

EDITORIAL

Well, firstly, I am excited to say we received so much material for this edition that I had to leave some out and keep it for the next edition. It was hard but, unless we change our format to a more expensive one, necessary.

And that brings me to the point of e-publishing. We've been talking about it for a while and, now, finally, we have this edition available to be downloaded electronically, or as a PDF for printing. The plan is that the next edition will be sent to the various monthly meetings as PDF documents to be printed on site – with the exception of some meetings that may have trouble accessing reasonably priced printing.

As usual, this issue starts with the Richard Gush Lecture – Shelagh Willet's *Reverence for life* – and that sets the tone for the rest. How do we as Quakers deal with the challenges of life, our own lives, the lives of others, and the lives of those less fortunate, including non-humans – and even non-animals?

So read about how the Zim Food Relief Action, animal rights campaigners and Quakers and Quaker activists from Britain, southern Africa and Australia strive to make life better for all sentient beings, and we give a taster of some interesting reading on the subject.

But the influence of a great life does not end with the last breath so we celebrate two dearly loved Quakers who died recently, and also question the legacy of one of South Africa's most remarkable people – Jan Smuts. And then we end up with musings on Quaker life by reports on YM and JMM's retreat, and some critical questions about how we worship as Quakers. It's a mixed bag – but then, so is life.

reverence for life



RICHARD GUSH MEMORIAL LECTURE

Shelagh Willet delivered the 2013 Richard Gush Memorial Lecture at Yearly Meeting in Cape Town. To quote Susan Groves from CWMM:

it was powerful and the meeting responded. I felt the Spirit move in a palpable way in my body in a way I had seldom experienced.



Good morning Friends,

I feel privileged and happy to be speaking to you to-day. My topic is Reverence for Life and I would like to begin with a brief meditation on the miraculous diversity and wonder of life on this earth of ours. Of course, one could spend the entire time allocated for the lecture to doing just that but let us try, for a moment, to regain the sense of wonder with which a child looks at the world. As adults most of us have often lost the ability to see the tiny details noticed by a child... the scurrying ants... the minute flowers that appear so briefly after the first rains fall...the sounds of birdsong.... the rustling of the leaves. All newly experienced and to be looked at, touched, heard, smelt with undivided attention.

Since 1968, when mankind first circled the moon, it has been possible to actually view the earth from space and to

view from afar its breath taking beauty. In her 2011 Swarthmore Lecture, Pamela Lunn reproduces the first image, taken from the Apollo 8 spacecraft and entitled *Earthrise*. It vividly portrays the blue and white orb of the earth rising above the desolate surface of the moon.



A second photo taken in 1972 from the Apollo 17 Spacecraft and entitled *The Blue Marble* shows the whole round Earth with the outline of the African continent very clearly depicted. As Pamela Lunn reports:

The view of the world alone in the blackness of space touched something, touched a nerve.

This image was reproduced many times for a variety of purposes. Lastly is *The pale blue dot* photographed by the camera on the spacecraft Voyager 1, in 1990 and depicting our planet from the edge of our solar system around four billion miles away and barely visible, just a tiny dot alone in the darkness of the universe¹. And so far, nowhere else has any vestige of life been detected, either in our own solar system, or in the local galaxy or upon any of the other bodies discovered in space. How infinitely precious therefore is the living world in its myriad forms and how greatly it is to be revered.

Let us spend a few moments looking at its diversity and wonder. I am completely unscientific and have never studied biology so I can only present a few random thoughts on some of what I find most fascinating and almost unbelievable about the living world. As we return to the surface of the Blue Dot, we see, north and south, the polar regions – an apparent desert of snow and ice but awesomely spectacular and beautiful with its great cliffs of ice reflected in the bluest of blue waters, enormous icebergs shaped and sculptured by the winds and waves. Then, seen from close by, incredibly crowded with vibrant life. Sea birds by the million, seals, whales and in the sea itself the microscopic plankton on which so many species depend for life. In spite of the devastation caused by the human hunters on both seals and whales, they still exist. There is so much about their lives which is as yet unknown. Had we been able to communicate with them, as they do with each other, how much might we have learnt? Instead, so many creatures are fatally endangered and on the point of extinction owing to human greed and cruelty.

If we move to the tropical regions, there are the huge giants of the tree world in the tropical rain forests. The lungs of the world and vital for the oxygen they provide for all living creatures, their surroundings and the creatures that live among them are barely known yet they are being ruthlessly destroyed by mankind. Trees that may be thousands of years old should be regarded with the reverence I felt when looking up at the stately beauty of the redwood trees of California, which are now but a remnant of what existed when Western man first saw them.

Here in Africa we are privileged to live in one of the richest floral kingdoms on earth with so many rare and priceless species. Twice I've been to Namaqualand when the plants were in bloom and experienced the sight of hillsides ablaze with flowers while at one's feet are miniscule brilliantly

coloured blossoms on small succulent plants. How glorious they all are and in a desert landscape of rocks and stones! Flying across the expanse of the skies are the migrating birds, some of which, like the Arctic Tern, actually fly from Pole to Pole and never see winter. How they manage to fly the distances they do and how they find their way remains a matter of incomprehension but they seem to use certain landmarks on land, and some use the winds to drift along



and sleep on the wing. Coming down to earth again we see the various social insects such as ants and bees, and marvel at their complex methods of navigation and communication. It is so easy to destroy a tiny insect but do we ever consider the complexity of its eye, for instance, or how remarkable is the transformation of an insignificant looking caterpillar into a brilliantly-coloured butterfly or moth? The variety of insect life is beyond computation and so many of its secrets have yet to be discovered. Then there is the world of the microscopic. The teeming life to be observed in a drop of muddy water from a stagnant pool,

only visible by means of a microscope but richly diverse and complex.

Nevertheless, no matter how much we may admire and wonder at the beauty and mystery of the natural world, we also have to recognise its dark side. Species that prey on those weaker, birds like the cuckoo whose fledglings kill those of its hosts. I'm sure you can think of many more examples! As Albert Schweitzer put it:

The world-view of reverence for life follows the world as it is. And the world means the horrible in the glorious, the meaningless in the full of meaning, the sorrowful in the joyful.²

Having had this brief glimpse of the power and wonder of the earth upon which we live, and while acknowledging the contradictions a realistic view of it entails, we now have to consider the seriousness of the current situation caused largely because humankind is alienated from nature, feeling only the need to dominate and exploit it. I expect, Friends, that most of you believe that climate change is happening and faster than expected. In the words of one of the contributors to a very impressive book published in 2012 and entitled *Many Heavens, one Earth: Readings on religion and the environment*. I quote:

It is probably safe to say that the present environmental state of the world constitutes the most serious threat to the biosphere since the origin of life on earth. It is also safe to say that the environmental crisis is not only a threat, but a situation that will not easily be overcome and that will haunt us for the foreseeable future.³

It could hardly be stated more forcefully than that or, to mention another very potent comment by Senator Gaylord Nelson in the same book:

*The harsh reality is that no war, no revolution, no peril in all of history measures up in importance to the threat of continued environmental deterioration.*⁴

The authors of the above-mentioned book are of the opinion that environmental problems are, at their root, spiritual issues. Because modern man has become alienated from the earth and its creatures, we need a wider vision of reality in which we see ourselves as part of a greater whole. In other words, a “paradigm shift”. You will find this term appearing in several of the texts I will be quoting and Paul Brockleman, in his essay which also appears in *Many Heavens, One Earth*, comments as follows:

*Historians and scholars [...] have long been aware that human cultures also undergo such transformations in how they envisage life as a meaningful whole and how they picture the purpose and role of humans in it.*⁵

Examples include the change to Christianity by the Romans in the 4th and 5th Centuries and the transformation of the traditional Christian culture to the modern world in the 17th and 18th Centuries. A book entitled *Ecology and religion* published in India in 2003, points out that the world’s major religions include an inextricable connection between humanity and nature, and discusses this in relation to Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity.⁶

Reverence for life

I first came across this phrase in the writings of Albert Schweitzer and indeed, he lived his life as a powerful exponent of letting his own life speak in this regard. I expect that his name is well known to us older folk but probably not as familiar to the younger generation. He was an inspiration to many people worldwide and lived in Africa for many

years. A well-known musician and philosopher, he began training as a medical doctor at the age of 30 and came to French Equatorial Africa (Gabon) and opened a hospital for patients suffering from leprosy, sleeping sickness and other dread diseases. He read widely, including investigating the religions of India, in several of which the concept of reverence for life exists. It was while crossing a river in a canoe in Africa that the insight came into his mind that Reverence for Life underlies all true ethics. Thereafter he lived his life guided by that principle, and wrote a number of books and articles on the subject in which, as the compiler of an anthology of his writings comments: *he provides a message of mystical, reverent life-affirmation.*⁷

Friends bear with me as I conclude this short comment on Albert Schweitzer with an account written by my mother of the visit of a Johannesburg chemist who went to Lambarene to work with the great doctor:

*Dr Schweitzer is noted, of course, for his teaching on reverence for life. If possible he will kill no living creature. Mr Friedman showed us pictures of the doctor feeding his many pets, which range from dogs and buck to chimpanzees. He always has his pockets filled with grain or bread and the animals seem to know his step, and show themselves at once. When walking one day with Mr Friedman, he told him to be very careful not to tread on a trail of ants crossing the road.*⁸

That passage shows how a life of deep philosophical insights could be combined with the utmost simplicity and love. His analysis of the failure of modern thinkers to offer an ethical response to the challenges of a failed and dying civilisation is as relevant now as when it was written so long ago. His message concerning the need for humankind to be transformed by a transmutation of its value system and

attitudes towards all sentient life still speaks to thinking beings, but how few have heeded it.

Jainism and Buddhism

Although the concept of reverence for life does exist in other religions, it is in Jainism that it has been worked out in the greatest detail to become the cornerstone of the faith.

