

# Southern Africa Quaker News

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Issue 237

## Southern African Quaker News

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### Cover:

A woman dancing when she sees the food lorry arriving – see page 7 for an update on the Zimbabwe Food Relief Action.

# Editorial

This issue has been divided into two sections, determined mostly by the material that has come the editor's way.

This first is "Quakers at work", reflecting some of the tasks undertaken by Southern African Friends. John Schmid (BMM) writes about feeding some of those affected by the drought in Zimbabwe, a programme he and Kelitha put in place 14 years ago, at the behest of YM. Still in Zimbabwe, the laying down of Hlekweni still casts a shadow over the lives of some of the people involved. The Clerks travelled to Bulawayo in June last year to run a healing workshop for people affected. And Geoff Harris writes about establishing a special fund to help build new communities.

The second section, "Quakers in thought" is a small 'taste' of the diversity of matters Friends think about. Namibian Friends held a retreat at Krumhuk, near Windhoek, last November. Those who attended share their thoughts about being a part of the retreat. This is followed by Justin Ellis' reflections on the Lord's Prayer which he shared at the retreat.

This year's FWCC World Gathering was held in Peru and CASAYM was represented by Justine Limpitlaw (JMM), Thuli Mbete (CWMM) and Khosi Sekoere (LAM). Justine shares with us the epilogue she gave at the end of one of the days.

Rory Short writes about yoga and Quakerism. Abongile Xantini is a student at Rhodes University who earned a scholarship to Bishop's University in Montreal for a semester. CERM Friends made a donation to her living expenses for the time there. Abongile reflects on what it is like to find your way in that society as an albino. Her article is also printed in a type size that she can read and, in the online version, with a colour background that makes reading easier.

This issue ends with three reviews, one of a new book on Africa that looks at the way the continent is dealing with its problems, and the others with two detective stories with a strong Quaker 'flavour'.

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## Building peace, justice and development

Geoff Harris, KZNMM

We can think of three channels through which peace, justice and development can happen.

First, there are our own thoughts, words and actions. As someone has put it, “When we change, the world changes”. A passage in *Quaker Faith & Practice* (2.27) is helpful on this:

*Prayer is an act of sharing with God, the Spirit, and not an attempt to prompt God to action. It is a promise that I will do my best, even if what I am able to do seems too insignificant to be worthwhile. When I pray for peace, and that the hearts of those in authority be change, it is a promise that I shall do such things as to write to those in power, share in vigils and above all lead my own life, as far as possible, in such a manner as to take away the occasion for strife between individuals and between peoples. When I pray for others in need, it is a promise to make my own contribution, perhaps by writing, by visiting, by a gift, by telling someone whom I know could help ...*

Second, there are the projects in which we are involved. These might be for something or against something. One of the advantages of group projects is that they help move us away from our individualism and in the direction of other people. As British Quaker Ben Pink Dandelion has emphasised, Quakerism is not a ‘do it yourself’ religion; we are meant to do things together, despite the world’s emphasis on individualism. Working with others makes use of diverse gifts and abilities and it builds relationships.

Third, there are actions which take on national (e.g. an oppressive government) or global systems (capitalism, militarism, climate change). These can be tackled at a macro-level (e.g. by pressing for divestment from companies producing fossil fuels) or by projects which have their immediate outcome in a local area but which also add to the momentum for national and global change.

Which of these three is the most important? They all are, although individuals are likely to be called to one or other.

But just in case you think such actions are not effective, here are some recent examples of actions initiated by individuals and organisations .

- The ‘Keep it in the ground campaign’ (i.e. to stop the mining of fossil fuels and so stave off climate change) began on US university campuses and has spread to faith groups, philanthropic funders, local authorities and pension funds. In the last year, there has been a 50-fold increase in such bodies which have signed up for divestment.
- In September, the Anglican Church of Southern Africa announced that it is considering divestment from companies engaged in the exploitation of fossil fuels.
- In September, the oil giant Shell announced that it will not commence exploration in Alaska because of pressure from citizens throughout the world.
- In October, China banned the trade in elephant ivory which has been the cause of large-scale killing of elephants in Africa.

### **The Peace, Justice and Development Fund of C&SAYM**

The 2015 Yearly Meeting approved the establishment of the PJDF, as a subset of ECTF, to encourage peace, justice and development work within C&SAYM. The Fund has been set up to help those who would like to work on such projects.

The fund will be administered by the Financial Oversight Committee (FOC). Applications will be considered twice each year and should be sent to the Convenor of the FOC by the end of March or the end of September. The current convenor is John Inglis (jinglis@mweb.co.za).

Applications must be made on the PJDF Application Form, which can be downloaded from the C&SAYM website [www.quakers.co.za](http://www.quakers.co.za).

The following principles will guide the FOC in making PJDF decisions, but may be varied as the FOC sees fit.

- The aim of the PJDF is to build peace, justice

and development. Applications for crisis relief should be directed to the Compassion Fund. Profit-making/income earning-activities will not normally be funded.

- Projects must have a Quaker link, i.e. members or attenders of a local Meeting must be involved in the project. Applications will be accompanied by a Minute to this effect from the local Meeting. Local Meetings will be expected to provide an annual financial report on any project under their care. This care might be for a project in another country, providing adequate monitoring arrangements are in place.
- As a guide, projects might be allocated funding of up to R15 000 per annum.
- Priority will be given to projects in countries where other funding is limited and for projects outside major urban areas.
- Each supported project will provide a one-page report to be included in the relevant YM papers, along with the annual financial monitoring report.
- Disbursements will normally be made to the local Meeting for onward transmission to the project.

- Both new and existing projects can be supported but no project will be supported for more than three consecutive years, after which there should be a break of at least two years before any further application can be met.
- Depending on their financial situation and rules, the ECTF and CAQT may allocate funds to the PJDF.

Donations to the fund are invited and can be specified as being for capital (i.e. retained unspent with the interest available for PJDF projects) or current (i.e. for more or less immediate allocation to projects).

Donations should be made to the Evelyn Cadbury Trust Fund (Standard Bank, Small Street, Johannesburg, account no. 001156780).

In the reference section, write 'Donation for PJDF', then capital or current, according to your wishes.

If the donation is not specified as capital or current, half will be allocated to the capital fund and half to current purposes.

Colin Glen would appreciate receiving notification of any donation to (colin.p.glen@gmail.com)

## Hlekweni healing workshop

*Helen Vale, NMM*

It was against the background of the winding down of Hlekweni and the pain it caused that YM Clerk and Co-clerk, Justine and Helen (Holleman), together with Helen (Vale) — and drawing deeply on her AVP experience — developed a two-day Healing Workshop for Bulawayo Quaker Meeting in early June 2015. It was held in Bruce and Julie Caddick's lovely home and engaged us all in thought-provoking experiences involving affirmation, active listening, trust-building, co-operation, sharing and truth-telling. Together we worked towards an idea of 'our ideal Meeting' and together developed strategies to make it real. It became wonderfully clear that every Friend has a gift to bring to the Meeting, and that it is our differences, our willingness to share and trust, and the courage to speak the truth to each other in love that enable us to build a rich, varied and caring Meeting.





# CERM aid for Nepal earthquake victims

*Rosemary Smith, CERM*

In 1996 two Grahamstown Friends, Adrienne Whisson and Rosemary Smith, with an American friend, Betsy Bell, travelled to Kathmandu and met a charming man named K.P. Kafle, who runs a trekking company and an organisation called SEEDS – Social, Educational and Development Services – which provides grassroots relief to Nepal's poorest villages.

K.P.'s story is an interesting one. He grew up in a remote rural area, but decided as a very young man to go and find work in Kathmandu. He could not read or write but obtained work as a waiter. Two American visitors were so impressed with K.P. when they met him waiting on tables that they offered to sponsor his education in the United States. He travelled to California where he went to school to learn to read and write, along with Mexicans and other second-language speakers.

K.P. thrived, passing all his exams with flying colours. He returned home to Nepal and eventually was able to establish his own trekking company and the NGO SEEDS. Apart from being intelligent and interesting, K.P. is a humble, wise man and a delightful companion.

So, in 2003 when a larger group, including Rosemary and Adrienne, decided to go to Nepal to walk the Annapurna circuit, it was to K.P. that they turned for their arrangements. That excursion turned out to be superb and recollections of it are still etched in memory. Three weeks of walking where the only sounds were the rushing rivers and waterfalls, workers calling to each other in the fields and now and again the mule trains with their bells. And just where one thought the sky ended the mountains began, snow-capped and majestic.

