

Southern Africa Quaker News

June 2021



Journal of the Religious Society of Friends in Southern Africa

Issue 247

Southern African Quaker News

© 2021

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

It is published by the Southern Africa Yearly Meeting. 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 SAYM. Copies will be sent on request to any other interested persons at the cost of printing and postage.

Please direct requests to:
SAQNeditor@quakers.co.za

Contributions can also be sent to the above address.

Please visit our website
www.quakers.co.za
where you will find details about local Meetings, or write to
heathwhite@me.com
for further information.

Design by Liz Gowans
lizgowanspublishing@gmail.com
Layout by Heath White
heath@ihwhitedesign.com

Printed by Dupliprint, Grahamstown

ISSN 1028-5768
No. 247, 2021/1

Cover: "Sunrise at Sundance"
by Susan Winters

Contents: 245

page 3
Editorial

RICHARD GUSH, PART 4

page 4

Re-envisioning the Quaker testimonies in turbulent times: Seeking from the silence

Helen Vale

COVID

page 9

The people are an asset
Steven Friedman

A Franciscan Benediction

Dealing with Panic
Susan Cooke

ON BEING A QUAKER

page 16

A Christian Welcome to the New World
Helen Holleman, Eastern Cape Quakers

Letting your life speak
Helen Holleman, Eastern Cape Quakers

POEMS AND PUNS

page 18

Ballad of the hesitant follower
Justin Ellis, Namibia Quaker Community

Azrafel
George Barker
Puns for pleasure

THINKING and DOING

page 20

Exchange, Wealth and Money
Rory Short, Quaker Community Johannesburg

Hannover Baptist Church
– a symbol of reconciliation
Rommel Roberts

Editorial

It's been more than a year since the Covid pandemic began to impact on the world. And, more than a year later, not much seems to have changed, other than that there are now several vaccines that are being administered to millions of people. We are, however, seeing alarming infection rates in India and some other countries, and even in Europe local lockdowns are still imposed every few weeks.

One of the impacts of this pandemic and the drive by pharmaceutical companies to manufacture millions of doses of vaccines has been the slowdown of production of vaccines for malaria used widely around Africa. Malaria killed 409 000 people in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2019. The total number of Covid-19 deaths recorded so far in sub-Saharan Africa is about 30 000, of which more than two-thirds occurred in South Africa.

Most of us are, however, adjusting pretty well to the new norm of working at home, wearing a mask in public, sanitising hands, keeping social distance, communicating electronically and teaching and learning online.

It leads one to ponder what the long-term impact will be on printed communications, such as the

SAQN? The most recent, double issue, Nos. 245 and 246, was distributed by email to all clerks for printing locally for those who could not access it online. How many Friends did not get to read it? And how many people accessed the SAQN on our website? Issue 247 will be printed and mailed as previously.

This issue is a bit of a mixed bag, with the last part of Helen Vale's Gush Lecture, a variety of poems, sound advice on dealing with panic – pertinent to lockdown as some folk have not found this easy; two contributions by Helen Holleman on being a Quaker, an essay on money from Rory Short, and more.

And to end, a request to Friends to submit articles, book reviews and more for publication. We are all aware that ours is a very small community, and one possible way of growing this community is to let others know what we do. Shane Petzer of Western Cape Quakers will be working with me on the SAQN as co-editor; please copy all submissions to him at shane.magpie99@gmail.com.

Wouter Holleman



Re-envisioning the Quaker testimonies in turbulent times: Seeking from the silence

Helen Vale, Namibia Quaker Community

Testimonies and the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP)

There are two advices that are particularly applicable to AVP for me, *Advices 32 and 33*:

Bring into God's light those emotions, attitudes and prejudices in yourself which lie at the root of destructive conflict, acknowledging your need for forgiveness and grace. In what ways are you involved in the work of reconciliation between individuals, groups and nations?

Are you alert to practices here and through the world which discriminate against people on the basis of who or what they are? ... Bear witness to the humanity of all people, including those who break society's conventions or its laws.

There are many links between AVP and Quakers and Quakerism and by implication between AVP and the testimonies. Several of you here today are already AVP facilitators working in your own countries and will know first-hand much of what I am now going to say.

The Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) started in 1975 as a collaboration between prisoners and Quaker prison visitors in the United States; its impetus was prison violence and the desire of some prisoners to examine the roots of violence in their own lives and to try and find alternative, more constructive ways of approaching problems and conflicts.



Today, the programme is widely used in correctional facilities and many other social contexts in about 50 countries around the world, including Southern Africa, to good effect to empower individuals to deal with conflict in creative ways and without violence.

In brief, the Alternatives to Violence Project offers basic, advanced and training for trainer workshops. It is...

- an experiential programme, helping people change their lives.
- a community programme, offering a new approach for community groups, social service agencies, schools, youth organisations, 'people of concern' (refugees) and all who would like to participate.
- prison programme, helping inmates learn new skills and attitudes that lead to fulfilling and crime-free lives.

In 2006, it was introduced in Namibia, by two of the Quakers in Namibia (Gudrun Kober, a clinical psychologist and former psychology lecturer) and myself, in collaboration with the PEACE Centre in Windhoek where Gudrun was Director. Our Friend Colin Glen came from Phapama in Johannesburg to talk to a group of about 30 interested NGOs, individuals, and civil servants. Since then, it has been administered by the first group of trained Namibian facilitators with strong support initially from the PEACE Centre. Over the years the executive committee, or circle as we call it, which meets every month or so to administer the project, has changed its composition somewhat but all members are AVP trained facilitators. Ben Schernick, who is now co-Clerk of the Namibian Quaker community, has been secretary for many years and I have served on the circle from the beginning.

In 2011, AVP Namibia was registered as an independent non-profit and social welfare organisation with the Ministry of Health and Social Services. After initial support from the FNB Foundation in 2013 (over N\$ 197 000) AVP managed to conduct a series of AVP workshops, develop a larger pool of facilitators from diverse backgrounds and establish itself as an organisation.

We have given workshops to refugees (mainly from the DRC) in Osire, to other interested individuals, and to inmates in the Correctional Facility at Rundu (which is in



the far north on the Angolan border) and in Windhoek. We are currently giving workshops to correctional officers in Windhoek CF. Two basic workshops were given last year and we plan one advanced and one Training for Facilitators in the next few months.

We have finalised a cooperation agreement with the Namibian Correctional Services (NCS) with the aim of helping officers apply nonviolent conflict resolution methods in their work, and giving them the tools to start training inmates so that inmates themselves can become AVP facilitators who can then continue training more inmates.

The long-term strategy is to expand this approach to other correctional facilities countrywide as a sustainable and cost-effective model for rehabilitation, transformation and reintegration of offenders, targeting social skill development and change in behaviour and attitudes, usually not covered by existing approaches.

Now, the particular links to Quakerism which I have noticed are:

1. The underlying principle that each individual is special – as reflected in the words ‘Remember that each one of us is unique, precious, a child of God.’ (Advice 22)
2. The experiential experience in both AVP workshops and in Quakerism, specifically the Meeting for Worship. The emphasis in both is on the ‘lived experience’.
3. The aim to resolve conflict through non-violent means is also at the heart of both AVP and Quakerism.
4. The five key principles of AVP are that ‘AVP is experiential and experimental’, ‘we are all teachers and all learners’, ‘AVP is not religious but it can be spiritual’, ‘AVP is not therapy but it can be healing’, ‘we are all volunteers’ and the first two in particular resonate strongly with Quakerism.
5. The importance of ‘trusting the process’ is implicit in the conducting of AVP workshops, but also it

is there in both our Meetings for Worship and particularly in our Meetings for Worship for Business where when making difficult decisions Friends don’t rely on a majority vote, or even consensus, but on a new way forward that may emerge through the process of trusting the spirit.