Spiritual leaders in the religion are known as “Fordmakers” as they are believed to guide their followers across the waters that separate them from enlightenment. The last Fordmaker, named Mahavira was born in India, around 2,600 years ago and was more or less contemporary with the Buddha. His message was as follows:

*All breathing, existing, living, sentient creatures should not be slain, nor treated with violence, nor tormented, nor driven away. This is the pure, unchangeable, eternal law which the clever ones who understand the world have proclaimed.*⁹

I find this a very powerful message!

In his book *The Jains*, Paul Dundas comments that

Jain teaching included a thoroughgoing analysis of reality and a consequent emphatic relationship with its life forms.

Such life forms were believed to exist in earth, water, air and fire, which were also to be revered. In line with this teaching, Jains are vegetarians and have even given up farming lest they destroy organisms in the soil. An interesting sign of their concern for animals is shown by their setting up refuges in which sick and aged animals are cared for until they die a natural death.¹⁰

Both the laity and members of the Jain monastic orders practice non-violence which is regarded as the highest religious duty and which should result in personalities who

exhibit qualities such as friendliness, goodwill, gentleness and lack of passion. In the words of a Jain friend of mine:

*Suffice it to say that non-violence is one of the most significant gifts of Jainism to humanity. If this principle was followed in its true spirit and essence, there would be no wars, no civil wars, no domestic violence, no passion killings, no crime and bloodshed on our streets, no xenophobia and hatred of races.*¹¹

Like Mahavira, the Buddha also taught his followers compassion and reverence for all living creatures, and Buddhism has always regarded concern for nature as a most important element in the belief and behaviour of its adherents. In our own day and age Adam Curle, both a Buddhist and a Quaker, pointed out that, 'our work for peace is work for harmony among all beings.'¹²

Judaism

It is interesting to note that, while many Christians have seen one particular text in the Bible (Genesis 1:28) as giving mankind the right to dominate and subdue the earth and its creatures, this is not the belief of Jewish scholars. Indeed, in his essay *Nature as subject*, Eric Katz points out that

*Indeed, Jewish scholars throughout history have gone to extraordinary lengths to disavow any idea that Genesis 1:28 permits the subjugation of nature by humanity.*¹³

Instead, Jewish tradition regarded the role of humans as being stewards of the natural world but not its owner. In Judaism the earth belongs to God. Though there are different traditions within Judaism, regarding the relationship between God and nature, the perspective is that there is innate value in nature that is independent of human

interests because nature itself expresses the creative power of God. Further, Katz comments that:

*Compassion for all living beings is a moral obligation in Judaism but the context will determine the level of response.*¹⁴

Christianity

Initially the followers of Jesus were non-violent and did not become soldiers. In fact many of them were the poor, the outcasts and women, who would not have been eligible to join the Roman military. This changed however, when the Roman emperor Constantine became a Christian in the 4th. Century AD, and Christianity became the state religion of the empire. Many Christians became soldiers and Augustine, who died in 430 AD introduced the doctrine of “just wars” and the belief that wars could be “just” and might be waged to punish evil-doers at the command of God.

In the 13th Century, Thomas Aquinas developed the theory even further. The history of Europe is a history of constant warfare between states and against foreign invaders and even for religious reasons, like the Crusades and there was certainly no awareness of the sacredness of the life of either humans or animals. These wars resulted in untold suffering of both human beings and the unfortunate animals used in battle, such as horses. And all this went on in so-called Christian nations, so the track record of the Christian religion regarding the relationship between the Creator and the Creation has on the whole not been a positive one. Exceptions like St Francis, who valued and rejoiced in nature, existed throughout the ages but were usually in the minority and were frequently persecuted by the Church authorities.

As European civilisation moved into the modern age, great advances were made in the sciences and a split developed

between science and religion with science being seen as concerned with material matters which did not concern the religious. By many Christians, Heaven was seen as a purely spiritual realm, to be attained by the deserving only after their death but concern for creation was not encouraged. Industrialisation led to increasing alienation from Nature and its relentless exploitation. By the end of the 20th Century and in the current one, in many churches there has been a new awakening as thinking people become aware of the ecological crisis, largely caused by total lack of concern for the earth. One development is "Creation Spirituality", which seems to fit in with the suggestion in *Many heavens, One Earth* of the need for a paradigm shift. Matthew Fox, author of *Original blessing*, after being dismissed from his Dominican Order commented:

*I, with this dismissal, rededicate myself and my energy to the work of a viable creation centred spirituality and the contribution it can make to assisting the bringing about of an environmental revolution ... to deep ecumenism, to honouring the wisdom of women and of indigenous peoples; to new models of educating that include body, soul, and spirit; and to social justice and compassion.*¹⁵

A holistic vision indeed! This was quoted in *The Friend* of March 19th 1993 on page 368 and at that time, the facts about global warming and climate change were not so clearly understood, so Fox can be seen as a prophetic voice. He wrote many books on the topic and founded the Institute of Culture and Spirituality. Creation Spirituality lays emphasis on the interconnectedness of all life forms and the need to show compassion for them.

It is positive, joyous and life-affirming in contrast to what Fox calls the Fall/Redemption theology that sees both mankind and nature as fallen and in need of redemption.

Quakerism and reverence for life

Early Friends, though not using such terms as *Reverence for Life* or *Non-Violence*, had a vision of God in all creation that involved respect for and love of all life on Earth. In her two books on this topic, Anne Adams has made a close investigation of the writings of these early Quakers and she comments on them in *Is there not a new Creation?* by observing that

*Early Friends experienced a paradigm shift in their lives. All who were faithful could experience the same new life, so that a new community would be born in which there was peace, harmony, with the rest of creation. It was a holistic vision involving God, the whole of nature and humans. The whole of creation, being created by God, was sacred.*¹⁶

Sadly, as Anne points out, this vision faded and was lost, as Friends entered the Quietist period when the emphasis was on various external aspects of their religion, such as correct speech patterns, dress, and the disownment of those who married non-Friends. They no longer took their message to the whole community and the idea of the relationship between God and the rest of creation was forgotten for several centuries.

One exception was John Woolman, an American Quaker whose testimony against the Slave Trade had a powerful impact on his fellow worshippers in the 18th Century. He felt very strongly about all abuse and cruelty towards animals and believed they should be treated with kindness. His Journal contains many instances of this concern, and in one passage he comments:

We should feel a care that we do not lessen that sweetness of life in the animal creation

*that the Great Creator intended for them under our government.*¹⁷

What a far cry is this sentiment from the way animals are treated in factory farming today. In fairness to the early Quakers in the UK, it must be remembered that they were instrumental in starting several of the societies against cruelty to animals, and against vivisection and also spoke strongly against such cruel sports as bear baiting and cock fighting.

Thankfully, Friends world-wide are responding to the ecological crisis in a number of ways. In 2011, Britain Yearly Meeting committed Friends to becoming a low carbon community. In an excellent series of articles entitled *Quakers and Creation*, Stuart Masters quotes from the Minute reporting on this development to the effect that:

*this commitment is consistent with our historical testimony and we are renewing our commitment to a sense of the unity of creation which has always been part of Friends' Testimonies.*¹⁸

A number of powerful and *telling* statements have been made by Friends in various countries and I would like to quote from just two of them. The first is a short extract from a report by Welsh Friends that appeared in the publication *EarthQuaker* in 2001 reporting on discussions on Susan Finch's book *Testimony to the Earth*, and that reads in part:

*Our respect and love for all human life should extend to love for all life. We are the consciousness and voice of creation and must accept this responsibility.*¹⁹

Then there was the Quaker
Earthcare Statement by

Australian Friends in 2008
which includes these words:

We find delight in the grace of creation and are humbled by the richness of its gifts.....Our very existence depends upon us sustaining our intimate relationship with nature. Yet much has been harmed through our lack of reverence, our ignorance, denial, waste and ill-considered actions. We have set ourselves against the Spirit. We have ignored our interconnectedness with other living things, weakened our own well-being and we have diminished the opportunity for fair livelihood. [...] We commit ourselves to the demanding, costly implications of radically changed ways of life. Let us do so out of joy, celebration, reverence and deep love of life.²⁰

Both these statements are evidence of a sense of hope and even of joy, which is in contrast to the feeling of hopelessness many feel when they contemplate the realities confronting the world and the escalating rise in temperature that, if it reaches 4°C, will mean unspeakable devastation for all life on earth.



In addition to the written word, which includes several magazines such as, *EarthQuaker*, Quakers are making use of new technology by setting up networks such as *Quaker Earthcare Witness* intended to bring together Quakers and other like-minded people taking spirit-led action to address the ecological and social crises of the world. In the UK, *Living Witness* is a Quaker charity that supports Friends' witness to sustainable living and taking it to the wider community by means of gatherings, newsletters and shared resources including a website, www.quakerearthcare.org.

Sources of hope

The fact of our interconnectedness is evidenced by the increasing response of people to the serious threat global warming poses towards all life on earth. These threats can no longer be hidden when any events such as wildfires in Australia or floods in America can be shown on our TV screens almost as they happen. We are now connected across barriers that previously divided us so that a teenager in the US can share ideas with one in Kenya through Facebook, Twitter and the Internet. An outstanding example of global interconnectedness is the success of the AVAAZ network of 13 million or more users. AVAAZ has members in every nation in the world, and describes itself as campaign to ensure that the views and values of the world's peoples shape global decision-making. When a new threat to human rights emerges, users are able to record their protest and the results will arrive on the desk of the appropriate person or authority in the country involved. Has anything like this ever existed before? The name AVAAZ, by the way, means "Voice" or "Song" in several languages and it has been successful in affecting a number of outstanding cases of human rights abuse.²¹

Another positive development was the launching of the Earth Charter on 29 June 2000. According to the Wikipedia entry it:

seeks to inspire in all peoples a sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the well-being of the human family, the greater community of life and future generations. [...] The Earth Charter's ethical vision proposes that environmental protection, human rights, equitable

human development, and peace are interdependent and indivisible. The Earth Charter has been formally endorsed by organisations representing millions of people .It is an approximately 2,400-word do

cument divided into sections (called Pillars,) with 16 main principles containing 61 supporting principles. The four pillars are as follows:

- *Respect and care for the Community of Life*
- *Ecological Integrity*
- *Social and Economic Justice.*
- *Democracy, Nonviolence and Peace*²²

The first Principle is

Respect Earth life in all its diversity, and

the 15th is

Treat all living beings with respect and consideration.