When the news came of the earthquake in Nepal,



Adrienne and Rosemary immediately thought of K.P. Concerned at first for his safety they were relieved to hear that he and his family were safe. They decided to ask CERM for funds which they could then attach to the Grahamstown Fund Raiser for Nepal Victims. This was duly organised and with the CERM donation of R2000 and the money raised in Grahamstown, R7500 was sent to SEEDS.

Some of the money went towards sheeting for roofs to replace old stone roofs that had collapsed, and thus provide shelter before the monsoons. It cost about US\$175 to provide sheeting for one roof. Some of the money went to providing very isolated villagers with food.

The money was little in comparison to the funding provided by the larger UN Agencies. But it was sent to someone known to two Quakers and their friends and they knew it would be spent wisely. It was also a small thank you for a unique and unforgettable experience in a beautiful but now devastated country.



## Zimbabwe Food Relief Action (ZFRA): update, early December 2015

*John & Kelitha Schmid, BMM*

Some readers may remember that in 2002 Yearly Meeting wanted to help the rural people of Matabeleland during a severe drought in a tangible way. Kelitha and I were asked to fundraise so that we could distribute food where most needed.

Few of us would then have thought that ZFRA would still be operating in 2015, having over the years distributed 910 tons of maize meal. A good harvest in 2014 (the first since 2004) allowed us a complete rest last year, but then the weather pattern reverted to drought conditions and we were once more called to action. From 25 September to 23 October this year we distributed 20 kg of maize meal to every household (about 3200 of them) in our 16 adopted villages in Matabeleland South.

In this area of Zimbabwe the growing season starts with the first rains in November and ends in May, when the dried maize cobs are harvested. The early rains are fairly predictable, but when

the plants have already emerged from the ground, more rain is needed. In most years since 2002 the rain has failed to come. This might be caused by global warming, but certainly in Zimbabwe widespread deforestation and over-grazing has played havoc with the livelihood of subsistence farmers.

The 2014 harvest made us realise what kind of people we at ZFRA are serving. Yes, the rain fell at the right time in January/February, but rain by itself does not grow a harvest. It takes farmers who have enough hope and perseverance to do the ploughing, sowing and weeding long before they know whether, in the end, the weather will favour them or not. The fact that in 2014 nearly every household had a good harvest is a testimony to their dogged determination.

This time, during the food distribution, as always supervised by Kelitha, she was saddened by the evidence that many people had died since our last





*Queueing on the hot sand.*

visit – not only elderly ones but also many who were Aids sufferers and who were on ARV tablets, which can be fatal if not backed by good nutrition. Many others were just desperately hungry.

The recent distribution exhausted our funds and we now have to build up our reserves again. The next harvest (whether good or bad) is still six months away and we are trying hard to raise enough funds to visit all our villages again before then. Can you help us?

This year we extended the current financial year to 13 months, ending on 30 October, to catch all the payments made during the recent distribution. Summaries of our accounts (which are annually audited) and other statistics can be found on our website [www.zfra.org](http://www.zfra.org).

The website also includes stories and pictures of our activities, including a recent new story 'With the other-abled at Emakhandeni'.



*A grateful recipient giving a small present to Kelitha (sitting).*



You can send contributions to the Christine Agar Quaker Trust, First National Bank, Bryanston branch, branch code 25-00-17, account number 620 562 914 39, SWIFT/BIC code FIRNZAJJ. Payment can be made from any branch of FNB by electronic transfer, or you can do an EFT into the above account. Use ZFRA as reference and notify Colin Glen of your remittance by e-mail to colin.p.glen@gmail.com or phone him at 011-706 1997. If you live outside Southern Africa, go to our website and click on 'How you can help'.

We are most grateful for your interest and support and wish you joy and good health in 2016.



*People waiting in the shade for unloading to begin.*

## QUAKERS IN THOUGHT

### Joint report by NAM Friends on their recent weekend retreat at Krumhuk – November 2015

#### **Helen**

We try to have a retreat once a year for a weekend as a group and for the past few years have been lucky to go to Krumhuk, a biodynamic farm with cattle and crops, about 20 kms from the capital Windhoek and 5 kms off the main road south. There are three simple guest chalets set on the edge of the bush with great views south, over the mountains. We sat outside for some sessions (until the mosquitoes drove us indoors) and enjoyed the sounds of the birds (loeries, hornbills, crimson-breasted shrike, guinea fowl) and the bush.

This year's retreat was particularly special to me. Ages ranged from nine to 68 and there were eight of us (increasing to nine when Lucy Steinitz, ex-Namibia and now back in USA after time in Ethiopia, joined us for Sunday morning). Everyone participated in an open, relaxed mood, sharing experiences in the sessions which we took turns to lead. Topics including using the Experiment with Light to analyse the Lord's Prayer, which was depthful and enjoyable. The early morning walk for some of us revealed a magical light, springbuck and oryx in the distance, and fascinating tracks in the sand.

Our meals were shared and scrumptious. I felt refreshed and reinvigorated and grateful again for being part of such a supportive and lovely worshipping group.

#### **Peter**

I particularly enjoyed Justin's analysis of the Lord's Prayer as viewed in the context of relationships. As one who likes to pull a complex thing apart and look at the pieces to see how it all works I found his analysis very interesting. It provided insights that I had never thought of and I foresee that I will reflect on them in times to come. Thank you Justin.

#### **Ben**

It was a wonderful time-out, in nature and with a small group of friends, shared cooking experiences and wonderful late-night interaction with kids around a very interesting and creative way of 'celebrating' Halloween by story-telling deep into the night. What was outstanding for me was to connect deeper for original Quaker impulses and the spiritual search of "that of God within" every one of us through a short session on Experiment with Light (<http://www.experiment-with-light.org>).



uk/resource.htm) which was initially introduced to the Namibian Quaker group by Paul Mooney a year ago, during our 2014 retreat. Another highlight was to hear from travelling Friends about their journeys and experiences abroad.

### **Enid**

Retreat at Krumhuk is always renewing for all the senses, but this year for me it focused on hearing. We listened to Ben leading Experiment with the Light, listened to Justin's insights on the Lord's Prayer and listened to Friends speaking about their relationships with their parents. We listened to Lucy sharing her experiences of relocating to her home country and we sat together in a silence where the only distraction to deeper listening was birdsong and the occasional lowing of a distant cow. It was a mindful retreat.

### **Becky**

The retreat this time round created a platform for me to assess my spiritual growth. Being a Quaker I have come to learn so much. The love, respect and pureness of the heart amongst Friends have made me realise that this is where I belong. Quakers is home to me and I am so happy to be part of such

wonderful, kind and loving friends. The night of arrival was great fun with all the story-telling and jokes, and brought out the kid in me after such a long time. The morning after was wonderful, sharing the Light and personal experiences with friends. It was very nice to have Lucy around, a very humble and smart lady. The atmosphere was amazing in the open and took one back in thought. I had a wonderful time. Thank you.

### **Nona**

When we got there we ran everywhere. When it got dark we went into a house and started to help cook. When we were finished with the meal, we decided to make popcorn; most of it burnt so we didn't get that much. After that we told scary stories and we were very scared. Hope started seeing stuff in the window because it was Halloween, she said. We went to our house and at first we were playing with Uncle Ben and then we went to bed. When we woke up we took a shower and ate an amazing breakfast, then we went for a quick swim at the swimming pool; the swim was great fun. We left with Uncle Peter and Uncle Ben to go back to Windhoek. It was such fun I would love to do it again.



# Our relationships and the Lord's Prayer

*Justin Ellis, NAM*

The relationships we share in, and their quality, largely determine our state of mind, our feelings of happiness, peacefulness and sense of fulfilment. Interestingly, it seems that the one prayer that Jesus taught his followers is all about relationships. We probably all know the words by heart, but can we perhaps use this familiar prayer in a new way, to reflect on our relationships? I am using the version in Luke 11:2–4 as it is the shortest and perhaps nearest to the original.

