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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

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Editorial

The last issue of the SAQN was published in June, when Covid had been with us for more than a year, and now still shows little inclination of 'being done'. This is of course in the nature of pandemics. The Great 'Flu of 1918 went on for two years and accounted for an estimated 50 million lives. And while we in Mzansi are now at Level 1 lockdown, with an election done and dusted, it would be wise not to count on Covid being at an end.

Between then and now Susan Winters, an isolated Eastern Cape Friend, has joined as co-editor of SAQN. With the expanded team we are looking at publishing the SAQN more regularly, ideally at 4 issues per year. To be able to do so does also depend on a flow of contributions from Friends.

It was of course lockdown that spurred a team to organize SAYM's first online Yearly Meeting over the last weekend of July and the first in August. Siphon Nsimbi reflects on YM.

YM followed shortly on the heels of the insurrection that erupted in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng which resulted a statement on this by SAYM as well as the endorsement of the Statement by the SACC.

One of the sessions of YM was given over to Friends speaking of their lives and faith experiences

and these have been included. One of these talks was by Shane Petzer of the Barrydale Worship Group and Co-Clerk of the Western Cape Quaker Community, a larger-than-life Friend who touched everyone he had commerce with, and who died suddenly a short while after YM. Tessa Buning has written movingly in his memory.

And, as I write this COP26 is in progress, with speaker after speaker telling the world at large that we are heading for disaster if we do not curb CO2 emissions. David Attenborough pithily reminded us that that as we 'messed up, so we can also fix it up'. More than 100 global leaders on Tuesday committed to halt deforestation by 2030, and 30 financial institutions promised to eliminate the "harmful practice" from their portfolios by 2025 ... but pardon my cynicism – what not immediately? So all and sundry can line their coffers with the last of the lumber?

Wearing another hat, I write about Murray Short of the Aotearoa New Zealand Yearly Meeting's 'paper' on how we need a 'mind-shift' to care for the Planet. And we end with Carl Sagan ...

Wouter Holleman



Epistle of YM 2021

1 August 2021

Greetings to Friends Everywhere

The Quaker Community in Southern Africa held our Yearly Meeting online over five days on 16 June (the 45th anniversary of the 1976 student uprising in Soweto, Cape Town and other parts of South Africa) and on the two weekends of 24/25 July and 31 July/1 August 2021. We send love and warm greetings to Friends all around the world.

We met during a time of vulnerability, uncertainty and heightened awareness of continuing poverty and inequality, while the Covid19 pandemic was raging around the world, and South Africa was experiencing rioting, looting, death, damage to infrastructure and an attempted insurrection in the two provinces of Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal, which are the economic hubs of the whole region.

We missed hugging and touching, the shared meals, the early morning yoga and walks and children's laughter, and yet we met in a spirit of love, hope and joy as we greeted and shared with each other from Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe and welcomed Friends from the Britain Yearly Meeting and Africa Section. Meeting virtually reduced travel costs of our dispersed yearly meeting and also reduced our carbon footprint.

Marie Odendaal delivered The Richard Gush Lecture 2021 — Creating our World in Love's Image: Journeying Beyond Apartheid — on 16 June, chosen as this day 45 years ago police fired on students protesting peacefully, leading to the 1976 student uprising in Soweto, Cape Town and other parts of South Africa, which changed the trajectory of South Africa's history. Marie's moving, powerful story of her life lived with compassion and integrity, ended with a challenge to our Meetings to rise to the historic challenges of colonialism, apartheid, economic inequality and land dispossession.

Simon Gush, a descendent of the 1820 settler Richard Gush, is investigating the land issue in Salem, an area of Gush's farm. Three of Simon Gush's films were

recommended for watching in preparation for the lecture.

The challenges could overwhelm us, and yet they could unite us in action. Marie reminded us of Margaret Mead's advice:

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

Always remember that you are absolutely unique. Just like everyone else.

Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have."

She encouraged Friends in Southern Africa to reflect on our own stories and Quaker legacy to explode the myths of race, contribute to restitution and reconciliation, and help build the beloved community.

The Meetings for Worship and Worship Sharing groups were rich in silence and ministry, and brought us together in a spirit of love and hope and a "strange feeling of togetherness at a distance."

The business was interspersed with worship sharing, musical interludes, 5-minute talks, short videos on Friends' work,

testimonies of departed Friends and discussions with breakout rooms and report backs.

The Clerks introduced the idea of Participatory Action and Research Groups (PAR Groups) which can involve Friends from all the meetings. The PAR Group on Poverty and Inequality explored the idea of a universal Basic Income Grant or Universal Basic Share as a means of addressing poverty and inequality. A private initiative has piloted the idea in Namibia and it is catching on in South Africa. PAR Groups on Peace and Quaker Bible study will be started. We acknowledge that Inequality is a cross-cutting theme that can be addressed in all the PAR Groups and in all our work.