I mention all this because these principles of the Earth Charter clearly match the theme of this lecture. Undoubtedly, the track record of mankind during the 13 years since the Charter was proclaimed has been appalling. Wars and terrorist attacks have escalated from year to year and caused thousands of deaths, so-called nuclear deterrents like Trident, continue to be renewed at enormous cost in times of economic crisis, while the problem of deadly nuclear waste poses insoluble problems that future generations will have as part of their heritage from those who have no concept that there is any alternative to the rule by the powerful over all aspects of life by the forces of nihilism. And yet, and yet ...opposition to these forces is being expressed all over the world by ordinary people who are willing to speak and act against what they see as wrong and to be punished for this belief but not to yield, who are

willing to accept imprisonment and even death for their beliefs. Such principles have been expressed and affirmed and they certainly represent a paradigm shift – a new way of looking at the world.

A country that might be an example of how change might come about is the tiny Buddhist state of Bhutan in Central Asia. Since 1971 Bhutan has espoused the idea of Gross National Happiness being used to replace Gross National Product as the criteria by which development and progress are measured. This is done by the government actively promoting the spiritual, social and environmental health of its citizens and natural environment. Particularly impressive is the fact that, according to an article in the Guardian Weekly in 2012:

Placing the natural world at the heart of public policy has led to environmental protection being enshrined in the constitution. The country has pledged itself to remain carbon neutral and to ensure that at least 60% of its land mass will remain under forest cover in perpetuity. It has banned logging and has instigated a monthly pedestrian day that bars all private vehicles from its roads.

The article comments further:

Now, in a world beset by collapsing financial systems, gross inequity and wide-scale environmental destruction, the tiny Buddhist state's approach is attracting a lot of interest. Last year the UN adopted Bhutan's call for a holistic approach to development, a move endorsed by 68 countries. A UN panel is considering ways for Bhutan's GNH model to be replicated globally.²³

Another country with unusual policies is Costa Rica in Central America, which, many years ago ceased to have an

army and thereby has improved its education system and infrastructure because of the money that has been saved in this way. Costa Rica is surrounded by much more powerful and aggressive states but manages to cooperate with them peacefully.

Embracing the earth charter.

Even though such a transformation does seem like a hopeless daydream in the world of today, let us not forget the abolition of slavery, which began when just a small minority faced with courage the implacable hatred and force of the rich slave owners, and succeeded! So what would a world that carried out the principles of the Earth Charter be like?

Human relations

Let's start with Inter-relatedness – the recognition that we are kin despite the differences between us of nationality, skin colour, language, religion and sexual orientation. Community life, especially where it had been broken down because of so-called development, would be restored. Friendliness and cooperation between neighbours would require assistance by all when climate change brings about catastrophes like floods. Smaller and closer communities working to produce food and to survive in unexpected circumstances brought about by the need to become carbon-neutral would result in greater happiness for all.

People everywhere would become aware of the challenge of accelerating temperature increase, and accept the need to make huge changes in lifestyle in order to become carbon-neutral.

Assistance to those countries most affected by increasing temperatures and loss of livelihood would be provided by

the countries that were most responsible for the environmental changes.

Armed conflict between countries would cease, and negotiation take its place. Money saved on producing the weapons of war would be used to promote conservation of the earth's resources.

Relations with non-human life

The Earth Charter Pillars Ecological Integrity, Democracy, Non-violence and Peace provide the principles that underlie these values. The changes required for humanity to survive also encompass their treatment of animals and the environment itself. If all forms of cruelty are to disappear, then factory farming has to be replaced by kinder methods of rearing and treating animals.

Unrestrained permission to treat laboratory animals cruelly would no longer be given and would be replaced by the belief that all sentient beings deserve protection from pain and suffering.

Time?

Much of all this would take a very long time to effect, and time is something that we do not have if the increasing rise in temperature is not to make the earth uninhabitable. However, I think we must not despair but believe that the Power that has given mankind the ability to think, feel and understand, underlies our efforts to cooperate with what is creative and healing. Millions of our fellow humans are groping towards this new vision that can save the Earth and the life upon it. Here I'd like to quote from the last few verses of the First Sonnet in Kenneth Bouldings'

There is a Spirit: the Naylor Sonnets

*And yet some Thing that moves among the
stars,
And holds the cosmos in a web of law,
Moves too in me: a hunger, a quick thaw
Of soul that liquefies the ancient bars
As I, a member of creation sing
The burning one-ness binding everything.*²⁴

Isn't that a marvellous last line?

Personal response

Any meaningful response to all that I have said previously can only begin with the individual. I feel very strongly that we need to regain that awareness of the beauty and wonder of life and of nature, and that we also need, each one of us, to seek to understand the effect climate change is going to make in the place where we live, upon our own precious communities and upon our children and their children.

Living as the majority do in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Botswana, struggling in the face of great need and poverty, just to survive, what will these things mean to them? How much do they know about the challenges the whole human race is facing? Isn't it our bounden duty to let them know what we ourselves understand about all this and to help them to face it and to realise the need for change.

We are at a time when people are exposed daily to the sight of others having what they would like for themselves, bigger cars, new TV sets, fancy clothes. All the "goods" that advertising on TV and everywhere else constantly forces upon our attention encourages the desire to possess them and be thought modern and up-to-date! Only a major change in thought and behaviour can save what is so precious.

Now I'd like to end with some verses from the same collection of poems previously quoted. It begins with a thrilling evocation of the beauty of the earth

*I plunge, shouting, in the fecund tide
Of vast creation; lave myself in light.*

And ends:

*Seek first the Kingdom---- for thy joys are dim
Until thou findest all things new in Him.²⁵*

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AVP – animal rights tour

ANNOUNCEMENT

Pauline & Les Mitchell of Cape Eastern Regional Meeting are planning to travel in the ministry next year, starting in Port Elizabeth in February.

Anyone who has participated in or facilitated an AVP workshop knows how amazing this activity is. We all want to do more workshops but have time

and financial constraints as well as difficulty accessing some places.

The Animal Rights focus is also becoming critically important, there having been a growing number of conferences debating the issues of concern for animals over the past four years.

Les will be 65 this November and so we have decided that he will take his retirement and we will tour the country – starting in the Eastern Cape. We plan to stay a week at a time with a community and hope to conduct a basic and advanced workshop with each group as well as talking to people about Animal Rights. Schools and Church groups will be our primary focus but we are open to suggestions. We already have some interested sponsors – we have our own transport with a camper trailer and our costs will be minimal.

As we travel we hope to meet up with other AVP 'ers or Animal Rights people. We will be hosting a blog – we may even begin 'tweeting' so watch out for us and invite us to your area if you would like us to conduct workshops or assist you with yours.



Inequality

REPORT

Bridget Nomonde Scoble gave a 7-minute talk on THE South African Network on Inequality to CWMM, and extended an invitation from SANI to all Quakers.

Explaining SANI to Cape Western and Central and Southern Africa Quakers in seven minutes is like trying to squeeze a free-range elephant back into an egg, because SANI grows

bigger and stronger every day.

SANI was born in inequality... in the enormous gap between rich and poor people... and keeps filling rooms where people's hearts, minds and skills are tuned to realities of poverty, hunger, food insecurity and violations of so many human rights of children and families, all over South Africa and elsewhere in the world... mostly in BRICSAM Countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa and Mexico.)

The Economic Justice Network (EJN) which coordinates SANI, gives the clue that SANI and economics are closely linked. EJN is a project of the Fellowship of Christian Councils in Southern Africa (FOCCISA), which falls under the World Council of Churches and was

founded in 1980 as Fellowship of Christian Councils in East and Southern Africa (FOCCESA) and as FOCCISA in 1999.



The Objective of FOCCISA is to enable Christian councils in the sub-region to pool their

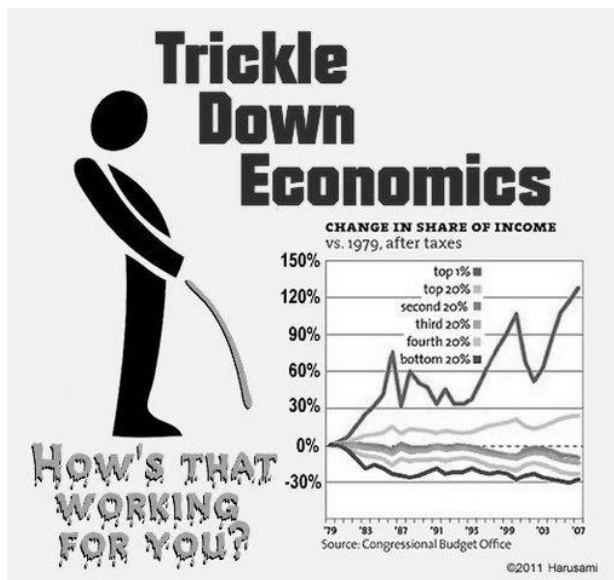
resources and energy ... in this case to work for equality.

At a conference to empower civil society organisations and social networks in an unequal, multi-polar world, held in Johannesburg in October 2013, concern was noted that in South Africa, despite being rich in natural resources and abundant water, the majority of the people still live under extreme levels of inequality and poverty. The dynamics, nature and contributions of structural factors perpetuating inequality in our society were deliberated and the role of civil society organisations in public policy-making was discussed.