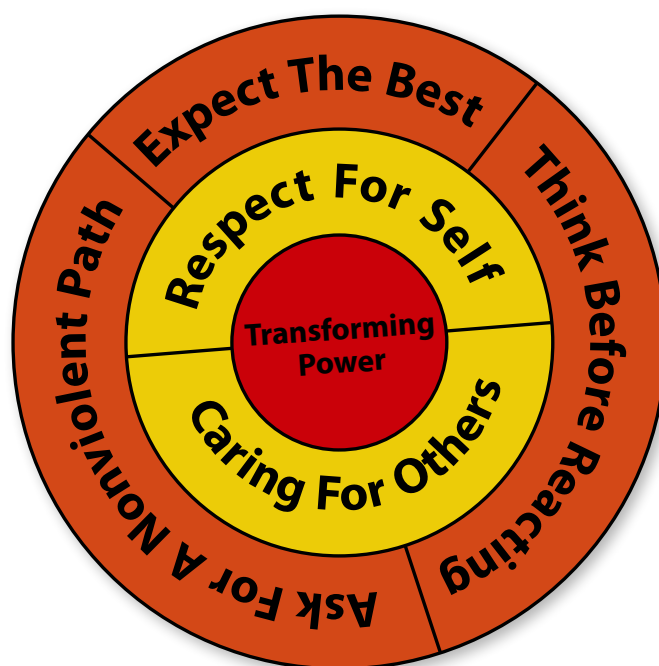
6. The concept of Transforming Power is key to AVP and it is itself made up of five elements – respect for self, caring for others, asking for a non-violent solution, thinking before reacting, and expecting the best. The first three of these elements are also fundamental to Friends.

This concept of ‘Transforming Power’ can be explained in several ways – but one is that it is the inner power that each of us has to transform a situation from negative to positive. Each of us has an inner potential to transform our attitudes and behaviour. This is where a conflict, whether physical or emotional, can be changed, healed, ‘transformed’. For me Transforming Power can be equated to ‘the inner light’ and ‘that of God or the divine in every person’ in Quaker belief.

Something that Jennifer Kinghorn shared at Johannesburg Monthly Meeting in 2007 on Ubuntu links to Transforming Power:

‘There is an invisible circuit of connection between us all: activating the flow of humanity, of love, of creative or spiritual power between human beings. This connection is Ubuntu. It is not a static state though; energy flows though, energy flows from respect for self to respect for others, which in turn regenerates respect for self.’

(Living Adventurously: 60)



I feel that this ‘invisible circuit of connections’ is there in AVP workshops as it is in Meetings for Worship. AVP is both an individual and a group process as is

the Meeting for Worship. Creative Listening is very important for both AVP and Meeting for Worship and we always incorporate an activity called concentric circles which focuses on this aspect of deep listening.

In addition, I should stress that facilitating an AVP workshop may not only be transformative for the participants, it can also be so for the facilitators since you are also constantly learning about human nature, the participants and yourself. I feel blessed to be able to facilitate workshops, particularly with inmates, and to be working with some younger committed Namibians to further AVP in Namibia.

Turbulent times

We all know the many challenges that the world faces in this first quarter of the 21st century. This personal statement from Nicky Marais next to her art installation at a recent Namibian Arts Association exhibition **HOW INDEPENDENCE CAME TO YOU** powerfully sets out the different elements that have impacted Namibia since its independence in March 1990 reads:

Independence, precious but precarious, buffeted by environmental crisis, economic disaster, poverty, corruption, greed, alcoholism, cynicism, defeatism, violence, crime. Bolstered by art, advocacy, youth action, feminism, compassion, concern, critical engagement, justice, reform, analysis, research, activism, information, a free press, independent observers, diligence, efficiency, democracy. (my emphasis)

I feel certain that this list of negative and positive forces could apply equally to all our countries in southern Africa.

As Wilkinson and Pickett argue in the final chapter 'A Better World' in their book *The Inner Level*:

The choice which confronts us is whether we expand the vertical and hierarchical or the horizontal and

egalitarian dimension of our society, whether we increase inequality and the status divisions between us, or decrease them... (2018: 231)

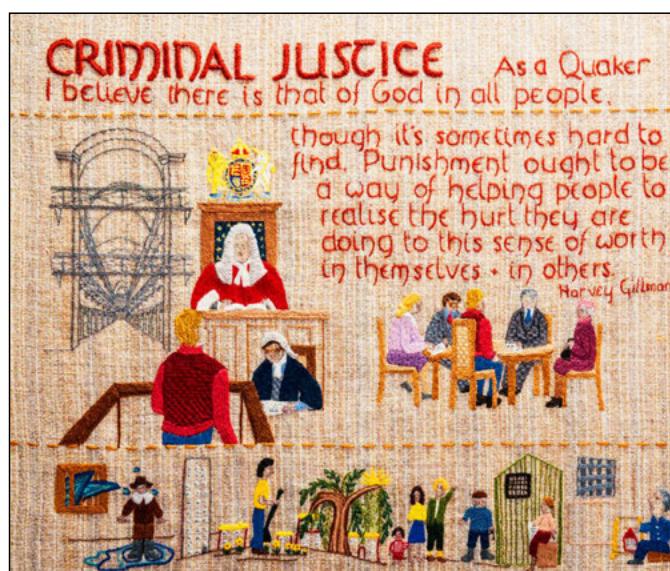
They go on to expand the list of negative forces given by Nicky Marais by adding 'climate change, the increasing flows of desperate refugees and migrants, the undemocratic and unbridled power of multinationals (whose turnover can be larger than the GDP of many countries), the need for enforceable international law' and illicit financial flows (2018: 242).

These problems are indicative of the 'turbulent times' we live in and the urgent challenges facing all societies today. Wilkinson and Pickett argue that a major reduction in inequality is possible through political pressure and structural changes such as greater economic democracy (2018: 244). The latter would encompass the development of cooperatives and of employee-owned businesses. This would change working relationships and power structures and improve the experience of work. It would spread the ownership and earnings of wealth more widely.

But whilst this is all very commendable, change on the scale needed can only be achieved if large numbers of people commit themselves to achieving it. The world is in need of a radical alternative, a clear vision of a future society, which is not only environmentally sustainable, but in which the real quality of life is better for the vast majority (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2018: 265)

So what can I do to make a difference? As Flintoff explains in his book, *How to change the world*

How can I, one individual in a world of billions, hope to change anything? (2012: 7) ... To make a difference only the person who actually seeks to make change truly understands that there is a choice to be made about how we lead our lives, and can observe clearly the effect they are having. (2012: 26)



We all have free will and the potential to change the world. In fact each of us can make a difference, even through small acts. To change the world is to have a sense of purpose and this relates to the human search for meaning. And meaning relates to what values we have and for Friends surely those values are intertwined with our testimonies.

As the Quaker writer Geoffrey Durham puts it:

The impulse of Quakers to 'mend the world' is a religious one since religion and politics, religion and peace, religion and simplicity, religion and sustainability are all mutually inclusive (2011: 91)

Viktor Frankl, a Jewish doctor, who survived several years of suffering in Nazi concentration camps, developed his ideas from interacting with his fellow prisoners and the guards. He put down his experience and views in his profound book *Man's Search for Meaning*. He saw that a prisoner who had lost faith in his future was doomed and for me that applies equally to humankind now faced with its many seemingly overwhelming challenges. Frankl quoted Nietzsche: 'He who has a "why" to live can bear almost any "how"' (1963: 121). He also argued that it is impossible to define the meaning of life in a general way and instead we should think of ourselves as being questioned by life.

Our answer must consist in right action and in right conduct. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfil the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual. (1963: 122)

Surely for Friends our testimonies provide that guide to right action and right conduct, however much we might fall short of attaining them.