The meeting supported a proposal to explore the viability of an ambitious Peace Education programme in the region — Investing in Peacebuilding. This would



Marie Odendaal gave the 2021 Richard Gush Lecture

be a Quaker social investment to implement the Peace Testimony in response to the reality that the countries of Southern Africa experience great socio-economic hardship and high levels of interpersonal violence. Murder rates in Lesotho and South Africa place these countries in the 10 most violent countries in the world. South Africa, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Eswatini have the highest rates of reported rapes per 100 000 people in the world. The peacebuilding proposal involves three independent but intersecting parts:

- Training 10 000 young people in Lesotho, South Africa, and Zimbabwe in responsible, loving and nonviolent parenting
- Establishing a postgraduate programme in Peacebuilding at the National University of Lesotho
- Recommencing the KZN-AVP peace education programme and extending it throughout southern Africa.

Young Friends shared a video of a wonderful camp in the Drakensberg. They are keen to be nurtured in taking on positions of responsibility in the meeting and want to be involved in community work and AVP.

We heard a report of an active children's programme including linking across the YM and connecting to meetings in the UK, which they look forward to and enjoyed, during a difficult time for children.

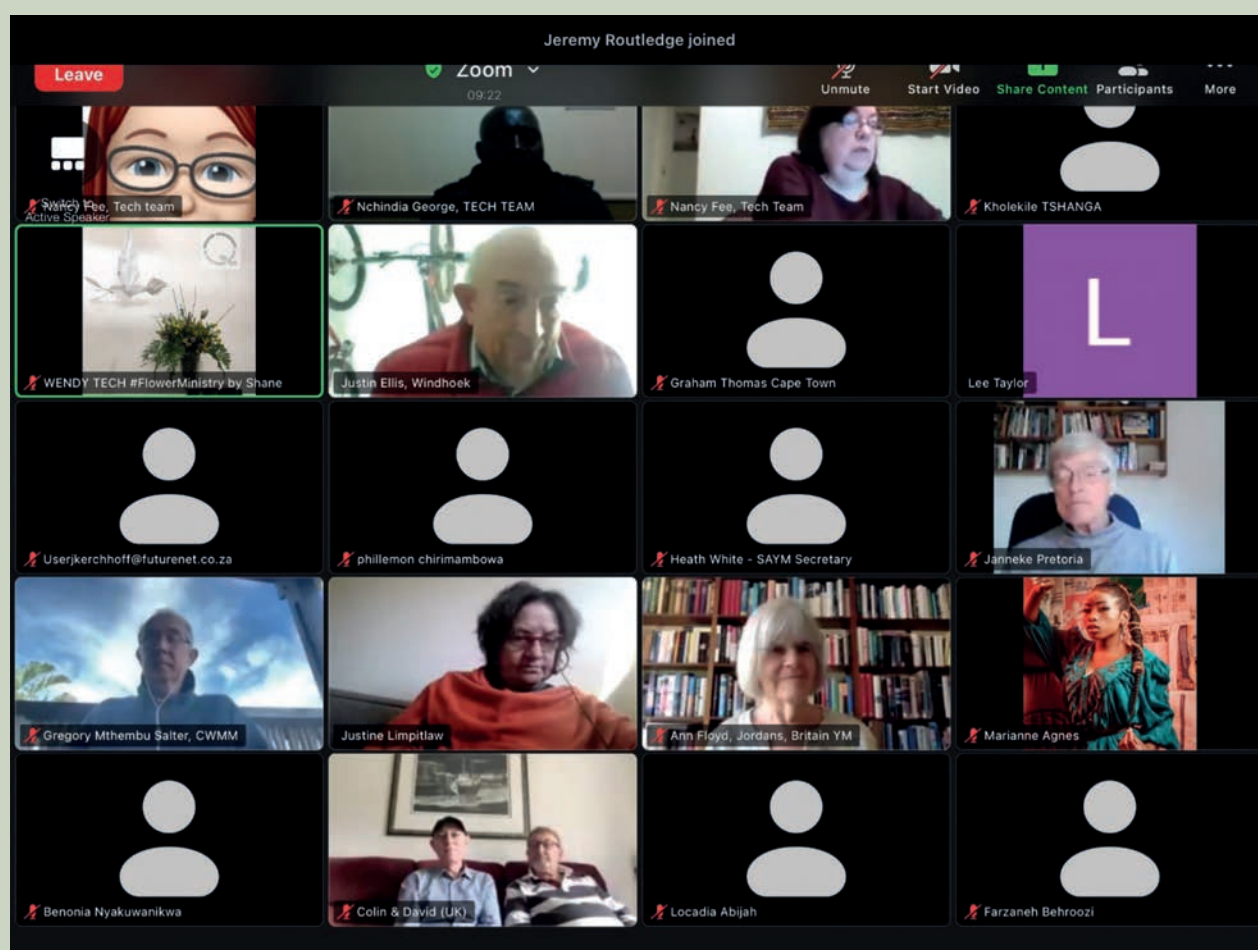
Digital technology has facilitated participation of Friends at our Yearly Meeting. This shows how adaptable Quakers are. There is also a need to put in place measures that address issues such as devices and data/connectivity, to maintain and increase the participation of Friends.

