

Southern Africa Quaker News

August 2018



Journal of the Religious Society of Friends in Southern Africa

Issue 241

Southern African Quaker News

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This newsletter is about the work and activities of the Religious Society of Friends in Southern Africa.

It is published by the Central and Southern Africa Yearly Meeting. C&SAYM is a small Meeting of Friends in South Africa, Lesotho, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

SAQN is distributed free to Members and Attenders of C&SAYM. Copies will be sent on request to any other interested persons at the cost of printing and postage.

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Design & layout by Liz Gowans
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Printed by Dupliprint, Grahamstown

ISSN 1028-5768
No. 241, 2018/1

Cover:
Southern African Quakers

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A fond farewell

Editorial

This issue of the SAQN is somewhat overdue, and apologies are in order. But, more about this below.

We celebrate meeting Friends from Zambia, the 'Meeting' for so many years kept alive by Ann Phiri. Helen Vale talks to Phillip Talavera, a follow on of the article in SAQN 240 on the AVP work in correctional facilities in Namibia. Helen Vale also writes about Gudrun Weeks who died but a few weeks ago in the US. Lungile Malotsha shares with us a lesson learned at school, when she was very young.

Much of this issue consists of the contributions of two contributors, the previous YM Clerk, Helen Holleman, and Rory Short of the Johannesburg

Monthly Meeting.

For any journal to be produced timeously, an editorial team should have sufficient material to hand to be compiling an issue in advance. Can I encourage Friends to write and tell our wider community what is happening in your 'Quaker world'. As I write this I have a copy of Issue 92, dated February / March 1977 next to me. The editorial relates that an appeal had been made for contributions; the response was such that 16 pages of SAQN was then being published every two months!

This is then an appeal for Friends to share their thinking, doing, reading and discoveries with other Friends, and with the wider world.

Wouter Holleman, Editor

An ex-Clerk's-eye view

Helen Holleman, Eastern Cape Quakers

I didn't want to leave. I really, really didn't. Didn't want to encounter the outside world again. And I wasn't alone. No one I spoke to wanted to leave. There was such a feeling of closeness, of wholeness, of 'being integrated' not only with others, but with oneself. I wanted to cling to it, afraid that I would be torn apart once I left. Friends' comments like: 'I feel like ME, again'; 'I feel that I belong in my body once more', capture something of the peace that comes with sharing a safe space; a space where you are not judged, but simply accepted for who you are and welcomed for the gifts you bring to the Meeting. One Friend described the Yearly Meeting as a 'healing ground' where we gather to be made

healthy, whole, and 'holy' (?) again through our sharing. This is how I pictured it – a space where we could gather together in the shade of the mopane trees.

Perhaps the deepest purpose of our Yearly Meetings it to strengthen ourselves for the world and the work we see must be done in it. And another Friend gave us an image of dandelion seeds being blown away to start new plants – every seed carries all the genetic material necessary for starting anew; a lovely image to take with us as we went our separate ways.

Another Friend reminded us of Jesus' likening his disciples to salt – only a little is needed to flavour food, but when salt 'loses its savour' what use it is then? Yearly Meeting provided an opportunity to be 'savoured-up' again. If there's no such thing, there should be, because we were!

We were blessed with many visitors from beyond our YM borders; visitors who shared their knowledge and joy and wisdom with us. I was especially happy to have Jane Dawson, Head of Communications at British Yearly Meeting, visit us. She clarified ways



of making our Quaker voice heard. Quaker silence in the face of mounting corruption and consequent impoverishment of the poor has played on my conscience in a profoundly distressing way. I'm relieved that the voice of civil society seems to be heard at last, but embarrassed that Quakers played no part in bringing that about.

Among other Friends, old and new, from beyond our YM borders were Jessica and Graham Bishop, whose warmth and delight in being back in South Africa make me love my own country all over again; Margot Lunnon who encouraged us to take on the task of financial responsibility, persuading me that it was not only necessary, but possible; Gretchen Castle who inspired a 'can-do' approach to inviting FWCC to hold their world meeting in SA; Clive Barlett and David Jones (who taught me how to say 'Good morning' in Welsh – Bora da – for those of you who missed his cheery greeting); Lee Taylor dragging a treasure trove of goodies for Hlekweni. So much to love.

There was sorrow, too: YM without John Schmid was strange, but we were glad to have Kelitha with us, and to see her recover some of her old spirit as the days went by. The death of his son delayed Solomon's arrival. I was deeply moved by his stoicism in the face of this tragic blow.

Justin Ellis broke new ground with our very own 'Quaker Speak' videos, and George and Nancy connected us electronically with the world we were away from and enabled us to explore the riches offered by Woodbrooke.

YM Clerking has been quite a ride, but I've been blessed with wonderful mentors: first and foremost, Justine, who was inspiring and encouraging, patient and generous; a source of information that opened

all kinds of avenues to explore. I have sometimes called to mind the section of the Bayeux tapestry of Harald behind his men with a huge spear at their backs, urging them on. The caption underneath reads, 'Harald comforteth his men'. Hmm. So THAT'S what comfort means – to strengthen! Nice.

Then, I had John Inglis as co-clerk in the second part of my term. He counter-balances everything I am not: he's got a mind like a steel trap and remembers everything; he's deeply thoughtful and doesn't rush into things; he sees parts of the picture that I'm blind to; he's unbelievably patient!

I was also comforted (Quaker word would be 'upheld', I think) by wonderful Friends at YM. It's a daunting task to try to remember everything (and I forgot a lot), but lifesaving to have Friends helping in all kinds of ways. I did feel 'held' by you on so many occasions. Thank you!

A special 'thank you' to the Friend who talked about finding the 'sweet spot' in our Quaker deliberations. I pictured it not simply as that spot on your tennis racquet where you hit the ball without apparent effort and it soars into victory on the other side of the net; I also thought of it as a lot of overlaid circles, like a Venn diagram. I wish I'd had that image to guide me at the beginning of my term of office.

So, I'm 'back in the world' again, and some of it is terrifying, some of it wakens despair in me, but so much of it is lovely and loving, and in those moments when I feel hopelessness stalking me, I recall the hot, halcyon, action-packed, love-filled days from 2 – 8 January 2018, and am strong again.





QUAKERS AT WORK

Friends in Zambia

For many years Friends in Lusaka, Zambia consisted of a solitary Friend. But, over the past few years a small circle of Friends has grown around Ann Phiri, and here they introduce themselves.



Ann Phiri

I came to Zambia from the UK in January 1964. By chance, Esme and Todd Matshikiza were on the same plane from London to Lusaka. We later became close friends. I was 24 and had a job teaching at Chipembi Girls Secondary School, a Methodist Missionary school. I had never taught before! But at University in Bristol in 1958, I had met one of the very first Northern Rhodesians to study in UK, fell in love and decided to spend my life with him. I married David in 1965. I taught in various schools until 1982. Since the year 2,000, I have done a lot of work with orphans. I administered a fund from UK that paid school fees for all the girls at Every Orphan's Hope from 2007 to 2014. I also support the Chainda Children's Centre that provides a daily

lunch for 200 children and 20 grandparents, a pre-school and Grade 1 class for 60 children, a Grade 2 and 3 class of 40 children and a Grade 4 – 7 class for 30 children. It is managed by Dorothy Kayumba – who was one of my first students at Chipembi School in 1964.