'Changing the world is a job that never ends. In that sense, it's not so much a job as a state of mind: attentive to the way things are, willing to share responsibility for it, and determined not to make despair convincing, but hope possible.' (Flintoff, 2012: 126)

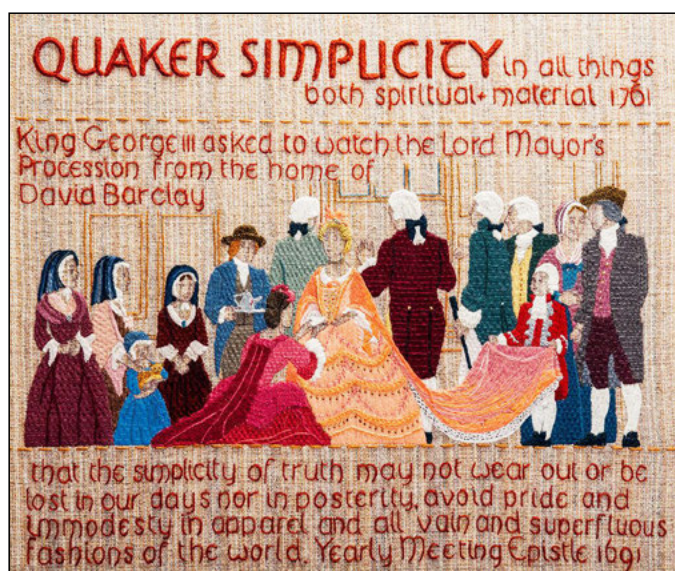
I end this section on turbulent times on a positive note with a phrase from the late John Muafangejo, Namibian artist, internationally known for his black and white lino and woodcuts. It is a phrase that he wrote on one print created in 1984 during Namibia's liberation struggle. It shows figures in discussion and I believe this is the mind-set which can help us: **Hope and optimism in spite of the present difficulties**

Conclusion

In conclusion, I hope that this lecture has helped stimulate you as Friends in southern Africa to be part of a process of assessing, re-testing and re-envisioning our testimonies. We need to be reminded of the importance of continuous reflection on them. In fact many of the Richard Gush lectures over the years have done so. We also need to be reminded that we have a treasure trove of Quaker insights in our *Quaker Faith and Practice*, *Advice and Queries*, and our own *Living Adventurously* and *Southern African Quaker Newsletters* and we should use them.

Finally, I would like to share an extract, a picture and a song. The extract which speaks to me comes from the autobiography of Carl Jung, the 20th century psychologist, and was quoted by John Schmid in his 2011, Richard Gush lecture 'Life'.

'In spite of all uncertainties, I feel a solidity underlying all existence, and the more uncertain I have felt about myself, the more there has grown up in me a feeling of kinship with all things.'



The picture I end with is an image of grace and hope for the future, of a dancer, outside the NAMDIA office in Avis Windhoek near where I live which I photographed on Christmas Day last year. Let's celebrate life and all

that it and we can be.

And I end with the music and words of '*Lord of the Dance*' (words by Sydney Carter) which complement this photo.

I danced in the morning
When the world was begun,
And I danced in the moon
And the stars and the sun,
And I came down from heaven
And I danced on the earth,
At Bethlehem
I had my birth.

Chorus

*Dance, then, wherever you may be,
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,
And I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,
And I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he.*

I danced on the Sabbath
And I cured the lame;

The holy people
Said it was a shame.
They whipped and they stripped
And they hung me on high,
And they left me there
On a Cross to die.

Chorus

They cut me down
And I leapt up high;
I am the life
That'll never, never die;
I'll live in you
If you'll live in me -
I am the Lord
Of the Dance, said he.



The People are An Asset, Not a Problem

Steven Friedman

This country would have far fewer Covid-19 infections if the government had seen most of its people as a partner, not a problem.

South Africa may be an economic giant in Africa but its fight against Covid-19 has not distinguished itself. Its infection rate is by a long way the highest on the continent and is rising rapidly. While the government is proud of the fact that the death rate thus far is low by international standards, it is still the highest on the continent. The government – and the scientists who advise it – insist that high infection and fatality rates were inevitable, even though other countries, including some on the continent, were able to avoid them.

Covid-19 has shown that ability to protect citizens from a pandemic does not necessarily depend on wealth: some rich countries have battled to contain the virus while more than a few poorer states have succeeded. One very clear reason is that there is no cure for Covid-19. Health systems in rich countries are built on curative medicine – curing people who are ill. These countries are not necessarily equipped for effective preventative medicine, which tries to ensure that people do not fall ill in the first place. Curative medicine relies on technical medical skill and money – preventative medicine relies on public health measures which usually work only if citizens can be persuaded to co-operate with the authorities. And curative medicine is obviously not that effective when there is no cure, which is why the United States has battled to contain the disease while some African and Asian countries have succeeded. It is also one reason why this country's response has fallen short.

Ignoring an Asset

From the outset, South Africa's reaction to Covid-19 assumed that the technical skills in the health system would be the key to fighting the disease.

When the government imposed a lockdown in March, citizens were told that the purpose was not to stop large numbers of infections (since these were supposed to be inevitable). It was, rather, to 'buy time' to ready the health system for a drastic rise in patient numbers. But this made sense only if hospitals were able to cure patients which, since there is no cure, is not at all obvious. Months into the pandemic, we still don't know how many people who contracted the disease have recovered because they were treated in a hospital. This means that it is at least possible in theory that getting

the hospitals ready did not save a single life. (It seems likely that lives were saved but it is certainly possible that the numbers are not high).

This stress on medical facilities rather than stopping the virus in its tracks also assumed that only a small number of people who fell ill with Covid-19 would be unable to recover: at this stage, only around 1,5% of people who contracted the disease have lost their lives. But there is evidence now that at least some people who contract Covid-19 suffer permanent organ damage even if they recover.

Given these realities, it isn't at all clear that readying the health system made nearly as much sense as South Africans were told. The reason why the government seems to have opted for this approach immediately is that those who govern South Africa and influence its public opinion assume that technical skills and money – curative medicine – are what is needed to fight an epidemic, even when there is no cure. This may partly explain why its Covid strategy showed no interest in forming a partnership with citizens to fight the disease.

When the lockdown was announced, President Cyril Ramaphosa stressed that the government had consulted stakeholders on its Covid strategy. But this did not mean that it was seeking a partnership with the people. Only business and faith-based organisations seem to have been included. In the latter case, the only purpose was to secure co-operation in not holding religious services, so only business seems to have been regarded as an important stakeholder. Nor is it clear whether the government was seeking a partnership with businesses or merely wanted to ensure that they would accept the need to close down most of the economy.

Noticeably absent was any attempt to reach out to citizens to find ways of working with them to stem the virus. Organisations with roots in the society who could have been mobilised to work with government officials to find ways of enabling people to protect themselves – from faith organisations through school governing bodies to activist organisations – were clearly not considered to be stakeholders worthy of consultation. And so, a huge opportunity to stem the spread of Covid-19 was lost. This did not matter much in the well-off suburbs where people had no problem protecting themselves but was extremely costly in townships and shack settlements where what is easy for the affluent is often very hard.

To some, the idea that a partnership between the government and citizens' organisations could achieve

anything is foolish. In this view, only governments have the resources and the power to make things happen and they should simply get on with doing this. Citizens' groups are narrowly focussed on sections of the society – only governments can tackle problems which affect everyone. An example of the flaws in this thinking is the recent history of social grants. When the constitutional lawyer Zola Skweyiya took over the national department of Social Development, his core aim was to extend social grants, which were then reaching only a fraction of the people entitled to them, to everyone who qualified. He did not develop a grand government plan for extending grants. Instead, he told his officials to make contact with citizens' organisations or individuals with networks such as school principals and pastors, and to ask them to encourage anyone they encountered who qualified for a grant to apply for one. The result was a mushrooming of grants which gave millions a tool to deal better with poverty.

There is no difference in principle between encouraging people to apply for a grant and urging them to protect themselves from a disease. Asking people to apply for money seems easier than asking them to find spaces in overcrowded townships where infected people can isolate or to locate hand-washing facilities in public places and encourage people to use them or to ensure that everyone wears a mask. But it could be argued that people are likely to be more open to protecting themselves (as well as others) than to helping others apply for a grant. If Skweyiya's model had been followed in response to Covid-19, we may well have witnessed not only a much more effective effort to stem it but an exciting grassroots campaign for health and safety.

Recently, the government has made concessions to the idea that citizen mobilisation is important. Social development minister Lindiwe Zulu claimed she was working with grassroots organisations to distribute government Covid grants and President Cyril Ramaphosa has welcomed the emergence of citizens' groups who encourage people to fight the virus. But neither have said who these organisations are. It seems unlikely that they are strong or effective because not only are infections rising at an alarming rate but much of the money committed to people in need has not reached them. This may be partly explained by the fact that the role of citizen's organisations has never been a core government concern – it is usually mentioned in passing, if at all, before discussion moves to something considered more important.

The Limits of Science

Why has the government ignored one its most important assets in the fight against Covid-19?