Three areas of intervention were chosen, namely Food Security, Social Services and Finance (or Economic Justice), and a steering committee with members in six or more provinces was elected.

We are invited to join SANI, to work together with a growing number of South African activists, civil society

organisations, researchers, networks and many others, bringing our resources, skills and experience to find the best possible alternatives to inequality and poverty in our land.



Chris Wallace, who has worked in Britain with Quaker Charities since 1999 with Quaker Social Action and as the treasurer of Quaker Homeless Action, joined CWMM together with three other Wallaces on Sunday 9 February 2014 for meeting for worship. CWMM members were inspired by his report on his work with Quaker Homeless Action.

Quaker Homeless Action is a small charity which opens its doors to the homeless and disadvantaged over the Christmas period, a time which can be pretty cold and cheerless for many people. We provide hot meals, home comforts, like showers and a change of clothes, entertainment and friendship for about 80 people a day. Around 28 people also sleep at the shelter every night. Guests who have other problems like alcohol and substance abuse can also get help while they are with us which carries on beyond Christmastide.

During the rest of the year we run two mobile libraries from specially adapted vans. One operates in London and the other in the Dorset and Hampshire area. Access to a library is often difficult if you have no fixed address. We also support the Brighton Quaker Meeting which has adapted this idea to local needs and operates a library embodied in a suite of suitcases. We have also piloted a Befriending Scheme, whereby volunteers lend support to previously homeless people who have recently moved into a home of their own.

We have recently benefitted from a legacy from a Quaker who left us a considerable amount of money in her will. This has opened up new and exciting prospects for us. Quaker Social Action are also beneficiaries and

we are going collaborate with them on a new project. We will use our money to buy houses which will be used to accommodation homeless people. The management of the property and support of the tenants will be undertaken by QSA.

Thank you for welcoming us and making us feel at home. We enjoyed meeting and talking to you all and hearing about the work you are involved in. Cape Town and London are very different but people have very similar needs wherever you are in the world.

Kaye Foskett helps to unravel some of the mystery, misconceptions and uncertainty surrounding ministry

Once the meeting has gathered we wait in silence. In that silence we are

Within that will be the usual distractions, someone will arrive late, someone has a cough, someone forgets to turn their phone to silent, etc. Then we find we can't settle, odd thoughts drift across our minds 'did I lock the car door', 'what am I having for lunch', 'what did that person mean when they said such and such,' etc. Eventually silence (of varying qualities from week to week) prevails.

It's a collective gathering of silence. There is an awareness of us all in that silence. Then somebody stands and speaks. They have a typed piece of paper with them, something that they read earlier in the week and that resonated with them. All well and good and it may be interesting or even pertinent but it is not ministry. Ministry is spontaneous. Well nearly. Beforehand there tends to be a bit of fidgeting and questioning of oneself. But if it's a case of you sitting there and wondering how to put a point across and going through a number of different ways that you can say it, then it's not ministry. It might be after-words, if your meeting has such a thing, or it might be an item for discussion over tea, but it is not ministry.

Ministry is almost like being prodded to stand up and talk. And we're called Quakers for a reason, we might be quaking in our boots when we stand. We might not quite have the words together when we first stand up. That's ministry. One is almost propelled out of one's chair to speak. And it shouldn't be too long. You're not giving a lecture, it's not a rant, it's not a discussion, you are not putting across a point and hoping that others will respond.

There might be more ministry after you once a short period of time has elapsed, and it might be on the same topic to which you spoke – or it might be about something else entirely.

Sometimes only one person ministers in a meeting, sometimes no-one ministers at all.

If you are listening to someone minister what that person says might speak to your condition. Equally likely is that it will not. You might listen to the first sentence then tune out the rest. The next person to minister might have found something in what was said before but you don't. That's fine. The ministry might even only mean something to the person saying it.

What it isn't is pre-prepared.



Lewis Watling 1919-2014

TESTIMONY



Diane Salters
reminisces about, our
Quaker poet of the
South Peninsula

Lewis joined our South Peninsula Meeting in about 2005 and swiftly established himself as an elder in the best sense of the word, though never officially so.

He had, for about 20 years, been a very valued member of the Beccles meeting in

Norfolk, and brought to our meeting all his rich experience of being a Quaker .

Kaaren Whitney from the Beccles meeting writes:-

During my time he was an Overseer and contributed wisely during the Sunday gatherings. Occasionally he would read a poem if appropriate. He always tried to get people to see one another's point of view. He was close friends with the other wise people who held the meeting together including Edward Jones who is the only stalwart left from

that era. He gave great thought to problems and advocated coming to a just solution.

Lewis, however maintained that he was “sacked” as an overseer for not being very good at it! He remained always fresh and open to new ideas, deepening his sense of the mystery and expanding his view of how to celebrate that mystery. He relished contact with young people who he felt were unfolding a new and wonderful future for us all and loved to engage with seekers of all kinds. He was an influence on the South Peninsula meeting becoming even more relaxed about the “forms” of worship than we were before – I think he favoured a deep and loving acceptance that knew no bounds.

One of the most notable things about Lewis was that he approached living in a spirit of adventure and discovery. Perhaps his greatest adventure was, at the age of 81 - when most people feel they are settled for life - leaving his home and friends in the UK to re-unite with his youngest daughter Maria in Cape Town. This was also an opportunity to “renew contact with the vibrant energy” of Cape Town that he had first experienced when, as a British airman, he served with the Commonwealth Air Training Scheme from 1941-1945. He eventually settled happily in his favourite corner, Fish Hoek.

Lewis described himself as a “teacher, mentor and poet”. He was indeed a teacher and had taught at junior, senior and special needs levels in Britain, Canada and South Africa. He was all of that to us, but particularly in his latter, years his poetry became a bountiful flood that poured from him. Very often during After-words, he would pull a folded piece of paper from his pocket and say “May I?”

We never refused as the gift was always precious. Although we will miss Lewis deeply, particularly in the silence he loved so well, we are grateful to be left his voice in the form of several volumes of poetry that he published over the last six years. The very last one was completed just before he died and published in time for his memorial service which was held in his beloved Tokai Arboretum. There was a beautiful gathering of his friends, Friends and fellow poets under the old trees.

Astrid read out messages from his family. Lewis leaves two daughters, one son nine grandchildren and six great grandchildren. Anita read the Valediction which he had written in 2006 as he consciously prepared for his passing.

His passing was indeed just as he would have wished. Having had a fall, he survived two operations on his leg and hip remarkably free of pain and was transferred to the Booth Memorial Hospital for recovery. There he was received with great compassion and was in full flood of chatting to the nurses when his heart just stopped. His close friend Astrid writes:

In the weeks preceding his death Lewis was imbued with a lightness of being that was a privilege to watch – a lightness of being that his body could no longer contain.

His last witness in our Meeting was a fascinating address to our young Friends about what being a Quaker meant to him and had brought to his life – followed of course by the sweets which he had been bringing them regularly since they were small.

I think there is no more fitting way to end this than to offer you Lewis' own words in the form of the Valediction

I mentioned earlier. It is from *So I Kissed the Golden Softness*: Published 2014. Lewis' other books are:

Not More of the Same: Poems for the Age of Aquarius
A Touch of Madness
Out of Dark Spaces T
he Book of being

POEM

A Valediction

Take, thou, these flakes of ash
And let them spill
Neither as remainder,
Nor reminder, of only these past years;
But rather as guides to fill
This living moment with paeans of silent praise
Salted with tears
Praise for re-birth.
Praise for the power of death
To interrupt and change eons
of pattern and repetition. Praise
for new breath
To probe once more Life's mystery,
Reclaim its vision.
The mystery of roots
that grow a green, so multi-hue
in mix of trembling leaves,
curled moss and weathered stone,
they breathe out balance, beauty and similitude;
a mystery that brings the All into the
Alone.

The All of deeper selves
Who beckon from afar, but
linger in this ambience of trees. An
All that seeks to tell,
I Am, Thou Art, We Are!
Go from this residue of ash and
... **Fare Thee Well!**

Sally Gross (1953 to 2014) has died. Jen Stern muses on her extraordinary life, and the contribution she has made to religious, racial, financial and gender equality.

Sally's life was almost incomprehensible to many people. How does a nice Jewish boy become a Catholic priest, then a Quaker woman and a Buddhist?

The answers to this conundrum offer a lesson in how we think about people. And even how we write about them, as I struggle with the personal pronouns, *he* and *she*.

It is easy to think that Sally's activism was thrust upon her, as she was born "different," but she could have chosen the easy path.



She was born in Cape Town in 1953 with ambiguous genitalia and was – more or less on a toss of the dice –

classified male and named Selwyn. Selwyn was a bright child and, if he had just kept his head down and looked after number one, he could have chosen a profession like law, engineering or finance, made a lot of money, and been a wealthy, privileged white South African (slightly effeminate) man.

But he didn't. He was a seeker of truth, and he was deeply religious, very moral and sincerely concerned about other people. Selwyn was an activist long before he understood what it was to be intersex – first as a white ANC member in South Africa and then, after fleeing into exile in 1977, a pro-Palestinian Jew in Israel. Selwyn was part of the 1987 ANC delegation to Senegal led by Thabo Mbeki.

Selwyn started to train as a rabbi, but dropped out. One of the issues he'd struggled with was the fact that he had no interest whatsoever in marrying and producing children and grandchildren – even if he had been capable. This was unthinkable for a rabbi.

A short digression ...

All people fit in somewhere on a continuum from *most decidedly* male (think Hugh Jackman) to *very* female (think Marilyn Monroe). Most of us are neither Jackman nor Monroe but we are recognisably close to one end of the spectrum or the other. Intersex people inhabit the middle area. And there is a big difference between gender and sexual orientation. Intersex people can be attracted to men, attracted to women, joyfully attracted to both, or virtually asexual. Sally was the latter and referred to herself as “one of nature's celibates.”

