we always seem to do. Some were involved in spectacular action. Most of us seemed to work all day, every day, to change our patterns of behaviour so that everything we did would undermine the apartheid system.⁴⁹ Quietly and with dedication SA friends all over the country and in many organisations helped in hundreds of chiefly mundane ways to heal and maintain society, by supporting truth and good ordering.

A group of teenagers at Yearly Meeting in the 1980's walked to a nearby “café”, bought cool drinks and sat down to drink. The proprietor said, “Black people are not allowed to sit on these chairs”, so the white children sat on the chairs, and the black children sat on their knees. The proprietor watched them helplessly.

Years later, Peter Storey then head of the Methodist church of SA astounded me by saying, “You were very important to us in those days, because you kept us close to Jesus”. This testimony is owed to all SA friends, whether we know it or not. By our Quaker process we help each other, and thereby we help everyone that each of us touches, in ever widening circles, like ripples in water that go on for ever.

Bible Study groups⁵⁰ and the support of Friends, especially from Central and Southern Africa Yearly Meeting, and FWCC section of the Americas.⁵¹ were vital lifelines to the outside world.

Non-violent results

Transvaal Monthly Meeting had a spirit filled group in Soweto, cheerful and vibrant, which met on Sundays. We met at Glyn Thomas House, the Medical School residence and later in a classroom at Namedi School. 1985 was a time of surging violence and death, when “the youth” often got an old car tyre, put it round a suspected Apartheid supporter's neck, added petrol and a match and burnt many people to death for no reason. One Sunday about 15 of us were worshipping silently at Namedi when some young men arrived and looked through the window,

then through the door. We carried on with silent worship. After a few minutes Tebogo Moteane went outside and spoke to them. After 10 minutes, we shook hands at the normal time. I went out, and Tebogo reported that they said they were hungry. I said we had tea inside and invited them in. We made a circle, held hands and prayed together. We then offered them tea and all our biscuits. They went away peacefully.⁵²

Later I was invited as “a church leader” to join others from all faiths, and take flowers on June 16th to Hector Petersen’s grave in the cemetery in deep Soweto⁵³. The purpose was to express sympathy and respect for the parents of Soweto, because no formal condolences had ever been expressed towards the thousands of parents who had lost children during the 10 years of student unrest. After lengthy ecumenical discussion and planning, we collected over a thousand bouquets and wreaths from various churches and a cavalcade of about 20 vehicles set out in the cold and misty dawn, a bleak winter’s day. A “state of emergency” had been declared; we expected to be arrested and imprisoned indefinitely, so we had warm socks, toothbrushes and bibles in our pockets and I got permission from my children.

Outside Baragwanath Hospital we were halted by a contingent of soldiers. We explained that we were merely taking flowers to the grave. After some courteous discussion we got reluctant permission to lay down the flowers on the roadside outside the hospital. We did this, and stood in a circle and prayed, in the cold grey air. We had invited the soldiers to join in, but they refused. Then we had to turn round and return to Johannesburg. The people in the last vehicle saw the soldiers stamping on the radiant flowers, crushing them all. How afraid the armed force of the state was of flowers!

Fear

I was seldom afraid for long. I had been greatly blessed. When I was about 20 I joined a Black Sash demonstration on the City Hall steps where we stood in silence, wearing black sashes and placards protesting against some new Apartheid law. A crowd of rowdy thugs gathered and threw tomatoes at us. As I looked at them I found myself filled with a clear, calm, happy sense that I was doing the right thing, and sorry for them, who were so clearly not in right relationship with God. I was covered by a tangible atmosphere which their mockery and hatred could not penetrate. I knew nothing could hurt my essence.

Years later, as a trustee of an Employee Share Ownership Trust (ESOP) I had to guide the trustees and worker representatives, and sometimes stand on a concrete block and explain the process (with a translator) to about three thousand hostile motor company employees, who hissed when they disapproved. This was nothing new, and I felt covered by the spirit of loving care.

