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Cover:

The new logo for the Quaker Community in Southern Africa decided on at MYRM.

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Editorial

This issue of Southern Africa Quaker News ‘starts’ with the new logo on the cover. It was adapted from the logo used by BYM and adopted at the MYRM held at the end of April. The logo – and a letterhead – is available on the website for Meetings to download and use.

Then follows a regular range of articles under the heading of Quakers Thinking and Quakers in Action. Susan Winters-Cook shares her experience of losing her house and possessions in a fire, as so many along the Southern Cape have recently done. Bridget Nomonde Scoble has written a fascinating overview of the origins and activities of SAFCEI, and encourages Friends to think about supporting and becoming involved in

the organisation. Les Mitchell takes the *Pax Gaia* idea in another, thought-provoking direction in his article, Quakers and Animals.

We have also added a new section to look at some of our history, here in South Africa and beyond. Aspects of our history will be extracted from SAQNs of some years ago, the first here, about a Meeting that used to exist in Worcester. Whatever happened to it?

To end, I encourage all Friends to consider contributing to the SAQN: what is your Meeting involved in, what interesting discussions are taking place? The more we have to select from, the easier it is to compile the Newsletter, and meet the desired number of four issues a year.

Wouter Holleman

MYRM – Koinonia Retreat Centre, 27 April – 1 May 2017

Helen Holleman, YM Clerk



We hope you like the new logo we decided on at MYRM (Minute 2017/10).

We met at Koinonia Retreat Centre – a wonderfully ecumenically eclectic venue – surrounded by the love and care of the Dominican sisters and the charming staff (many of whom are refugees), and the sounds of the muezzin calling the faithful to prayer as we sat in silent worship in the Catholic chapel.

A deep concern raised by all Meetings was ‘How do we **keep Quakers alive and growing** in Southern Africa?’ As one Clerk said: *If we don’t grow, we will die*. How do we attract people to Quaker Meetings, and once they are there, how do we make them feel welcome?

We also need to foster the **sense of togetherness** between Meetings, and one way of doing this is to share our Minutes of Meetings for Worship for Business. It may sound a rather dry way of communicating, but delightful gems surface: do you know which Meeting keeps its spirits up by celebrating birthdays?

An important discussion centred on **how we represent ourselves as Quakers** in national and international events – a discussion that is becoming

more urgent as we move into troubled times on a national scale. Clerks received useful material to share with their Meetings on this issue.

Communication is the lifeblood of the spiritual life of Meeting, and we talked about effective ways of communicating internally and externally, with a reminder not to overlook the wonderful resources available in the libraries of Meetings, in the *Quaker Speak* videos, and on our Facebook page and Website.

Our responsibilities as Friends were explained, highlighted and clarified at the **Financial Oversight Workshop**. We all have a duty to care for our assets, to be informed about the duties of trustees even if you’re not a trustee, to look after all our property – buildings, money, books ...

YM Clerks proposed **Diversity** as a topic for YM and beyond. Although it is a word that has unfortunately attracted mostly political connotations, it is an essential part of our communal lives:

*Because we are different,
we have gifts to share with others.
The things we are unable to do, provide the
spaces in which others may shine.*

MYRM 2017



Diversity

Helen Holleman, YM Co-Clerk

When I mooted the topic of Diversity as a theme for Yearly Meeting 2018, I was surprised to find that it had acquired such racially charged connotations. 'A provocative topic' someone said. 'What do you mean by 'diversity'?' someone else asked, cautiously, I thought.

I had in mind diversity along the lines of biodiversity, of balanced meals that consist of a variety of foods, of 'complementary planting' in the vegetable garden to combat pests and get a range of vegetables out of a small space, of the absolute necessity of difference in order to survive by sharing the skills of others. And who better to capture that vision than St Paul in this description of diversity:

A body is not a single organ, but many. Suppose the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it belongs to the body none the less. Suppose the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' it still belongs to the body.

If the body were all eye, how could it hear? If the body were all ear, how could it smell? But, in fact, God appointed each limb and organ to its own place in the body as he chose. If the whole were a single organ, there would not be a body at all;

in fact, however, there are many different organs, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I do not need you,' or the head to the feet, 'I do not need you.' Quite the contrary: those parts of the body which seem to be more frail than others are indispensable, and those parts of the body which we regard as less honourable are treated with special honour. The parts we are modest about are treated with special respect, whereas, our respectable parts have no such need. But God combined the various parts of the body, giving special honour to the humbler parts, so that there might be no division in the body, but that all its parts might feel the same concern for one another. If one part suffers, all suffer together; if one flourishes, all rejoice together. [1 Corinthians, Ch 12, vs 14–26, RSV translation]

So, it's not as though diversity is an option, something we can choose to buy into or not; no, it's an essential for life. And, yes, it does produce conflict, which produces sparks – and sparkles – and I suppose the lesson we learn from that is how to use conflict creatively.

Ah! Lovely points to ponder, I believe. And I hope we will have an opportunity to share them at Yearly Meeting.

QUAKERS THINKING

Friends and nonhuman animals^a

Les Mitchell, Cape Eastern Regional Meeting

What we look for is no longer the Pax Romana, the peace of imperial Rome, nor is it simply the Pax Humana, the peace among humans, but the Pax Gaia, the peace of Earth and every being on the Earth. This is the original and final peace, the peace granted by whatever power it is that brings our world into being.
Thomas Berry, 1914-2009, Evening Thoughts¹

In this article, I argue that the question of where we, as the Religious Society of Friends, stand with respect to animals and their lives, is the single most pressing challenge to our values and practices. I begin by examining human relations with, and treatment of, animals and then look at our Society's position.

^a Hereafter known as "animals"

Humans using animals

Every year in animal agriculture worldwide, we kill 65 000 000 000 land-based animals.² This is a rate of killing roughly equivalent to wiping out every person in Central and Southern Africa every 24 hours and it goes on day after day.³ Animals used in agriculture do not enjoy idyllic lives. Certainly, those in Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), also known as factory farms, have awful lives, but animal farming is about exploiting another individual's body for gain and animals are confined, castrated, forcibly made pregnant, have parts of their bodies cut or burnt off, have their young taken away, their families destroyed and they die a violent death at a young age.^{4,5,6} From birth to death their lives are never their own.

We also experiment on animals in laboratories and other establishments. Estimates are that the number is well over 100 million a year: rats, mice, cats, dogs, pigs, monkeys, baboons and other species, but reporting is very poor or often non-existent, so little is known of their suffering behind the walls, or of their capture and transportation.⁷ What we do know from the sanitised language of reports, journal publications and information from inside laboratories is that in many cases unimaginable suffering is taking place.⁸ In addition to these uses, we use animals for power, carrying loads, transport of people, for hunting and for entertainment.

While cruelty statutes do exist, they are, for the most part, vague, ambiguous and human centred. UK legislation on experimentation refers to animals who are to be experimented upon as being "protected animals".⁹ The Animal Welfare Act speaks of causing "unnecessary suffering" and of it being an offence to carry out "mutilation" on animals unless that procedure is approved.¹⁰ But what is meant by "necessary" suffering; for whom is it necessary and how can mutilation be approved by anyone?

In legal terms animals are property and they are always owned by somebody or some entity such as the state¹¹. Being property means that they cannot be represented in court.¹² We care about the abuse of property because of the hurt it causes the owner, not because the property suffers. Our own societal, cultural and economic interests concerning animals drive what is deemed legal or illegal and, for this reason, examples of legal definitions of animal cruelty or abuse which are free from these influences are very difficult to find.