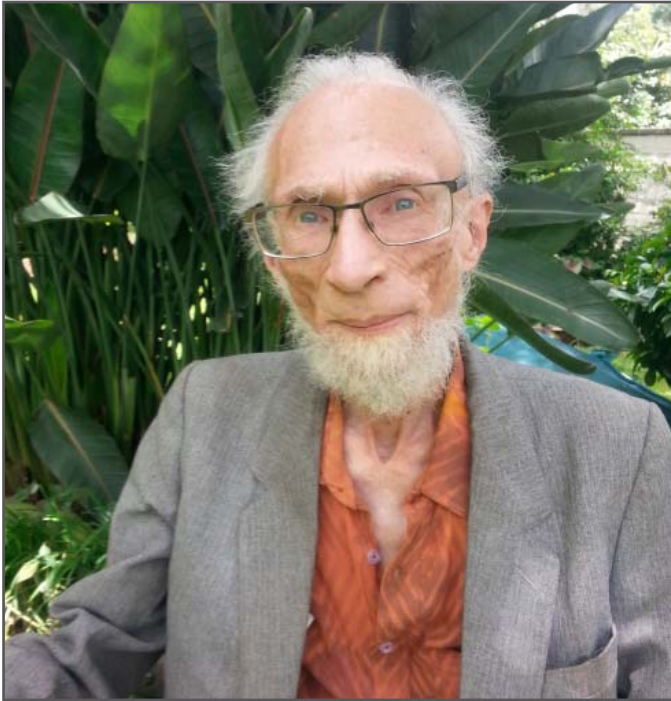
I have become a Quaker /Attender as I need their open-minded, honest approach to religion. I also respect the strong commitment to pacifism, social justice and practical compassion. It gives harmony, meaning and happiness to my life.

Kasoka Kasapatu

Coming to the Quaker Meetings always leaves me feeling at peace and with hope for all humanity. Living in a world where there's a lot of injustice, greed and selfishness, I always enjoy the quiet time and hearing about other people's weekly experiences and determination to do good in spite of all the challenges going on in our world today. Sitting in silence (in Ann's peaceful living room with the birds usually singing in her garden and the soft sounds of the wind chimes in the background :-)) it's a wonderful feeling of knowing God is around us in so many ways. It feels like going to see a great therapist and having a very meaningful and insightful and heartfelt deep conversation. During this time I truly feel God's importance in each one of our lives. I feel I can share with him my worries, my joy, my sadness, my remorse at things I feel I did wrong and speak to him directly, honestly and freely without feeling pressured or forced. For I know only he knows our deepest thoughts and plans. And the best part is the feeling of a strong conviction that he truly listens to all my thoughts without prejudice and speaks to me and assures me that no matter how much the world seems broken at the moment with all the wars and hate and injustice, he still remains truthful and just and is always with each one of us and loves us all with all our flaws. And to me this is the greatest motivation I ever need to grow in my faith as a child of his.

Bernard L. Gadsden

I was admitted into membership of the Society of



Friends in 1960 at the same time as my parents. My membership was with East Grinstead Meeting in England which was part of Dorking and Horsham Monthly Meeting.

I also attended a number of Young Friends activities both in the region and nationally and was for a short time treasurer of Young Friends Central Committee.

When I moved to London in 1969 my membership was transferred to Ratcliff (now Bethnal Green). On getting married we had a civil wedding at Stoke Newington Registry Office followed immediately by a meeting for worship at Toynbee Hall where Bethnal Green Friends met. Bethnal Green is now a part of

the North East Thames Area Meeting.

I moved to Lusaka in October 1971. Lusaka was a part of Zambia Regional Meeting and was covered by Salisbury (now Harare) Monthly Meeting, Given the difficulties between Zambia and Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) my membership remained with Bethnal Green and I am still a member of Bethnal Green and have on rare occasions attended meeting there.

Unfortunately I stopped going to meeting for worship after a few years but stayed in touch. The Clerk was Hans Noak and when he left Zambia Ronald Watts became Clerk and when he left Ferdinand Mutanda became Clerk. Ferdinand made many attempts to draw me back into the fold but without success although I did on rare occasions attend and kept in touch.

I have recently resumed my attendance and Ann Phiri has been very welcoming. I hope that there will be no further lapse in my participation.

Ann adds: Bernard runs an accountancy company and his wife Fay publishes local books. They live an hour's drive from Lusaka so it takes dedication to come to my house on Sunday mornings!

Bridget O'Connor

I have always admired the Quakers, especially their work in the abolition of slavery. Quaker friends I have known have been like-minded in many respects. I was disillusioned about the "church" side of other religions, especially when I visited St Peters in Rome and then saw the poverty of Naples and noticed a



Friar in brown habit collecting money from the poor on a ferryboat.

However, I really only started to develop spiritually when I was introduced to Tibetan Buddhist meditation in Zimbabwe in 1980s. Someone said it is like yoga of the mind and I determined to experience it. I found the practice very helpful, especially in building confidence.

When I came to live in Zambia in 2003 I met Ann Phiri and she told me about her home Quaker meetings. I had not found somewhere to practice group meditation and asked if I could join her Sunday meeting for that purpose. She agreed and since then I have learnt much more about Quakers, especially in Southern Africa. Coincidentally, the person who introduced me to the Tibetan meditation in Zimbabwe is Trish Swift who is also a Quaker.

Ann adds: Bridget works in organic agriculture and sustainable farming. She is qualified to do organic certification but at the moment is more into training and advocacy. She has three adopted daughters from Zimbabwe, now adults. One is working in London and two in Lusaka.

Jessica Clarkson

A native of California, Jessica has also lived in Germany, France, Kenya, and Zambia. She currently runs a nonprofit called USAP Zambia that assists high-achieving students from low-income backgrounds to apply to university scholarship programs around the world, so that they can further their studies before returning home to contribute to the development of



their communities. She graduated from UC Berkeley, where she later worked as program coordinator for a scholarship program aimed at the same demographic of student from all over Africa.

Jessica did not have a Quaker upbringing, but, after college, discovered that the philosophy, values, and practice of group meditation suited her spiritual life. She joined a Quaker meeting in Berkeley one year before moving to Zambia and was very grateful to find the small yet vibrant group of Quakers here to continue this grounding and connecting practice.



Telling it like it is

This is a conversation between Helen Vale (HV) (NMM), vice chairperson of the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) Namibia and Philippe Talavera (PT) who recently premiered the film 'Salute' at the Warehouse Theatre. HV is also an AVP lead facilitator in correctional facilities and was a judge for the Namibian Theatre Awards for six years.

HV: First of all, I would like to congratulate you as the director, but also the cast and crew, for making this powerful film 'Salute', showing life in Correctional Facilities in Namibia. I attended the premiere recently with two friends. We discussed it for an hour after the screening. It must have taken you lots of courage and determination to make.

PT: Thank you

HV: I have also done some training in correctional facilities, in particular in Rundu. I am therefore really interested in your depiction of prison life in Namibia. Where did the idea of 'Salute' come from?

PT: We had been approached by the Ministry of Safety and Security to help with their HIV project. They needed to find ways to encourage inmates to go for an HIV test regularly and to find out if some inmates were indeed getting infected while incarcerated. We suggested that we organise one-week Arts workshops with inmates every three months. We worked from Monday to Friday using drama, role plays, dances and songs, talking about HIV and other related issues. We gained the trust of inmates. We spent a total of 48 weeks (or 240 days) in twelve of Namibia's thirteen facilities working with inmates. As inmates shared their stories and experiences with us, we realised those stories had to be told. We therefore started to work on 'Salute' as a way of doing this.

HV: How did you then write the script?