From the time the virus arrived in South Africa, the government, like some of its counterparts elsewhere, has insisted repeatedly that it is 'following the science'

– that it is guided by the insights of medical scientists. This sounds attractive because it suggests that hard evidence, not prejudice, is informing decisions. It is particularly attractive in this country because, almost two decades ago, many lives were lost because the government ignored the scientific evidence on HIV and AIDS. But there is a crucial difference between AIDS and Covid-19. When AIDS arrived here, scientists knew how it worked and how to treat it. Covid-19 is very new and so there is no agreement among scientists on how it works and no treatment. It has, therefore, never been clear what 'follow the science' means in South Africa's fight against Covid-19. What is clear is that it does not mean an effective way of curbing infections.

'Follow the science' also suggests a particular attitude to the task of government – one which assumes that it is about 'science' and technical knowledge. But, while this can be very useful (when the science is clear), governing is also about relations with citizens. Governments can enjoy the best scientific advice which tells them what they need to do. But citizens will always frustrate what it thinks it needs to do if they are not convinced that it will meet their needs, and so effective governments need to find ways of convincing citizens to accept what they plan. This may mean changing their plans when citizens insist that it needs changing. And, as the social grants example shows, governments can sometimes only do what they want to do if they persuade citizens to help them to do it. So, 'follow the science' can be anything but attractive. It can signal that governments do not understand how important it is to work with and to listen to citizens.

A second reason stems from deeply rooted attitudes in the government and among the society's elite more generally about people living in poverty. From the outset, the government's strategy assumed that it needed to control people in townships, not work with them. Ironically, some of the regulations which upset people in the suburbs are designed to control those in the townships. A ban on tobacco sales was explained by a government minister as a way of preventing people in townships sharing cigarettes, a rule preventing the sale of cooked food was explained as a means of curbing sales on township street corners, a prohibition on exercising after 9am as a means of ensuring that people did not loiter in streets, something which does not generally happen in suburbs where cars are the favoured means of transport. If we add to this the deployment of over 70 000 troops to reinforce the lockdown, and incidents which show that the soldiers sometimes used heavy-handed tactics to bully people into obeying, the message is clear: in the view of the government, people in townships would spread the virus unless they were controlled.

If the majority of citizens are seen as a problem, not an asset, there is little point in inviting them and the

organisations which are in touch with them to co-operate in curbing the spread of Covid-19. The way in which the government responded to people at the grassroots suggests that the failure to reach out to them was not an oversight – it seems likely that the government never seriously considered doing this because to do it would have meant treating a problem as if it were capable of becoming a solution.

We will, of course, never know whether a partnership between the government and organisations in touch with people at the grassroots would have halted the spread of Covid-19. What we do know is that the government's alternative, which relied on controlling people, did not work. Commanding people – and relying on technical advice rather than strong links with citizens – is often seen as the hard-headed, practical, way of addressing problems and working with citizens as a luxury. South Africa's Covid-19 experience may well show that it is a highly impractical approach since it simply does not work. In a sense, the choice was between relying on democracy or on a scientific elite. Had the government chosen democracy, South Africa might well be a much healthier and happier place.

Steven Friedman is is Research Professor, Politics Department, Univ. of Johannesburg. This article was originally published on the Democracy Developed Programme website

A Franciscan Benediction

*May God bless you with discomfort
At easy answers, half-truths and superficial
relationships
So that you may live deep within your heart.*

*May God bless you with anger
At injustice, oppression and exploitation of
people,
So that you may work for justice, freedom and
peace.*

*May God bless you with tears
To shed for those who suffer pain, rejection,
hunger and war,
So that you may reach out your hand to comfort
them and
Turn their pain to joy.*

*And may God bless you with enough foolishness
To believe that you can make a difference in the
world,
So that you can do what others claim cannot be
done,
To bring justice and kindness to all our children
and the poor.*

Dealing with panic

Susan Winters, Eastern Cape Quakers

It's a normal day. Nothing pressing. It's an indoor day because the wind is howling, that's normal for this time of year. I have fed all the animals; dogs, cats, ducks, geese, and emus. I am a retired American photojournalist and wannabe farmer, living on an Eastern Cape farm. I share the land with a real farmer who lives close-by. It's a lifestyle thing.

I am on my own. My marriage collapsed five years ago at the same time my house burned down. I rebuilt the home and, at 66, started a whole new life.

The prevalent silence is one of the first things visitors here observe, the absence of external noise that allows the sounds of birds and animals and the movement of air to be noticed. My footsteps, a barking dog, the geese squawking, an emu thumping, are the sounds of the day. A cat rubs against me at sunset. Silence, except for the purring.

My refrain for life in South Africa is, "You can't afford to be afraid, but you also can't afford to be stupid." A white woman living alone on a farm has been a daily exercise in determining what side of that line I am on. And now, a complication has crept into my life.

On this day it started after I completed the immediate daily tasks and was making some bread in the kitchen. It was like an electric hum throughout my body and the kitchen started to spin. My fingers started to tingle, my legs became weak. My blood sugar dropped. I recognized the signs of a panic attack. They started a few months after the fire. They don't happen as frequently now, but when they do, I struggle. Sometimes I argue with it by taking a brisk walk, doing breathing exercises, check my five senses, call a friend, sing very loud. I drink some juice for the blood sugar. Most times I end up taking the medication and then lie or sit quietly. For hours there is nothing else.

At first, I saw the attacks as related to trauma, aggravated by anxiety. But the panic attacks are different, they come clear out of the blue, with no clear precipitating event. It's like falling into a dark hole. I have figured, it is not coincidental that the attacks started after the fire, but are not specifically caused by it. There have been more veldfires that have been threatening but I have not become paralyzed by them, instead I go through the ritual of fire preparation.

I have dealt with anxiety for many years, but have never had such totally debilitating attacks before. Anxiety is part of my gene pool – and my response to emotional issues is different from my response to those external events that come without warning. I deal with



the events more easily and have had a lifetime of being one who deals pretty well with an event-based crisis.

I think back over the years and see the contrast of the person I was before, and now. An even that happened when I was 24 created a new definition for myself that held fast for many years.

It's 1973, and I'm walking on the beach at my family's summer home near Boston with my two-year-old son Carter. Carter is giving me two-year-old grief about everything. I'm ignoring him and studying the towering, wild waves in the sea, the aftermath of a storm. I spend a few minutes talking to a fisherman with whom I have always chatted during my annual trips here. We remark on the surf and I tell him this is one day I would absolutely not consider swimming.

As my son and I return to our community beach I see neighbor women gathered at the water's edge. They are worried, a young girl who was visiting one of the families has decided to swim, and is calling for help. Anyone who knows this beach would know better, with the dangers of the undertow, but to her those roller coaster waves look like a thrill.

Years earlier I had had training in lifesaving. None of the other women would be able to help. I ask them to watch Carter, then take off the shirt I am wearing over my bathing suit, and plunge in. The first thing I think about is how cold the water is. After working my way through the breaking waves, I swim toward the girl, and

the training comes back to me. As I approach her, I talk to her and tell her that I will be putting my arm across her chest to carry her. When I am close enough, she does the predictable thing, she grabs my head and pushes me under. "Idiot" I say to myself as I break free, they warned us about that in class. I back off and dive down and grasp her from under the water. This time I have her, and start swimming back to shore with her in tow.

The waves are building in height. I barely maintain my hold on her as we rise over the tops of them. When we are within sight of the beach a large wave hovers as it is breaking over us, and as I lose my grip on her I shout, "Ride it in!"

"I can't", she shouts back.

Just as the wave hits, I think, "Honey, you don't have a choice!"

The wave takes me under. For a long time. I think about my son, standing on the beach and I fight to get back to him. Then, I accept that this is the way I will die. It feels peaceful. Eventually the churning water tosses me back to the surface. I ride a wave to the sand. I can see the girl also landing on the beach in the next wave and the other women wading into the water to pull her out. I collect my son who is standing right where I left him and go to our towels on the sand and lie down. He is silent.

After talking with the other women Carter and I walk to the house. I see all the things of my life in there like

a stranger coming in for the first time. This house I have known all my life. I see the unwashed dishes and unmade bed, as though I had died and I was someone else looking around at the last hours of my life.

In fact, I was that someone else.

I had never been challenged like that before. I had never done something so risky on instinct before, without hesitation, simply because it had to be done. I had never considered my predictable and mundane housewife life to be special before. I had never felt courageous. Now, suddenly, my life is of value.