One such a definition is given by Agnew and describes the abuse of an animal as, "...any act that

contributes to the pain or death of an animal or that otherwise threatens the welfare of an animal".¹³ He continues;

*Such abuse may be physical (including sexual) or mental, may involve active maltreatment or passive neglect, may be direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional, socially approved or condemned, and/or necessary or unnecessary (however defined).*¹⁴

Critically, this is victim centred rather than perpetrator centred and applies as well to humans as animals. But when we look at our uses of animals in light of this, those uses are shown to constitute abuse. Of course, we might not directly abuse any animals, but we may support abuse through, for example, our purchases of animal body parts, skins, milk, cheese and some pharmaceutical products.

Our actions relating to animals have been compared to some of the worst atrocities in our history and the comparisons with slavery are compelling.¹⁵ Slaves at the time of the slave trade were first and foremost property, as animals are property today. They were coerced and beaten, bought and sold, inspected intimately, transported long distances, and families were broken up.¹⁶ The child of a slave couple was the property of the slave owner not the parents and there were even attempts to breed slaves.¹⁷ All of these practices apply to the animals we use today. But perhaps we should not be surprised because this system of oppression began long before slavery when animals were first "domesticated" and became our captives. In slavery and other forms of oppression, we simply transferred the system onto our fellow human beings.

Writers have also compared what we do to animals to genocide and the Holocaust¹⁸ and of course the whole ideology of eugenics comes directly from animal farming – strengthening the stock weeding out the "weak" or "dysfunctional" and breeding those with the "right" characteristics.¹⁹ Abhorrent when applied to humans but best practice when applied to animals.

Carol Adams makes the connection between meat and pornography.²⁰ Women are often referred to using animal terms such as chick, filly, bitch, cow and sometimes as meat, with fresh meat denoting a woman who has just reached the age of sexual consent. Their bodies are consumed in parts in a similar way to the consumption of the body parts of animals. There is no individual present, no sentience – just parts. We fail to recognise the flesh on a dinner plate as an individual who wanted to live but whose

life has been taken in order to satisfy our pleasure.²¹ We may have a leg of lamb for lunch, but never a lamb's leg.

One of the great drivers of colonial expansion was the hunger for land and water on which to put "farmed" animals for flesh and other "products".²² Indigenous peoples and free-living animals were mercilessly abused and killed in the process.²³

Our language also obscures our actions in regard to animals.²⁴ We "cull" instead of murdering speak of "humane" slaughter, have cows "giving" milk while their own babies have been taken away and killed and animals in laboratories are simply "models". We speak of humans *and* animals as if these are two separate categories of being. Humans *are* animals, but we divide ourselves ideologically from all other living beings. As Johnson points out, we often have a "blindness to being" and fail to see animals as truly other beings.²⁵

The Society of Friends and animals

There is a great deal more which might be said, but what of our Society in all of this? Certainly, there is a long history of animal friendly religious perspectives in many faiths, and none of the major faiths requires the eating of flesh. There is also a long history of Friends being concerned about animals²⁶ and, in the past, some Quakers argued that vivisection is incompatible with our Peace Testimony, and viewed vivisection as war.²⁷

Given the immense suffering humans inflict upon the world, it seems appropriate and urgent to ask where we stand today with regard to our treatment of animals. This is not a trivial question or one which can simply be set aside because we have more human concerns to consider. We surely cannot dismiss the suffering of powerless others simply because they are seen as different.

While it is true that we as a Society do not have a creed, we do have shared values or, as some Friends describe them, testimonies. Amongst these are that we believe in justice, non-violence, equality, and speaking truth to power. Yet at the start of the 21st century our Society worldwide is almost totally silent about the mass suffering of billions of individuals at our hands. How can we explain, let alone condone, this collective turning away?

Do we claim we should restrict our justice only so far as the species barrier which we have chosen to erect? Can we ask for justice for fellow humans when we deny it to others? And what type of justice is it when it is only for the powerful, which we

undoubtedly are in relation to animals?

Are we committed to non-violence or does this again only apply to our own "kind" and not to others? What of our Peace Testimony? And what about equality – do we believe, as the ancient Greeks believed, that a hierarchy exists in the world where there are greater and lesser beings and those below serve those above?^{28,29} Certainly our science tells us otherwise and no being is "more evolved" than any other, indeed, the term has no scientific meaning.

And what of speaking truth to power? In this case, we are the powerful, the oppressors of the powerless. Who will speak truth to this power? We surely need to honestly and openly examine our complicity in this ongoing violence. This is not about being nice to animals but about respecting and practising our core values. But more than this, it is about recognising that Light which also shines undimmed in our suffering fellow beings.

And if we do come to acknowledge our deep embroilment in this mass violence, as I believe we must, how are we called to act, because surely we must act? Perhaps trying to answer this query might be a starting point for our deliberations.

"Do we recognise the suffering imposed upon billions of nonhuman animals by human animals in the flesh and milk industry; in vivisection laboratories; in using them for power and entertainment and in the taking of their natural habitat? Given that nonhuman animals are utterly powerless to resist this oppression how is our Society called to act?"

Central and Southern Africa Yearly Meeting
Heronbridge, South Africa 2006

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Words of experience from a fire survivor

Susan Winters-Cook, Cape Eastern Regional Meeting

My house burned down nearly three years ago. I live on a farm surrounded by veld, close to two villages. There have been enough fires over the years for me to be acquainted with the routine of fire prevention: fire breaks, fire beaters, connectors for hosepipes, a fire plan on the refrigerator, list of neighbours, and my most important things packed in boxes to be accessed easily. I did everything right. But still, that didn't stop the howling wind from tossing fire onto the thatched roof and having the entire house and all the contents reduced to ashes.

I am writing this to share my heartfelt condolences with those who have lost their homes. I am also writing this to share what I learned from the experience, knowing what the next year will be like for most of the fire survivors. It's not all bad. A lot of it is hard.

The fire

It was a Sunday morning. I was alone on the farm; my husband had gone overseas. All the neighbours were somewhere else, leaving me and David Ngetu, my trustworthy neighbour and farm manager, on our own. David helped as long as he could, but then he had to go and protect his house and family. I understood that.

The fire started 20 km away and burned a swathe as far as one could see. It would soon be surrounding the house, even if the firebreaks held. I watched it as I watered the firebreak grass. I knew I could not manage the tall ladder to be able to get to the roof with water. The popping, snapping blaze was moving in a direction that would graze the yard, but pass by. Then the wind shifted and it came straight for the house.

Then it became an issue of choosing between life and things. I chose life.

The decisions

It's natural to rethink all those decisions made under the threat of fire. Fire is final. The pressure of oncoming fire is like a looming tidal wave. There are no second chances. And people do the best they can. That needs to become a mantra, I did my best. I chose life. Life is good.

The first few days

Within just a few hours, on a windy, sunny Sunday, I became homeless, without warning. I had three dogs and two cats in my car. I had only the boots on my feet and some old clothing that had been stored in a building that did not burn. I phoned Rhoda, a friend



© Susan Winters

Sundance before the fire



The day of the fire

in East London, which was 50 km away, who said I could stay with her. But first I had to call Eskom about the live main line feed that was in the smouldering ruins. I called a builder I knew to come and secure the two small buildings that did not burn, but were damaged. When I left at dusk, the smouldering fire still glowed in the ashes of my home.

I was in a functional shock for the first few days. I did not look beyond the things that needed to be done. The insurance paperwork, documenting every single item that was inside the house, meeting the adjuster at the site, meeting with him in my lawyer's office, notifying family and friends, dealing with the bank so I could make large withdrawals to cover immediate expenses. The only time I wept in public was in the bank, dealing with all the red tape they threw at me.