PT: 'Salute' was inspired by some of the stories shared during the Art Workshops. However, the script was developed at the Windhoek Correctional Facility. Four of the inmates who took part in the workshops were invited to participate in the project. Through role plays, they developed the story and characters. They spoke the slang they use when neither officers nor visitors are around. I don't speak Afrikaans so I haven't tampered with their language. Back in the office, I would have the role plays transcribed by someone and translated. Then I would then put the role plays together, have questions and identify gaps. I would come back to the facility and workshop some of the sections again with inmates.

HV: In 'Salute' the main character, Carlito/ Kado, beautifully played by Adriano Visagie, gets lured into the General's group. He is given food and toiletries and is later forced to have sex with the General. However, in times, he develops a more romantic relationship with the General. Is that really realistic?

PT: Intimate relationships in facilities can be one-off, but can also evolve as longer time relationships. As with any other intimate relationships, feelings evolve. We've all heard in the newspapers of the case where an inmate murdered another one because of jealousy. Inmates who stay long together can then even 'marry'. In the case of Kado and the General, they stay together for over three years. What started as intimidation evolved. Kado found protection in the relationship. For me, it is natural that their feelings should develop into affection. Also to be honest I know homosexuality and sodomy are still taboo in Namibia. I didn't want to further stigmatise the gay relationship. I wanted to show that sometimes you may find love in the weirdest place. There is something actually beautiful about their relationship in the end.

HV: In my work with AVP at the Rundu Correctional Facility, we talked a lot about the many obstacles to reintegration into society. In 'Salute' that doesn't come across, as Carlito is very fortunate to come out to a place to stay, his girlfriend and even seems to find a job. Why did you make that choice?

PT: We couldn't address everything in the film. Yes leaving the correctional facility and finding one position within society is difficult. Many ex-inmates struggled because they can't find jobs, their families reject them, etc. Those are important topics but we couldn't address them in 'Salute'. We wanted to stay focused on our story.

HV: Like you I don't speak Afrikaans, which is an obstacle to understand the dynamic between inmates. Is the language used in the film really the one used in correctional facilities in Namibia?

PT: Yes it is. As I said it was role-played by inmates. It was interesting because when we started the role plays, most of the scenes were supposed to happen in the cell after lock up time. An officer was always present with us, for our safety and to follow the rules of the facility. At one stage an inmate came to me and said 'you know, we actually don't really talk like that'. I asked him what he meant and he said that in my presence, and in the presence of the officer, they dared not using swear words. But when alone in the cell and when talking with members of their own gangs, they would use a different language. I told them that that was the language I was interested in – the one happening behind closed doors. We asked for authorisation to allow them to speak their real way. So yes, I think the language used is authentic.

HV: The fact that you portray the gang culture so vividly in 'Salute' has led to some criticism of the film. In Rundu I didn't come across the number gangs at all. Do you think the gangs are more prevalent in some facilities rather than others?

PT: The number 26, 27 and 28 originated from South Africa long before independence. Since Namibia was ruled by SA at the time, it is logical that it spread here too. It has, however, evolved differently. While gang culture is still prominent in SA, it is much weaker in Namibia. But it does exist. We have strong evidence of the number gangs in Windhoek, Hardap and Walvis Bay, with some elements of it in Oluno and other facilities too. Some years ago, there was an effort made by the Ministry to try and break down the gangs. It was quite effective. Nowadays, you still find the number system in some places, but it is more secretive. You also find other gangs, whether based on ethnic groups or on similar interests. An inmate doesn't want to live in isolation, and being on your own in a facility can be dangerous. So being part of a gang or a group often offers the inmate protection and a sense of belonging.

HV: Is this why some critics of the film think it is a form of copying or plagiarism from South African films and have criticized 'Salute' rather harshly?

PT: I don't mind film critics commenting negatively on directing or acting: one can always learn from critics. But I find criticism about the content actually disturbing. As I mentioned, we spent 48 weeks in correctional facilities. I don't think you could do more background research for the film than that. The number system was born in SA: so finding similarities is logical. However, I can promise you that this is a Namibian story. You might find it disturbing, but it is the truth. I know of films such as 'Four Corners' and 'Noem my Skollie' but I have never watched them. I actually didn't want to be influenced by any work from SA. I wanted the story to be true to the testimonies inmates were brave enough to share with us. Also, we had ex-inmates during rehearsals to guide the actors and both inmates and officers on set to make sure that what we were portraying was correct, whether from a language point of view or a procedural point of view. Officers, for example, guided us on the scene where they search the cell. Inmates guided us with many of the other scenes.

HV: The situation depicted in 'Salute' is rather negative and we don't see scenes about other aspects of life in correctional facilities, such as

opportunities for inmates to have education (e.g. NAMCOL studies), attend religious services or attend workshops. Why didn't you portray those situations too?

PT: Again we couldn't show everything. Some facilities indeed offer education, some have workshops inmates can attend, some offer spiritual guidance. But the truth is most inmates spend a lot of time doing nothing. In Windhoek inmates are often locked up at 15h30 and get out the next morning at 07h00. I was particularly interested in the time they spend alone — a long time — over 15 hours. That's when things happen.

HV: Finally, to me the issue of HIV/AIDS came up almost as an afterthought at the end of the film. Yet it is a major issue. Don't you think it could have been investigated more in depth?

PT: I wanted HIV to be an afterthought. In Namibia we have a culture of silence. We don't want to talk about sodomy. We don't want to admit some inmates can have sex. We don't want to talk about condoms in jail. Some inmates may be scared to go for an HIV test and none of them will ever admit to their girlfriends or wives they had sex with a man while in jail. So this is not discussed, until it is too late and the partner finds out. So if you felt it was an afterthought I am happy, because that was the intention. If Kado and the General had been able to talk about it, if there were condoms, if there was not so much stigmatisation against gay sex and Carlito could have talked to his girlfriend about what really happened in jail, they would have been able to protect themselves and the story would not have been what it is.

HV: So what's next for 'Salute'?

PT: We are still planning some screenings in Windhoek and other towns, so follow us on Facebook to find out more. We want to create a movement and encourage people to think about the issue and how we can bring about change. Yes, inmates are in correctional facilities for a reason: they have committed a crime. But they are first and foremost human beings and will eventually, sooner or later, get out. So how can we manage their time at the facility in a better way, so that they come out of them as better people, not as people who have been further broken down or worse, who have been infected with HIV?

HV: Thank you very much, Philippe.

A dangerous animal

Lungile Malotsha, Bulawayo Monthly Meeting



I come from the rural part of Matebeleland North about 200km from Bulawayo. I grew up under the Free Presbyterian Church, one of the churches that have built schools and hospitals in Zimbabwe. I vividly remember one day at the age of eight years while attending Sunday school, a doctor at the nearest hospital who was also our Sunday school teacher, requested that we all memorize a verse from the Bible. The verse according to her would protect us if ever we came across a dangerous animal. Our teacher was from Scotland and was not yet well acquainted with our area so we re-assured her that there have never been any reports of dangerous animals in our area. She just smiled and said you might come across it one day, so just memorize a verse. After perusing some pages I finally chose Psalm 23v4, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil”. I really never came upon the dangerous animal my teacher spoke of, that is until I was thirty-six years old.