A recurring nightmare of my childhood, one of swimming in the sea and having to dive under relentless huge waves, has never happened again. I had just lived my nightmare, and survived.

I don't know what happened to the girl. My father told me that the Chinese believe that when you save a person's life you are responsible for all that person does. Thanks a lot. I went swimming in the ocean a few times after that, but now, not for many years.

I never saw the fisherman again on subsequent trips to that beach.

The 35 years of work in adrenalin driven photojournalism that followed presented many challenges that involved that decision of when to take a risk and when not to. It was about witnessing scary events, but having the responsibility to record them in a professional way.

"I am here to do a job; I will deal with my feelings later. Focus on the camera settings, the activity, the light." Whether I succeeded or not was in the photograph. Some fellow staff members took greater risks and I envied their confidence, but as a parent, I knew that I was not willing to die for a photograph.

Through those years of my job and coping with life's

emergencies I have usually done what needed to be done. My heart beats faster, my breathing becomes heavier and I have to calm myself with continuous chatter with myself about what is happening before me. But I coped when going in to photograph a hostage situation, or a riot with tear gas, meeting a cobra head on, coping with a car accident, or the house burning down. Or, approaching a stranger who appears to be in trouble, helping a friend in a crisis.

So why do I deal with paralyzing fear now? What has changed? Why the sudden rush of adrenalin that has nowhere to go? I don't have an answer to this. The professionals don't have real answers either. Anxiety attacks have a specific historical cause. Panic attacks don't. They simply happen. Surprise!

I am not outside the normal range when I find myself avoiding situations that might include risk of another attack, or would be a difficult time to have to deal with one. The Mayo Clinic lists isolation as a side effect of the attacks. Although I am a dedicated introvert, I still had an active social and professional life. Now I am less likely to drive somewhere new or go to crowded public areas on my own. I meet the travel part of semi-annual trips to the United States with trepidation. I avoid driving in Boston. When I do those normal activities, I maintain background vigilance for the signs of a potential attack. I keep Ativan in my purse.

Because of that I have had my own personal lockdown for several years so Covid isolation is not so new to me. What I do know is that I am not the only person who suffers from these attacks. Yet, as with other psychological conditions, few people come forth to discuss it.

I think it would help if we did.

ABOUT PANIC ATTACKS

From the Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic, and HelpGuide Org International

A panic attack is a sudden episode of intense fear that triggers severe physical reactions when there is no real danger or apparent cause. When panic attacks occur, you might think you're losing control, having a heart attack or even dying.

Panic attacks typically begin suddenly, without warning. You feel your chest tighten, your heart rate skyrockets and you start sweating. It's an alarming scenario, and your mind races to figure out what's happening. Is it a heart attack? Or is it a panic attack? It can often be difficult to tell the difference and that only adds to the confusion and stress.

Many people have just one or two panic attacks in their lifetimes, and the problem goes away, perhaps

when a stressful situation ends. But if you've had recurrent, unexpected panic attacks and spent long periods in constant fear of another attack, you may have a condition called panic disorder.

Symptoms

There are many variations, but symptoms usually peak within 30 minutes. Panic attacks typically include some of these signs or symptoms:

- Feeling dizzy, light-headed, or faint
- Numbness or tingling sensations
- Rapid, pounding heart rate
- Sweating
- Trembling or shaking

- Shortness of breath or hyperventilation
- Tightness in your throat
- Sense of impending doom or danger
- Fear of loss of control or death
- Chills
- Hot flashes
- Nausea
- Abdominal cramping
- Chest pain
- Headache
- Fear of dying, losing control, or going crazy
- Feeling of unreality or detachment

Symptoms of panic disorder often start in the late teens or early adulthood and affect more women than men. Factors that may increase the risk of developing panic attacks or panic disorder include:

- Genetics
- Major stress
- Temperament that is more sensitive to stress or prone to negative emotions
- Certain changes in the way parts of your brain function
- Traumatic event, such as sexual assault or a serious accident
- Major changes in your life
- Smoking or excessive caffeine intake
- History of childhood physical or sexual abuse



It's not known what causes panic attacks or panic disorder. Some research suggests that your body's natural fight-or-flight response to danger is involved in panic attacks. But it's unknown why a panic attack occurs when there's no obvious danger present.

Is it a heart attack or a panic attack?

A heart attack is a medical emergency. A panic attack isn't. But with the overlap in symptoms, it can be tough to tell them apart. Most of the symptoms of a panic attack are physical, and many times these symptoms are so severe that you may think you're having a heart attack.

What are the symptoms of a heart attack?

A heart attack is when part of your heart doesn't get enough blood. This usually happens because an artery that supplies blood to the heart is blocked.

Common heart attack symptoms include:

- Chest pain or pressure.
- Pounding or racing heart.
- Feeling lightheaded or faint.
- Sweating, including cold sweats.
- Pain or discomfort in the upper body, such as the jaw, neck, arms, shoulders or back.
- Shortness of breath.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Feeling of impending doom.

Both panic and heart attacks cause chest discomfort, but there is a difference. With a heart attack, pain radiates to other areas like the arm, jaw or neck. If it's a panic attack, pain will typically stay in the chest.

Heart attack chest pain feels like:

- Chest pressure.
- Feeling of squeezing or like an elephant sitting on your chest.
- Achy or burning sensation, like heartburn.
- Panic attacks have many of similar symptoms. However panic attack chest pain feels like:
- Sharp or stabbing pain (not typical with a heart attack).
- Heart racing or chest discomfort that's hard to describe.

Heart attacks tend to happen after physical strain or exertion — a sign not found in panic attacks. A panic attack does not happen after exercise unless there was an emotional stress trigger with it.

Both panic attacks and heart attacks can wake you from sleep. But there's a key difference: People who have night time, or nocturnal, panic attacks usually have daytime panic attacks, too. So if you wake up with chest pain or other symptoms, and you don't

have a history of panic attacks, that might be a sign of a heart attack.

Panic attack symptoms last a few minutes or up to an hour. Pain and symptoms of a heart attack might keep going or come in waves where it gets better and worse. Heart attacks can cause severe chest pain, like a 9 or 10 on the pain scale. Then later, the pain may drop to a 3 or 4 before it gets worse again. The pain might change, but it won't go away.

What happens to your heart rate during a panic attack?

In many cases, a panic attack triggers a fast heart rate, also known as tachycardia. The heart rate may speed up to 200 beats per minute or even faster, which can make you feel lightheaded and short of breath. Or you might feel fluttering or pounding in the chest. Usually, tachycardia that happens in response to emotional stress and only lasts a few minutes is not harmful.

Both panic attacks and heart attacks can occur during or after a stressful situation. Most of the time, people have a panic attack rather than a heart attack in response to emotional stress. A panic attack is unlikely to cause a heart attack, but it's possible.

A heart attack might seem like it came out of nowhere. But in many cases, chest pain due to heart disease appears in the days or weeks before a cardiac event. You may feel a twinge or some pain in the shoulder or chest but think it's something else. The symptoms go away. Then later, the pain gets worse, or you feel a little off. Then the heart attack hits. These early signs can be hard to identify.

Effects of Panic Attacks

One of the worst things about panic attacks is the intense fear that you'll have another one. You may fear having panic attacks so much that you avoid certain situations where they may occur. You may be so afraid of having more panic attacks that you live in a constant state of fear, ruining your quality of life.

Complications that panic attacks may cause or be linked to include:

- Development of specific phobias, such as fear of driving or leaving your home
- Frequent medical care for health concerns and other medical conditions
- Avoidance of social situations
- Problems at work or school
- Depression, anxiety disorders and other psychiatric disorders
- Increased risk of suicide or suicidal thoughts
- Alcohol or other substance misuse

While a single panic attack may only last a few minutes, the effects of the experience can leave

a lasting imprint. If you have panic disorder, the recurrent panic attacks take an emotional toll. The memory of the intense fear and terror that you felt during the attacks can negatively impact your self-confidence and cause serious disruption to your everyday life. Eventually, this leads to the following panic disorder symptoms:

Anticipatory anxiety – Instead of feeling relaxed and like your normal self in between panic attacks, you feel anxious and tense. This anxiety stems from a fear of having future panic attacks. This “fear of fear” is present most of the time, and can be extremely disabling.