I was afraid of imprisonment: in case my secretary had to cancel my appointments and explain “Mrs Kinghorn is in gaol”! Gaol was a stigma in all but highly politicised circles.

So through all the years of oppression I would check with my inner Guide “Is this what you want me to do?” Really?” and then go confidently ahead. This was a severe discipline. I knew that if I was arrested, detained or harmed it would have to be because I was doing what God wanted, not just being thoughtless or sentimental⁵⁴.

When I had to give a seminar to articled clerks at work and then fly to Cape Town to help sort out a Quaker Service crisis, I stood in the bathroom while packing and said, “God, I am sure that

a nice respectable wife and mother should not be leaving her family and going to Cape Town on Quaker business”. I clearly heard the words “Why Not?” - a profound reassurance.

Another time as I rushed to fetch school children before giving a seminar for articulated clerks, I said “God, I am always asking you to stop me from taking on too much. You have let me down. You have not helped me to keep my activities reasonable. So this exhausting mess on my plate is all your fault, its over to you to do the work for me!” At that, I realised that God had indeed brought me to that point – to the point where I had to relax and rely on the Holy Spirit to deal with the situation.

I have had much more energy since then, less worry and have trusted my Inner Guide much more. What is more, I have at last learned to say “No” or “I’d rather not”.⁵⁵

The language of other Christians and other faiths:

Being so involved with Christians from other churches I had to start understanding their language. Luckily I had no baggage to make me allergic to it, unlike many Friends. What did their strange terminology mean? How did it fit with Quaker terms? Why did they need Bible study and theology to prove that Apartheid was wrong?

I sensed that South Africa at that time was ruled according to a second-hand theology – a structure built by others on the spiritual experience and thought processes of John Calvin who lived before the French revolution, and which was outside the current mainstream of Calvinism. I realised a largely fossilised dogma required intellectual correction, as well as a new spiritual dynamic.⁵⁶ Indeed, it does matter what a church preaches - it can limit and distort personal spiritual life.

Jung liberated our language and imagery and initiated a psychological vocabulary for matters of the spirit, the unconscious and the right brain.

I understand why John Yungblut said that the great tragedy of the Christian church was that its “Myth had been cast in stone at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, and needed urgent renewal”. The Nicene Creed froze Christian language, and religious art froze our mental pictures so our communication is now meaningless to many people – especially those no longer attached to agriculture, the land, and cultures which use religious sacrifices to appease their gods. Previously we were confined to the imagery of nature and of human love. Now we can use the images of quantum physics, space travel, mathematics, cosmology, Einstein, analytical and depth psychology, and as well as current events.⁵⁷ Deepak Chopra says much the same things as Jesus, to an enormous, appreciative audience, using “Quantum Theory” language. John Yungblut’s version of John 3.16 reads:

God so loved the world that he implanted deeply and darkly in matter itself the seed which would one day, through continuing creation by evolution, bear fruit in the Christ life of one Jesus of Nazareth, thereby quickening the Christ seed in other men and women to their ultimate salvation and fulfillment..⁵⁸

These days, I switch between different spiritual languages, that of Quakers and that of orthodox faiths those who have stuck to the Nicene Creed or the Old Testament,⁵⁹

The Emerging world before us

In 1990, with Margaret Roper, I became exhaustingly involved with the work of the Women's National Coalition which helped shape our wonderful South African Constitution and changed the composition and thought processes of every organisation in South Africa, by ensuring that all women became first class citizens, and could be given "catching up" benefits. Many of our colleagues became Members of Parliament or Cabinet ministers.

In 1994, when Apartheid was de-legislated, like many others I was tired and had to re-orientate. The urgency seemed over. Keeping in step with my Inner Guide, I have space to develop my understanding and to improve my caring, my listening and my personal relationships. At present my path is quiet, talking and playing with children, offering hospitality, being a friend to the old and dying and to young energetic people of good will, who are afraid, lonely, and often oppressed by their employers.