It was on the afternoon of 11 January 2018. I was walking home to Hlekweni on my way from town. I had with me a bag with some school uniforms that I had just finished sewing and was to deliver them the next day. The road was empty —not even a single soul that day. I had walked a kilometer from the main road (Plumtree Road) and had another two km to go. I don’t know whether it was the calm and stillness of the surrounding forest but I found my mind drifting from my surroundings and thinking back at the wonderful experiences I had enjoyed at

the 2018 yearly meeting in SA. Little did I know that it was the calm before the storm; a very dangerous animal had been watching me, waiting till I was in range, and was hiding in the trees ready to pounce. He came out of the bushes above the garbage pit and headed straight to where I was, I turned to look behind me but there was nothing just clear road and quiet forest. The silence was chilling. Even the birds were mute all I could hear was my rapidly beating heart as I realized there wasn’t a single sign of help coming.

He ordered me to put everything on the ground including my phones and all the money I had. I quietly obeyed. He retrieved the stuff from the ground and then swiftly disappeared into the bushes. I tried to scream my mouth just opened but no sound came out. I thought of running and I found that I couldn’t move. It was as if my shoes had turned into iron. A few minutes passed just as I was regaining a little composure and was starting to move. The man came back! The look in his eyes had changed; it was no longer greed but now his eyes were full of lust. His gaze was no longer focused on my face but I could clearly see he was scanning my body. This time he took out a knife and waved it in a threatening manner. I stopped moving, knelt down in front of him and begged him not to harm me. When he saw how terrified I was he started to undress me and at this point it was apparent to me exactly what his intentions were. I felt powerless all I could do was to appeal to reason and beg him not to rape me. My protesting angered him he announced with an angry and annoyed tone that he was going to kill me, as he said this he lifted the knife over my head poised to strike. I still remember those eyes, no remorse, no regret, no empathy, as if he had lost his humanity. It was as though I was staring straight into the eyes of an animal. It was at this point that my mind flashed back to when I was eight and I knew right then that my teacher was right — there are dangerous animals in the world. I closed my eyes as if surrendering to my fate. It’s hard to explain what followed next. As I knelt there on the dust road, eyes closed, tears slowly flowing down my cheeks and death hovering inches over my head, I remembered my verse and with a shaky weepy voice I began to recite the

words out loud. My heart skipped a beat as I heard a metallic thud on the ground. Many thoughts raced through my mind but when I opened my eyes I saw that somehow the knife had slipped from his grip. The look in his eyes had changed again. This time he looked nervous and ashamed. I could see his hand shaking a little as he reached down to pick up his knife. He immediately left without saying a word.

I praised God and was grateful for my Sunday school teacher for teaching me that verse. I lost all my stuff including the clothes I was wearing because

he ripped them off with his knife in his haste to rape me. But no harm came to me; he left without raping me or causing me any injury, so I'm grateful that although I lost some stuff my life and my dignity were spared.

Friends in this life we will at some time encounter a variety of dangerous animals, be it war, disease or other people who have chosen to put aside their humanity. Let us trust and surrender our lives to God for He is indeed a good shepherd and in times of trouble He is closer to us.

John Tengo Jabavu, Quaker (1859–1921)

Adrienne Whisson, Eastern Cape Quakers

John Tengo Jabavu was introduced to Quakers by Joshua and Isabella Rowntree, and while in Britain with WP Schreiner attended Westminster Meeting for Worship. In 1912 he joined The Society of Friends. He was an intelligent and sensitive man of his time, and of great integrity, but he was seen as irrelevant to dominant white political interests. Two of his sons were also prominent in South African affairs, and the author and journalist Noni Jabavu was a granddaughter. (p. 348 *Hedge of Wild Almonds, South Africa, the 'Pro-Boers' and the Quaker Conscience*, 1989. James Currey Ltd, London.)

But, who was he?

Jabavu's parents were both Mfengu converts to Christianity. He was educated by Wesleyan Methodists at the Healdtown Missionary Institution, where he qualified as a teacher. He was sent to teach in Somerset East in 1875. While teaching he also worked in a newspaper print shop. His interest in journalism developed and he began to publish letters and articles in Cape Town newspapers.

In 1881 he accepted the position as editor of the Lovedale Mission Institute newspaper, *Isigidimi sama Xhosa* ('Messenger of the Xhosa'). He began to have political differences with his employers and in 1881 left Lovedale to start his own newspaper, *Imvo Zabantsundu* ('The View of the Black people'). The aim of *Imvo* was, according to Jabavu, to give "...untrammelled expression to African views and to and to bring about closer bonds between Africans and between Africans and Whites." *Imvo* soon became the mouthpiece for Xhosa opinion.



Jabavu used his newspaper to influence those Blacks who had the vote in the Cape parliamentary elections to support the liberal White faction in parliament. In 1890 the liberals came to power under the leadership of CJ Rhodes. Jabavu shifted his support from the liberals to the Afrikaner Bond, a moderate party under the leadership of JH

Hofmeyer. To many Blacks this was an unwise move as they saw the Bond as the chief stumbling block in the way of getting more Black rights. One of the results of this was the creation of an opposition paper *Izwi Labantu* ('Voice of the People') which opposed Jabavu. Neither White party lived up to their promises of being sympathetic to Black rights.

Jabavu lost credibility because of his contacts with Whites. *Imvo* was closed down briefly by the government in the period 1901-1902, during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), which caused the paper to lose so much financially that it was never able to fully recover.

When the South African Native Congress (later the ANC) was formed, Jabavu refused to join because it was an all-Black political organisation. He founded the South African Races Congress a few months

later, but it never gained much support.

In 1909 Jabavu was a member of a delegation that went to London to protest against the draft constitution that was prepared for the proposed Union Government because it failed to safeguard the Black franchise. His support for the 1913 Native Land Act (which was introduced by one of Jabavu's White friends) resulted in his defeat in an election for a seat into the Cape Provincial Council.

Jabavu devoted the remainder of his life to trying to improve Black education. He played an important role in the founding of what was eventually called the University of Fort Hare.

(From David R Owen, *Ubukhosi Neenkokeli – Dictionary of Eastern Cape Black Leaders*, published by the Albany Museum, 1994.)

Remembering Gudrun Weeks

Helen Vale, Quaker Community in Namibia

Empathetic, serene, open-hearted, adventurous and musical – just a few of the words to describe our dear Friend Gudrun Weeks, whom I had the privilege to know over 30 years. She and Sheldon moved back to USA (Brattleborough, Vermont) with Sheldon some time ago to be nearer family and grandchildren after 20 years or more in Gaborone, Botswana. She and Sheldon were stalwarts of the Botswana Meeting along with Shelagh Willett. We were privileged to have Gudrun give the Richard Gush Lecture at Southern Africa Yearly Meeting a few years ago and the wonderful and unusual aspect was that two thirds was music – Gudrun sharing with us her love of music by playing her favourite pieces on the violin. We will miss you deeply and we send our love and support to Sheldon.



Hard won territory

Rory Short, Johannesburg Monthly Meeting

What is the meaning of hard-won? According to the Oxford English dictionary it is: *Having taken a great deal of effort to win or acquire.*

The important issue here for me is where, in myself, does the effort come from? If it involved forcing things, which is sadly my default mode, then the territory is not really won, because it requires unremitting effort to hold it.

On the other hand, if the effort was expended in going with the flow of things then the winning will be a natural outcome of all the forces at play in the situation. It will have happened because I worked in cooperation with the forces rather than against some and with others.

How does one achieve this, this hard won territory, because it is not something which one can just decide to do and it's done. The reality is that there are myriads of factors operating in any situation that requires a decision, and it is therefore impossible in our everyday consciousness to take them all into account, which would be necessary if one was to go with the flow.