Lesson # 1. Make sure your lawyer is on hand when dealing with the insurance people. It's their job to pay the minimal amount.

My insurer informed me that my house was 50% underinsured. They calculated the rebuilding cost and cut it by 50%. I managed to fit within the insured amount for the contents.

Lesson #2. There is no way to get around the schemes that all insurance companies have. You MUST insure every single item and asset for full replacement value. Anything you do not report is then calculated into the under-insured column and that amount is subtracted from the whole. I advise to refrain from finding a way to get around this, it simply cannot be done. But that's something that needs to be done before the disaster.

Rhoda was wonderful. Staying for a long stretch in someone else's home can be uncomfortable when you are accustomed to having your own home and life. I was lucky. Every evening when I returned from dealing with my disaster, she and I put on our sweats, ordered out for food, had a glass of wine, and watched a movie. We went through the entire Downton Abbey series. A real pajama party.

Lesson #3. Doing normal things helps. Friends are essential and the best ones rise to the occasion.

What did I miss the most? My daily chores. Washing the dishes, doing the laundry, feeding the ducks. The everydayness of life, even more than the things I lost.

Life became a never-ending shopping trip for essentials; meds for the dogs, tools for dealing with

the fire site, a printer for documents, a power cord for my computer, some coats and fleece sweats, and socks, makeup, and shampoo. I missed the little things, my scarves, my earrings, my bathrobe, my shoes. When I was in the grocery store I felt deep pain from not buying the things I would usually buy when I had a home.

On a whim, I bought some packets of *Nasturtium* seeds. When I went to the farm, I poked them into the surviving (but burned) planters. In a few weeks those beautiful little plants appeared and produced bright cheery flowers amid all the blackness.

Within a few weeks after the fire, and after rain had fallen, the badly burned shrubs and plants produced tiny little shoots of green. They would survive. Within months, many had started to flourish again. Although it has taken longer, the lemon tree that was completely burned is now covered with lemons. I was humbled, and inspired, by the tenacity of Nature.

Lesson #4. I befriended the clerks in the stores where I went shopping. They were sympathetic when I explained the strange collection of things I was buying. They always greeted me nicely after that and were always helpful.

Probably the worst few hours was when my car broke down on the N2 on one of the trips between my friend's house and the farm. I had the three dogs with me. White stuff was billowing out from under the bonnet and I could not tell if it was steam or smoke. I got the dogs and my computer out of the car, phoned David to come to fetch the dogs and Andre, my mechanic, for roadside assistance. Then I waited, sitting in the grass on the median strip of the N2 with three frantic dogs on their leads.

The car was old because I really liked it, but it was time to let it go. Andre got it running again so it could be sold. He contacted all his friends in the car sales business and scouted for a new (but not new) car for me. He had the dealers bring them to the shop so I could see them. When we decided on one, he looked it over very carefully, and I bought it. That meant more gruelling visits to the bank. Andre then put my old car in front of his shop and sold it for me.

Lesson #5. The good people come from unexpected places.

The long-term decisions

Rebuilding. That's huge. I spent two weeks determining if that was the right thing to do, from

both emotional and logical angles. I consulted various people. It helped that I already knew a good builder I trusted. So I decided to rebuild.

Lesson #6. You are not in your right mind after the trauma of the fire and losing everything. Enlist the input of people you trust when making the big decisions.

A rondavel that was a bedroom with a bath had survived the fire. I brought in Cassim Jina, the builder, to discuss temporary housing so I could move back to the farm. He built a six-sided rondavel in less than 30 days. It had a small kitchen area and room for a futon and table. That sustained life for the five months of building. Later I added a bathroom and it's a nice place for visitors.

David became the night watchman for the first four weeks. The insurance paid for that. After I moved back, my dogs and I became the security. There was only one looting attempt the night after the fire. The looter ripped the wiring out of the surviving rondavel but thankfully left the few personal things and linens I had there. Still, I was constantly worried about more attempts.

Moving back onto the property as soon as possible was absolutely the right thing for me to do. Living was rough. But psychologically, it worked.

When I brought the cats to the farm, I released them in the surviving bedroom rondavel, a familiar place for them. Cheeky, who is nearly blind, walked out the door and proceeded to exactly the same place his cat door had been in a window to the house. The window sill was still there but the window and everything else was gone. He jumped onto the sill and then froze. Then he ran away and did not return for hours.

Lesson #7. Recovery happens in slow motion.

I spent two weeks searching through the ashes to see if anything survived. I recovered a few pieces of silver jewelry, a wire ostrich, a pottery vase, silver-coated cutlery that was burned beyond repair, coins. Everything else was simply gone. Then it was time to clear the site so the new house could go on the old foundation.

All the brick was damaged. What remained of the old house had to be torn down. Restoring water to the site, setting up electricity, reinstalling the landline, and setting up life in the rondavel were labour-intensive events. Each one resulted in a vague sense of accomplishment.

That was when I realised my husband was not

going to return. He said the fire was a sign from God that it was time to return to the US, where we are both from. I said it was a veld fire that went out of control. I was then on my own. That was hard.

Lesson #8. The insurance company says it should take only 10 weeks to build a house. That's a lie. Prepare for 4-5 months. These are not optimal conditions for house building because there has been little time for planning. The site has to be cleared first. Supplies are obtained in bits and pieces rather than altogether to avoid theft. The design of the new house needs to conform to existing conditions. Weather is a factor.

This is a rural area where building plans and codes are not essential. We started with basic ideas of what would go where, and how, and took it from there. Cassim is Old School. He worried about the practical issues while I considered the function and aesthetics. Some things in the new house would be different, a metal roof for sure, metal windows. The kitchen would be on the other side of the house. Instead of a loft, this house would have a full second floor over part of it. Some things would be the same, the living room would have wooden windows in the same places, the fireplace would be in the same place.

Lesson #9. Cassim and I had a rule, a decision is final once I have changed my mind three times.

Lesson #10. Construction workers must be watched every minute. Many preventable problems were created by careless workers.

Reinventing daily life

I spent several days every week scouting building materials; the windows, doors, tiles for the house, water pumps, appliances, and fixtures for kitchen and bath, blinds and curtains for windows, paint for the walls, basic furniture to sustain life. Some of it was fun, some was frustrating, all of it was tiring.

Most days, when I went to town, I would stop by one of several buy-and-sell places where I had come to know the owners and, once again, they were more than helpful. Looking through things proved to be relaxing for me, as I found things here and there to turn that building under construction into a home.

I did some of the finishing work in the house, sanding and finishing windows, putting sealer on tiles, tiling walls, refinishing old furniture I found at the shops.



© Susan Winters

The new house with the rondavel I lived in



© Susan Winters

Veranda of the new house

A new home

I finally chased the movers away and moved into my new house, although there was still finishing work to be completed. For the first few days I sat on the living room sofa, where the old one had been, I looked out the windows that were in the same place as the old ones. It was unnerving. I felt like I was living in someone else's house in place of my home. Everything was the same and yet different. Someone had warned me, this would be when I missed my lost things the most. I no longer had my elegant library table to go under the window or that special lamp, or all those books that burned. I didn't have the curtains made from the special material I brought over from the US. All the paintings I had done over the previous few years were gone. My best blankets and quilts that I had so carefully protected by storing them in a cedar chest in the house were gone. My best clothes and most useful work clothes were gone. Yes, it all struck hard at that time.