This is satisfying, not dramatic.⁶⁰ I find I don't need to be as conscious of the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth, when I am not under so much human and personal stress, and for a while I needed to rest quietly in God's universe. Then I talk more about God instead of Jesus. Now I wait (sometimes impatiently) for guidance to deal with the anger, pain, violence and greed which I see all around.⁶¹

I am only a beginner in the Ministry of Healing. I am not aware of any spectacular gifts of healing among Quakers today, but I do know that many of the things we do as a matter of course are those things which the Charismatic churches never stop talking about (quite rightly!). We all receive and work daily miracles, we have visions, we speak prophecies, and we have direct guidance from God⁶² often without being conscious of them – and often don't even remember to give thanks!

Nowadays the Johannesburg meeting is dominated by a new and vital generation of South Africans – not expatriates. We are adopting many of the good things in African culture. We laugh, we change procedures, we sometimes sing and dance, we argue, we usually work through our problems with skill, instead of baling out – the sign of true community - we use e-mail, we go to workshops and seminars, and we are very much into self-improvement.

We may be tired, but the meeting is wonderfully vital and personal. For me, the best description of our Meeting remains that composed by a study group in Soweto in 1979 attached to this paper⁶³

Our planet is in a state of flux, we are in a fast changing environment. ⁶⁴Evolution is rushing forward in psychological and spiritual form rather than in the physical and tangible. I have become aware of being part of ongoing evolution and I believe that Ethical, Communal, Mysticism, is the way to carry the world forward to healing and fulfilling its evolutionary purpose⁶⁵.

I long to help others consciously to accept the power of the Spirit. I hope to be able to encourage the young to launch out for themselves on the Adventure of Life more Abundant, with a joyful view of the World and the Universe.

The Mystery

What do I believe now? I believe very little. Instead I know. I know from Experience. I know that life is a process; that creation is an ongoing process, and I am an integral part of that process.

I know that I want to be in step with that process, and with the Essence, the Spirit of the Universe. I know that I need not be afraid, because the process is Good even though I don't know why or how. I already experience the bliss of that process, and so am not afraid of dying except in a purely animal instinctive way. I already live in Heaven.

I know I am a Quaker. I know that the Ethical Mysticism of Quakerism is effective in renewing and healing the world⁶⁶. I know that I cannot live fully in body, mind and spirit on my own. The maturing process is a communal one; we are part of a communal discovery and evolution.

Our process is good; it will lead us to a good place in the Mystery if we stay close to the Historical Jesus and to the Evolving Christ myth. I know I am proud to be able to say I am a Quaker and to speak of Quakers, because we actually live according to the Alternative Life of Jesus, and have avoided many of the faults of orthodoxy.

I trust the Process. The Mystery of Creation.⁶⁷

I don't know about good and evil, I don't understand God, or the world. My puny mind produces puny theories; how can I even imagine the Whole? But I do trust and enjoy and Love the Process. I love The Way.

Like George Fox on his death bed I can say, "I am glad I was here".

APPENDIX

Who are the Quakers?

Quakers are a group of people who meet together to share their experience of the Christ Spirit. They try to give help and support in each other's journey, in action and prayer, in equality and openness.

What does gathering in this way lead to?

We have found through meeting on this basis, with a wide variety of people, that everyone can have a direct relationship with God's Spirit, without intermediaries and rituals, God can influence us directly, and we can all come to recognise God's Presence.

We need to check our individual experience with that of others in the past and in the present, through the Bible and other writings and in conversation.

We find that God's Spirit is eternal and universal and leads us to cut across barriers of age, sex, nation, culture, race and religion.

Formulated by a Quaker fellowship in Soweto in 1979.

¹ Advice no 27: Available in "Quaker Faith and Practice" 2nd edition.

² *Perfect Health; Channels of Healing p 147: Deepak Chopra on "the Naturalness of Bliss"*; I have experienced joy, even bliss in times of loneliness and grief.