What Cynthia Bourgeault has to say in her book *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening* has relevance to resolving this problem. In her book she explains that we humans possess three levels of awareness. The outermost level is where we automatically spend most of our waking hours. We could categorise it as our 'every day consciousness'. It is where we think about how to deal with the exigencies of our daily lives and make decisions about them. It is where we could try to make a decision that goes with the flow but because of the reality, explained above, we would not succeed in this wish.

So we have a problem. How is this problem to be resolved? Is there a resolution to it? Yes, there is. We need to draw on the abiding source of all information in the Universe, usually referred to as God, before we make the decision. Is this possible? Yes, it is but we have to operate from another level of consciousness.

This is not possible whilst we are operating within the realm of 'everyday consciousness'. Everyday

consciousness is filled with incessant noise. That is if we categorise our thoughts as noise and the untutored mind is unaware of any other possible levels of awareness besides this noisy one.

Now awareness is an inherent attribute of the mind. It is beyond thinking and therefore cannot be conjured up by thinking about it. We, unfortunately, like Descarte, think we only exist when our minds are filled with thoughts. Well that is not the case. If we stop to think about it we realise that we do not cease to exist when there are no thoughts in our minds. We could think of this condition of no thoughts in the mind as one of silence in the mind because the noise of thoughts has ceased.

For this silence in the mind to exist it is helpful if there is silence in the outer world. Noise in the outer world automatically generates thoughts, i.e. noise, in the mind. The absence of outer noise does not, however, automatically produce the condition of no thoughts in the mind. As we all know thoughts can and do happen independent of any outward event.

The level of awareness that arises from there being no thoughts in the mind is what Cynthia terms, spiritual awareness. It is a level of awareness where we are open to receiving thoughts from the source of all the information in the Universe, namely God. The incessant chatter of our thoughts needs to cease before this level of awareness can arise. This condition cannot be achieved by our own command, which is our natural inclination. We are then operating from a thought. This would mean that we are operating within the level of 'everyday consciousness' awareness. How do we attain a mind bereft of thoughts? A person knocked unconscious, or under a general anaesthetic, is bereft of thoughts but that is not the kind of condition that we want to attain. We want to be fully awake, aware and at the same time without any thoughts generated by ourselves.

Quakers have found that by holding silence within a community where the members of that community share the intention of being fully open to receiving communication from the All. The All is known by

various names, but conventionally, in Christian circles, it is known as God. Quaker experience over the centuries has been that this shared intention helps greatly to quieten the noise in individual participants' heads thus creating the conditions which enable individual participants to receive messages from God. Sometimes these messages are only for the individual concerned, then the individual should keep it to themselves. At other times the message is intended for one or more of the other participants in the Meeting. The individual then feels an inner compulsion to share the message with others. This is known as ministry because the source of the inner compulsion is understood to be the All, i.e. God. Not surprisingly Quakers call such communal, silent, gatherings 'Meetings for Worship'.

All that Quakers are doing in their Meetings for Worship is putting into weekly practice a verse, in the gospel of Matthew, where Jesus says, 'For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them'. King James version, Mt.18v20.

Another method for creating the conditions for thoughtless awareness is called Centering Prayer or CP. CP is a fail-safe method for individuals to help themselves to become thoughtlessly aware. What distinguishes CP from conventional prayer is succinctly captured by what Thomas Keating, the monk who developed CP, has to say about it, "CP is done with intention not with attention".

In its intention CP is exactly the same as the intention at the heart of a Quaker MfW. The intention is to be open to communication from the All, or God. Except

that CP does not rely for its effectiveness on the collective participation of like-minded individuals. CP can be practiced, to good effect, alone. Quaker MfW embodies what Jesus taught when he said, 'When two or three are gathered in my name then I am there'. CP embodies another aspect of Christ's life not so much in his verbal teaching but in that he gave himself wholly to the will of the All, or of God, in allowing himself to be crucified. His self-giving is captured in the phrase, 'Not my will but thine be done', uttered in the garden of Gethsemane the night before his crucifixion.

In CP this self-sacrifice for God is mimicked every time the CP practitioner realises that their minds have wandered into thought and they then voluntarily let go of the thought and return their minds to their self-chosen sacred word and its intention. Sacred because the word reflects their intention to be totally open to the All, or God. Thomas Keating has a lovely anecdote about returning the mind to God. A nun, a participant in one of his early workshops for would be CP practitioners, said, in desperation after a CP practice session, 'Father throughout this session my mind was filled with nothing but a thousand and one thoughts'. Thomas quipped, 'How wonderful, a thousand and one opportunities to return to God'.

And it is this reality that makes CP a fail-safe method for enabling the mind to become clear of thoughts because over time, with consistent practice, the habit of letting go, the letting go muscle in the brain so to speak, is inexorably strengthened and the opportunity for receiving communication from the All, or God, is thereby established.

Do Quakers believe in God?

Helen Holleman, Eastern Cape Quakers

"The Quakers are right. We don't need God." So wrote Simon Jenkins in the online version of *The Guardian* (4 May 2018), and set the cat among the pigeons. Certainly, in Britain, more Quakers are voicing their discomfort with the word 'God', and probably with the concept. Many of them prefer to call themselves atheists, agnostics, or 'nones' – not to be confused with 'nuns'!

This drift to secularism is not specific to Quakers, nor is it particularly new; it is a trend common around the world. Pope Francis himself suggested

that it was better to be an atheist than a hypocritical Roman Catholic (*Washington Post*, February 2017), and in 2015, Phil Zuckerman wrote in *Psychology Today*:

The ranks of the non-religious have grown by 19 million since 2007; there are now approximately 56 million Americans who do not identify with any religion, and these so-called 'nones' are now more numerous than Catholics or mainline Protestants, making 'non-religious' the second largest 'religious' group in America, behind only

evangelical Protestantism.

For every American who was raised without religion but has since joined a religious group as an adult, four Americans who were raised with religion have dropped out as adults; thus, secularism is clearly winning the joining/leaving game by a ratio of 4 to 1.

Non-religious Americans are more likely than ever to describe themselves in specifically non-theistic terms; one third now openly self-identifies as atheist or agnostic.

According to Zuckerman, this is good news for the following reasons:

- Reason, logic and evidence-based empiricism are ousting creeds and doctrines that are manifestly untrue. Gone are heaven, hell, purgatory, virgin births, resurrections, along with talking snakes and tongues of fire.
- Religion has divided people into *them* vs *us*; forbidding marriage across religious divides, keeping children apart from each other, and entrenching differences rather than seeking commonalities.
- Too often, religion has entrenched attitudes against gays, women, and people of other races.

Quakerism can provide good responses to all those points. As an experiential faith rather than a doctrinal one, Quakers were urged to answer Fox's question: *What say you?* The inner journey Friends take in response to that question almost compels silence in the face of the resulting experience – life-changing and life-affirming, but beyond words because beyond human reasoning.

As for talking snakes, heaven, hell and all the other victims of evidence-based empiricism ... so much Biblical imagery is just that: images that point us to a greater understanding; not necessarily to be taken as literal expressions of something that 'really' happened in the past and is now no longer – or to be looked for in exactly the same way. To mistake the figurative for the literal, is to lose the kind of truth that poetry reveals; to read the Bible (or the Qu'ran or the Talmud and Torah) with a 'non-literal' head and heart, is to open doors to fresh insights and new directions on the spiritual journey.

Secondly, the Quaker testimony to equality has enabled Friends to cross barriers of colour, homosexuality, feminism, as they follow Fox's injunction to *Walk cheerfully over the earth seeking that of God in everyone*.