My husband had not prepared his life's work for fire. At the time of the fire I had no idea where to find it in his office space and could not save it. He did not have the heart to return, and has yet to do so. He lost 40 years of research work. I lost my home I had built before we were married, ten years before the fire. We both lost a marriage.

Lesson #11. It's hard to let go of the things we have treasured, that had sentimental value. Most of them can never be replaced. Time heals that, slowly.

The aftermath

Rebuilding is not the end of the process. I became overwhelmed with exhaustion. A few weeks after moving into the new house I started having anxiety attacks. I had David take me to the doctor more than once because I was so tense with tingling down my arms and fingers, dizziness, and weak legs. I worried about a stroke or heart attack, only to have it confirmed, it's anxiety. I started medication that took some time to be effective, and after a few more attacks, my doctor raised the dose.

Calling it PTSD is not completely correct, although I certainly became anxious about fires in the distance. Every time there was smoke David would phone me to tell me where it was, and reassure me it would not be a problem. My attacks were more about the feeling that the earth could disappear from beneath my feet without warning, and that made other things like driving, or even walking the dogs scary because so many things could go wrong; an accident, a tyre

puncture or car breakdown, or in the fields, a snake, or the village hunting dogs appearing. That process took 18 months of allowing the meds to keep me calm and slowly build a new, more normal existence.

I finally went to the US to see my family, my son and his wife and three granddaughters. I had not seen them for 18 months because I never left the building site unprotected. I started visiting friends again. However, dry weather that meant vulnerability to fire curtailed some socialising. If a fire was going to come, I needed to be there to make the decisions.

I'm fine now. It's almost three years now. I'm off the meds and functioning normally. I still fine tune the details of the new house, and sometimes find something special at the buy-and-sell shop. I started painting again and although it was difficult in the beginning, I manage to produce new paintings to put on the walls.

A lot of my life is still defined by the before or after the fire. The fire was the end to my career in photojournalism. Although I had left a newspaper staff years ago I had kept my hand in it by doing projects here and there. I decided to close the door on that chapter in my life.

Reflections about surviving fire

I sometimes still contemplate how those last minutes of my past life passed, seemingly in slow motion.

It was my preparation for fire that kept it from being even more of a disaster. I had put my historical, professional, and family photographs into the boxes I call the Fire Boxes. I had put essential documents like the deed to my property, vehicle registration forms, and insurance documents in those boxes. I had put my late mother's jewelry into the boxes. When fire approaches, the boxes are the first things to go into the car.

I had a fire plan posted on the refrigerator door. It listed the things to do in the event of fire, in order of importance. First thing on the list is to confine the cats and get them into their boxes so they cannot run away. I know the dogs will stay close. The fire boxes are next, the list also includes packing meds and ID documents, credit cards, computers and cameras, and then removing gas tanks and inflammables, and using the connectors to make the hose pipes long enough to reach fire.

Whenever I wanted to panic, I consulted the fire plan to keep me on track. I moved the bakkie I was not using to the road, hoping it would survive there. I did save camera and computer equipment but failed to save the power cords. I did not think to save

all the keys, just the ones for immediate use. I only got through half the list before I had to leave. My final gesture was opening the goat pen so they could escape.

I drove to a place in the road where the fire had already burned all the grass, so I could not become trapped in case the fire jumped the road. It was over a rise so I could not see my house but I could see the smoke. I wanted to go back but the threat of becoming trapped held me back. And I could see the smoke billow every time the fire found something flammable. A woman I did not know drove to where I was from the other direction. She said, "That house, it's gone."

Some of the neighbours had managed to get through from the other side. They fought to save the other buildings. I am thankful to them for that. When

I drove through the burned grasses and approached my home, it was only a smouldering skeleton of what it had once been.

I cried for five minutes in the arms of that woman I didn't know. Then I started taking care of survival.

The fire brigade arrived six hours after the fire. The neighbours eventually pressured a promise from them that they would respond immediately to a call. The last two times there have been fires nearby they have done just that.

Lesson #12. Take nothing for granted. Cherish what is now, however flawed it might be. I never thought I would miss washing the dishes. Allow others to help. They want to. Make sure your insurance is in order and protect the things you cherish. Fire is final. Life goes on.



The author, two years after the fire

New money and its democratisation

Rory Short, Johannesburg Monthly Meeting

Introduction

This article is written in the knowledge that in order to blossom, let alone survive, every person needs to exchange goods and/or services with others.

In cash-based societies, certain of these exchanges can only be entered into if the person has money. This is not a problem if every person in the society has access to money when they need it to enter into a complex exchange.

If the money is commodity-based, however, then access to it is restricted to only those who are able to purchase, that is earn, it. This restriction is very unfair to the individual who cannot purchase it, and disadvantageous to the society as a whole as it restricts economic activity. However, if a society uses a fiat currency*, such a restriction is completely unnecessary.

We use a fiat currency and yet our money system still enforces this restriction, along with allowing banks to immorally exploit deficiencies in the current Money System because the system was designed to handle a commodity-based currency and not a fiat currency.

Here I enumerate in some detail the problems that derive from our current Money System, and describe how these could be fixed.

In order to prevent any confusion, it is first necessary to distinguish between the Money System and financial systems in general. The Money System involves the direct representation of economic events by means of money. Financial systems in general and their related theories such as socialism, capitalism, etc., etc., are involved with what is done with money after it is created by the Money System. Thus, because the Money System is the foundation of all these other systems, it is obviously essential for the Money System to function correctly otherwise these other systems cannot function correctly.

Our Money System does not function correctly for a fiat currency. The flaws in the operation of the money system negatively affect the health of the economy and consequently the economic health of all of us as individuals. We have to reform our Money System if we want to have a healthy economy.

The current money system is responsible for:

a) issuing new money into and removing old money from, circulation,

b) controlling who can trigger the production of new money,

By omission it is also responsible for:

c) The anonymity of money, which means that money only represents value, but contains no information about what is being valued.

It is with regard to a), b) and c) above that flaws are to be found in the operation of the current money system.

What is money?

We have to start with the question, 'Why do we need money in the first place if we can make exchanges without it?' Simply, because money is the unsurpassed underpinning for all our economic activities. These economic activities consist of voluntary exchanges of goods and/or services with one and other. Such voluntary exchanges are not only necessary but vital to our continued survival.

The only economic activity possible before the invention of money consisted of satisfactorily completed voluntary exchanges of goods and/or services. Each such event was a healthy economic event and the accumulation of healthy economic events created a healthy economy.

After the invention of money more complex exchanges became possible because money enabled the healthy completion of complex exchanges. A simple exchange involves two parties who voluntarily make a 'quid pro quo' exchange of two items, the items being either a good and/or a service. The two items are obviously of at least equal value in the eyes of the two parties, otherwise the exchange would simply not have happened. A completed simple exchange is thus a naturally healthy economic event in that both parties are happy with the result.

The trouble is, simple exchanges are logistically very difficult to organise, because of the number of coincident conditions that are a pre-requisite for the exchange to take place. These conditions are: both parties have to have, at the same moment in time, an item that they are willing to exchange, and both parties must be present to each other and happy to accept the other party's item in exchange for their own item.

The invention of money removed these logistical difficulties. Money, as a socially accepted record of

value, enables the above compulsory conjunction of coincident events to be disassociated in time and place. Because money is an independent record of value, it opens the way for one of the parties in an exchange to be replaced by two or more different parties. This enables the remaining party to purchase an item that they want from somebody and then subsequently sell, for the same price, their own item to somebody else who wants it. This sale completes the complex exchange economically and in this way, what would previously have required two simple exchanges, if they could have been organised, has, through the use of money, enabled a number of separate transactions to become a single complex exchange.