So, having left rabbinical college and also having serious moral issues with Judaism because of the Palestinian

question and the tacit support of many South African Jews for apartheid, Selwyn turned to Christianity. He greatly admired the person of Jesus and the symbolism of the cross, as Sally told the Natal Witness in an interview in 2000, continuing,

The Holocaust was there, the horror of Apartheid was there, and my own personal confusion and pain – which I could never publicly admit – was there as well. And in the resurrection was a symbol that this was transcended. And at the back of my mind, there would have been an awareness that in Christianity there are strands of tradition in which celibacy is valued and turned to positive use.

So Selwyn became a Dominican priest. What a perfect role for a natural celibate. That was until, in 1993, Selwyn decided to explore his ambiguous feelings about gender, and sought medical advice. After a few tests, it was confirmed that Sally/Selwyn was intersex, leaning more towards female than male. It's a long and traumatic story, but the gist of it is that Selwyn decided to embrace the feminine side, changed his name to Sally, and changed his official gender to female. This led to some bureaucratic passport nightmares, but the most painful for Sally was the cruel rejection by the Church. When she spoke about this to me, it was clear that this was an extremely painful experience that – I think – broke her heart.

Sally returned to South Africa and found a spiritual home in Quakers. She was a most erudite, learned and interesting person. I distinctly remember her standing up in meeting and reciting verses in Aramaic. She had the most beautiful voice – deep, but not too deep, resonant

and melodic. And Aramaic is a lyrical language. I have no idea of the meaning of what she said, but I could have listened to her saying it all day. It was like the best piece of classical music I have ever heard.

While Sally was a strong and principled campaigner for human rights and worked selflessly to fight inequality, she was never physically robust. Sex hormones do more than just control how we look and procreate. Sally lived on a constant hormonal knife's edge that caused numerous medical problems, including severely painful and crippling osteoporosis.

But working through her pain, she drafted amendments on intersex issues for the *Alteration of Sex Descriptions Bill* and the *Promotion of Equality Act*, and brought the seriousness of intersex as a human rights issue to the awareness of the SA Human Rights Commission. She was particularly outspoken about coerced “corrective” surgery for intersex people, particularly babies and children. Sally always fought for the underdog – as a white South African she was an anti-Apartheid campaigner, and as a Jew in Israel, pro-Palestinian. She worked for years for the Land Claims Commission and helped countless people regain homes, land and money, but she died almost broke, in a tiny rented home she was struggling to pay for. She drew comfort in Galatians 3:28:

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

The painting reproduced above is by Gabrielle le Roux, and forms part of a body of work by about transgender and intersex activists that focuses on portraits and narrations of lived experiences. Each portrait is accompanied by text written by the subject – as

Gabrielle believes that people who speak first-hand about lived experiences do so with authority, and are the ones who should be listened to most closely. So it seems fitting to end with Sally's own words:

I am an unmutilated, WHOLE intersex PERSON.



OPINION

Wendy Landau critically discusses the life of Jan Christiaan Smuts in response to an article that appeared in a local newspaper, and in the process questions how we create, represent and represent history.

Representations and re-presentations of history; *the case of Jan Christiaan Smuts*

In the quiet period between Christmas 2013 and New Year 2014, an article by Naas Steenkamp entitled *Oom Jannie en die Kwakers* (Oom Jannie and the Quakers) slipped into the Afrikaans Sunday weekly, Rapport, which can be found on <http://www.rapport.co.za/Weekliks/Nuus/Oom-Janniedie-Kwakers-20131228>. Friends from Pretoria Worship Group did a translation into English that can be read on Microsoft OneDrive (cloud storage): <http://1drv.ms/1hbSsVz>.

The article recounts a lot of the history of Jan Smuts' friendships with British Quakers (especially the Clark and Gillett families) in the wake of the Anglo Boer War, their possible effects on his decisions about self-government

and Union in SA, and contains a glowing account of Smuts' philosophical contributions. This is ground that has frequently been covered by historians and is well known to many South African and British Quakers. Of particular interest, is the writer's account of his visit to one of Smuts' Clark grandchildren in Street, Somerset in England in the United Kingdom.

Reading the article led to me reflecting, once again, on how history is represented and then re-presented over again. For me, the telling of history is about a 'showing' of what happened in the past and is obviously based on the information that is available, what is chosen to be told, what is chosen to be important or cared about in the telling, and about the times and concerns of the narrators each time the history is told.

The life story of Jan Christiaan Smuts is a great example of this process, and as someone who in some instances showed 'statesmanlike' qualities, the study of the history of his life and times will probably show us some of the issues that will go into the long term study of the life and times of another South African statesman, Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela.

I grew up in a family that in South African English speaking lingo was called UP (United Party, after the name of Smuts' last party) and in Afrikaans was called SAP (after the first party Smuts and Louis Botha started in 1910, so my grandparents would have been described as 'sappe'. As a result of that allegiance, I grew up with a sanitised version of Smuts' life and political career, but as I moved into adulthood I started to dissect the life of Smuts and ponder its contradictions for myself.

Many Quaker writers and historians have recorded how Smuts met British Quakers after the Anglo-Boer War (it is not clear whether he met any Quakers at Cambridge when he studied there in the 1890s) and developed enduring friendships with them, and in particular with the Clark and Gillett families. As is indicated in the *Rapport* article one of Smuts and his wife Isie's daughters, Cato Smuts, married Bancroft Clark in 1928. One of their children is Petronella Clark, who was a Quaker in Lesotho and then in Cape Town for many years and is known to many in C&SAYM. The friendship with the Clark and Gillett families is explained in detail in British Quaker historian Hope Hay Hewison's key work published in 1989, *Hedge of Wild Almonds: South Africa, the 'Pro-Boers' and the Quakers*.

British Quakers concerned about the treatment of the Boers had, as the article indicates, links with Emily Hobhouse and links with Quakers in South Africa. Many British Quakers travelled to South Africa during the war and in the 'reconstruction' period in the decade after the war. This was the context for Smuts' openness to Quakers – he responded to their willingness to listen to and express compassion in word and deed to the plight of the Boers despite the immense criticism of the 'ProBoers' by the majority of British opinion at that time.

I want to believe that meeting British people (Quakers and



other 'Pro-Boers') who were willing to seek compromise, reconciliation and restitution helped to soften the anger that Smuts no doubt felt to Britain after the Anglo-Boer war, and I would like to believe that Quaker values and approaches played a role in Smuts' (and Botha's) willingness to accept the offers of first self government and later Union initiated by the Liberal Party government in the UK, perhaps within a spirit and understanding of reconciliation.

However, Smuts soon swung from his 1902 role of defeated

Boer general and Afrikaner politician to active supporter for Imperial Britain, which the 'Pro-Boer' Quakers had been essentially questioning among other things, because by 1914 he was a military general campaigning in Namibia and Tanzania on behalf of the British Empire in the First World War (a cause of great dissension and a growth of stronger republican sentiments among his fellow Afrikaners) and from 1917 a member of the Imperial War Cabinet. And roughly twenty years later, he led South Africa into the Second World War on the side of Britain again.

The article hints at the differences Smuts' Quaker friends had with him at those times, but in the spirit of friendship and dialogue in a typical and wonderfully Quaker fashion, the correspondence between Smuts and Margaret Clark (Gillett) continued throughout the Great War and for the rest of their lives.

My concern when reading an article like this one by Naas Steenkamp is that much is written and known about Smuts, his brilliance as a student, lawyer and politician, his holistic theories and his more broad-minded (than his contemporaries') views on religion and philosophy.

However, I feel that Smuts and his British Quaker supporters, like Smuts and most other white South Africans of the late nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century (Olive Schreiner was a notable exception) framed the problems in South Africa in the context of British and 'Dutch' "races", and were less conscious and concerned about the issue of the oppression and disenfranchisement of black South Africans. The policies and proposals of Smuts' United Party had liberal strands in the 1940s, and were definitely more liberal than the apartheid policies that followed them, but they were essentially paternalistic and gradualist, accepting the existence and necessity of segregation and not considering a universal franchise for all South Africans. Proposals for a way forward remained fixated on limited franchise options for black people based on property, education levels or income. This was a contradiction between Smuts' holistic and universalist views, often expressed in support of the formation of the United Nations, and his actual policies in power.

Of particular concern when examining Smuts' political life was his personal commanding of excessive armed force against resistance of various forms – in the 1913 and 1922 strikes on the Reef against white workers, and in response to the millenarian resistance by rural black people squatting on land at Bulhoek near Queenstown in the Eastern Cape in 1921, as well as the resistance to a dog tax by 'mixed-race' people called the Bondelswarts, in Namibia (newly a League of Nations mandate territory governed by South Africa's government) in 1922.

More than 180 people were killed at Bulhoek in half an hour when an 800-strong police force – armed with

machine guns and authorised by Smuts to remove the people – opened fire when the group refused to move. With the Bondelswarts people,

[a] force of 370 men advanced against the group and military aircraft started to bomb the Bondelswarts into submission. With the loss of only two people, the military force killed 115 Bondelswarts, including some women and children. The Bondelswarts had no option but to surrender.¹

Smuts' military decisions as Prime Minister and Minister of Defence (he held both offices) in the 1922 strike are better known. The rebellion in the mining towns of the Witwatersrand was crushed with 20 000 troops, artillery, tanks and bomber aircraft. Sadly, Smuts had turned to the study of war when he joined the leadership of the Boer forces in 1899, and he never lost his belief in force; whereas most Quakers had turned away from the study of war.

A lot of biographical writing runs the risk of being 'hagiographical' which means that it is written in a reverential (putting the person on a pedestal of esteem) or uncritical way. Some of Steenkamp's article falls into that category.