Phobic avoidance – You begin to avoid certain situations or environments. This avoidance may be based on the belief that the situation you're avoiding caused a previous panic attack. Or you may avoid places where escape would be difficult or help would be unavailable if you had a panic attack. Taken to its extreme, phobic avoidance becomes agoraphobia.

Agoraphobia was traditionally thought to involve a fear of public places and open spaces. However, it is now believed that agoraphobia develops as a complication of panic attacks and panic disorder. Although it can develop at any point, agoraphobia usually appears within a year of your first recurrent panic attacks.

If you're agoraphobic, you're afraid of having a panic attack in a situation where escape would be difficult or embarrassing. You may also be afraid of having a panic attack where you wouldn't be able to get help. Because of these fears, you start avoiding more and more situations.

For example, you may begin to avoid:

- Crowded places such as shopping malls or sports arenas.
- Cars, airplanes, subways, and other forms of travel.
- Social gatherings, restaurants, or other situations where it would be embarrassing to have a panic attack.
- Physical exercise in case it triggers panic.
- Certain food or drinks that could provoke panic, such as alcohol, caffeine, sugar, or specific medications.
- Going anywhere without the company of someone who makes you feel safe. In more severe cases, you might only feel safe at home.

Prevention

There's no sure way to prevent panic attacks or panic disorder. Getting treatment when they begin and regular physical activity may help.

ON BEING A QUAKER

A Christian welcome to the New World?

Helen Holleman, Eastern Cape Quakers

In the Year of Our Lord 1682

To ye aged and beloved, Mr. John Higginson:

There be now at sea a ship called *Welcome*, which has on board 100 or more of the heretics and malignants called Quakers, with W. Penn, who is the chief scamp, at the head of them. The General Court has accordingly given sacred orders to Master Malachi Huscott, of the brig *Porpoise*, to waylay the said *Welcome* slyly as near the Cape of Cod as may be, and make captive the said Penn and his ungodly crew, so that the Lord my be glorified and not mocked on the soil of this new country with the heathen worship of these people. Much spoil can be made of selling the whole lot to Barbadoes, where slaves fetch good prices in rum and sugar and we shall not only do the Lord great good by punishing the wicked, but we shall make great good for His Minister and people.

Yours in the bowels of Christ,

Cotton Mather

The Hero with a thousand Faces by Joseph Campbell, 1988, Fontana Press, London.

This letter follows what seems to be a useful explanation of the role of ego in the rise of fundamentalism.

In a discussion on the role of initiation in many societies in subduing the ego of the individual for the good of the group, Campbell has this to say:

"Totem, tribal, racial and aggressively missionizing cults represent only partial solutions to the psychological problem of subduing hate by love; they only partially initiate. Ego is not annihilated in them, rather it is enlarged; instead of thinking only of himself, the individual becomes dedicated to the whole of his society. The rest of the world meanwhile (that is to say, by far the greater portion of mankind) is left outside the sphere of his sympathy and protection because [it is] outside the sphere and protection of his god. And there takes place,

then, that dramatic divorce of the two principles of love and hate which the pages of history so bountifully illustrate. Instead of clearing his own heart, the zealot tries to clear the world. The laws of the City of God are applied only to his in-group (tribe, church, nations, class, or what not) while the fire of a perpetual holy war is hurled (with good conscience, and indeed a sense of pious service) against whatever uncircumcised, barbarian, heathen, "native" or alien people happens to occupy the position of neighbour. ... The world is full of the resultant mutually contending bands: totem-, flag-, and party-worshippers. Even the so-called Christian nations are better known to history for their colonial barbarity and internecine strife than for any practical display of that unconditioned love synonymous with the effective conquest of ego, ego's world, and ego's tribal god.

Letting your life speak

Adapted by Helen Holleman, Eastern Cape Quakers

We found this in a little dog-eared pamphlet among the Quaker books that we house. Printed in 1984 and originally published in Friends Journal, it is an account by Nikos Philippides of his return to the Greek island of Andros, where he was born. He became a Quaker while living in the United States. I've taken the liberty to paraphrase and summarise his delightful account.

"You're what?"

Nikos was expecting that. Long had the parishioners of the Greek Orthodox church of the village tolerated the strange newcomer worshiping among them who never took partook of the bread and wine, never lit the candles, never kissed the hand of the priest, or the icons of the saints, never crossed himself, never knelt down. In short, he was an intruder into their cosy orthodox world. But, since his return from the United States, he felt the need to worship, and the Orthodox church was the only option.

The boldest but most tactful parishioners popped the inevitable question: "Pardon me, sir. But you are not a Christian?"

"Certainly I am – a Quaker."

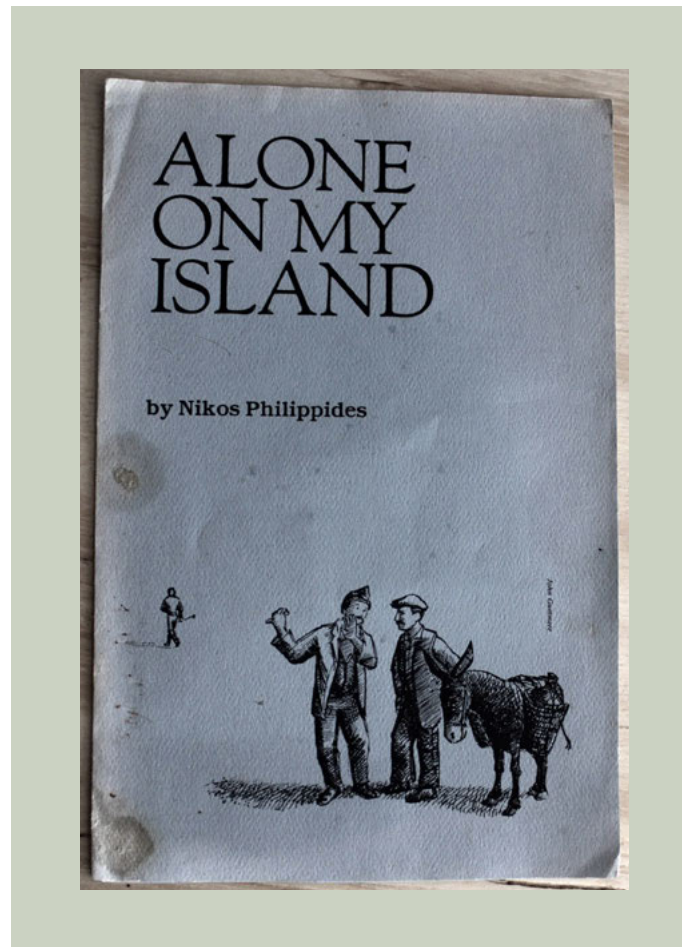
"Never heard of that."

In the only coffee house in the village to which the worshipers always repaired after the services, the same confusion covered the faces of all in response to his explanation of Quakerism. The parish priest looked at him scornfully and accused him of being a 'Hiliastis' – a Jehovah's Witness, a group held in contempt by the local population for their tenacious proselytizing.

Quakerism in Greece was practically unknown. His own life, as the lonely Quaker on the island of Andros among the "heathen" (in reality, a simple, kind, considerate, honest, hard-working folk) was uneventful. After the people learned that there was an "unbeliever" amongst them, in their kindness and their laudable spirit of toleration they did not reject him entirely, but neither did they embrace him with the loving-kindness, the esteem and respect that usually befitted a learned man. They didn't remain aloof, but they kept him at a distance, until he decided that his obligation as a bona fide Quaker was "to draw a circle and take them in."

But how? The wise words of the Clerk of Chicago's 57th Street Meeting came to mind: *Proselytizing is not the thing. ... The spiritual needs of the world won't be satisfied by a single faith but by the good deeds exemplified in the message of Christ – the good example, the only thing that sinks permanently into the hearts of people!*

Why not start acting according to the spirit of his



Quaker religion? And he did.

There are innumerable good deeds that anyone can do, Quaker style, limited only by lack of imagination. With his background in naturopathy he began by checking the blood pressure of anyone who wanted it; he attended to their sicknesses, treating wounds, bruises and broken bones. The pensions of the peasants were low, and in certain hardship cases he supplemented them from his own funds. When the roads of the village became impassable from weed growth, he paid to have them cleaned, and lent a hand himself. Because he knew several languages, he helped people with translations, letter writing, official petitions. Children came with questions about their homework, and he even gave lessons to weak students. Every time he went to town, he asked the elderly if they needed something brought to them ... the tasks were wide and varied.