Not surprisingly, the removal of the logistical hurdles inherent in simple exchanges by enabling complex exchanges in their place has resulted in the demise of simple exchanges. Besides overcoming the logistical difficulties inherent in simple exchanges, money has opened the way for the economic health of complex exchanges to be threatened by the abuse of how new money is created. Thus the money system must prevent these possible abuses if we are ever to have a healthy economy.

The first flaw [(c) above]

This flaw arises because all the participants in a complex exchange do not have sight of one another, or of all the items involved in a completed complex exchange, and the health of a complex exchange is thus not a given. To remedy this lack of information the participants in a complex exchange need to be informed of the sources of the backing value of the money used in a complex exchange. To this end the money system should record identities of the successive holders of any Unit of Currency [UoC], and be able to make these identities known to any person upon request.

The second and third flaw [(a) and b) above]

These two flaws are not as simple to unpack as the first flaw. They arise from the fact that since the 1970's we have been using a 'fiat currency' instead of a 'commodity-based currency'. Our commodity-based currency used the gold standard.

What this change in our currency meant was that it became necessary for our Money System to operate in a way that recognises the difference between the face value of a UoC and its backing value. This distinction is irrelevant when a money system deals with a commodity-based currency. As our Money

System, has not been altered to deal with our fiat currency, it erroneously operates ignoring the distinction between the face value and backing value of a fiat currency UoC.

The face value of a UoC is quite simply the amount that is stated on its face. The backing value of a UoC is the value, in exchange terms, of the actual goods or services, or a fraction thereof, that the face value of the UoC represents. It is invisible to the users of money and they therefore have to accept, on trust, that the backing value of a UoC exists.

When we adhered to the gold standard this trust was not misplaced because the State was legally bound to replace a UoC with an appropriate fraction of its gold holding, i.e. a good, should the holder of the UoC request it. There is, however, no commodity (such as gold) providing a guaranteed backing value for our fiat currency. Consequently the Money System has to ensure that there is a genuine backing value for each UoC because its users expect it to have such. If not so backed, by default, this value is appropriated, i.e. stolen, from the money already in circulation, debasing our currency in the process.

The Money System can, however, guarantee the presence of the backing value if new UoCs are produced only when they are required to complete a purchase of goods and/or services and, to ensure that the supply half of the complex exchange is completed by the purchaser, who uses the newly issued UoCs as a stand-in for a real good or service, and the new UoCs are recorded as non-interest paying debt against the purchaser. The purchaser then needs to complete the supply half of the complex exchange to enable him/her to settle the new money debt. When the new money debt is settled, the complex exchange has been completed and the new money now actually represents the value of the goods and/or services in the previously uncompleted half of the complex exchange.

Current Money System

Even though we have been using a fiat currency since the 1970s, our current Money System is operating in some respects as though we still have a commodity-based currency.

First, even though a newly-issued fiat UoC has as yet no honest backing value, banks continue to treat them as commodity-based UoCs, issuing them as interest paying loans to their customers, being people who can afford to pay the interest.

There are serious consequences for the health of the economy resulting from this approach to the

issuing new fiat money.

- a) The economy as a whole is restricted in size when poor people are unable to enter into complex exchanges because they lack access to new money; poor people are also deprived of the freedom to trigger the production of new money whenever they need it to enter into a complex exchange.
- b) The interest charged is fraudulent in the bank's hands because the UoCs do not have an honest backing value; it being stolen from the money already in circulation, i.e. in effect from the community at large.
- c) General price inflation happens because the money already in circulation is debased through the theft of its backing value by the loaned UoCs.

In the case of short-term credit, such as credit cards, the debtor is required to settle the debt within thirty days otherwise the debt is subject to interest payments. So, for the first thirty days the bank commits no fraud.

In the case of longer term loans, the banks commit fraud throughout the duration of the loan as interest is charged from its inception. It is only when the new money debt is fully settled that the new money in the loan gains its honest backing value.

Fiat money in a few words

Honest fiat money can be viewed from various perspectives. The simplest view is as a contract which reads as follows:

- A unit of currency [UoC] is a contract between the holder of the UoC and the community that accepts the currency.
- If the UoC has been earned by the holder then the community will supply to the holder in exchange for the UoC goods or services chosen by the holder to the value of the UoC.
- If the UoC is newly issued to the holder to purchase goods or services, excluding financial services, to the value of the UoC then the holder must supply goods or services to the community to the value of the UoC.

A reformed money system

Essential requirements for reform

The details of a reformed money system would need to be worked out and agreed by all stakeholders but they will definitely need to include the following:

1. A switch to a completely digital currency.
2. Government acceptance of the responsibility for ensuring that every person has the use of a cell

phone that can serve as an electronic wallet.

3. The establishment of a completely apolitical Central Currency Authority [CCA] to manage
 - a) money,
 - b) the money system,
 - c) the registration of the users of money.
4. The issuing of, and removal from, circulation of all new money to be the sole responsibility of the CCA.
5. The exclusion of any and all financial institutions from issuing and handling anything but the money already in circulation. Credit cards will be redundant.
6. The keeping, with each UoC, of a history of the identities of its holders.
7. The acceptance that all cash transactions, deposits or disbursements, will begin their lives by first engaging with the CCA and its money system.

Benefits of a reformed money system

All sorts of immediate, and possible future, benefits will flow from the implementation of the above seven things.

1. The end of money system induced money poverty — everybody will have access to new money when they need it, provided that they regularly settle their new money debt.
2. The end of money system induced inflation — the money supply will always be exactly equal to what is needed.
3. An end to the costs associated with the handling and securing of physical money. Digital money will of course have its own security requirements, and luckily these are already being catered for in our banking systems.
4. The possibility of eliminating all crimes involving money, such as drug dealing, money laundering, the conversion of stolen or illegal items into money, because the holders of money will no longer be anonymous.
5. The possibility of replacing the present tax collection system with a minimal levy applied to all cash transactions. This will massively cut the costs associated with tax collection as these transactions will all have to automatically pass through the CCA's systems.
6. Massive simplification of the logistics of disbursing any public money in grants to citizens.

Glossary

Fiat currency – Legal tender whose value is backed

by the government that issued it. The U.S. dollar is fiat money, as are the euro and many other major world currencies. This approach differs from money whose value is underpinned by some physical good

such as gold or silver, called commodity money. The value of fiat money is derived from the relationship between supply and demand rather than the value of the material that the money is made of.

QUAKERS (AND OTHERS) IN ACTION

The story of SAFCEI

Bridget-Nomonde Scoble, Cape Western Monthly Meeting

There's usually a sensitive human story behind the bolder public one, something people were passionate about and, as hoped, there's just such a story behind SAFCEI. A Cape Town schoolboy who became a journalist and anti-apartheid activist was ordained an Anglican priest after studying and working in England for ten years. Drawn back to Africa, but not wanting to return to apartheid South Africa, he spent five years as a missionary priest in Serowe, in rural Botswana. Living on the fringe of the Kalahari and experiencing unpredictable years of drought and plenty, he became deeply conscious of the fragility of all life. Through his work amongst the people so dependent on local landscapes, his understanding of justice broadened to embrace the whole community of life, not just humans.

The rural Anglican missionary then met and married a natural scientist from the University of Cape Town and returned to South Africa in the final burning decade of apartheid, when townships were on fire. He re-joined the human rights resistance movement, where his was the lone voice in calling for the church and civil society to respond to eco-justice issues (economic and ecological). He recognized the emerging global crisis: that infinite growth on a finite planet is impossible.