## **“Father”**

The first word is apparently an immediate turn-off for many of us. Is this an endorsement of patriarchy, male chauvinism, and all the havoc that this causes in our lives? The incident of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38–42), however, suggests that Jesus did not have a role of domestic or any other servitude in mind for women. His close association with Mary Magdalene and other women also suggests that Jesus expected women to be just as much part of his campaign as men were. So why did Jesus typify our relationship with God by the word Father? Both men and women are equally capable of playing parenting roles. Through pregnancy, breastfeeding and other nurturing, mothers do have a powerful bond with their children. For fathers, however, there is an element of choice as to whether or not such a bond is established and developed. Men must decide whether or not to stick around and be jointly responsible for the upbringing of the children that have been created. Fatherhood is apparently a complex and onerous role. Many of us men, as we well know, find it too difficult: we opt out in one way and another. A third of households in Namibia are female headed. However, in his own father, Joseph, Jesus had a good example of fatherhood. Joseph did not abandon Mary when she fell pregnant; he helped deliver their first child in difficult circumstances, as we celebrate at Christmas; he took the family into exile when it was necessary; he taught his son the trade of carpentry, and perhaps also to read. Children do seem to have a deep longing for a father, one who is fully engaged with his creation, and it seems that it was this kind of chosen,

intimate, guiding relationship that Jesus was alluding to when he said Father, Abba, Daddy. It is a relationship that all of us do have with God, by his choice, we believe, and a foundation on which to build all other relationships. By saying “Father” we, of course, imply that all of us humans are children in the same family.

## **“hallowed be your name”**

Here we get a second guide to good relationships: awe, respect for the other. Without that, a relationship has no long-term prospect. There is a slight irony here, of course, since God does not have a name, or indeed need one, even though we humans have given him quite a few. But he is known in the relationship that we have with him. One is tempted to think that Jesus may have been hinting at what we these days call a brand. Everyone in the market wants to have a respected brand, to have a good reputation. In a way we may need to think about ourselves as ‘brand ambassadors’: asking whether our relationships and actions, how we love God and others, bring our Father and family into disrepute or not? Consider, for instance, how our Muslim brothers and sisters are in a problem because of fundamentalist extremists. What about blessing bombers on the tarmac? Quakers have a transforming belief that there is that of God in everyone: hallowing God means taking that presence seriously and loving some people that others have demonised.

## **“Your kingdom come”**

We may not be all that clear about what Jesus meant here as there are not many absolute kings and queens left for us to experience, though there are still dictatorships aplenty. However, we may take it as a reminder that we take our direction from God, that he is our leader, our shepherd, our counsellor, teacher and protector. But we may also remember that the Kingdom Jesus described and called people to join is an upside-down and unworldly one, in which the first are last, and the greatest is the one who is servant of all. The Kingdom of God provides no endorsement of hierarchy, or of those who are ‘more equal than

others', who have bureaucracies, spies and armed forces to keep them in power. It is the kingdom described in the Sermon on the Mount, one that gives priority to the suffering, the oppressed, and to those who struggle to right wrongs, the salt and the light of the world. As subjects of the Kingdom of God we should therefore be on notice that many of the relationships we will be involved in may involve tension and conflict, as we feel called to take unpopular positions. Loving our opponents, even in our own households or places of work or communities, may be the challenge we must face quite often. And try as we may, it may not be possible to resolve all such conflicts nicely. We are not the ones with the power. We hope and pray to be spared, but humiliation, defeat — and worse — is what we must be prepared to face. There is a cost of discipleship, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer taught us.

### **"Give us each day our daily bread"**

Perhaps somewhere there is an individual who can grow wheat, harvest it, grind the grain to flour, make yeast, get clean water, knead the dough, heat the oven, and bake the bread, but for most of us our daily bread will come from many people, and even from beyond the borders of our countries. It will be the product of farmers, transporters, silo managers, millers, bakers and shop keepers, energy producers, scientists and regulators, to name a few. To eat bread, therefore, we have to be part of society and its industry. We must be part of the changing polity. If we want our bread we must play our part in keeping society, industry and our environment sustainable and in the best shape that is possible. We must pay attention to the processes and systems that we are part of.

There is another aspect to our daily bread, and that is simply the enjoyment of sharing it with others. This intimacy and fellowship of the table at home or at work probably sustains us in many more ways than we are actually conscious of. Clearly it is something that Jesus treasured. It may motivate us to take more pleasure in our daily tasks in society and commerce.

### **"and forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us."**

This is the second part of the sentence about daily bread, so it is still about our familial, social and economic relationships. This part seems to speak about the obligations that we have,

perhaps especially the moral and business obligations. It is not possible to grow up without having moral obligations to one's parents and teachers, for instance. It is not possible to exist without obligations to those who share with us in maintaining the systems that make life possible. And we owe many debts to those ancestors who went before us, developing knowledge and institutions, establishing rights and ways of behaving. Actually, all of us fall far short of what can rightly be expected of us. If we cannot make the grade we need to guard against being judgemental of others who also do not shape up as we think they should.

There is something liberating about being forgiven. Debts are burdensome, and being relieved of one is likely to be a cause for celebration. It is reassuring to discover that one can be loved and accepted, and given another chance, even when one is not perfect. It is somehow easier to get along with one another if we accept that none of us is perfect, but human. It may be what has enabled many Quakers to work productively in prisons.

Forgiving may nevertheless still mean that we point out what is wrong, even with anger. Remember how Jesus challenged the one who assaulted him during his 'trial'. "If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?" (John 18:23) It may be easier to forgive someone who regrets what they have done and apologises. But even without such a plea we have to forgive — storing up all that egoistical self-righteous resentment just does too much damage. It is better to forgive, learn the lessons that can be learnt, and move on.

And perhaps there is also a challenge in this prayer: to think carefully about the burdens and obligations we are placing on others: are they actually fair and reasonable? Would we gladly accept such obligations if we were on the receiving end? Especially in an unequal society such as ours people may be placed under unjust obligations, to live on low wages in poor housing in unsanitary conditions. Are we fitting in with such unjust relationships, or doing what we can to liberate people from them? When we engage in business, are our deals, charges and profits justifiable?

### **"And lead us not into temptation."**

Looking at the temptations that Jesus faced, (Matthew 4:1–11) it would seem that this is a prayer to save us from trying to achieve good



things by wrong, violent or deceptive methods, or from supporting misguided leaders. The end, unfortunately, does not justify the means. In fact, the journey along the less-travelled road, through the narrow gate, seems to be as important as the destination. One suggestion here seems to be that we should be wary of getting caught up with messianic, charismatic leaders and over-enthusiastic movements. Celebrity and populism may not be the way for us to go. Sound leadership is undoubtedly to be supported, encouraged and respected. Indeed we should be ready to accept the arduous of leadership if that is what we are called

to. But when we are asked to put someone on a pedestal we should probably be backing off, rapidly. The groups that we belong to and that help to give us an identity may also lead us astray.

These are just some thoughts about relationships that came to me in contemplating Jesus' Prayer. If you can help to enrich this article through sharing your own reflection and experience please do so.

Contact: [justin@nawa.co.na](mailto:justin@nawa.co.na)

*This article was originally shared at the retreat of the Namibia Allowed Meeting, October 2015.*

## 2016 FWCC World Gathering in Pisac, Peru

*Justine Limpilaw*

I will be writing more about this extraordinary experience that I shared with Thuli Mbete (CWMM) and Khosi Sekoere (LAM) at YM but I thought I would share with Southern African Friends, the epilogue that I contributed. The epilogue is given at the end of the day (that is at about 21:30) and different Friends were invited to give one. Mine took place on the second last night of the Gathering by which time there had been plenty of time for reflection on my experiences of the Gathering.

"Dear Friends

We have been together for seven days now, and I want reflect on some things that Friends have helped me see clearly in this past week.

Quakers feel comfortable talking and walking with God and the Spirit... but it seems to me that we don't really seem to explore messengers and messages of the spirit....

We never seem to talk about the angels and saints – and yet many of them appear to be Quaker. Surely St Francis of Assisi was a Quaker Saint even if he didn't know it? Caring for God's creatures and living simply? A clear prophet of the ecology movement that Friends have embraced.

At this FWCC gathering, and through a particular Friend, I have reconnected with Archangel Michael. I generally don't talk a lot about Archangel Michael with Friends because he doesn't seem a very Quaker archangel ... He is often depicted wearing a sword he hasn't yet been able to lay it down! So

he is a warrior angel. But his sword is not made of steel — it is the sword of truth. I imagine Archangel Michael's sword of truth cutting cleanly through lies, excuses, obfuscation, and evasion to reveal and lay bare the truth of our present human condition for all of us to see clearly.

The apocalyptic language of Revelations has never spoken to my condition. I find it alien. This is also true of talk about environmental and social crises that herald the end times. But there is no doubt that our human society and the earth we inhabit are at a tipping point... struggling with the dilemmas of growth, development and sustainability; struggling with wars, cruelty and inequality. Humans and nature are deeply unhappy. There is no doubt that, as our theme for this gathering proclaims, "All creation awaits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God."