"And how much do we owe you, sir?"

"Nothing at all. The pleasure in helping you out has been all mine."

This was beyond the comprehension of the simple and innocent people. At a time when, in this cruel world,



people too often try to exploit, cheat and extort their fellow people, it was difficult to grasp the willingness of somebody to do something for nothing. People felt embarrassed, they began to harbour feelings of taking advantage of somebody's kindness, of being guilty for not repaying in equal value. They insisted on paying, but he insisted in refusing remuneration. So they immediately began to make plans for "revenge".

Several days later, so as not to appear as payment for services rendered, they would beat a path to his door *dona ferentes* [bearing gifts]. If people who can hardly make ends meet decide to part with a portion of their deficiency, it would be the worst insult if the one for whom the gift is intended refused to accept it. They knew that he was a lacto-vegetarian, and they brought only appropriate presents: eggs, homemade cheese, vegetables, fruit.

And after the shock of him being an "unbeliever" wore off, compliments began to circulate among them: "Mr Nikos is a good man, a holy man" – names that Nikos himself felt he did not deserve – but never, "Mr Nikos is a good man because he is a Quaker".

Quakerism was something they did not want to, or could not understand. That doesn't matter – the world won't be saved by all the people in it becoming Quakers, but by all the peoples of whatever faith becoming incited by good examples to apply to their lives the golden commandments of Jesus Christ. Especially us Christians: we have had more than enough of theological dissertations, deliberations, enmities, and schisms for 20 centuries. Isn't it about time we turned out energies to other, more proper and practical directions?

POEMS AND PUNS

Ballad of the Hesitant Follower of Jesus

Justin Ellis, Namibia Quaker Community

But nobody listens to me!
DON'T WORRY! Speak up and you'll find there are people listening.
I don't know where to start!
DON'T WORRY! Start with what you have, where you are, and it will grow from there.
I don't know many people!
DON'T WORRY! The truth has a mysterious way of spreading.
There are so many things going on!
DON'T WORRY! Concentrate your efforts on the things that matter.
I don't know how I'm going to make ends meet!
DON'T WORRY! You'll find plenty of support through the network.
This seems very complicated!
DON'T WORRY! It's simple enough for a child to understand.

Someone is going to exploit me!
DON'T WORRY! Just forgive them the way that you have been forgiven.
This life of service is not fair!
DON'T WORRY! The reward is to live at peace and as equals.
The high-ups don't want to know my troubles!
DON'T WORRY! You are going to find many more interesting friendships.
The status quo doesn't look very stable!
DON'T WORRY! You can prepare for when things fall apart.
I have more than I need!
DON'T WORRY! There are plenty of people with whom you can share.

(Derived from the parables of Jesus about the Kingdom of God)

Azrafel

George Barker

When the Angel calls, somehow we are always
engaged in domestic pursuits of remarkable unimportance
Such as polishing the piano top or putting the dog out
Or ordering pork chops or strangling a howling baby.

For the powers that be, the angelic authorities, know that
these absurd little human ceremonies comprise the
desperate appeal of our pathos. "Look" they whisper
"see how truly immersed that singular person is in
trying to become two people. Of course, he would rather
make love on the kitchen table to his second wife
than open the door to an unknown messenger.
Who would not sooner caress the breasts of his wife
On her twenty first birthday than open the door
To receive a telegram delivered by a glass machine"

"I am the Angel of death. Refuse to accept this message"
But then, of course, one day having nothing better to do

We open the door.



Submitted by Rosemary Smith, ECQ

George Granville Barker (1913-1991) British poet and novelist known for Thirty Preliminary Poems and The Dead Seagull, among other works. He also published a 1965 autobiography entitled The True Confession of George Barker.

He was raised by a British father and an Irish mother. His younger brother Kit became a painter. Barker was identified with the New Apocalyptics movement, which reacted against 1930s realism with mythical and surrealistic themes. His long liaison with Elizabeth Smart was the subject of her cult-novel By Grand Central Station I Sat Down and Wept.

Some puns for pleasure

Those who jump off a bridge in Paris are in Seine.

A man's home is his castle, in a manor of speaking.

A hangover is the wrath of grapes.

Reading while sunbathing makes you well red.

When two egotists meet, it's an I for an I.

A bicycle can't stand on its own because it is two tired.

The man who fell into an upholstery machine is now fully recovered.

You feel stuck with your debt if you can't budge it.



Exchange, wealth and money

Rory Short, Johannesburg Quaker Community

This article is intended to explain what the natural basis of money is. This is needed because our current money system operates as though there is no natural process on which units of currency, i.e. money, could and should be based.

Because **exchange** underlies both wealth and money I want to begin with an exploration of **exchange**.

EXCHANGE

The Wikipedia defines **exchange** as:

An act of giving one thing and receiving another (especially of the same kind) in return.

The Wikipedia also defines 'kind' as:

A group of people, or things, having similar characteristics.

For our purposes here, a definition of **exchange**, that includes of the 'same kind', is too narrow.

We need to recognise a more general meaning for **exchange**. Consequently, if we drop the bracketed phrase from the definition and it would then read as:

An act of giving one thing and receiving another in return.

The above definition is quite general as it makes no prescription about what the things exchanged should consist of.

Our physical Universe is founded on continuous exchange between entities existing at every level.

If we limit our view to our planet alone, our planet is in a relationship of constant exchange with its environment. For example, the Earth continuously receives energy from the Sun and radiates it out again into the solar system. The same holds true for all life forms. All of us only exist through constant exchanges with our environments. When exchange stops for an organism it shows that it is no longer alive, but dead.

As self-conscious beings our exchanges contain an additional element compared to those of non-conscious beings. This is because inherent in consciousness is the responsibility of choosing how to respond to events in our environments, whatever they are.

If the exchanges are with other conscious beings, for example, we can choose whether to participate in the

exchange or not. These exchanges are, in other words, voluntary.

Voluntary exchanges may or may not happen, but the universal law that every action produces a reaction still applies. So, unless a voluntary exchange is completed satisfactorily is not an exchange.

Having explored exchange as such let us now turn to exploring wealth and its connection to exchange.

WEALTH

When we use the word **wealth** for *something* what do we mean by it?

We mean that the something is particularly useful to its possessor, or possessors. Possession, according to the dictionary is:

a: the act of having or taking into control.

b: control or occupancy of property without regard to ownership. c: ownership.

A thing can be collectively or individually owned or possessed but in this article we are only interested in individual ownership.

Why should something be particularly useful to a human individual?

As living organisms, a primary requirement of humans is to survive. Anything that increases their chances of survival is of particular value to them and can therefore be thought of as **wealth**.

Now, according to Wikipedia,

wealth is the abundance of valuable financial assets or physical possessions which can be converted into a form that can be used for transactions.

In this regard we are particularly interested in 'possessions' as **wealth** because, as Wikipedia says, **wealth** can consist of financial assets or physical possessions, or both.

Financial assets by their very nature can be converted into, or exchangeable for, goods and/or services and, according to the second phrase in the definition above, wealth is the label word for 'physical possessions' that 'can be converted into a form that can be used for transactions', in other words, exchanges.

Thus, we could say that anything that can be exchanged for other more useful things is **wealth**.

Now, humans need many things as aids to their

survival. It is then natural that they should regard possessions as wealth because, through exchanges with other members of society, possessions widen their own chances of survival. It then follows that **wealth**, because it enables entry into exchanges, has value to humans. However, wealth is a blanket term that is applicable to any amount of it. Can wealth be subdivided into 'atoms' of **wealth**?

An 'atom' is the term used for the smallest particle of something that can exist, yet with all its properties intact. What then is an 'atom' of **wealth**?

An atom of **wealth** is a completed, voluntary, exchange of goods and/or a service because each of the participants in the exchange is more satisfied after the exchange than they were before its completion.

Now let us move on to money. Can money represent **wealth**?

Yes, it can. Let us see how.

MONEY

According to Wikipedia,

Money is any item or verifiable record that is generally accepted as payment for goods and/or services and repayment of debts such as taxes.

This is all very well but a verifiable record of what, and how is it to be verified?