³ I use the word Myth, technically – to mean a story which explains the inexplicable. A good example is of the African child in Geneva who saw snow for the first time and ran to his mother saying "there are flowers falling out of the sky". Not a lie, not wrong, just his attempt to explain something for which he had no words. This is the language of poetry, and of much of the Bible.

⁴ We did not speak of sin or forgiveness. We were expected only to "live up to the Light that you have so that more will be granted", and to "raise up the good, so that evil would be cast out by itself"

⁵ Sacramental Christianity: *Edward Grubb*

⁶ The nature of mystical consciousness involves the experience of identification, and the perception of inter-relatedness. ... These are its basic characteristics. ... The mystical faculty is present, whether developed or not, in all human beings by virtue of their being human. This form of consciousness is the evolving edge in man. It is the point at which he is in process of becoming the new man, man's successor, the son of man. It is his potential for realizing presently, in some measure, the coming enhancement of life. It is the capacity to love more profoundly. It induces the experience of agape love.

If we would attain our maximum fulfilment as individuals and thereby serve the entire creative process of evolution in man, then we must do all we can to cultivate this richest treasure of the psyche, the contemplative capacity, and the agape love which it fosters. *John Yungblut: Quakerism of the Future: Mystical Prophetic & Evangelical. Pendle Hill Pamphlet 194P 22*

⁷ Mysticism has been strongly discouraged by the Roman Catholic Church and therefore by many of the western protestant churches. Mysticism is accepted by the Orthodox churches of the Byzantine tradition - Greek, Coptic and Russian. There are Jewish mystics, Moslem mystics, Buddhist mystics, Confucian mystics. In spite of Roman disapproval, there has been a continuing outburst of mystical expression in the West (including St John of the Cross, and St Theresa who managed to conform to the authority of the Roman church). The Seekers, George Fox and the founders of most Protestant churches were mystics though their organisations may subsequently have discouraged it. Mystics threaten authority, but as George Fox realised, need communal discipline to mature spiritually. *JK*

⁸ The Human Zoo; *Desmond Morris*

⁹ Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. *James 1.3*

¹⁰ The mind is an organ system that includes all of the physical being. The purpose of the mind is to survive ... and to this end it will do almost anything. ...The mind accomplishes its purpose of surviving by laying down memory traces of events as they happen, calling upon these memories as needed in survival situations. Survival is involved in all functions of day to day life.

So the mind wires itself up very quickly to avoid those situations that threaten its survival.Without love from others you cannot physically survive. So at the level of the mind, life is a game, the purpose of which is to survive. People put together a survival act – behaviour patterns to obtain adequate air, food and love. Many false associations are built up over the years so that it is sometimes difficult to see that the way a person acts was originally related to survival – often we live “then”, instead of living “now”.

You may have noticed that people have a certain need to be right. This is an aspect of survival. To state it correctly, being right represents successful survival ploys of the past.Being right is the one condition, which the mind will sometimes choose over survival. Sometimes people will die in order to be right. *Winning Through Enlightenment: Ron Smotherman*

¹¹ The value of Wisdom is beyond rubies; it cannot be bought with pure gold....The fear of the Lord – that is Wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding. *Job 28.28.*

¹² My grandmother's family in Kendal came from Westmoreland “Seekers”; she lived at Magoebaskloof, Limpopo.

¹³ Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by doing so some people have entertained angels without knowing it. *Hebrews 13.2:*

¹⁴ I am not psychic, but have lived with as little elaborate ritual and as close to nature as possible so have developed a certain natural discernment.

¹⁵ I realised much later that I avoided all leadership situations because like many others, I confused leadership (which derives authority from the group) with authority that comes from position, and often co-opted leaders. I did not want to be co-opted by authority figures and be disliked as I disliked them.

¹⁶ Bryan Green, from Birmingham.

¹⁷ I once read that God blesses weak people with a very clear experience, to help them on their path. True for me.

¹⁸ Similarly, my husband an intelligent and well educated man found that the bible suddenly made sense, a few months before his death.