Elected Bishop of the rural Diocese of Umzimvubu in the Eastern Cape in 1987, Bishop Geoff and his wife Kate went to work among the amaMpondo people in the former apartheid homeland of Transkei. It was a region suffering from deep poverty and devastated by a legacy of South Africa's compulsory migrant labour system; their mission was to support development and training that would create livelihoods to sustain both human and earth communities.

In retirement, Green Bishop and Kate Davies, along with a small, passionate team of supporters, fulfilled their vision of establishing a community

of faithful earthkeepers. Underpinned by the core values of the Earth Charter, (Respect and care for the community of life, Ecological integrity, Social and economic justice and democracy, non-violence and peace), SAFCEI, a multi-faith environmental initiative, continues to encourage and support eco-justice activism for a more sustainable world.

At the "Faith Communities Committed To Cherishing Living Earth -National Environment Conference for Faith Communities", at Hartbeespoort 14-17 March 2005, late Professor Wangari Maathai of Kenya said, "We need to uphold democracy and the equitable and sustainable distribution of natural resources if we want to find peace", and those who had gathered answered, "It is our prayer in SAFCEI that the various faiths of our country will be able to see this, so that we may indeed dwell in the peace that our creator wishes, not only for us, but for all of creation".

In July 2005, SAFCEI was officially launched by Wangari Maathai, who also taught us "The Three R's":

- REDUCE – especially important for industrialised, 'throw away' societies.
- REUSE – reuse what you can + "REPAIR" = REPAIR + REUSE. (In poor countries, people repair and reuse out of poverty, rather than consciously to protect the environment.)
- RECYCLE – recycle if you can use it again, and a lot of paper is being saved this way.

And Archbishop Desmond Tutu added:

- REVOLUTION

And in his endorsement of SAFCEI's initiative Archbishop Desmond Tutu said, "We are stewards of the diversity of life around us. Those who would destroy or misuse what is, in fact, our life support system must be challenged and admonished... I hope many will support this initiative generously".

Endorsements also came from the Wildlife and



SAFCEI Board and staff at the Board Meeting in Durban, June 2015

Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA) and the Worldwide Fund for Nature–South Africa (WWF-SA).

SAFCEI today

Much has happened since then. SAFCEI is now an active Section 21, non-profit organization, providing meeting places for leaders and representatives of all faith communities in Southern Africa and beyond, to share theological perspectives on environmental matters, express concerns, and speak out and interact with governments at all levels about harm to the environment and the related impact on all forms of life.

Green Bishop Geoff and Kate Davies are known and loved at home and in many parts of the world, for their ongoing commitment to just and sustainable development.

SAFCEI has strong links with the following religious organizations: South African Council of Churches, Provincial Councils of Churches, mainline Christian Denominations, National and Provincial Religious Leaders' Forums, Muslim Judicial Council, Jewish Board of Deputies, SA Hindu Maha Sabha and the various other smaller faith communities in Southern Africa.

SAFCEI's up-to-date website – www.safcei.org – has valuable information linking earth-keeping, sustainable energy sources, and so much more, with theologies of various faith communities, including Quakers elsewhere in the world, e.g. from Quakers in USA: "Our religious experience of the natural world is pervaded by a strong sense of God's presence immanent within it ... we have come to recognize that the non-human creatures are our fellow worshippers in that temple, our fellow inhabitants of God's Kingdom, and to realize that, as such, they are entitled to all the rights, all the gentleness and consideration, that Christ himself would give them." (Marshall Massey, a co-founder of the Friends Community on Unity with Nature, now called the Quaker Earthcare Witness in Quaker Environmentalism.)

On the web, from pre-SAFCEI times, is this poem by Thomas Berry (1914–2009):

To all the children

*To the children who swim beneath
The waves of the sea, to those who live in
The soils of the earth, to the children of the flowers,
To the meadows and trees of the forest,
To all those children who roam over the land,*



Blessing of the Waters ceremony at Camissa Stream, Platteklip Gorge on World Water Day 22 March 2017

*And the winged ones who fly with the winds,
To the human children too, that all children
May go together into the future in the full
Diversity of their regional communities.*

In 2016, when Green Bishop Geoff was honoured by the Anglican Church for his tireless ecological work and outstanding contribution to community service, the award was linked to the Magna Carta ... and Geoff said, "The Magna Carta was a great step in establishing human rights and civil liberties ... we are part of the web of life ...we now need to recognize the rights of all of life, not just human life."

Today SAFCEI actively promotes environmental awareness, sustainable development and supports environmental justice through a variety of initiatives across the southern African region ... and, coming back to the inter-connectedness of all creation, SAFCEI provides training for activists who are concerned about socio-ecological injustices that face Africa's peoples and our surrounding environment. Congratulations to SAFCEI's dedicated staff.

On World Water Day 22 March 2017, we gave thanks for the waters of Camissa Stream below Platteklip George on Table Mountain, at the Blessing of the Waters ceremony, and, as we enter the month of June, our biggest prayer in the Western Cape is for rain. We are in the midst of an unprecedented

drought, a situation not unfamiliar for Eastern Cape people who coped with a severe drought in the '50s. We seem unprepared and unaware that we need to manage our water resources with great care and respect.

Programmes in which individuals and faith communities can become involved in to learn together how best we may make a difference:

Earth Keeper Movement Building. An Earth Keeper is any individual who has connected their faith or spirituality to caring for the Earth, who celebrates the beauty of God's creation, experiences life as sacred and wants to act for a just, compassionate world. Contact SAFCEI to learn more about its recently established Active Citizens Network (ACN).

Faith Leaders and Congregations. Through the Faith Leader Environmental Advocacy Training (FLEAT) programme, SAFCEI has built a network of faith leaders for change across southern Africa, to empower faith leaders to make a positive difference in their communities and to campaign against socio-ecological injustices that Africa's peoples face. Eco-congregations, or local faith communities, are committed to living at peace with the Earth in response to the wisdom of the sacred texts and faith traditions. Their actions help to strengthen and deepen the appreciation and compassion for all life.

Eco-audit Programme. SAFCEI is looking for local energy champions and our Quaker Community in Southern Africa could be involved. In 2012, SAFCEI started the Energy 100 Programme, an action-learning project. It aims to encourage faith congregations to respond to the challenge of climate change by taking practical energy-related action in their congregation. This has now been expanded to include auditing of waste, water, land use and biodiversity.

One Web of Life (OWL). Compelled by the Golden Rule [2] to “treat all others as you’d like to be treated yourself”, OWL aims to encourage people of faith to think consciously about their relationship with all the creatures with whom we share the Earth. The programme currently focuses on the well-being of farmed animals as well as the impact of the agricultural industry on climate change and the limited resources of our planet.

Energy & Climate Change Programme. SAFCEI’s own energy and climate change specialist, Liz McDaid, heads up this programme, engaging with government and faith communities to find healthy energy solutions together that help to prevent climate change.

Anti-nuclear Campaign. In 2014, SAFCEI launched its anti-nuclear / pro-sustainable clean energy campaign, with weekly early morning vigils outside parliament in Cape Town and the Department of Energy in Pretoria. It was highlighting the lack of ethical governance in the signing of illegal deals

with Russia and other powers, to build nuclear power stations in SA. This had been concluded without consultation with SA citizens who have constitutional rights to decide on how these vast sums of money would be spent and, together with Earthlife Africa Johannesburg (ELA), SAFCEI embarked on and won their legal challenge to stop an illegitimate procurement process. The findings of this legal case were heard in the Cape Town High Court on 26th April and we succeeded! “Justice has prevailed!” SA is now in the position to expend the predicted R1-trillion cost of nuclear on the following instead: 69 000 new schools for children and 100 million new RDP houses with clean running water and adequate sanitation, for families who need them. We need to remain vigilant and campaign for environmentally friendly energy production, which will create employment opportunities and an income for thousands of families.