Money must be a record of value, as it is used in payment, i.e., in exchange, for goods and/or services or, in repayment of debts. But, how is this value to be verified?

The sense of something, that can become a value, starts off in peoples' minds as a desire for, or appreciation of, a particular thing. This sense then becomes a value when the person is confronted with other things that they also desire, for their own comfort and well-being. A person then needs to rank the relative desirability of different things. These desirability rankings, once quantified, can be called 'values'. However, they are still resident in the mind of the person who is thinking them, and where they cannot be verified by an outsider.

How are these values then to be externalised so that they can be verified?

The easiest and most certain way for this to be done is in a completed voluntary exchange where the two parties to the exchange are not in direct contact with one another and thus the values of the items involved has to be articulated and communicated between the two. The verification of the values involved in a completed voluntary exchange is automatic because the exchange is completed in the full knowledge of the two parties involved.

What can and does happen however, because of the utility of money, is that the completed exchange can

involve three parties, the initiator and two others, rather than just two.

The initiator of the exchange does not possess any money to purchase a desired item from a seller so the initiator obtains new money, with the required face value, from the Money System which simultaneously debits the initiator for the face value of the new money. Using the new money, the initiator purchases the desired item from its seller. Then in order to settle the purchase debt the Initiator sells an item of equal value to another party and is able to settle the purchase debt. The exchange is then complete and the face value of the new money verified.

This already happens in the present Money System when the holder of a credit card uses it to purchase an item. The Money System provides new money to the value of the item purchased and at the same time debits the card holder with that value. When the card holder settles the credit card debt the exchange is complete and the value of the new money, now in circulation, is verified.

New money produced in this way always has a verified value and it is in fact the only way that new money should ever be put into circulation as it automatically guarantees that there is no debasement of the currency with consequent price inflation. The only increases in price that will occur are genuine when demand outstrips supply. I would call all money produced in this way Natural money. Artificial money is money produced with no relation to actual exchanges and so, inevitably, has a value that is unverified.

Why hasn't society switched to only allowing Natural money into circulation?

The reason is, quite simply, that there are groups, within society, that make a significant part of their livings out of producing Artificial money, and of course they would not like it if this became illegal. And it should become illegal because Artificial money generates unnecessary costs which the whole of society has to bear.

The first of these is inflation

Inflation, or currency debasement, occurs when the value of newly produced artificial money, exceeds the combined value of all the goods and services available in the economy.

Basically, the value attached to currency already in existence is stolen by the excess of new Artificial money, and everybody loses.

In an effort to try to curb inflation the Reserve Bank has to keep a watchful eye on the rate of inflation, which it is currently targeting at between 3 and 6 percent. Not only that but there are additional administrative costs associated with any activity that uses money as a measure of value because it has to keep adjusting to the

falling purchasing power of the currency. And access to credit cards

The second of these is individual financial disempowerment

Financial disempowerment exists for any person who does not have ready access to new money, i.e., short term credit, when they wish to purchase something. This situation is a loss both for the person and society. Society would benefit greatly both socially and economically if everybody was financially empowered.

Currently only people with bank accounts and access to a credit card are financially empowered. There is no reason, other than uncertainty concerning them settling

their credit debts, why people without bank accounts should remain forever financially disempowered.

Through the Money System every citizen should have access to capped short-term credit. The cap set according to the economic circumstances of each individual.

There will always be some people who do not do their bit to settle their short-term credit debt, but that is a small price to pay in comparison to the greater number of people who will at last be financially empowered.

The technology to support the above suggestion is already available in terms of smart phones, the Internet and Information Technology. Its realisation just requires the commitment to it by government and the other organs of society.

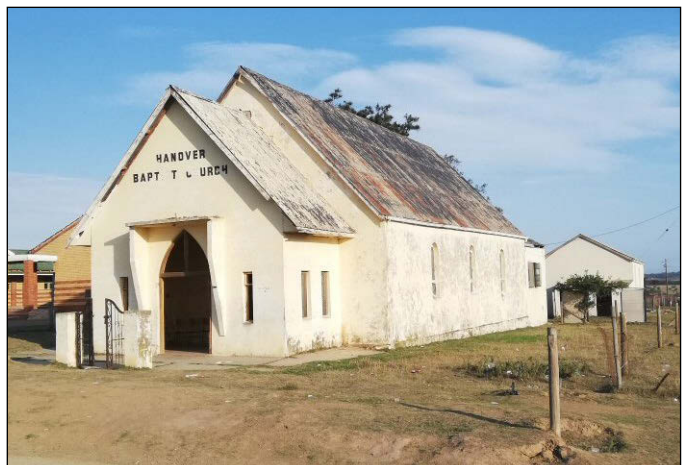
Hanover Baptist Church – a symbol of reconciliation

Rommel Roberts, Isolated Quaker

The village of Hanover lies within five kilometers of Bisho, Eastern Cape, and has a history going back to 1853 when the British offered their volunteer German soldiers – who had assisted them during the war of the Crimea – farming land close to East London. The British neglected to tell them that they would act as a buffer to the warring Xhosa tribes at that time. The region rapidly became the bread basket for a large part of the province and was peppered with household names like, Stutterheim, Hannover and Berlin. The monthly German market at what is now the Amathole Museum in King William's Town became a popular landmark.

A bloody transition of the early 90s

During the late 1980s the Peace Centre established solid links with the Eastern Cape rural area via the Council of Churches and the local Quaker network so that when an initiative was started to address and manage the resettlement programme for returning exiles, the Eastern Cape was a prime destination. Unfortunately, farm attacks had started in earnest; Hannover was one of the first farms to be attacked, and the farming couple murdered. I attended the funeral and made connections with the German farming community, a connection from which a number of initiatives developed, including a reconciliation process which resulted in the handover of the local Baptist church built by the early German colonials. This ceremony formed part of a special communication initiative I facilitated as a healing process between the villages and the farmers. It also had another result, the sale of Hilltop Farm, the



Above: Hannover Church

property of one of the elderly farmers. It was to become a development point for the whole region. Judge Jan Steyn, a close friend and also CEO of the newly formed IDTrust donated the money for its purchase and I agreed to occupy it with a small team that included former exiles to spearhead a number of projects. The initiative continues to this day, 30 years on.

German volunteers together with those from other nationalities have since made inputs to improve the church and build additional buildings to assist the local school.

The decay

Like so many places in the province and around the country, the area had suffered serious decay. The ANC



Left: Hannover Church handover celebrations

Below: Robin Roberts, pastor ... and Rommell Roberts

Women's League bought a flourishing 1000-hectare farm in Hannover from German farmers; they ran into trouble and within a year the farm was a disaster zone. Further decay around the district followed, and conflicts simmering from of the apartheid era led to two communities facing each other with spears. I intervened and stood between the factions for 46 hours, to facilitate a removal to a farm close to Hannover. It was ultimately purchased and settled to include some former exiles.

The decay spread to the village as many newcomers arrived, shebeens sprang up, and other negative influences played into the mix. The church became a symbol of community decay, a place where unruly youth practiced abuse of all kinds.

Another intervention was needed – first, to change the corrupt leadership and, second, to install new leadership consisting of older folk who understood the history and their struggle. This happened, but not without some serious difficulties, and attempts to remove me and my family from the farm, using political clout and corrupt officials of the Council of Churches. The new village leadership prevented our removal and agreed to start with the renovation of the church as a symbol of renewal and to forge links with the new school management so that Grade R children could use it as a protected environment for learning. A number of churches also agreed to use it, with a clear understanding of responsibility and sustainability.

Contributions came from local farmers, but the bulk of contributions came from personal friends and from personal donations made to Robin and me, as well as gifts received as part of my 70th birthday.



Sunday, 24 January 2021 marked the completion of the project which had started in late November 2020. The project involved many workers from the village; Hilltop Farm helped a small team of them to start their own small construction business using the Farm as their base. Some skilled people in the village also donated their services. A number of school youth assisted, as did our own foster children. Given my other commitments, my wife, Robin, assisted me with the day-to-day management.

The handover ceremony to the leadership was regarded as a victory, not only as a symbol of the restoration of their village, but also as a resurgence of spirit and a move towards reconstruction and development. The school leadership have agreed to contribute toward other elements still required, like electrical installations and fencing, together with a clear, sustainable plan.

The pictures say it all.