There's that word again: God! The search for that of 'God in everyone' (whatever that may mean to each of us) then presents a fresh challenge: find that 'connectedness' in yourself in order to recognise it in others. It's not a goal; it's a life-time (ad)venture. "The journey is the mission", to quote the Monkey-God, Hanuman, in the marvellous tale of spiritual adventure, *Journey to the West*.

If religion is on the wane, the same cannot be said of spirituality. There is a hunger for more than what doctrinal religion can offer; a real thirst and search for what is 'beyond', and giving it names may or may not help the seeker. The danger, as Karen Armstrong points out in *A History of God*, is that the name itself, the concept, or the accretion of belief around the name becomes the focus of worship, and so an act of idolatry.

A Hindu sage was once asked by a Christian missionary why Hindus believe in so many gods. He replied: "Tell me, sir, when you see a signpost on a road, do you sit down at the foot of the sign and say to yourself 'I have arrived'? Of course not! You continue down the road in the direction that the signpost indicates! We do not sit down in front of the gods and say, 'We have arrived'. Our gods point us in the direction of the great un-nameable, that which is beyond mere human understanding, and we continue our journey towards that."

It's very difficult to say what Quakers 'believe in' or whether we 'need God' or not. Language traps us in all kinds of difficulties, but another Quaker injunction can get us out of that difficulty, I believe: *Let your lives speak*. What we do speaks louder than what we say.

Although I personally find the word 'God' more of a stumbling block than a springboard, to call into question the experience other Friends may have had as they struggle to voice their insights simply because I may not like the word 'God', seems to me to be unkind at best, and arrogant at worst. I think we can only begin to glimpse the great unknown by looking at all the wonderful pieces of mosaic people have experienced through the ages, learning from them, and building them into our own experience. And then the question is: After all, what's in a name?

There's a lovely ending to many yoga practices: with our hands in a prayer position on our foreheads above our eyes, we say to each other, "The divine in me sees the divine in you. Namaste". Let us never stop seeking.

The Quakers are right. We don't need God

Simon Jenkins (From The Guardian, Opinion, 7 May 2018)

The Quakers are clearly onto something. At their annual get-together this weekend [at the meeting house at Carperby, Wensleydale, UK] they are reportedly thinking of dropping the word God from their “guidance to meetings.” The reason, said one of them. Is because the term “makes some Quakers feel uncomfortable.” Atheists, according to a Birmingham University academic, comprise a rising 14% of professed Quakers, which at full 43% felt “unable to profess a belief in God.” They come to meeting for fellowship, rather than for higher guidance. The meeting will also consider transgenderism, same-sex marriage,

climate change and social media.’ Religion is a tiring business.

I am not a Quaker or religious, but I have been to Quaker meetings, usually marriages or funerals, and found them deeply moving. The absence of ritual, the emphasis on silence and thought and the witness of “friends” seem starkly modernist. Meeting houses can be beautiful spaces. The loveliest I know dates from 1700 and is lost deep in the woods near Meiford, Powes. It is a place of the purest serenity, miles away from any road and with only birdsong to blend in with inner reflection.

The neurophysics of consciousness

Rory Short, Johannesburg Monthly Meeting

Why am I writing under this title ‘The neurophysics of consciousness’? It is because I want to share with you something of what I gleaned — nay gained — over last weekend. The workshop was on Centering Prayer conducted by Cynthia Bourgeault, a priest in the American Episcopalian tradition. Cynthia has been a CP practitioner and promoter for approximately 30 years now. She is a deep thinker and has pondered CP and why and how it works to spiritually mature its practitioners. It was clearly the distillation of her own experience that she was trying to share with us. That this was so was revealed in a question and answer session at the end of the last day of the workshop. One of the participants asked her to tell us a bit more about herself and she answered quite simply that the whole three-day workshop was about her personal experience with and understanding of CP.

But first I need to define what I mean by the word *neurophysics*. People might know of the word *neuromechanics*:

Neuromechanics is a field of study that combines concepts from biomechanics and neurophysiology to study human movement.

But here I want to consider not bodily movement but changes in consciousness rooted in the nervous system, hence neurophysics. Neuromechanics examines the combined roles of the skeletal, muscular, and nervous systems and how they interact to produce the motion required to complete motor tasks, whereas I want to consider changes in the nervous system that effect how we see/interpret life in the world.

We are conscious beings. This state, it would seem, arises because of the huge number of neurons that comprise our brains. We are only one of many life forms with nervous systems of course. So why did creatures evolve with nerves in the first place and why with differing arrangements of the nerves, some arrangements being more complex than others?

Nerves evolved to enable life forms to negotiate through the world more successfully than those life forms without nerves. Success being defined by survival long enough to reproduce. Following the evolutionary thread clearly, more complex arrangements of nerves evolved because these organisms were more successful than those with less complex arrangements. Complex arrangements of

nerves evolved through specialisations of functions, e.g. the grouping of nerves for visual system and the auditory system etc., etc. Measured by our sheer numbers humans would appear to be the most successful life form to date.

We have large brains for creatures of our physical size. The numbers of neurons in a brain are estimates, derived by multiplying the density of neurons in a particular brain by the average volume of that brain. The human brain contains some 86 billion neurons and roughly 16 billion of these are in the cerebral cortex, the thinking part of the brain. Each individual neuron can form thousands of links, or synapses, with other neurons, giving rise to trillions of synapses in a typical human brain. Functionally related neurons connect to each other to form neural networks, also known as neural nets or assemblies. These links are dynamic, having the capacity to develop throughout our lives: not only can the brain form new connection, but can also develop (grow) new neurons throughout our lives, depending on how much we exercise our brains. It is also interesting to note that all this physical neural activity happens outside of our conscious awareness because, as we know, 'a knife cannot cut itself'.

It seems the greater the number of neurons that a particular species has the more it edges towards consciousness, but these neurons need to be in the cerebral cortex, particularly because this is the part of the brain devoted to thinking, which requires consciousness. The other part of the brain, the cerebellum, is, in evolutionary terms, the more primitive part and is responsible for movement and other bodily functions that can and do happen 'outside' of consciousness.

Let us briefly consider here the neuron counts of some other creatures from the smallest to the biggest.

An earthworm has a total of 302 neurons interconnected by between 5,000-7,000 synapses. These neurons are mainly devoted to movement consequently an earth worm's thinking capabilities are far, far less than those of humans, and they are not conscious.

The female dolphin is estimated to have 19 billion neurons in the cortex. The male dolphin has 23 billion. Thus dolphins have more neo-cortical neurons than any mammal studied so far, including humans, and some people interested in and knowledgeable about dolphins argue that dolphins are capable of conscious behaviour.

The African elephant on the other hand has a brain which is about three times larger than the human brain. It is estimated to contain 257 billion neurons, about three times more than the average human brain. However, 97.5% of the neurons in the elephant's brain (251 billion) are found in the cerebellum. On reading *The Elephant Whisperer*, by Lawrence Anthony, and based on the happenings reported in it, it does not seem far-fetched to me to think that elephants have a level of conscious awareness.

Conscious thus it would seem is not unique to humans, it is a result of evolution. Thus a natural question is, can our consciousness itself evolve, is it part of the broad evolutionary stream, or, is our everyday consciousness at the end point for this particular branch of evolution?

What do I mean by everyday consciousness?

Thousands of years before the birth of Charles Darwin humans labeled a phenomenon, of which they were interiorly aware, or conscious of, as emanating from another realm. They labeled the realm as that, of the Gods, or in more modern language, the spiritual realm.