So what is our revealing? What can we do? What is our role? Well ... "WE ARE God's hands, he has no hands but ours. We are called to be God's hands." Such a responsibility. But what does this mean? For me it is both huge and very simple – the revealing of God's children is that we are called to do as the Lord's Prayer commands: "Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven". We are called to create the Kingdom of Heaven right here on Mother Earth.

Impossible, no? No, not impossible.

We are not called to be wealthy enough to pay for an end to world poverty. We are not called to be politically powerful enough unilaterally to change

whole political and economic systems. So how do we build the Kingdom of Heaven here on earth?

Quite simply we are to do what Jesus told us to do ... to love one another.

Social justice is love in action.

Ecological justice is the spirit of reverence for life in action.

As Friends, we are called to have reverence for life and to love one another and the world.

For us as Quakers we well know how to love each other as Friends — caring for each other, sharing tears of pain and tears of laughter, supporting each other, translating for each other, helping out when times are tough for Friends, and not taking more than our fair share. It's the same, just the same, out there in the so-called "real world".

Every contribution of love for another person and for our planet is a spark for social and ecological justice. Some of our contributions seem to be veritable bonfires, such as QUNO's dinners to help birth the Paris climate change agreement or companioning a BlackLivesMatter chapter. Other contributions are more like little matches... scraping a plate to make natural compost or inviting a refugee to dinner. We need both kinds of points of warmth (the appropriate Quaker metaphor for me is not between Light and Dark but between Warmth and Cold). We are all searching for

warmth, for human caring for each other and for our home, planet earth.

The good news is that, as we have all experienced right here in Pisac in the arms of the High Andes, cracking open our hearts to share love is not a chore — it is joyful! Giving love feels wonderful, perhaps even better than GETTING love! This we know experientially.

Since I arrived here, for this, my first World Plenary of Friends, I have been surrounded by unexpected love, from individual Friends, from our Quaker community generally and, most importantly, from God, my maker. The indescribable joy that I have felt these past days, and I am sure I am not alone, is because right here... in this place... we have come together as equals, our material needs met, caring for each other and marvelling at the majesty of nature. We have glimpsed heaven here on earth and we have helped create it!

It takes just one of us to be a beacon of warmth against the icy coldness of loneliness, poverty, inequality, homophobia, racial prejudice, illness and environmental damage. It takes one person to love and to revere life to start a chain reaction. We can all be points of warmth right where we are... From Rovaniemi to Kigali, from Hong Kong to El Salvador, from Alaska to Maseru."



*The African delegation at FWCC, left to right: Johnson (Ghana), Jessica (CSAYM), Thuli (CWMM), Justine (JMM), Khosi (LAM) and Oliver (Cameroun)*



## REVERENCE FOR LIFE

An opportunity for existence  
I was here  
I lived  
I loved  
I was here

Life is an opportunity,  
Doomed by deficiency  
Lack of the spiritual seed  
Lerato, lerato tholaona ea moea

Ruri ke fumane lerato ...  
Ke fuoe sebaka sa ho phela  
Bophelo ke mpho e kholo  
Mpho eo re e fuoeng ke molimo  
Ramaseli mmopi, "ntata lichaba"  
God gave me an opportunity

An opportunity for existence!!  
I was here  
I lived  
I loved  
I was here

Life needs tender care!!  
The active part of existence is chance  
Monyetta oa ho nka karolo  
A chance to participate  
Bophelo ke monyetta  
Life is an opportunity

Mpho e kholo ea lerato  
Mpho e tsoa ho ramaseli  
Bophelo!!  
Life!!!!

Glory to God!!!!!!!  
An opportunity  
Opportunity  
Opportunity  
Opportunity

I won't forget, "umuntu ungumuntu ngabantu"

*Khosi Daniel Sekoere,  
Lesotho Allowed Meeting*

# Yoga and Quakerism

Rory Short, JMM

Quakerism has a well-used phrase of 'Right Ordering' to refer to social arrangements that just seem so organically right that one cannot fault them. Another general, well-worn phrase is 'as above, so below' meaning that the microcosm is repeated in the macrocosm and vice-versa.

During yoga practice one day it struck me that the essence of yoga practice is the intention to attain a 'Right Ordering' of, ultimately, the whole being, starting with the physical body right from the cells through to the largest components of the bones and muscles. The yogic understanding is that everything is *one* and that if we are to achieve 'Right Ordering' of our whole being then it has to start with the 'Right Ordering' of the physical foundations of our being. Over the millennia this understanding led to the development of Hatha yoga. In keeping with this holistic outlook, Yoga also gives attention to diet, i.e. the nutritional foundation of our being, as well as to how we behave in the world.

However, yoga was developed long before collective human behaviour significantly impacted our supporting environment, our nest, so it has nothing specifically to say about the 'Right Ordering' of our interactions with the global environment. This is, however, no longer the case, and it is now absolutely necessary that we take into

cognisance the 'Right Ordering' of our interactions with the global environment.

According to recently published research on the history of global temperatures, the temperature-elevating effects of burning fossil fuels by humans has, since the 1940s, increased to the point where the average global temperature has now gone up by 0.8° C and is increasing exponentially. The climatic effects of even this increase in average global temperature have already been disastrous in many regions across the world. Yet, those who have been given the kind of social power needed to change things, i.e governments, are still talking about the possibility of limiting the increase to what they call a 'safe' 2°C. And yet ordinary citizens can already see that there is *no such thing* as a 'safe increase' in the average global temperature. The only safe increase is a *zero increase*. Thus, to not push for the necessary changes to our collective behaviour is to give unconscious assent to death by attrition caused by that element of humanity that is making money from destroying the environment.

The 'Right Ordering' of our interactions with the environment is no longer a 'take it or leave it' issue. The time for that has passed. Now 'Right Ordering' of our interactions with the environment is a question of human survival, nothing more, nothing less.

## Reflections on black shades of white

Abongile Xhantini

During the day I normally walk with three pairs of eyes, just observing what happens [goes on] around me. I try with all the pairs to not stare with judgement. But being in Canada has been such an amazing experience that all I have been doing has been

staring [outwardly], accepting everything.

People said just taking off to a foreign continent, to Bishop's University, for the last bit of my Bachelors in Geography and Philosophy degree was crazy. [They basically called me crazy.]



But something about that madness felt so right. It felt more right than staying on home soil, constantly popping on my three pairs of oculars and trying to make sense of a world that is distinctly black and white. The reality is I'm neither "black" nor "white", thus my journey to completing my Bachelors degree wouldn't be either.

I have come to see people's different realities and my quick adaptation to a place is because I have learnt that the world may look black and white, but if we open ourselves to the possibility of many shades of grey, there are so many interlinking relationships between circumstances and people.

Being on exchange in Canada, Quebec has shown me how much I can still do in my country. Where we still struggle with consultation and environmental policy and implementation, the Canadians seem to have it worked out. And where we have moved a 1000 steps to ensure desegregation, perhaps they could learn a few things with some cases concerning the First Nation and Indigenous population. It is not known that Canada is home to many indigenous populations living in the harsh north of Canada. Bridging the gap and acknowledging the rights of many of the nations who feel unrepresented by the Canadian federal government is an example of how South Africa can teach



Canada a thing or two.

I have been able to draw this parallel, by seeing how Canadians succeed at things we struggle with, by letting go of stereotypes and allowing my empty cup to be filled anew. Many people helped me prepare for my stay in Canada, and many had different worries. Some worried most about the weather while others were concerned about courses I would register for. In the wrong place, our priorities also differ and we stress certain things in our lives and in the lives of those we value.

I know plenty of people who grumble or snarl at the concerns of those who seem more privileged and get impatient at those who need a little more help. In fact I was one of those people. Well I was a lot younger then, until I was exposed to life outside the suburb, and independence without the opportunity to hide in my mom's pouch now and then. Then I realised the need to be able to stand on my own and have an opinion. As I grew older I realised my opinion was not quite as privileged as I had thought, nor was it as unfortunate as some. And I had to begin to find methods to express myself in ways where I could express my middle ground. In expressing my position, I could express both views to both sides in all the shades that people tend to miss, in the shades I began to see my everyday life.

Only as recently as last year I started questioning what we as South Africans meant when we said "black" or "white". Having albinism means there is nothing black about my skin colour; I am whiter than most "white people". Was I denying what I looked like if I said I was "black" on a form? Did I somehow walk around and not acknowledge a reality that I cover up all the time, that I have to put aside a firm budget for lotions, fresh food and special clothing? Most "black" people don't have to do that. They don't have to worry about hats, and the sun's glare and re-applying sunblock

every thirty minutes; well, at least not as much as I do. Nor would they hold books five centimeters away from their faces, while taking hours to read a few pages.