¹⁹ Quakerism is “inescapably part of the Christian tradition with its roots deep in the soil of the Bible and dependent for its health and identity on the Christian milieu from which it sprang and in which it still lives and moves and has its being.” *John Yungblut. Speaking as one Friend to another – the Mystical way forward: Pendle hill pamphlet 249*

²⁰ I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. *Ezekiel 11.19:*

²¹ The Practice of the Presence of God: *conversations with Brother Lawrence, an illiterate Carmelite Lay brother in Paris in 1666.*

²² We have all met Jesus before. Most of us first met him when we were children. For many of us.. there came a time when their childhood image of Jesus no longer made a great deal of sense. And for many of them no persuasive alternative has replaced it. ... Meeting Jesus again will be ... like meeting him for the first time. It will involve a new image of Jesus. *Meeting Jesus Again for the first time: the Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith by Marcus J Borg:*

²³ It is said that a Christian should have the bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.

²⁴ Luke 2.19

²⁵ A Testament of Devotion: by *Thomas Kelly*.

²⁶ I became steeped in Jungian thought, which paralleled but did not seem to connect with Quaker mysticism, until one day in Meeting I felt my Jungian ideas and my Christian myth come together so strongly that I had a physical sense of the integration. In the same way, after my husband died and I felt physically disintegrated, I found regularly in meeting a sense of being put together again – of the splinters uniting.

²⁷ The difficulty with religion as a ritual is that it freezes life in a condition of hope/hopelessness and no responsibility, no enlightenment. (Let it) become a religion of the Self. That doesn't mean a new church. It means a new context for the religion you already have. That context involves becoming responsible for being the source of life and not the effect. It involves a *willingness* to be enlightened whenever you are and an acceptance of the conditions of your mind and the world at every moment. It means living right now. It means clean communicative relationships. It means being true to your life's purpose. It means manifesting your natural integrity. It means satisfaction with and contribution to life. It means that you participate in life by choice. It means that you take responsibility for the way the world is right now and exercise your awesome power in the matter of what the world is becoming. A transformed you means a transformed enlightened world. Have the courage to be enlightened. I can't think of a better place to start than within the framework of your religion. *Winning through Enlightenment; supra*

²⁸ Anglican Bishop of Grahamstown and later Archbishop of Cape Town,

²⁹ A black woman came one evening in great distress. Her child who lived on a farm in the Magaliesberg was seriously ill with a lung problem. We laid hands on her and prayed for her, and she became calm, confident, and serene. Afterwards, in good Quaker tradition, I went to her and asked what I could do – transport, take the child to the doctor, money? etc. I found that all of those things were in place. Her employer had been sympathetic and helpful. But it was the prayer that healed her and enabled her to carry out the mundane tasks needed to help her child. It was prayer like this that enabled my sister to pluck up courage to go to the doctor and be diagnosed with breast cancer in time to lengthen her life by 11 years.

³⁰ Developed by a group active in the general Renewal of the Christian Church -Roman Catholics in USA.

³¹ Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil. May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. Brothers pray for us. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. *1 Thess 5.20*

³² My vision of God today, is not of an interfering tribal patriarch, but of a powerful, enormous, and exciting spirit, that I must follow gently, carefully, and obediently and allow to do most of the work. Jesus was the human being who expressed the Christ Spirit most fully, and I have found it miraculously rewarding to imagine what he would do in the human situations in which I find myself. I also refer in my imagination to my own father and to my Quaker grandmother, both Christ like people, and so make use of the "Communion of Saints". For me, the Body of Christ is every iota of Creation.

³³ The process of renewal and growth begins in solitude. The individual is the unit of energy... on a daily basis.. we need to sit down in an attitude of prayer and dare to experiment faithfully in the wild hope of putting ourselves in touch with and therefore at the disposal of, the very sources of life. *John Yungblut Speaking as one Friend to Another Pendle Hill pamphlet p 16*

³⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. ... Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds. *Philippians 4.6*

³⁵ By the Johannesburg Marriage Guidance Society; now the Family Life Association.