That we labeled this interior experience in this way, as something separate from ourselves, is not surprising. It was as a consequence of our level of consciousness at that time, and that level is still where we are largely at the present time. What is the level of consciousness of our everyday consciousness? It is a bi-polar or subject/object level of consciousness. We automatically interpret what we experience as something separate from and wholly apart from ourselves.

If we think about it this level of consciousness is a natural first step in the development of a successful 'conscious organism'. For its physical survival it must be able to distinguish self from not-self. So the natural mental default mode for interpreting its experience has to be subject/object. Consequently we naturally feel mentally comfortable when we experience life in this subject/object way even if the experience we are dealing with is purely an interior one which cannot be verified by any of the five senses, evolved for sensing 'the other' outside of ourselves, like sound, sight, touch, taste and smell.

This level of consciousness feels right. It is naturally determined by the mental frame that we automatically use to interpret our everyday experiences. What if we stopped automatically applying this mental frame to our experience? What

then? Our experiences would continue because we are alive but we would no longer automatically interpret them through a subject/object frame. We would enter the realm of what is nowadays termed non-dual experience. We would be open to experiencing everything including ourselves and the experience itself as unquestionably part of the whole.

We cannot achieve this holistic way of experiencing by mental sleights of hand, so to speak, because all our mental activities are automatically shaped by our in-built subject/object frame. But clearly it is possible for humans to achieve this holistic way of experiencing because the founders of three great spiritual traditions, the Buddha, Jesus, and the

Prophet, all achieved it and their traditions, at base, all teach how the individual can achieve it. But none of the traditions teach a path to an instant sainthood or enlightenment. This is for a very good physical reason, our nervous systems need time to evolve so that they can naturally support a holistic frame of perception.

This is where Centering Prayer enters the picture. CP is a spiritual practice specifically designed to prepare the nervous system for holistic experiencing. My experience of Cynthia during the workshop anchored her in my mind as a living example of CP's efficacy in bringing about, the changes in the nervous system, necessary to support holistic, or non-dual, perception.

Wicked problems

Helen Holleman, Eastern Cape Quakers

No – not problems of wickedness! But problems that seem impossible to solve – and we seem to have them aplenty: education, land distribution, service delivery, gender equality, poverty, jobs, the environment, prison reform, health services ... the list goes on and on. We've had think-tanks, uncountable meetings, brainstorming, the best brains available trying to tackle these issues – and we still seem to be in the same place. These are indeed 'wicked problems'.

What does this mean, though?

As long ago as 1973, researchers Horst Rittel and Melvin M Webber used the term to describe problems that shared ten characteristics:

1. They elude clear definition: poverty in Grahamstown is very different from poverty in inner city New York – there's no one-size-fits-all explanation – so there's no one-size-fits-all solution. Time, size, and place make a difference; they matter.
2. There's no clear idea when you've reached a solution, or when you've been successful, because wicked problems blend into each other.
3. Solutions to wicked problems can only be good or bad, not true or false.
4. There's no convincing way to test the solutions: a small intervention may make a profound difference, and vice versa. You just have to go ahead and do it!

5. What 'solutions' there are seem to be 'one-shot' rather than tried and tested; those who tackle wicked problems have to make things up as they go along.
6. There are no criteria by which we can be sure that we've identified all the solutions.
7. Every wicked problem is unique, and we can't use science to fix them because humans invented wicked problems, and science exists to understand natural phenomena.
8. Any wicked problem could be the symptom of another wicked problem – changes in education may make a difference to family relationships, or to nutrition, for example.
9. There's always more than one explanation for what causes a wicked problem, and that view depends largely on the individual describing the problem.
10. People trying to address a wicked problem must be responsible for their actions.

'Fixing' a wicked problem is a little like undoing a knot in your knitting wool after the kitten has been playing with it for half the morning. It requires unlimited patience, to start with. Then you've really got to look at it carefully to trace the thread, and gently pull at it – only to find that it creates a knot somewhere else! When you finally give up in disgust, and hand the knotty problem on to your mother, why is that she manages to undo it eventually? Different



way of looking at the knot, perhaps? Your efforts contributed to making the 'solution' possible? She had more patience? There's no way of testing.

So, what does this have to say to us as Quakers?

First, if we're going to tackle a wicked problem (and it seems to be something that Quakers do a lot of), we need to listen really, really carefully to everyone involved in the problem; get as many viewpoints as possible, and don't worry about contradictions – accept them, and hold them in tension because they are all part of the 'face' of the problem. Wicked problems don't seem to be amenable to 'either/or' solutions; they often require a 'both/and' approach.

We really need to trust the people we're working

with in solving a wicked problem. There's no space for ego here – we're all bungling around in the dark trying to avoid doing damage. The opening lines of the Hippocratic Oath come to mind: First, do no harm. But, in the case of a wicked problem, even that is hard to assess. Just hang on to the idea that you're expected to be responsible for your actions.

Bear in mind that the problem will never be 'solved'; the best we can aim for is to make the situation better, then look at the new 'face' of the problem after our intervention (because it will have changed!) and carry on trying. The 'carry on' part may well mean changing your tactics, and even handing the problem on to someone else. It's a process – forever.

Above all, don't just stand and look at the problem. As with that tangled ball of wool, it's not going to fix itself, and letting the kitten carry on playing with it isn't going to help, either. Do something! But what? How do I know that I won't make the situation worse?

Listen for guidance. Use the Light to see the problem as clearly as possible – and in the company with others, not alone. And as you act, be guided by George Fox's injunction to 'walk cheerfully over the earth, seeking that of God in everyone – and everything.' Even in wicked problems.

MATTERS OF THE SPIRIT

On spiritual practice

Rory Short, Johannesburg Monthly Meeting

We humans are not the centre of the Universe. We are just part of a much greater whole, which we call the Universe, a whole that has form and order not determined by us. Thus the logical thing for us to do in our efforts to ensure our continued existence within the Universe is to only act in ways that are in tune with surviving and thriving within this greater whole. The reality is however that the greater whole is beyond our present intellectual comprehension so how are we to remain in tune with it? This seems like an impossible task.

In trying to resolve this problem we need to accept that the Universe is subject to constant change. The Buddha recognised this and termed it

impermanence. Now impermanence is just change, it has no apparent direction. After the passing of the Buddha it needed the passage of a further two and a half thousand years before a collective scientific mindset opened the way for Charles Darwin to put forward the idea of evolution as a researchable scientific topic. Evolution doesn't have to replace impermanence in our conceptual armory however as evolution without impermanence is impossible.

Evolution, once accepted as a scientifically proven fact, enables us to sense a direction in what looks like directionless impermanence. One of evolution's directions, at least as far as we humans are concerned, would seem to be towards

- (a) greater and greater complexity, particularly in life forms, and
- (b) increased levels of consciousness.

The solution to our current intellectual incapacity as a species lies with (b). Our species has reached a level of consciousness that opens up the possibility of individually and collectively communicating with the consciousness that permeates the greater whole, the Universe.

Like Jesus Christ, the Prophet, the Buddha, and others before and subsequent to them, George Fox discovered for himself the reality of this possibility. Now it takes two to tango and George Fox called the other party in his experience, of direct inner communication with the 'all-pervasive consciousness', the 'Light'. His sharing, with his contemporaries, of the conditions conducive to this experience, led to the growth of a community of fellow experiencers of the Light. They were initially known as 'Publishers of the Truth' and then as Quakers. The conducive conditions are actually quite simple. They are those created by the willing coming together of individual consciousnesses in a shared expectation of communion with the Light. The expectation being manifested in a mutually agreed silence. Quakers call such silent meetings, Meetings for Worship [MfW].