As a Quaker I baulk at Steenkamp's description of Smuts as more broadminded than the Quakers, whereas I think we Quakers then and now with our non-conformist opposition to war and challenging testimonies are and were more broadminded than Smuts was. But I imagine

¹ New History (website), 'Post-War Crisis Bulhoek and Bondelswarts', <http://newhistory.co.za/part-3-chapter-10-postwar-crises-bulhoek-and-bondelswarts/>, accessed 31 March 2014.

Steenkamp wrote that with a superficial understanding of Quaker testimonies and actions.

For me, the gist of a study of the life of Jan Christiaan Smuts is a study of contradiction, compromise and unconscious flaws, much like the study of any human life. And like Naas Steenkamp, I too enjoy pondering on the impact and meaning of Jan Smuts' long friendships, and indeed family connections, with Quakers. I particularly enjoy the fact that there is a place for silent worship near the Smuts House at Irene in Pretoria, and that Pretoria Worship Group sometimes holds outdoor meetings for worship in that space, continuing the visits of Quakers for over a century to the Irene farmstead of Jan and Isie Smuts.



Yearly meeting

OPINION

Susan Groves reflects on YM2013 in Cape Town.

I attended my first yearly meeting of Friends (The Religious Society of Friends or Quakers) at Easter 2013 in Cape Town. The meetings for worship were beautiful. Worship sharing in a group was marvellous. Meeting people over tea and in the breaks was good – there was love. I felt really part of central and southern Africa – a new experience for me.

But I was troubled by the fact that:

- many people had to speak in English, which is not their first language, and
- leadings of the spirit had to be fitted into the prearranged schedule.

Language

I so, so want people to be free to speak in their own languages. This only happened during the singing of a few songs during meeting for worship. I'd estimate that people for whom English was not a first language made up about a fifth of the gathering. No provision was made at any time for people to speak in their own language.

Why this bothers me: I suspect the Spirit often speaks in the softest – perhaps least articulate – voice. And so we are missing the Spirit. I have a sense of so much I need to learn from my sisters and brothers who aren't first language English-speaking.

During worship sharing, the group leader quietly said "*We need to speak about corruption.*" And I thought afterwards that if he were to speak out about corruption in his home, Zimbabwe, he may vanish.

Those speaking English dominated proceedings in leading the sessions and speaking from the floor. There were quite a few people from England present and participating. I don't mind this if the British yearly meeting also then has us from Africa sharing influentially in their meeting.

Leadings

Sheila Willett's Richard Gush Lecture was powerful, and the meeting responded. I felt the Spirit move in a palpable way in my body in a way I had seldom experienced.

Though we spoke about carrying this theme forward in the gathering, we in fact 'moved on' and I felt this vision was lost. I

felt distressed about that. It felt to me that we had missed a movement of the Spirit. The 'energy' of the meeting, when we get into 'business' mode, is such that I feel we don't stay with things long enough – despite the enjoiner to 'stand in the light'. Is there a way of returning to this or is it a missed opportunity? Surely nothing is wasted.



Perhaps our different ways of being need to co-exist and inform each other. As Paul used to ask in his letters (I think!) 'What is the Spirit saying to the churches?' (In this instance, to Friends) As Shelagh said in her talk:

the environmental crisis is a spiritual crisis.

Humanity has to change how it sees itself.

Healing memories

REPORT

Robin Baker, from Milton Keynes PM in Luton and Leighton Area Meeting in the UK, discusses two workshops he attended while he was in Cape Town in March and April working with the Institute for Healing of Memories, consolidating training that that he did two years ago.

Human Rights Day Workshop on Rape

The Institute for the Healing of Memories runs a project called “Restoring Humanity”. This is aimed at young people from school to late teens and is facilitated primarily by young people who have been trained by the Institute.

On Friday 21st March for Human Rights Day the project put on an exhibition and workshop at Excelsior High School in Belhar.

In the days and weeks before the day I had been aware of two or more of the youth facilitators working together in the office, large sheets of brown paper being laid out in the office and clippings being pasted to them. Come Thursday 20th April I was bundled into a bakkie, and deposited at the high school. We were shown into the hall and set to work sweeping the floor and setting out 100-odd chairs. I had been shown through the school by one of the pupils, and on route met one of the other facilitators Mas’oodah a grade 12 student, who took me under her wing and came to help set up. We transformed the hall pasting brown craft paper around the walls and setting up scenarios representing: the home, the play area, the schoolroom, a taxi and a bar. There was also a strip cartoon the youth facilitators had put together to tell an open-ended story of a young girl who gets raped.

These scenarios acted as the basis for discussions in groups for upwards of 100 young people from Belhar, Delft, Atlantis, Mfuleni, Khayelitsha and Masiphumelele. They all engaged very well and spent a public holiday dealing with an issue that they recognise as a challenge within their community.

The exhibition was left up for the

following two weeks for the whole of the school to experience. One interesting feature was that the wall displays had spaces for visitor comments. Some of the comments made were extremely powerful, such as “I’m free, free from hate.”

I’m free,
free from
hate

The Restoring Humanity project is looking for involvement with other communities and schools. Please contact Fatima Swartz at the institute for Healing of Memories, 5 Eastry Road, Claremont, 7708.
info@healing-memories.org

Healing of Memories in Prison

Over three days 25th -27th March I was privileged to take part in a Healing of Memories Workshop in Goodwood Prison.

The previous week Madoda Gocwadi and I had visited the unit where we would be holding the workshop to meet the participants and to give them an orientation on what to expect. This day should have given us a warning about the challenges we would face. We started with a list of 20 prisoners, but by the end of 90 minutes we had 29. So that was the list that we went ahead with.

The lead facilitator for the workshop was Sr. Jacinta Bannon. On Tuesday morning we started with 23 prisoners, six of our list having to be elsewhere. During the morning as we were working, one or other of the prisoners had to leave, for medication, parole meetings or other commitments. It is not conducive to dealing with deep emotional issues. However all went well. In the end we had all 29 at the end of day one. The fundamental part of a Healing of Memories workshop is the telling of stories at a deep feeling level. ‘A

journey of the heart not the head'. The final exercise on day one was drawing of stories. (This is usually the morning of the second day). There was deep concentration on this exercise, and the results were duly stored overnight.

Next morning we had our small group session where all participants use their pictures to tell their story. These of course are confidential but my experience was that two were able to open up well and one had more difficulty trusting the confidentiality. However all managed to talk through their feelings and look at their past in a new way. I was able to see a real shift in my group and in others outside of our group.

The key events on Thursday morning were the making of a clay peace symbol to represent the future for each and every one, followed by a celebration in which participants were invited to leave behind and bury something from the past or present, and to look forward to the next step.

The participants themselves put the celebration together with the help of the facilitators. The whole three-day workshop was very moving and I feel the experience of working in a South African prison will greatly enrich my work in the UK as a Quaker prison chaplain. At the end of the three days there was a real sense of brotherhood, and hope that at least some of the participants may not come back in the revolving door.

Interfaith Peace School in India

REPORT

Rosemary Mattingley attended an interfaith peace school in India in 2013. This article was previously published in Tasmanian Quaker News.

The India Peace Centre invited me to speak at a fourday Interfaith Peace School that they conducted in Assam, India, in September 2013. This was the first of a number of peace events planned for different conflict areas of India. There were nine ongoing local participants, nearly all male, from Islam, Christianity and Hinduism, with three Indian male Christian presenters and me, the only non-Indian, non-Christian, female presenter. Other participants of various faiths came for one or two sessions, but dropped out or were otherwise unable to attend further sessions.

One notable local peace movement was peace clubs, started by a Roman Catholic priest in his home for school students of different faiths to do activities together. This expanded to peace clubs in high schools, with training for university age students to become leaders of these clubs. Some of them attended sessions at the Peace School. Other participants spoke of how they mix with and employ people of different faiths in their daily lives in villages. Yet others spoke of land conflicts between their tribe and others.

The initial focus of my sessions was on sowing seeds and networking without thought of reward (referring to the Islamic concept of *sadaqa*), and listening – listening to God or our inner voice, listening to our fellow humans. This built up to listening activities that could be useful in working towards peace. I used Quaker-inspired formats of sitting in silence to listen to God – although without ministry – and worship-sharing style groups to practise some of the skills and attitudes needed to listen to others, regardless of faith. Feedback and whole group discussion followed. While sitting in silence in one of these sessions, I found myself thanking the Quaker body for all that it had given me, despite my difficulties with Quakers. As participants tended to stay in their own faith groups, I also saw my role at the

event as encouraging mingling and spontaneous whole-group discussion.

From participants, facilitators and my own reading while there (not much is available on the internet), I learnt something of the history and current situation in India. A few simple points follow.



The whole region of north-east India is quite isolated; and locals refer to the main part of India as the mainland. It is very fractured because of the number of tribes and sub-tribes: 270 communities in Assam alone (the second largest in area of seven states in the region), with many mutually unintelligible languages and dialects.

Over the centuries, different groups from south-east Asia, greater India and Britain have invaded and colonised. Major religions and sects of each have proselytised and continue to do so, competing with each other, often overlaying or exterminating local beliefs and ways of life. Although some of these have been irretrievably lost, some Christian missionaries have researched the lifestyles, customs and beliefs of peoples in the northeast; their books and institutions are among the valuable resources held in the region.

Starting nearly 200 years ago, the British brought in people from different ethnic and religious groups around the wider region as dairy, agriculture and tea plantation workers. Refugees fled to north-east India from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) after the Indo-Pakistan war ended in 1971. The border is porous, so locals move fairly freely between India, Bangladesh and Burma, especially where an international border divides a tribe.

There has been ongoing conflict for centuries over land rights among these various groups, tribes and sub-tribes.

Stereotyping is also a problem; for example, many Muslims including those whose families have been there for several centuries are discriminated against because of unacceptable behaviour by recent Muslim migrants. Christian sects have done excellent work in providing facilities such as hospitals and schools but compete for followers because their theologies are different.