I then had to weigh the other possibility of my whiteness. It seemed that the "white" population also counted appearance. One would say they burn easily, are usually fair in skin tone, tan easily, have blue, green, hazel eyes and aren't just coffee brown and have better chances of having naturally blonde hair, and so on. Well, by such criteria, it would seem in order to deem me more "white", wouldn't it now? [On a spectrum,] I would have more chances of being seen as being white, by someone approaching me. Once you have engaged with me, my accent may confirm your supposition.

However, here is the thing. No one else in the family has to carry out the little rituals I perform to ensure they don't get skin cancer or huge, brown sun spots. The rest of my family is black. That's a part of me I cannot deny, and it is also just as important. Although I have participated in traditional ceremonies, I can't say I have a grounding in them. I never lost them over the years because they never formed part of my basis for living in Johannesburg with my mom and dad in my early childhood.

Best believe however, that when my family in the hills of KwaGcina (which is full of the



most out-spoken people I know) starts to sing and dance I will be right in front lifting the dust of the Sterkspruit soil, in the Eastern Cape.

On some days people would jump to the assumption that I am “black” and others would completely miss it. The most colourful aspect of my life is being able to step into any community and see the souls of everyone. First impressions matter – first impressions of the soul. I am sure people’s physical looks matter as well. But it also isn’t by chance that I see souls because I am not as gifted with sight.

The most poignant challenge I face is determining when I am making the right call at a given time. It has taken much work and

questioning, and continues to do so.

At times I resolve to make a decision and concluding the one I make is the right one, other times I look for the decision that causes the least pain, to me or others; and even that is relative. Living life in shades and openness has taught me to be me, and that is integrity.

Difference is normal. What seems to be normal seems most abnormal and the difference in people is what seems more natural.

I wish people would try less to hide themselves behind what is perceived as black or white, be it a decision that is such or stereotypes that come with these certain skin colours, and just be.

## Opportunity costs – an economic sci-fi parable

*Doreen Bekker, CERM*

### Introduction

Perhaps upon a time soon, aliens from another planet may decide to visit us here on Earth. And maybe<sup>1</sup> the reason for this visit is their desire to encourage inter-planetary trade<sup>2</sup>.

Why would any alien species, capable of interplanetary travel, want to trade with Earthlings though? Well, maybe there is something that planet Earth has that they need. In other words, we may have a comparative advantage in the supply of a product or service that they may require. After all, according to our economic system this is important.

Or maybe it has already happened? Let us assume that it has. So we could restart our tale in the

traditional way, at the once-upon-a-time moment when these aliens first made contact with Earth.

### Initial contact

As a more advanced civilization than us, the aliens knew that the acceptable procedure would be to make contact with our leader. And so they did. Of course, initially most of us knew nothing about what was happening. Our leader kept it very quiet for fear of creating panic amongst the masses.

The first contact was an incredulous moment for Jack. Never in his wildest dreams did he think he would experience this. Or rather, to be perfectly honest, he never really believed that there were aliens anywhere in the universe, in spite of all the money that was being spent on trying to reach the next solar system. And as President of the

<sup>1</sup> As an economist one is entitled to make assumptions.

<sup>2</sup> I think this idea was subconsciously planted when reading Krugman’s (2010) article on interstellar trade.

International Governing and Advisory Forum (IGAF), he was the *de facto* leader of the planet, so he would know how much money was being spent by the International Fund for the Exploration of Outer Space (IFEOS).

He was sitting on his verandah that evening sipping his obligatory martini, looking at the night sky in the hope of seeing some stars for a change. It was a clear evening sky, no clouds were visible. Of course only those who had been born more than 50 years ago really remembered what a clear sky looked like. Jack could remember seeing many stars in the sky when he was a small boy — but no more. Even scientists who went to the north and south poles to explore for fossils of animals that used to live on what were no longer continents of ice, said even there it was a rare occurrence to actually have a sky clear enough to see stars with the naked eye.

At first, his experience was the typical sci-fi-movie moment — a bright light in the sky getting bigger and bigger, closer and closer. At first he thought it was his private presidential solar-powered transporter, but then he realized it wasn't making the right sound, or rather there was no sound at all. 'Strange,' he thought.

Then he saw it. What was this vehicle? Whose was this vehicle? And how was this vehicle able to enter his protected, private airspace? And come to think of it, how was it able to get this far without setting off the protection system? And where were his bodyguards? Jack was slowly but surely becoming more and more angry. Someone was going to have to answer a number of questions!

An opening appeared in the side of the vehicle and some people appeared in silhouette. Jack couldn't see them clearly because the lights of the vehicle were still too bright. He was starting to feel a bit anxious. Were these assassins sent to dispatch him to the afterlife that he did not believe in? Where were his bodyguards? Where was his panic button? Oh yes, one on each ring finger. He pressed the rings with his thumbs sending the alert message to his bodyguards who would be here in a matter of seconds.

The people came closer and closer. Where were his bodyguards?

Then his jaw dropped. His martini glass crashed unnoticed onto the verandah floor. Who, what were these? He must be dreaming. 'Please, let me be dreaming,' thought Jack, 'I've been watching too many sci-fi movies.'

Three strange-looking beings (almost human,

but not quite) stopped in front of him. "Greetings Mr President of IGAF. We are official trade representatives from Tchoclug<sup>3</sup> in the Hjilitad<sup>4</sup> solar system. We are here to begin trade negotiations with your planet. We have been monitoring and observing your planet and its occupants for some time now and we have come to the conclusion that there is a very real possibility that we can both benefit from inter-planetary trade."

Struck dumb was an understatement. Jack tried to get his mind around this but he kept on thinking that he must be hallucinating. However, the three aliens were very patient with him. They understood that such an encounter must be a shock for any Earthling.

After what felt like an age, Jack muttered "Can this really be happening?" and then, "Where are my bodyguards?" One of the aliens replied, "We have put a shield around you and your property so no signals or people can get in or out. I am sorry, but most aliens react quite aggressively the first time they meet us so we have to take precautions. We promise that nothing will happen to you, we just want to talk, negotiate."

"Oh," squeaked Jack. And immediately, always the politician, he cleared his throat and thought, 'Thank goodness that was not live!' "Exactly what do you want to talk about, er ... hm ... do you perhaps have names?" he asked.

"You can call us Adam, John and Milton," said the alien who seemed to be the spokesperson, pointing firstly to himself and then to the other two. "I think these will be easier names than our real ones." Jack could have sworn that the alien smiled.

"What we want to talk about is the possibility of trade between your planet and ours. It could be worth a lot of money to your planet," said the alien, who Jack now thought of as Adam. Jack briefly closed his eyes and thought, 'If I keep them closed then this could just be another trade negotiation.'

"Exactly what is it that you want to trade with us?" asked Jack, "I can't imagine what it is that we could have that you need."

"We are in need of brain matter" said Adam.

"I beg you pardon!" said Jack.

"Let me explain," said Adam. "During our observation of your planet we realized how similar in many respects we are as people."

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3 Translated into English this would be something like *Materialia*.

4 The name of the solar system is not material to the parable.



‘People?’ thought Jack, then realized how prejudiced he sounded! The alien carried on to explain that on their planet, society was run along very similar lines as on Earth. People traded their goods and services with each other without interference and everyone was allowed to keep their earnings for themselves. Jack began to understand that what the alien was saying is that their economy was also based on a market system.

“So because our societies think and operate in a very similar way, it means that on a certain level we are very compatible,” said Adam. “Of course, we are a lot more advanced scientifically and technologically, but in essence, the moral and ethical bases of our societies are very similar.”

“I think I understand that”, said Jack, “but I still don’t understand what you mean by needing brain matter! If you are so much more advanced than us how can we help you with knowledge?”

“No, no it is not knowledge we need,” said Adam. “Because we are so advanced we have been able to cure all diseases so our people live for a very long time. But what we have not been able to stop is the slow deterioration of people’s brains. By the time people are at what you might call mid-life, their brain-matter needs to be supplemented. What we need is a source of brain matter from a planet similar to us that has a large and continuously replenished supply of this product. Unlike on our planet, brain matter is a renewable resource on Earth. As far as we could establish, it is one of the few products that you have a comparative advantage in that you have not thought to make a profit from. So we are here to negotiate to harvest and buy brain-matter from your planet. You have a large renewable supply and we have the demand — a perfect market solution.”

Once again, Jack was dumbstruck. For a politician this meant he was completely and utterly floored. It seemed as though the aliens thought this meant he was not convinced about the possible benefits to Earth because Adam quickly reassured Jack that they were happy to agree on a lucrative price.