MfW although a shared occasion nevertheless remains an individual experience. MfWfB, i.e.

Meetings for Worship for Business, on the other hand are occasions where the group as a whole seeks, to respond to individual communications with the Light, by a collectively arrived at decisions. In order for the group to be able to do so it has to maintain the following climate within itself, that of the inviolability of individual consciousnesses. In other words the individual contributions to a decision are accepted as valuable in their own right and consequently there are no judgements of individual contributions by others just further contributions, where felt to be necessary, informed by previous contributions.

Participation in MfW and MfWfB has been experientially proven to be beneficial for the development of our individual consciousnesses. Participation in these practices is not the only practice that we can undertake to develop our consciousnesses however. Any worthwhile spiritual tradition is replete with practices that can be undertaken for this purpose. Centering Prayer, as fully elucidated by Cynthia Bourgeault in 'Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening' (ISBN 10:1-56101-262-9), is just such a daily practice for allowing the overarching consciousness to heal us and, in a sense, super-charge the development of our individual consciousnesses. I would highly recommend the practice to anyone who is aware of their need to develop their consciousnesses in a spiritual direction.

BOOK REVIEW

Us and them

Wouter Holleman, Eastern Cape Quakers

"The world is full of confrontations between people, groups and nations who think, feel and act differently." (Hofstede 2010:2)

Earlier in the year I participated in one leg of the annual 'RV Dr Fridtjof Nansen' cruise, from Port St John's to Richard's Bay. The 'Nansen' is a Norwegian fisheries research ship that has worked along the west coast of Africa and in the Indian Ocean since 1975. This particular vessel is the third of its kind and boasts several laboratories and other facilities for fisheries and allied research programmes.

There were some 20 researchers on board from Norway, South Africa and Mozambique. Having recently re-read David Berreby's *Us and Them* I was intrigued by how the dining room tables were occupied. One table was exclusively used by the Norwegian crew. One table was used by the Norwegian scientists, one by the South African white scientists, and one by black scientists from South Africa and Mozambique. A few of the white scientists sometimes sat at the 'black' or 'Norwegian table' and one or two of the black scientists sometimes sat at the 'white' table. One or two of the white scientists

sometimes at the 'Norwegian' table, but none of the Norwegian scientists ever sat at another table.

A few weeks ago we were appalled by the confrontation between the Israeli military and Palestinians. For years the Middle East has lurched from one confrontational crisis to another, with no political solution in sight and seemingly no political will to address problems, many deep-seated and very ancient. As I write, dissent in the US about Donald Trump's hardline attitude towards illegal immigrants/asylum seekers is growing, particularly with regard to the separation of young children from their parents. In Europe, there is a growing right-wing political anti-refugee stance in several countries.

There are so many ways in which we divide people into 'Us' and 'Them', the 'in group' and the 'outgroup'. We all do it, all the time. We are all also part of several groups at once: teacher, parent, bridge player, quilter, Quaker, Zen Buddhist, South African, and so on. How do we decide which of these many identities matter? What makes people willing to die, or kill, for a religion, a tract of land, or an ideology?

I have been interested in what makes humans 'tick' for a long time – what are the underlying urges that drive us? I am also convinced that unless we understand these 'urges' and come to terms with them, we will never begin resolve the problems that beset the world. This brings to mind two books, David Berreby's *Us and them—understanding your tribal mind*, and Geert Hofstede et al.'s *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*.

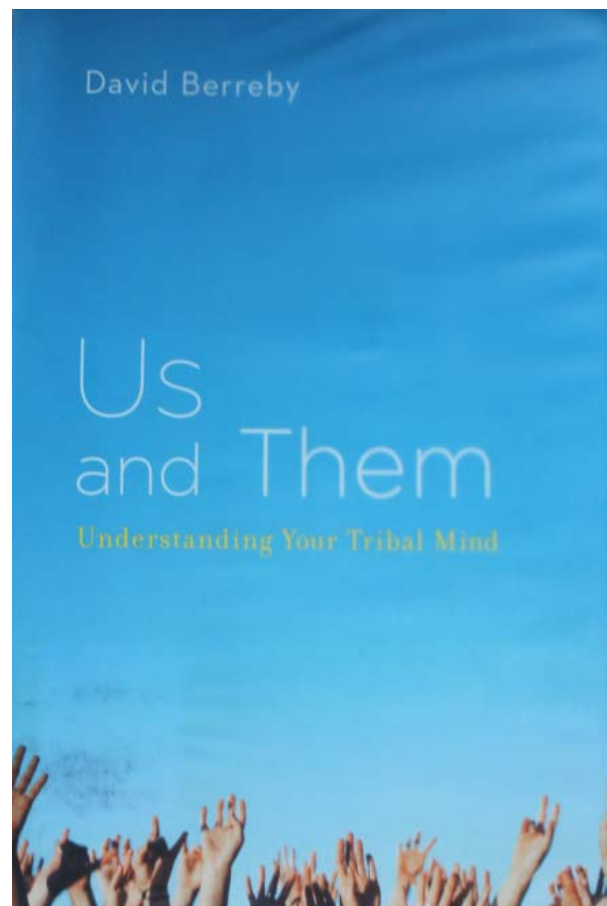
Berreby explores how science looks at questions of group identity; he argues that a "tribal" sense is a part of human nature and expresses itself in every aspect of life. The process of placing others into categories is determined by "ignoring some of what you know, while paying heightened attention to the rest." But what we choose to ignore or focus on is essentially arbitrary: we decide that certain characteristics are important, then look for evidence that justifies our classification system. At different times in history, different characteristics have seemed important, and by classifying people according to them they then become meaningful. There is no objective reason why skin colour, or whether you are born in the highlands of Nepal ("flat noses") or the on the plains ("sharp noses"), or whether one is left-handed or right-handed should determine a particular category. Berreby says, "Give me any hundred people selected at random, and I can divide them every which way,

into groupings that will fit some real measurement system. The question is not whether people differ but why we hang our essentialist beliefs on one type of difference — skin colour or language, say — while ignoring others."

However, the categories we place people in change over time. Berreby quotes the way Americans viewed Russians: a 1942 survey showed that Americans believed Russians were "brave and hardworking", but by 1948 the stereotypes had shifted to "cruel and conceited".

Berreby makes it clear, however, that we cannot live without this sense of belonging to one group or other. It is part of our identity and tells how we should behave. Our group identity also links us to others, and to our shared past and the future. But, he offers no solutions to the problems this creates in the relationships between groups of people. I am convinced that unless we *understand* these imperatives we will never be able to create non-violent relationships between 'us' and 'them'.

David Berreby, 2005. *Us and Them — Understanding Your Tribal Mind*. Little Brown and Company
Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede & Michael Mincov. 2010. *Cultural Dimensions — Software of the Mind*. McGraw-Hill.



QUAKER NEWS

A fond farewell

Sunday 13th May 2018. Farewell meeting and workshop for Tara O'Day and her two daughters Solene and Amelie, followed by brunch, at Helen's

house in Avis, Windhoek. Tara and family have been in Namibia for some years and are moving to Germany to join Christian, Tara's husband.



Back row: Evan and his mother Sally Naswa (from Kenya), Stuart Morton (Quaker visitor from Birmingham), Ben Schernick (co-Clerk), Enid Ellis (Treasurer), Solene, Nona (daughter of Becky), Justin Ellis (co-Clerk);
Middle row: Wilhelmina Morton (originally from Namibia, visitor), Becky Shiimi, Helen Vale, Tara O'Day;
Front row: Olwen (Sally Naswa's daughter) and Amelie.