I was shocked by how the legacy and impact of British colonisation and religious proselytising over the centuries has contributed to ongoing conflict in varying degrees in the region today. It certainly made me consider anew how my own actions might impinge on others, and how deep and long-lasting that impact might be, even to future generations. It made me ever more deeply aware of how careful I need to be with my behaviour and my thoughts, that I sow seeds of peace, not seeds of potential conflict, in myself and in those whom I meet.



Zimbabwe Food Relief Action

REPORT

This annual report by John & Kelitha Schmid covers the period October 2012 to September 2013 and starts with an emergency appeal, so please read on...

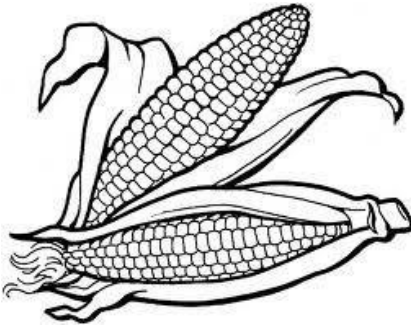
Sadly, some things don't change. To quote words from last year's report, which are still true: "The last growing season was the worst in ZFRA's history. The rains failed completely at a time when most people's crops were only a foot high, and very few of our subsistence farmers had a usable crop. This weather has affected large parts of Zimbabwe. The World Food Programme estimates that 1.6 million people will face starvation and need feeding." [This year, the predicted figure is 2.2 million.]

"Most villagers cannot look forward to help from the international community [and] our own government is broke." But as drought year follows drought year, the situation becomes more desperate. Last month, while showering at 6 am, Kelitha received a call on her mobile from the headmaster of a secondary school in one of our villages.

He said, in essence, that many young children in his school were starving in front of his eyes, and would die if food was not distributed to their village very soon. It so happened that we had planned to do a distribution in his ward a week or two later, when Kelitha saw the evidence of starvation with her own eyes.

We know, however, that this call could have come from any other headmaster in our three wards or in one of the other 22 wards in our district, from other districts in our province of Matabeleland South, and indeed from other provinces. Help is needed on a huge scale and we are always aware that we are only providing the proverbial drop in the ocean. We "acquired" our present 16 villages almost by accident, but feel that we should not dilute our limited effort by assisting more villages located further away.

In this reporting period we were able to help all our villages with the 19th distribution between November 2012 and January 2013. We then had to wait for more funds until, by September, we were able to begin the 20th distribution, *but only to one ward*. Can you help us to help the remaining two wards? All donations, large and small, can bring us closer to this target. Page 3 of the annual accounts, which are available to anyone who wants to see them, shows details of our fund collectors.



As always, the accounts will be audited. Feel free to ask for the auditor's report. You will see that during this year 89% of funds we spent were used to buy maize meal. This was maize imported from Zambia and milled locally.

We have just heard the good news that the government has lifted the ban on importing already milled maize meal in larger bags and at a lower cost from Botswana. This will allow us to give each household 25kg instead of 20kg. We look forward to seeing the joyful smiles when the villagers hear of this further bounty! For news of how we progress, go to our website www.zfra.org.

On behalf of "our" villagers we thank you all for your interest and help throughout these difficult years.

Graham Thomas reviews

The last runaway

by Tracy Chevalier

Harper

ISBN 978-0-00-735035-3

BOOK REVIEW

This novel by Tracy Chevalier, who also wrote “Girl with a Pearl Earring”, tells the story of a young Quaker woman called Honor Bright who leaves the comfort of her Quaker community in Dorset in 1850 after a failed love

affair and travels to a Quaker family in Ohio with her sister, who is to marry Adam Cox. Honor barely survives the voyage from Bristol to New York and, on arrival in America, her sister contracts yellow fever and dies.

Honor has no choice but to stay with Adam’s family until she herself finds someone to marry. In the meantime she becomes aware of the Underground Railroad – the network of people who helped black slaves escape from captivity in the South to freedom in the North.

Slavery was part of the foundation of America, with British settlers buying slaves from Portuguese traders in 1619. After the American War of Independence slavery was outlawed state by state in the North but an economic and moral schism developed between the North and South that eventually led to the Civil War. The invention of the cotton gin in 1793 required a large work force to handle the huge amounts of cotton demanded by northern manufacturers. In 1790 there were almost 700,000 slaves in America but by 1830 there were two million, and by 1850 over three million.

Slavery was formally abolished by the British in 1834 so British laws, could not be taken back. A runaway from

Louisiana would need to travel one thousand miles to reach Canada and would need help with food and water, shelter, hiding places and transport from black and white sympathisers along the way. Help first came from the Quaker community around Philadelphia, where a network began to develop in the 1820s. From there the Underground Railroad, as it began to be called, spread as far as Maine in the North to Kansas in the West. Because most of the help was done in secret it is hard to know all the facts involved. One slave called Harriet Tubman managed to escape but then went back many times to help others and is estimated to have led over 300 slaves to freedom.

For as long as there were runaways there were laws to help owners bring them back. Slaves had no human rights and national laws gave slave owners and appointed slave catchers the right to seize their slaves even from states where slavery was illegal. Anyone helping runaways could be fined and imprisoned. This included Quakers, as Honor discovers when she tries to involve Adam's family in helping runaways who come to their farm for help. Some Quakers had themselves been slave owners until Philadelphia Yearly Meeting prohibited Members keeping them in 1776. Even so, some Quakers were reluctant to break the law and help slaves escape. Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 suddenly ended slavery but created a chaos that took generations to heal. It is estimated that between 1800 and 1865 perhaps 30,000 African Americans managed to escape using the Underground Railroad.

The Last Runaway Deals with many practical and moral issues that arise for the runaway slaves and those who sought to help them, especially the character of Honor Bright who struggles to uphold her Quaker testimonies in the face of conflicting and extreme circumstances

Les Mitchell of CERM is a contributing author to **The Global Guide to Animal Protection** published by University of Illinois Press (www.press.uillinois.edu) in conjunction with the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. The following is extracted from the publisher's press release.

BOOK

The Global Guide to Animal Protection is the result of collaboration between the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics, a world-wide association of academics from all disciplines, and the University of Illinois Press. Raising awareness of human indifference and cruelty toward animals, The Global Guide includes more than 180 introductory articles that survey the extent of worldwide human exploitation of animals from a variety of perspectives.

In addition to entries on often disturbing examples of human cruelty toward animals, the book provides inspiring accounts of attempts by courageous individuals to challenge and change exploitative practices.

Desmond Tutu, in his foreword to the book, says:

I have spent my life fighting discrimination and injustice, whether the victims are blacks, women, or gays and lesbians. No human being should be the target of prejudice or the object of vilification or be denied his or her basic rights.

But there are other issues of justice – not only for human beings but also for the world's other sentient creatures. The matter of the abuse and cruelty we inflict on other animals has to fight for our attention in what sometimes seems an already overfull moral agenda. It is vital, however, that these instances of injustice not be overlooked.

I have seen first-hand how injustice gets overlooked when the victims are powerless or vulnerable, when they have no one to speak up for them and no means of representing themselves to a higher authority. Animals are in precisely that position. Unless we are mindful of their interests and speak out loudly on their behalf, abuse



and cruelty go unchallenged.

It is a kind of theological folly to suppose that God has made the entire world just for human beings, or to suppose that God is interested in only one of the millions of species that inhabit God's good earth.

Our dominion over animals is not supposed to be despotism. We are made in the image of God, yes, but God – in whose image we are made - is holy, loving, and just. We do not honour God by abusing other sentient creatures.

If it is true that we are the most exalted species in creation, it is equally true that we can be the most debased and sinful. This realisation should give us pause ... There is something Christ-like about caring for suffering creatures, whether they are humans or animals.

Churches should lead the way by making clear that all cruelty – to other animals as well as human beings – is an affront to civilised living and a sin before God.

Tony Marshall reviews

John Shelby Spong's

***The Fourth Gospel:
Tales of a Jewish Mystic***

HarperOne

Spong was an Episcopalian Bishop in his eighties when he started the task of fully understanding the gospel he says he has preferred to avoid. He says it is so different from the synoptic gospels.

A celebrated – if not universally admired – author, this is Spong's 24th book.

In a scholarly study that reads like a gripping detective novel, Spong presents an intriguing argument for the reinterpretation of John's Gospel as the work of late firstcentury Jewish mystics writing after the destruction of Jerusalem. He adds numerous references to support his reading, but he does not labour the reader by inserting them in the chapters – they appear as addenda at the back of the book.

Spong prefaces his study in a moving dedication that includes the following statement:

My life is still a journey along the Christ path into the mystery of God, and that continues to be an ever deepening reality, but the more I walk this path the less I find that words are my communication vehicle of choice and I slip into the wonder of wordlessness.

That certainly got my attention!

He continues:

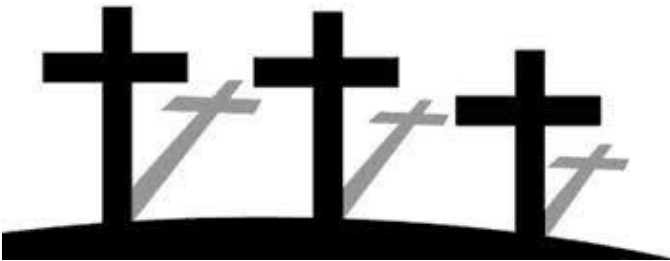
I have wrestled with the Christian faith for all of my now eighty-two years and I find myself at this moment, to the surprise of my traditionalist critics, I'm sure, more deeply committed to my Christ and to my faith than ever before. My commitment is, however, to a new understanding of both Christ and Christianity. I am increasingly drawn to a Christianity that has no separating barriers and that does not bind me to creeds of antiquity. It is a Christianity that cannot be contained by or expressed through traditional liturgical forms. I have no desire to find certainty or to embrace religious security. I choose rather to live in the unbounded joy of embracing the radical insecurity that is the nature of human life and by so doing to discover that I am in fact walking the Christ path. I have also no desire to walk any other faith path. I have discovered, however, that if I walk the Christ path deeply enough and far enough, it will lead me beyond anything I now know about Christianity. I see that not as a negative statement, but as a positive one. Jesus walked beyond the boundaries of his religion into a new vision of God. I think that this is what I have done and that is what I want to celebrate. God is ultimate. Christianity is not. The only way I know how to walk the ultimacy of God, however, is to walk through Christianity. I claim not that the Christian path is the exclusive path, but that it is the only path I know and thus the only path on which I can walk. I claim for myself without equivocation the title 'Christian'. I define human life through the lens of the Christ experience and that satisfies me. I can honestly say with deep conviction that I am who I am because of my relationship with one called Jesus of Nazareth and that it is through him that the meaning of what I call God has been opened to me.