Jack’s mind felt like a tornado had ripped through it. The words, ‘renewable resource’, ‘supply and demand’, ‘large profits’, swirled in his brain. He briefly considered what ‘harvesting brain matter’ might entail but pushed that thought aside. As the aliens rightly pointed out, there are one-hellava-lot of people on this planet! ‘Renewable resource is one way of putting it,’ Jack thought wryly. ‘One of the things we humans have not changed is our

ability to procreate.’

“I do hope you understand,” said Jack stalling for time. “A decision of this magnitude cannot be taken by only one person. I will need to consult with my board.”

“Of course,” said Adam. “We would have done the exactly same thing if our positions were reversed. How much time do you think you need? An Earth week, or two?”

By this time Jack’s mind was starting to function more normally. He started to appreciate the upside of this bizarre offer. One of Earth’s biggest problems was overpopulation. Here was a possible solution, a purely logical solution which could be rationalized according to solid economic theory and which, in addition, could be profitable for the planet. ‘How’s that for a possible win-win situation?’ he thought. Still, he was a bit hesitant, what did they actually mean by ‘harvesting brain matter’? Was it what he thought? On the other hand, here was a possible golden opportunity which he didn’t want to let slip through his fingers.

“Would you give me about two weeks?” he asked.

“No problem,” said Adam. “We will park in space and return after two weeks.”

“Before you go I do need some specifics though,” said Jack.

Before Jack could say any more the alien spoke again. “We will pay you in what you call gold or platinum, whichever you prefer, and will pay on consignment, or what you call cash-on-delivery.”

“Exactly what must we deliver to you?” asked Jack. “I don’t think we have the necessary medical technology ... er ... ”

“Oh no, we will do all the necessary procedure when we get back to our planet. We prefer to take live cargo, that way the product does not deteriorate. Unfortunately brain matter does not have a long shelf life.”

“Er, and would you be requiring more than one consignment? I mean, if you come back for a second batch would you be returning the, er, specimens once you have extracted the necessary, er, renewable resource from er, its er, host?”

“Oh dear, I am sorry if I did not make myself very clear. Our technology is not that advanced yet — unfortunately. We only keep the host alive until we require the brain matter, then we recycle whatever is left. Maybe we were mistaken, but we assumed that you would not need the hosts back as you are so adept at creating new ones.”

Jack swallowed. “Ah yes, I mean no, I – I

understand, and as you quite rightly point out, we have a lot of this renewable resource on Earth. Obviously we cannot over-harvest though. What sort of volumes were you thinking of? And of course, I would need to have some exact figures, how much would you be prepared to pay for er, one host, as there would be some costs involved on our side."

"We have the authority to offer you one ton of gold or platinum per host. We require five million hosts over a period of a year. But as far as your costs are concerned, these should be minimal. Once you and your board have decided from where we can collect our consignment of hosts and how many, we will do the actual collection ourselves. With all due respect, I think your methods may be a bit more primitive than ours."

"Of course," said Jack, starting to feel a little nauseous. "I think I have all the information I need to take this proposal to my board. I do hope you understand that there may be a few more questions that could be raised, as we have never dealt with something of this nature before."

"Oh", said Adam, sounding a little surprised. "Of course, but then maybe we should come back in a week's time, to check what other information you may need to come to a decision."

"Yes," said Jack, "yes." By now he wanted the aliens to go away so he could think without them watching him so intently. He didn't want to lose this opportunity, but he wasn't sure how the other members of the Board would react to the suggested trade. He needed to think about the pros and cons, get a cost-benefit analysis. Yes, that's what he should do, arrange a cost-benefit analysis. That would help get emotions out of the way. After all, his responsibility was to the long-term survival of the human race, and some individuals were always being sacrificed along the way. That was the nature of the system.

There were many poverty-stricken, unemployed people all over the planet. If the aliens went to a town that was far away from other places, no-one would know what had happened to the people except that they had disappeared. And the return – think what he could do with so much gold, there were so many projects that had been put on ice because of cutting fiscal budgets. 'And I think I would be entitled to a small commission seeing that I am the official agent.' This idea was starting to sound like it had more benefits than costs. 'Yes,' thought Jack, 'we must look at this rationally. After

all, we live in a market-driven society, it is about supply and demand. We buy and sell all other living matter, how is this any different?'

Nevertheless, there was a slight uneasiness that would not leave Jack. 'Jack,' he said to himself, 'remember, be rational, this is about cost versus benefit, what will be the best for our society in the long run? And in any case I will not be the one making the decision.'

"Well Mr President ..." said Adam. Jack started. 'Good grief they are still here!' he thought.

"Yes" said Jack.

"We will be on our way then," said Adam. "Here is a draft contract that you can look at in the meantime. We will be back next week, same time."

"Yes, yes of course," said Jack. "I will make sure that I have all the necessary queries lined up by then."

He watched as the three aliens moved back to their vehicle. 'I guess it's a space ship,' thought Jack, 'or am I dreaming?'

Just then Adam turned around, "Just wait there Mr President, I want to bring you something as a small token." The three aliens disappeared into the ship and after a few minutes Adam came out again, carrying something. As he got closer, Jack saw it was a bar of gold, alien gold.

### **The big decision**

Jack walked into the meeting feeling rather tense. He pushed a trolley covered with a thick blanket before him — an unusual sight on any day! The members of the Board were all present as ordered.

After making sure that only the Board members were present, Jack cleared his throat out of habit to get everyone's attention. "I have an unusual proposition to discuss with you," he said. "That is what your e-mail said, Mr President," pointed out Jack's least-favourite member of the Board. Jack ignored the slight. He knew everyone present would be very quiet, very soon.

"That was the basic proposition from the aliens," he said, after repeating what Adam had told him.

"Now, before I give you some more detail ..."

The members of the Board were looking at him as if he had gone mad. Exactly the response he had expected. "... here is a token of the aliens' good will. Please come closer to have a look." Jack dramatically whipped the blanket off the trolley. A bar of gold lay glimmering in the lights of the enclosed room. A bar of gold — something they were all used to seeing, yet this gold seemed



different. The more they looked the more they realized it was not gold that had come from Earth.

Now that Jack had everyone's not only undivided but also no-longer-skeptical attention, he carried on. "According to their draft contract, the aliens would like to take their first consignment of 500 000 hosts with them as soon as possible — in fact, as soon as a collection craft can arrive to do the necessary transfer. Thereafter they will collect another consignment of 500 000 hosts every month, until they have the full quota of 5 million. They will be paying cash on delivery for each consignment. However, they will pay an initial 10% deposit up front for each consignment. The first deposit will be paid before the negotiators leave next week. I think let us now break for lunch, so we can discuss this more informally."

Jack had decided to put the basic principle to a vote as quickly as possible so after lunch he asked the members of the Board to vote yes or no to the proposed trade deal. "Once we have made a decision one way or the other, then we can iron out the details," he said. Jack had of course already anticipated the majority would be in favor of the lucrative if somewhat unorthodox trade deal. He was surprised though when he received a 100% yeses. It took much longer to reach agreement about the detail though.

### **The contract**

The main obstacle seemed to be that very few of the members of his board trusted the aliens. "How do we know that we will be paid once they have a consignment on board? They could just disappear," pointed out one member. "We should make sure we get payment before they take delivery; in fact even before they are given the co-ordinates of where they can upload their consignment. We don't know how quickly they can travel to the place and upload! Let's be realistic, we have no way of putting debt collectors after them do we?"

"We do have to be reasonable though," said Jack. "They will also surely want some guarantee that we won't back out of the agreement once we have been paid."

Another problem related to trust was, "How do we know that they will ever come back for further consignments once they have taken the first one?" By now each board member was thinking in terms of their own possible commission and had been doing sums. No matter how one looked at it, a tiny percentage of 5 000 000 was infinitely more than

the same percentage of 500 000! As one member of the Board suggested, "If we are treating this proposed trade policy as an efficient and profitable solution to the planet's overpopulation problem, then we need to ensure that it is carried out properly."

After much haggling and posturing amongst the members, Jack's least-favourite member of the Board succinctly summed up the Board's major concerns. "We have no way of knowing that the other party will perform according to the contract, nor do we have any way in which to enforce the contract in the event of them defaulting," said the member. "The way I see it, it would serve our best interests most, if the aliens were to pay the full 5 million tons of gold or platinum up front. Given their superior technology I suspect it would be very difficult for us to avoid keeping our side of the bargain!" The latter point was stated with much cynicism. "In addition, the interest earned on the capital would be a tidy sum." The last point swayed the last few doubting members. 'This is the only time I have agreed with this person,' thought Jack in mild amusement. After much discussion and a few more minor suggestions the Board made some amendments to the contract and left the final haggling to Jack.