³⁶ The Alternatives to Violence Program was initiated by USA Quakers in response to requests from prison inmates and is now applied widely throughout the world. Participation in the Alternatives to Violence Program has given me many of the skills needed to live according to the Alternative Wisdom taught by the Historical Jesus (*p 69 Meeting Jesus... supra*).

³⁷ He will teach us his ways... nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. *Isaiah 2.4:*

³⁸ Matthew 18.3: unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Ezekiel 11.19: I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh...

³⁹ He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

⁴⁰ See John 15.4: No branch can bear fruit by itself. It must remain in the Vine. It is the Vine that bears the fruit.

⁴¹ Ordinary discussion groups tended to be of little value – merely intellectual debates which increased prejudices.

⁴² Bill Burnett once said to me, "Quakers are very humanist". I realized I should have replied "the Holy Spirit is very humanist".

⁴³ I realised that if I refused to take Communion and share the Eucharist on Quaker grounds, I would be harming myself and others. I have continued to value the Eucharist, and most churches allow one to take it "if you have been baptized, in any

church". I have not been baptized by a church but if challenged will say that I have been baptized by the Holy Spirit, by Jesus himself.

⁴⁴ There was a radical social and political edge to his message and activity. (The historical Jesus) challenged the social order of his day and indicted the elites who dominated it. *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: supra*

⁴⁵ Early Friends said the Light was in Jesus "without measure" - without limit.

⁴⁶ I only truly became convinced of the non-Violent approach through the spiritual witness of Simeon Shitemi a Kenyan Friend who attended a FWCC seminar on Non violence, in Gabarone, Botswana in 1977.

⁴⁷ Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. *Isaiah 1.17*

⁴⁸ Ds Beyers Naude, formerly Moderator of the NGK - Dutch Reformed Church in the Transvaal.

⁴⁹ God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self discipline: *2 Timothy 7*

⁵⁰ I belonged to a Bible study led by Ross Maine an evangelical Anglican minister who ran Bible study ministry to the Nationalist Cabinet ministers in Pretoria, and the SA embassy in Washington, and their families. He was a potent agent of inner change among influential persons, while the Quaker, Prof HW van der Merwe offered them practical, external opportunities to meet others and work out how to dismantle Apartheid.

⁵¹ It would be invidious to mention names, because to me they were a heavenly host, and I hate to leave anyone out, but I must mention Rosemary Elliot of Cape Eastern Monthly Meeting, who showed me that one could be fun, be joyful, be brave, and follow Jesus, and Louis and Lois Hoskins of Earlham College, Indiana, who were role models as parents, friends and citizens.

⁵² This was "no problem" for someone brought up on the story of the Pennsylvania Friends and the Indians.

⁵³ Hector Petersen was a child killed in the schoolchildren's march against apartheid on 16 June 1976, the beginning of a 15 year uprising by the youth. We were also protected by our white skins and the clerical uniforms of the clergy.

⁵⁴ Friends also dispelled my fear. When I was young, Suzanne Stephen and Olive Gibson were wonderful role models. HW van der Merwe (founder and director of the Centre for InterGroup Studies at UCT) gave invaluable information, so that I could take informed action, and use my reason as well as my intuition.

⁵⁵ Nosiswe Madlala Routledge and I went round the house chanting, "I'd rather not", so that the words would start tripping easily off our tongues.

⁵⁶ The difficulty with religion *as a ritual* is that it freezes life in a condition of hope/hopelessness and no responsibility, no enlightenment. ... let it become a religion of the Self. That doesn't mean a new church. It means a new context for the religion you already have. That context involves becoming responsible for being the source of life and not the effect. It involves a *willingness* to be enlightened wherever you are and an acceptance of the conditions of your mind and the world at every moment. It means living right now. It means clean communicative relationships. It means being true to your life's purpose. It means manifesting your natural integrity. It means satisfaction with and contribution to life. It means that you participate in life by choice. It means that you take responsibility for the way the world is right now and exercise your awesome power in the matter of what the world is becoming. A transformed you means a transformed enlightened world. Have the courage to be enlightened. I can't think of a better place to start than within the framework of your religion. *Ron Smotherman supra*

⁵⁷ Although I have no scientific background George Ellis the Quaker cosmologist has been generous in discussing my spiritual leadings, and confirming and widening them from the view point of cosmology, and physics. His words at the end of his Einstein lecture, "the conclusion I come to is that we live in a benign universe" remain with me. For me, the whole of Creation constitutes "the Body of Christ".