Anti-fracking and Anti-uranium Mining Programme. Since its founding in 2005, SAFCEI identified the need for a shift to earth-friendly energy sources as a priority. Understanding the complex issues around climate change, renewable energy solutions, and unbundling the vested interests of the fossil fuel multi-nationals requires solid science. SAFCEI has worked in the Karoo region to help strengthen understanding of these issues amongst faith communities as well as offering a well-grounded technical response to the fracking debate. Visit our dedicated website: www.frackingsa.org. SAFCEI also focused its energies on informing communities about the threat to health and livelihoods of uranium mining in the Karoo. See too: <https://www.facebook.com/StopUraniumMiningKaroo/>.

Food Security. Food and life are gifts from God. As co-workers with God and custodians of God’s creation, we have a duty to sustain life and the abundance thereof, ensuring the just distribution of God’s bounty so that all may enjoy sufficient food and health. Although SAFCEI does not run a specific Food Security Programme, it is integrally connected to all environmental concerns, the well-being of people, and especially growing developing children and the planet.

Sustaining the Wild Coast (SWC). SAFCEI supports SWC, which is a small, big-hearted NGO assisting the community of the Pondoland Wild Coast in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, to decide for themselves the type of development they want, which does not include dune mining by a foreign mining house, or a toll road slicing through the community.



Related legislation

Progressive stewardship policies in our SA Constitution of 1996: Sec 24, grants environmental rights to “everyone” and The National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) provides an underlying framework for environmental law.

The agenda for the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Summit, held on September 25-27, 2015 in USA, was “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”. This led to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), officially known as Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a set of 17 “Global Goals” with 169 specific targets. The Resolution is a broad inter-governmental agreement that acts as the Post 2015 Development Agenda (successor to the Millennium Development Goals). The SDGs are in large measure informed by the often quoted assertion by the then United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that, “We don’t have a plan B because there is no planet B!”

Become a member of SAFCEI

As well as showing your support for environmental education and action among faith communities, you will: receive the monthly Earth Keeper newsletter, receive annual updates about SAFCEI’s work, an invitation to the AGM and notifications of any other special events. You will also be encouraged to contribute your gifts and skills towards SAFCEI’s Active Citizens Network.

N.B. Only faith communities and faith-based organisations have voting rights at the AGM. Individual members re-register annually, to renew our personal commitment to earth keeping.

How to contact SAFCEI:

SAFCEI’s Active Citizens Network

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/271426316654281/>

SAFCEI’s Cape Town Office and website:

www.safcei.org

Telephone: +27(0)21 701 8145

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MATTERS OF THE SPIRIT

On hospitality

from Monk in the World: A Podcast by Christine Valters Paintner

Reflections on the podcast

All guests who present themselves are to be welcomed as Christ, for he himself will say: I was a stranger and you welcomed me. Rule of St. Benedict 53:1

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in. Matthew 25:35

St. Benedict invites us to welcome in each stranger we encounter as the face of Christ in our lives. Those people who make us uncomfortable or we dislike are especially included. I also believe that Benedict meant to extend this hospitality within ourselves and seek out the stranger who knocks within our own hearts – that part of ourselves that has been neglected or shut out. These inner and outer acts of hospitality are intimately connected. As we grow in compassion for the places within which challenge us, we are able to extend that compassion toward others. The more we grow intimate with our own places of weakness or un-lived longings, the more we can accept these in others.

When people in our lives stir a strong reaction in us, often it is because we are seeing our own shadow side being reflected back to us. Being curious about our response opens us up to greater interior freedom as we discover the inner places we have neglected.

Monastic spirituality calls us to see everything and everyone – including ourselves – as holy. The tools of the kitchen are to be regarded as sacred vessels. The places in our heart where we wrestle are to be embraced with kindness. The person who irritates us or makes us feel fearful is a window into how God is at work in our lives.

Hospitality practical exercise

Begin by pausing for a few moments and connecting to your breath. Gently draw your awareness down to your heart centre and take some time to notice what you are feeling right now. See if you can make space for the truth of your experience without judgment or trying to change it. Then bring to your awareness what the mystics across traditions tell us – the infinite compassion of God that burns in our hearts. Breathe it in and allow it to fill you and your experience. Anytime you are feeling tender or hurt, allow some inner space to fill with compassion. Then extend that compassion to someone in your

life whom you love. Then see if you can imagine this sacred compassion filling someone whom you find difficult.

Questions

What would it mean for you to welcome in neglected parts of yourself?

When you consider hospitality, is there someone who comes to mind with whom you could practise?

The guest house

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
some momentary awareness comes
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
who violently sweep your house
empty of its furniture,
still, treat each guest honorably.
He may be clearing you
out for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice.
Meet them at the door, laughing,
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whatever comes.
Because each has been sent
as a guide from beyond.

Jelaluddin Rumi, translation by Coleman Barks

Blessing

Holy Presence of God,
you shimmer across time and space
and through each person and creature.
Create in me a welcoming space to usher in the grace that newness offers.
May my heart be spacious and my spirit free.
May your infinite compassion grow in me like sunlight across a field, luminous and radiant.

The parliament within

Chris Mann

We do not see deeply unless with love
and deepest and clearest among our insights
are those which steeped in love's energy
accumulate clarity in contemplative calm.

Such brooding serenity allows the self
to convene the shades alive in the soul,
to quieten the bombastic, hearten the shy
and bid the elderly and neglected speak.

In turn, these partners and companions,
mentors, opponents and even enemies
converse with each other and the self,
which listens, responds and negotiates.

This reconciliation, of shades and self,
flows on and separates and flows again
in sleep and dream as well as in thought,
with balance and not perfection its goal.

Democracy will always be shallow
until it's ensconced within our souls.
We cannot make peace with each other
until we make peace with our shades.

Miracles

Helen Holleman

What's a miracle?
I asked.

"The way my hair just grows and grows."
That's Ellen
Five years old.

And now I'm cutting back the bougainvillea.
Last year
I pruned it to the stock.

Sunlight and water
Drawn from earth and sky
Have made a pile of prunings five foot high
Of leaves, of stalk, of thorns, of flowers.

That's a miracle.

Chris Mann is Emeritus Professor of Poetry at Rhodes University. The poem above is quoted with his permission from his new book: The Road to Emmaus.

SNATCHES OF OUR HISTORY

Quakers, cocoa and San Tomé

Helen Holleman, Quaker Community in the Eastern Cape

Off the coast of West Africa, near Gabon, almost on the equator, lies the mountainous little (854 km²) island of San Tomé. As early as the 1500s, the island exported sugar, and slaves that had been brought from Benin, or along the Guinea coast.

Rich volcanic soil and the varying climatic conditions between the mountains and the sea proved irresistible to farmers of rubber, cinchona

(used to treat malaria, among other conditions), coffee and cocoa. Although the Portuguese had outlawed slavery on the island in 1875, the cocoa planters gradually, very quietly, revived the slave trade to meet their urgent needs.

They sent slave traders to Angola, the Congo, even as far as what is today north-west Zambia, to recruit labour. Willing chiefs provided *servicaes* (indentured

labourers) for a price, and every year four thousand men, women and children left the ports of Angola for San Tomé. Not one returned. Their contracts were torn up and they were trapped on the island.