I found myself thinking: Well! Welcome to Quakers, John Spong!

So, having declared his bona fides without apology, Spong methodically explains the key to his understanding of John's gospel in short punchy chapters. His reading is unconventional, but he warns his reader to expect that, so his integrity is intact.

Spong points out that the gospels were written long after the crucifixion, and contends that the author of *John* uses figures – like Jesus' mother, Mary, Nicodemus and Samaritan woman by the well – essentially as metaphorical representations of his contemporary society. This is a radical departure from the approach in the synoptic gospels, Mathew, Mark and Luke, where these stories are presented as factual and literal.

Spong's reading of John's gospel focuses the reader's attention on the depth of insight that can be developed by considering a diversity of opinions. Refreshing, inspiring and enlightening, Spong's perspective on John's gospel through the lens of Jewish mysticism refocuses its good news. For me, his argument is ultimately convincing and I am committed to re-reading John's Gospel with a more studious approach.



Why am I a Quaker?

IMPRESSIONS

In October 2013, 20 Friends from JMM and LAM held a retreat called “My spiritual journey: Why am I a Quaker?” Seven Friends from Lesotho travelled to St Peters in Johannesburg, to join 13 Johannesburg Friends. Alex Kuhn reports, followed by some impressions from various Friends.

From Friday evening until Sunday morning, Friends spent time in silent worship, worship sharing groups and personal retreat time. These worshipful activities helped us to focus on what it meant to us to be Quakers. Retreatants also had the opportunity to engage in two “tasters”, meant to give an idea of what Quaker Quest is like, and a small experience of the Alternatives to Violence Programme. Below you can read some Friends’ reflections on the retreat. There is also a poem written



during the personal retreat time and a drawing done by Jim McCloy (LAM) in the same time which adorns the cover of this issue of SAQN.

The diversity of Friends was once again apparent during a *Light and*

Lively that showed us the range of ages in the group

(from early 20's to mid-70s), the different sports preferred (soccer having the most fans), and with Friends having been born in six different countries: South

Africa, Lesotho, England, Rwanda, Uganda and Cameroon. One of the most sobering differences was in employment: the majority of young Friends under 30 were unemployed. Despite everything that might in other circumstances set us apart, Friends found they have much in common, and it was pleasing to be able to celebrate and honour our differences and our unity.

Zee Mlangeni (JMM)

Quaker Retreat at St Peter's: it was great. First I would like to thank Wendy Landau for taking the initiative in organising the retreat at St Peter's. Everything it was well organised. What an ability of hard work for Wendy. Warm gratitude from me, for me it was an opportunity to be part of the retreat.

We were joined by Lesotho Friends and it was great seeing some of the elders as Young Friends. Worship and sharing in session was on the theme "My spiritual journey: Why am I a Quaker?"

It was more of knowing each other there were such powerful moments



and
of

worship sharing and being amongst friends willing to have that conversation that invites trust. It was morally explicit with spiritual focus I seek and draw into sacred space. Meditation in the garden session was phenomenal. It gave me time to connect and meditate because of the environment and the space. Being surrounded by nature it was too refreshing, and being in such a small group was one of the best, because it was more of intimacy and it was cherishing growing my depth spiritually. I did find stillness.

AVP taster session taught me a lot even though it was just a refresher. It was well presented by our facilitators, and offered a good introduction in that short time.

The retreat basically gave me this ability of learning, improving my listening skills, assertive methods of expression and meditating spiritually. It brought me closer directly in the presence of God.

Jim McCloy (LAM)

Sunday 6.00pm ... the shadows lengthen and the evening falls ... time to put together my thoughts on the Johannesburg retreat. Several times the “what do I believe?” question came up - concerning and disturbing to some. Afterwards I referred to “Twelve Quakers and God” and found a reassuring range of ... not answers ... but pointers.

Among them: “A leaf of a tree. The leaf buds and opens, doing its bit for the growth of the tree, creating oxygen. Then, the leaf withers and dies and falls to the ground, still contributing to the nourishment of the soil, and the tree lives on.” In St Peter’s garden, during the retreat, I spent sixty minutes carefully drawing leaves of a plant. This focused my mind on the precision of creation. Whoever or whatever made “all things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small” produced something wonderful far, far beyond the

best of finite man-made computer ware. Still ... it was a computer that led me back to a dimly remembered poem oft repeated during my time at a Quaker school 55 years ago:

*A fire-mist and a planet –
A crystal and a cell - A
jelly-fish and a saurian,
And caves where cavemen dwell; Then
a sense of law and beauty,
And a face turned from the clod, -
Some call it Evolution, And
others call it God.*

George Nchindia (JMM)

Humans can do all sort of things, but when I see the plants and the beautiful flowers around me, I consider the greatness of God. A human being can't reach or compete with innovation and invention. Consider the complications involved in all engineering domains and then consider our Lord's works to be perfect and pure.

In time of trouble, I will consider the goodness of the lord to all the plants and animals, for they do not sow but still the lord provide for them in due season.

In time of trouble, I will consider how we do not ask God for rain or sun but he provides rain and sun in their due seasons, with all this in mind, I will know the lord is with me in my situation.

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, so I can only hear God while in total silence and stillness, which to me is not a once-off encounter so I will practise Quakerism in totality. If God is love then love is God in return.

Alex Kühn (JMM)

Twilight on Friday in balmy weather, St Peters courtyard filled with the scent of evening flowers. Arriving at the same time as nine Lesotho Friends, their tired faces and warm greetings. My room with three simple wooden beds. I have brought my own pillow! A long dinner table with enough space for all 20 of us. Meeting for worship flows into worship sharing groups. I feel safe, contained, able to reveal myself without fear of judgment or criticism. It's 9 o'clock and still warm. In housekeeping announcements we discuss the etiquette of both sexes sharing the bathrooms – no urinals, no nudity.

It's morning already, and I didn't have to wake up once for the twins during the night! Cheerful faces at the dining room table. Raising our hands to say a silent grace, the other group at St Peters joins in too. Meeting for worship deepens the inwardness, silence refreshes. Worship sharing groups huddle close, sharing confidences and dilemmas. Time for individual retreat and meditation – I write and create some order out of confusion and anxiety. Look forward to sharing with my worship sharing group. Lunch brings an important conversation about the nature of that which is eternal. "You love people – that love is eternal," a Friend tells me, and suddenly that's enough to reassure me about my continued existence even when I am a pile of bones. The exquisite pleasure of lying down after lunch and reading poems by Mary Oliver.

Now a Quaker Quest taster – what do Quakers believe? Writing it down helps me to clarify why I am here and to be thankful that there are others who seek as I do. Now an AVP taster – suddenly I can see how the transforming power has been at work in my life – it gives a name to a phenomenon which I have sometimes only glimpsed and sometimes experienced with raw immediacy.

The dinner bell, the long table, friendly banter, serious talk, appreciating relationships old and new. Marvelling again at being part of a community like this – where profound difference coexists happily alongside essential similarities.

Our final worship sharing groups – it's amazing how some Friends can find just the right words to express themselves. I always feel tongue-tied. I am very grateful for my experience in my group. Our last nocturnal meeting for worship is sleepy and gentle. Sunday morning – I hear suitcases being wheeled to cars, voices calling. It's the end of our retreat. Time to return to the twins. We acknowledge each other and ourselves. I am glad.

Rob Thomson (JMM)

Questions

Where in the world can truth be found?

 In writings wise? In scholars' tomes?

In travelling all the Earth around?

 Where pilgrim walks, where wanderer roams?

Or is the truth in black-bound word

 Proclaimed by priest from pulpit high

Preserved, inerrant, to be heard

 As life to live, as death to die?

Or does truth grow from the soil of life,

 From loam of spirit, water of love

To right the wrongs of power and strife

 To tend the Earth below, the sky above?

What is a Quaker?

QUESTION

Kaye Foskett and Nokothula Mbete of CWMM drafted a letter to be sent to FWCC to address the issue.

There are two very different types of Quakerism being practiced today; liberal Quakers with non-programmed silent meetings, recognition of same sex marriage, a long history of equality, and no attempts to proselytise, and evangelical Quakerism with missionaries (outreach is seen as salvation), patriarchal beliefs, non-acceptance of equality for gay people, literal belief in the bible, and other practices that make them almost indistinguishable from many evangelical and charismatic churches.

Before the FWCC meeting *Salt and Light* in 2012, the Friends Church in Kenya issued a statement that condemned homosexuality unreservedly. How is this compatible with the mission of FWCC to promote God's universal love? There are few, if any, women in roles of leadership at meetings in Kenya. Our delegate Nokuthula Mbete has spoken of the patriarchy she experienced at the last FWCC triennial.

Why are we paying to belong to an organisation that subsidises other so-called Quaker organisations that promote hatred of others, practice inequality and intolerance, and reduce women to a secondary role? How is any of this compatible with Quakerism?

In the words of Pink Dandelion in *The Quakers – A short introduction*, it is time for 'further negotiations about what constitutes authentic Quakerism'.

Is it not time that we recognise that these are in fact two quite distinct religions?