⁵⁸ *Speaking as one Friend to another: The Mystical Way Forward: Pendle Hill pamphlet 249*

⁵⁹ Douglas Steere said that a role for Quakers in the 20th century was to find modern terminology for religion and in this way to bring the warring Christian churches to unity. He was principal of Haverford College near Philadelphia USA, involved in the ecumenical movement, and a Quaker delegate to the World Council of Churches. He visited friends in Johannesburg in the 1960's.

⁶⁰ St Bernard of Clairvaux said: Life is for Love; Time is given so that we may Know God. I sense that the whole of Creation constitutes "the Body of Christ".

⁶¹ When Yen Ho was about to take up his duties as tutor to the heir of Ling, Due of Wei, he went to Ch'u Po Yu for advice. "I have to deal", he said, "with a man of depraved and murderous disposition.... How is one to deal with a man of this sort?" "I am glad that you asked this question.... The first thing you must do is not to improve him, but to improve yourself". *Human habits of highly Effective Organisations: Guy Codrington: Regarding Deployment of self: p 76*

⁶² (We could be) a conduit for an energy that, since the beginning of time through the vast eons of pre-life and the eons of the ascent of life, is moving on its relentless way to a destination of ever higher consciousness....and .. (we can) choose to get in line with that current...to adjust the little straw of one's life in alignment with the flow of that cosmic tidal wave. ...The consensus of the mystics of all living religious (is) that God is nearest me in me, that God is the very Self of my self, and that we are all members of one God body, who is the very ground of our being. *Speaking as one Friend to Another ibid p 17*

⁶³ Reproduced in part, at the end of this paper

⁶⁴ We are in a Crisis of perception... We are trying to apply the concepts of an outdated world view – the mechanistic world view of Cartesian Newtonian science – to a reality that can no longer be understood in terms of these concepts. We are living today in a globally interconnected world in which biological, psychological and environmental phenomena are all interdependent.

We need a new vision of reality, a fundamental change in our thoughts, perceptions and values. The beginnings of this change, of the shift from the mechanistic to a holistic conception of reality are already visible in all fields. The 60s and 70s have generated a whole series of social movements that all seem to go in the same direction – but must still operate separately and have not yet recognised how their intentions interrelate.

In the 1920's the problems of the scientific order were not merely intellectual but amounted to an intense emotional and one could say, even existential crisis. Today our society as a whole finds itself in a similar crisis. We can read about its various manifestations every day in the newspapers – (the disfunctions are) all are different facets of one and the same crisis and it is crisis is essentially a crisis of perception. *The turning point: Fritjof Capra; p xviii.....*

⁶⁵ ... in shaping a religion that could serve the Family of man, to claim that Jesus is God, blocks communication. To see him in evolutionary terms as the Son of Man, as a forerunner of man's successor, Homo Spiritus, the second Adam, the first-born among many brethren, bearing a family likeness to other great mystics and avatars, keeps communication flowing. Friends, because of their freedom from creedal commitment, could make a great contribution in this "mutual irradiation". *Speaking as one Friend to another (ibid) p 26*

⁶⁶ It is important to allow oneself to be confronted by the ultimate darkness, the ineffable mystery. But for the Christian there is the assumption that the Judeo-Christian God is there in the darkness, that it is somehow God's home and that if one will but attune ones inner ear there will come through the otherwise empty silence the still small voice. It is the "ineffable voice of the Divine Teacher". John Yungblut: *Speaking as one Friend to Another*. P 19