Jack awaited the aliens' return to discuss the revised contract. He was surprised to say the least when Adam accepted their amendments without any objections. All Adam said was, "We would obviously have to insert a clause to cover our own interests."

"Naturally," said Jack. "We will be back in two weeks," said Adam, "with the payment and to collect our first consignment. In the meantime we will pay you the 10% deposit on the first consignment which you may keep even if we are not able to come to an agreement." Jack, ever the skeptic, wondered if they would ever see the aliens again.

The aliens returned within two weeks. The contract was handed over to Jack. As far as he could see it was exactly as had been suggested by the Board. He speedily circulated it to the members of the Board to check and everyone was happy that the aliens had agreed to the full payment immediately. The only change made by the aliens was as expected — that the earthlings agreed "... not to prevent the transfer of the agreed-upon 5 million earthlings to the alien spaceships within the stipulated time period of one earth year...".

'As if we could,' thought Jack wryly.

### **The first consignment**

'Now comes the tough part,' thought Jack, 'deciding from where the aliens can take their first consignment.' However it was a lot easier that he thought. The members of the Board quickly made a number of suggestions. There were more people living in abject poverty than Jack realized! "I think as many consignments as possible should be taken from areas that are not too near any metropolis," suggested one member. "We don't want people to start panicking."

'You mean we don't want the masses to find out what is happening!' thought Jack to himself. He decided it was not wise to utter this thought out loud though.

The first few consignment spots were therefore quickly decided on, with enough possible areas to make up the rest of the 5 million hosts. Jack could not help feeling a bit revolted by the ease with which his board members had accepted the whole trade deal with the aliens. He pushed away the thought that he had himself quite easily accepted the idea as well. Instead he reminded himself that this was a rational solution to the Earth's huge problem of overpopulation. Not only would this reduce the actual number of people in areas where people were living in poverty, it would also reduce future problems because it was usually these people who had so many children! As one member of the Board, who was very good at running statistical analyses, said, "Such a relatively big reduction in the population in such a short period would more than likely reduce the future rate of population increase by at least 0.0326731%, over the short term." Jack could not help being amused by how vague this conclusion really was, compared to the extreme accuracy of the number!

And so it happened. The aliens collected their

first consignment of hosts from a number of towns in the poorest areas of the poorest countries. Whole communities disappeared in seconds. There were none left behind to tell of the very real yet implausible event. The few who came across the deserted areas had no explanation for the sudden disappearance of hundreds of thousands of people.

When the official reports of the disappearances reached the President, Jack responded with the correct amount of concern and action. He knew the investigation that he set in motion would find nothing. 'Everything was going according to plan,' he thought. Nevertheless, that initial uneasy feeling had returned. Was everything going too well?

### **A problem and its logical rational solution**

The aliens returned a week earlier than expected.

"We had a slight problem," said Adam.

"What is the problem?" asked Jack with a sudden sense of foreboding.

"The first consignment was not as compatible as we had expected," said Adam. "How is that possible? You were the ones who came to us because of the compatibility!" said Jack, while thinking, 'Does that mean they will want their gold back?'

"No, no," said Adam as if he had read Jack thoughts. "We have found a solution so the deal is still on. It was just that we had not refined our compatibility test well enough and this we have now done. We now know how to select compatible hosts."

"So what would be a compatible host then?" asked Jack.

"People like you," said Adam.

### **Bibliography**

Krugman P. 2010. The theory of interstellar trade. *The Economic Enquiry*, 48(4): 1119–1123.

## BECAUSE

The unheard;  
They don't exist,  
Because  
They are not heard.  
Nobody hears their voices  
Nobody sees their faces  
Nobody even knows they exist;  
The mass of unheard.  
Nobody cares  
Because  
They are not seen, not heard.  
They are crying out in pain.

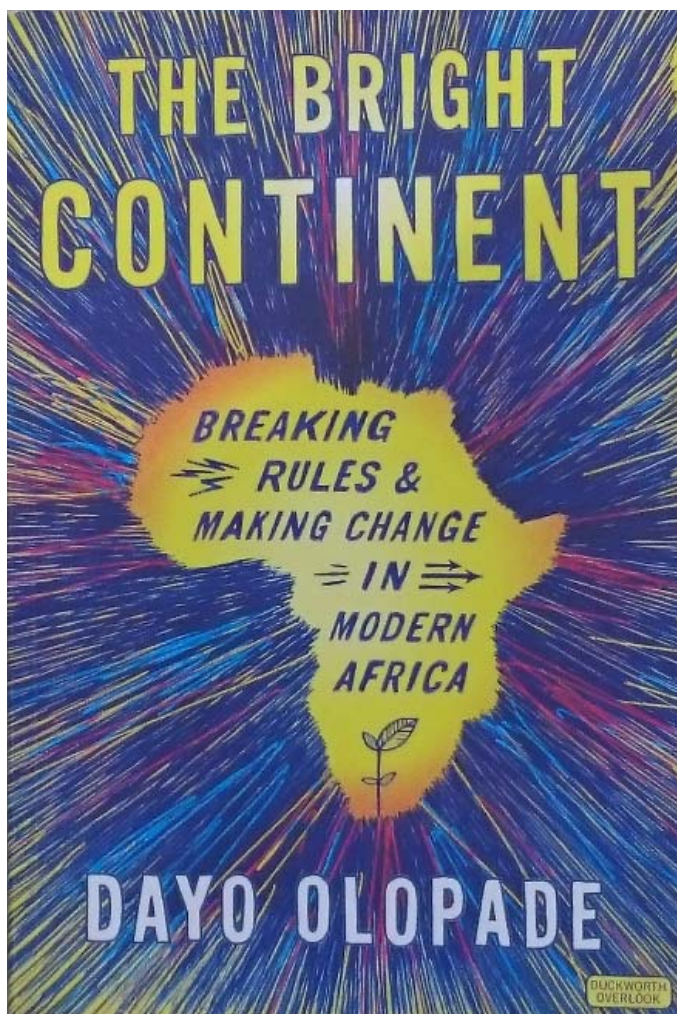
Nobody is listening;  
Maybe they don't want to hear  
Because  
Hearing is not comfortable  
Hearing makes you feel guilty  
Hearing makes you feel there is something  
you should be doing  
And you don't know what;  
Or you feel uncomfortable about  
having to do things you don't want to do.  
So you don't want to listen.

And more and more  
People are calling out to be heard  
Because  
Nobody is listening to them  
And they need to be heard  
Because  
Not being heard makes one angry;  
Very angry.

*Doreen Bekker  
7 November 2015*



## Book reviews



### **The Bright Continent by Dayo Olopade**

Published by Duckworth Overlook, London.

ISBN 978-0-7156-4924-4

*Reviewed by Jennifer Stern, CWMM*

Born to Nigerian parents in the USA, Dayo Olopade has written a book that challenges the accepted view of Africa as a place of poverty, violence and underdevelopment – the dark continent. Eschewing the terms *first world* and *third world* and *developed* and *underdeveloped* – or even *developing*, she refers to fat economies and lean economies. Fat economies are complacent, lazy and wasteful, while lean economies are agile, creative and energetic. And most of Africa, she reports, works as a lean economy.

Of course, Olopade accepts that it's not all roses and sunshine. The challenges are enormous but

– she emphasises – the solutions are local and indigenous. Rather than looking to foreign aid, which usually supplies what she calls Swedow – stuff we don't want – Africans are finding their own solutions. A powerful example she uses to illustrate the concept of Swedow is how well-meaning, fat-economy citizens send their old and unwanted clothes to Africa, and thereby create unemployment by destroying local clothing industries.

But the book is most certainly not a long, whiny diatribe against the legacy of colonialism and well-meaning if misplaced aid. It's more a celebration of African ingenuity, African energy and the African can-do attitude that she refers to by the Yoruba word *kanju*. *Kanju* is informal, unstructured and agile. It's making do, getting by, hustling. *Kanju* skates around the concept of legality, subverts the status quo when the status quo doesn't deliver, and is responsible for the spectacular success of, for example, the Nigerian film industry. When there are no formal structures, *kanju* dictates that you build informal ones. That's not a new concept to South Africans who live in informal settlements, shop at spaza shops and commute by minibus taxis.