By 1908, San Tomé alone was producing about one-sixth of the world's cocoa. Perhaps you already know that the Quakers in England bought a lot of cocoa for their chocolate houses, established to counteract the horrors of alcoholism. Think of names like Cadbury, Fry, Rowntree – all Quakers – and the Quakers were not going to tolerate any form of slavery. Early in the 1900s, Quakers heard rumours of slavery in San Tomé, and from that point on, it was only a matter of time before the slave-drivers of San Tomé met their match.

William A. Cadbury led the campaign, sending men of integrity to Angola and San Tomé to uncover

the truth. And, in truth, they reported, the so-called indentured labourers were the ransomed captives of native chiefs, and although they were treated fairly well on the island, they were, in effect, slaves.

That was enough for Cadbury and the rest of the cocoa buyers. "We won't buy any more cocoa from San Tomé," they told the Portuguese, "until you employ free labour." To which the Portuguese responded that the labourers sent to San Tomé were *muito stupido* (very stupid), and were unable to look after themselves; in fact, they were very lucky to find any work at all!

Cadbury knew better. Not a bean would he buy until the 50 000 slaves of San Tomé had been sent back to their homes on the mainland.

And sent back they were, thanks to the Quakers.

Meeting for Worship in Worcester

Julian Kotze (from SAQN Botswana Series No. 1, 1997)

She was described as "quite a woman". Her endless energy poured into charity work and anything related to that. For example she would take over an "ailing" charity and would soon have it up and running. It is because of this woman that the C&SAYM can have the number of Friends attending every year that it has. And it is because of this woman that I am privileged to be at Woodbrooke for a while, before going to other meetings and see, hear, and talk about what other Young Friends are doing.

Today I went to Worcester Meeting. The ride on the bus took me to the countryside and then, as if it is actually a little village, one arrives suddenly in Worcester. Only to be told "W is a city, you know; it has a cathedral!" Walking with David Saunders to the Meeting through the streets lined with red brick buildings, I can still hear him ministering at the C&SAYM in Phuting about the Worcester Monthly Meeting and Evelyn Cadbury. Yes, it is she I am describing.

I entered the Meeting House area. Immediately on the right is the Quaker cemetery; all I can see is a few flat slabs embedded into the green grass. Right in front of me is the Meeting House, the typical red brick with the welcoming double doors and friendly Friend waiting with an outstretched hand to greet and welcome everybody. David went around the

corner to put his bicycle away and I went in: the foyer, the front room and the Meeting room with its familiar circle of chairs and the table in the middle bearing a Bible and Quaker Faith and Practice. The Meeting for Worship was silent at first and then after some ministering (using the dogs that were in Meeting patiently waiting underneath their owner's chairs as subject) it became powerful.

I sat contentedly feeling the power of the Meeting speak to me. A sense of gratitude came over me; I thanked God for people like Evelyn. I thanked God for being my guide in whatever I am doing. I thanked God for being able to worship Him and also for speaking to me.

After Meeting we enjoyed a cup of tea and in the tone of the hum-drum I can hear that the Meeting of Worcester is an active Meeting. I chat to Holly Jeffreys and her mom about what the Meeting's Young Friends do and was invited to the Young Friends Yearly Meeting. Then we got herded off to David and Jooles Saunders' house for soup and singing. There I meet more people and after a hearty bowl of thick home-made soup we started.... THE SINGING (these words you should read with a very serious tone in your voice, dear reader). Instruments were brought out, ranging from a big African drum to a tiny shaker. Needless to say, I got given the

African drum to play (hit, rather!). 'Jolly' songs, serious songs, Quaker songs. More people joined us. The harmonising voices belting out the songs tells a story of: I am loving this and enjoying myself. David at the piano and the "orchestra" do their best to sound good. A gentleman sitting near me bends forward to say "You have got good rhythm; are you the one from Africa?"

It was time to say good bye. Everybody gives me

a big smile and a handshake with words like: "Good of you to come", "Nice seeing you", and "Go well!" I get a lift back with a Friend and she is kind enough to give me time to see Worcester Cathedral: beautiful ... vibrating with worship, in its design, building, and acoustics. Standing in the cathedral I have a sense of humbleness, and I feel so small, yet great!!! for only God could have made the world and what is in it so beautiful. And I am part of it.

AND A STORY

Uncle George goes to Kasouga

Shirley MacLennan

The girls were excited to hear that Uncle George was coming to visit. I had to explain that his big hat does not conceal pointy ears and that his leather trousers don't hide a long bushy tail. "That's just his name, like Uncle Roddy." They were disappointed to hear that George is just a human, but relieved to learn that he doesn't bite.

George arrived safely and met the twins. I installed him in the guest room. He was very quiet at supper, and that night and went straight to his room, where his light was still on at 11 o'clock.

The next day dawned clear and warm. George joined us for breakfast. He was puzzled by the Rice Krispies and stumped by finding a toy in the box, but he enjoyed the toast. He was still subdued, but I knew from Aunt Sarah that he was often gloomy.

George went straight back to his room. As I was clearing up the kitchen I decided it was a day for the beach. The girls would be delighted. And George? We could but try.

The children were rooting out buckets and spades and swimsuits when I went to George's door. Through the door I could hear him practising his sermon.

"There's a sky full of darkness and I drowned in the night", he said. And then he said it a little louder, "There's an ocean of darkness and I drowned in the night — yes, that's better."

"Oh dear", I thought, "I wonder if that spare room bed is sagging. Poor George. He does need cheering up." I knocked tentatively. It took all my powers of persuasion and a chorus of coaxing from the girls to get him to put down his pen, but George consented

to come. Beaches were clearly not his thing.

The girls and I played "I spy" all the way to Kasouga. George was very quiet. He was pleased when we showed him the giraffes in the game park eating the treetops, but he seemed to be deep in thought. When we got to the beach we ran to the water to look at the roadmaker snails and collect shells, but Uncle George sat down and opened his book. When the girls started to dig the moat for a splendid sandcastle, George eventually was persuaded to join in. When the flagpoles were stuck on the tops of the turrets, I served the tea and juice and the chocolate biscuits. George was going quiet again and looking around for his book when he suddenly stood up saying, "What's that? What's happening?"

Everyone jumped up to scan the water. "It's dolphins!" the children shouted. And it was. Dozens and dozens of leaping, playing dolphins flashing past in the bright sunshine. "It's too many to count! It's wonderful!" George said. "I've never seen anything like it! It's the best thing ever!" Everyone was pleased, but George was thrilled. They stood watching for a long time, until the dolphins disappeared in the distance.

"I will never forget that wonderful sight," George said. He sat down to take off his shoes and long socks. "Come on girls", he said, taking their hands. He ran down to where the waves washed up on the sand. They all laughed and shouted when they got their feet wet as they tried to race with the water.

It was a very happy family that walked back to the car for the drive home. I was very pleased that

George had enjoyed the day. And late that evening, after supper, I pressed my ear against George's door. George was singing:

*"There's an ocean of darkness and I drowned in the night
Till I came through the darkness to the ocean of Light;
You can lock me in prison but the Light will be free.
And I'll walk in the glory of the Light, said he.
Walk in the Light, wherever you may be!
Walk in the Light, wherever you may be!
In my old leather breeches and my shaggy, shaggy locks,
I am walking in the glory of the Light, said Fox."*

I don't know who was happier, me or George. But I am sure we all had sweet dreams that night.

*"I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death,
but an infinite ocean of light and love,
which flowed over the ocean of darkness."*
Journal of George Fox (1624–1691)