The book is about ordinary people taking action, often in the face of official inertia, maladministration and corruption. Olopade attributes the phenomenal uptake of mobile communication technology in Africa to the fact that staid, infrastructure-heavy land-line phones depended on top-down supply, and just weren't meeting needs. In many parts of the continent that whole landline phone technology has just been leapfrogged, and even deep rural communities are now connected.

But it's not just the fact that mobile phones are ubiquitous – it's also how they are used. Mobile banking is almost second nature to many Africans, and the informal locally developed banking systems are light years more sophisticated (and simple) than those in highly "developed" fat economies like the USA. She quotes a 2012 study in which 20 countries report more than 10% of people using mobile banking apps – and 15 of them were in Africa. And most impressively, most of those mobile banking

apps were developed in Africa by Africans – often coding on four- or five-year-old phones. African IT specialists – many of whom are self-taught – are developing apps for “dumb phones” because most people can’t afford smart phones.

Another example is Nairobi’s sprawling informal settlement of Kibera, which does not exist in official surveys of Kenya, and remained unmapped until the residents took to the sandy lanes and informal “streets” with simple GPSs, and mapped the settlement down to individual businesses, clinics and other services. The information is not only accurate, comprehensive and up to date, it offers exceptionally useful detail such as ‘which clinic offers free immunisation, how many trained teachers are at a given school, or which streetlights are operational.’ This modified GPS application is yet another example of African ingenuity and *kanju*.

While not glossing over some of the immense problems the continent faces, Olopade puts the contradictions and paradoxes into context. The fact that 70% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa is under thirty years of age is contrasted strongly with the fact that many national leaders are doddering octogenarians clinging to tradition, power and privilege by their brittle, yellowing fingernails. While some might see this ‘youth bubble’ as a time-bomb, Olopade chooses to see it as ‘an untapped source of pure potential energy.’

This is a book of phenomenal optimism and deeply felt humanity. The author quotes Tanzanian business leader Emanuel Feruzi who said at a gathering of education professionals, ‘the uneducated of the 21st century are not those who can’t read and write. The uneducated of this century are those who cannot unlearn their old lessons and learn the new ones to adapt to this age.’

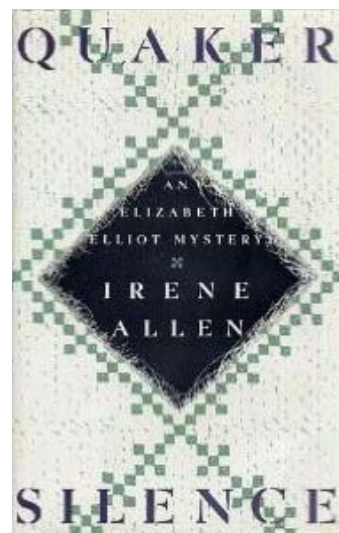
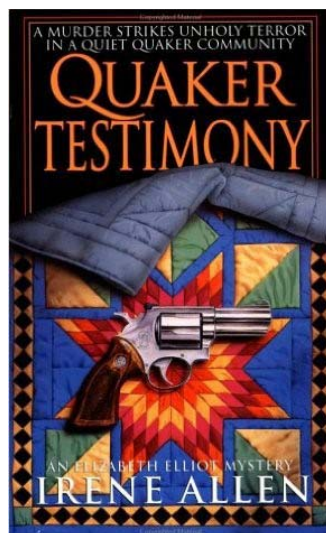
Read this book, it will help you unlearn those lessons, and give you hope for a bright future for this bright continent.

### **A Quaker Miss Marple: Murder Mysteries from New England**

Quaker tensions boil over in an American detective series, with Cambridge (Massachusetts) Meeting Clerk solving murder mysteries.

*Reviewed by Nancy Fee, PWG*

As we are all human, there are sometimes tensions



in our Monthly and Yearly Meetings. However, I never thought this might result in murder(s): a lack of imagination on my side, I suspect. Over in America, things are different – and Elizabeth Elliot, the Clerk of the Cambridge Meeting, is kept busy solving murders inside and outside of her Meeting in a series of four detective novels.

Dr E Kirsten Peters wrote the novels in the 1990’s. She attended the Cambridge Meeting for a number of years while a PhD student at Harvard (which is in Cambridge, across the river from Boston). Dr Peters is a Quaker herself, from rural Washington State. Her writing now focuses on scientific papers in her field, geology. Maybe the murder rate in Quaker Meetings became a bit much.

I have read two of the four novels so far, *Quaker Silence* and *Quaker Testimony*. The other two books are *Quaker Witness* and *Quaker Indictment*. The novels are interesting and well written, although rather slow and lacking in the blood and guts of most detective novels. The novels have also been well reviewed in on-line forums, including for their portrayal of Quakers and Quakerism.

The elements of the Cambridge Meeting, and the work of the Clerk, would be very familiar to CSAYM members, although on a larger scale. Cambridge is the largest Meeting in New England Yearly Meeting, with over 1000 members and attenders. More than 100 people usually attend Meeting for Worship (MfW). The Meeting is unprogrammed, and seems to belong to Friends General Conference, the more liberal side of North American Quakerism (and which CSAYM would probably belong to if we were there).

The Clerk of the Meeting is Elizabeth Elliot, a 66-year-old widow, living on social security and a small pension as a retired teacher. She has two



adult sons, and spends at least half of her time on Meeting business. She is a committed tea drinker, and has a cat (as would be expected, Elizabeth took in a stray).

The novels reflect the various tensions and issues within a Clerk's work – leading and not leading, and seeking to be led. Elizabeth spends quite a lot of time discerning right action, which is well reflected in the book. Her Quaker approach to detective work is also well developed. The police detective charged with investigating the murders is (understandably) quite fed up with her interference, and quiet insistence that the truth is all important, above issues of guilt and innocence. And using discernment, Elizabeth is the one who cracks the cases.

The structure of the Meeting is well reflected and seems appropriate to a large Meeting – regular Meetings for Business, Elders and Oversight Committee, Premises Committee. There are endless discussions at MfB on some issues. When there is no sense of the Meeting, issues are sent back to sub-committees, and sometimes held over for the way to open.

The missing part in the novels seems to be a lack of Young Friends, and there is only one child, who is too restless to attend Children's Meeting (and seems to mostly be in the Meeting as a plot device). But the children of the Meeting are pretty much non-existent – they do not join the MfW at any point. *Quaker Testimonies* does involve the organizer of the Children's Meeting, but again mostly as a plot device. Aside from the MfW, the spiritual side of the Meeting seems pretty inactive – no Worship Sharing, retreats, studying of Quaker and other books, etc. However, the Meeting members are engaged in various social actions and campaigns, especially feeding the homeless and food banks. Interestingly, the Cambridge USA meeting does not seem to be a "popcorn" meeting, unlike the Oxford and Cambridge Meetings in the UK.

The novels are good at illustrating the various tensions and issues within the Meeting, in addition to the murders. There are tensions between Quakers of means (who are often needed to support various problems with an old Meeting

House), and those of more modest means. There are issues between the older, more middle-class and established Quakers, and younger members, who are attempting to live a more simple and sustainable life. And there are also tensions and disagreements around social change – the murder in *Quaker Silence* involves an older, well-off member who cannot accept a fellow Quaker who is gay. In *Quaker Testimonies*, a young couple from the Meeting are about to have their house repossessed by the IRS (tax office), as they are war-tax resisters – and this issue divides the Meeting.

Social norms are portrayed as quite conservative and prim. Maybe the old Quaker stereotypes are irresistible to a writer, as resolving these tensions makes for good plot devices (Quaker romance novels often revolve around these issues). Elizabeth develops strong feelings for a widower in the Meeting. But she doesn't feel she can go away for a weekend with him to New York, or meet his parents until they are engaged. What will the Meeting think if the Clerk does this? Really, even in 1992? Maybe an influence from puritan New England.

The novels also remind us that Quaker business *did* function before e-mail, websites, Facebook, etc. And that receiving letters and dealing with the post was a critical part of any organization (oh, for a functioning postal system!).

As a Clerk, I am especially interested in how the work of the Clerk is portrayed. Except for the murder and detective elements (which I hope not to ever need), it was all quite recognizable. And a nice counterpoint to the more practical approach to Clerking we followed in the recent Woodbrooke on-line Clerking course.

Although I am not a murder mystery buff, I would recommend the books to other CSAYM members. They are enjoyable and provide a look into another branch of Quakerism. I'll certainly read the remaining two books.

And next? Well, I've recently discovered a sub-genre of science fiction books – Quaker science fiction. Most focus on an environmentally degraded Earth, and starships leaving to settle other planets. There are mixed groups of settlers – including Quaker groups. Well, could be interesting, I will let CSAYM know.