We appreciate that we were able to meet and share creative ways of gathering remotely. During this Yearly Meeting we were able to meet in Breakout Rooms and watch videos and were inspired by the presentation of music interludes and five-minute talks.

We agreed to continue exploring different ways of gathering, including holding blended meetings (face-to-face and digital) and we agreed to the Representatives Meetings taking place three times a year, possibly in blended meetings.

The Yearly Meeting is deeply concerned about the recent violent riots in South Africa and the growing socio-economic inequality and poverty in our region. The Yearly Meeting issued a public statement on the attempted insurrection, rioting, looting and damage to infrastructure in South Africa.

Signed
Co-Clerks
Sipho Nsimbi and Justin Ellis
Quaker Community in Southern Africa



Reflecting on YM 2021

Sipho Nsimbi, Bulawayo Monthly Meeting

A milestone

The SAYM of July /August 2021 stands out in the calendar of events in our Quaker community as a long awaited opportunity for Friends to interface with one another in keeping with our YM tradition. There was a sense of having “come home” to seek the silence under a new normal.

With great support from a strong technical team, YM 2021 delivered a meaningful worship experience via zoom for Quakers in Southern Africa and Friends from outside the region. Even with constraints of time, Friends were engaged in a varied program that attempted to balance both spiritual and business matters in the best way possible on a virtual platform. In spite of the odd technical hitches and some sessions overrunning their allocated times, the success of the event spoke to a high level of preparedness, great team work and planning ahead of time as well as co-operation from local meetings in providing relevant information within the agreed timelines.

YM happened at a time when the Southern Africa region (as indeed elsewhere in the world) was challenged by Covid 19, which had left in its wake increased social and material poverty due to losses of livelihoods, poor service delivery as more effort was being directed towards containing the pandemic, and rampant corruption that further marginalized the poor. Hence the YM Theme, Our Emergence from the Pandemic (inspired by discussions at MYRM 2020), was not only appropriate but was much more significant as a call to action in addressing some of these issues that threatened to dehumanize people in our communities.

Spiritual Life of Meetings under the New Normal

In general, it seemed that Meetings struggled to survive under the pandemic. Eastern Cape Quakers summarised the situation well as they cite different formats having been tried, ranging from zoom meetings, to socially distancing outdoors, sitting at home at an appointed time and holding everyone in the Light. There was anxiety as to whether we will ever get back to the old normal.

To get a feel of how Meetings fared during the pandemic, YM programmed time for local Meetings to share on how they survived by talking to the theme under 3 sub-themes: Healing in the midst of the pandemic, caring for each other and the planet, being the breath and light of God. From responses of various Meetings one got the sense of Friends having been “hard pressed but not defeated”. There was an encouraging wider use of online meetings which

broadened communication, but with a downside that some Friends did not have the appropriate gadgets, nor afford the cost of data. Mindful of this threat of exclusion YM has at least offered to supplement data costs on request to those who needed it. There were also some misgivings as to whether one is able to attain the same level of spirituality as in physical meetings, since the small scale interaction and fellowship that usually follows after a physical meeting is no longer the same. The quote about there being “...a dearth of emotional and spiritual support” and “....a barren place for me” capture a sense of isolation for some Friends during the pandemic, indicating a wish to return to the nurturing collective we have always known.

Some highlights

Apart from this YM being a zoom experience, there was a freshness about this gathering that really galvanized the audience. With sincere appreciation to Shane Petzer for his floral ministry our worship space had a special ambience brought about by a floral arrangement he had done specially for the event. The flowers in their stillness spoke volumes about nature’s diversity and its interdependence with humans. Then there were career videos, an initiative by QCJ, showcasing inspirational journeys of some of their Friends as they pursued their professions. In their presentations they shared how apart from working with diligence in their chosen disciplines, they always looked for opportunities to positively impact the social environments beyond their professions. These videos were a true reflection of adventurous living, a Quaker Quest. It is our hope that these presentations were a form of career guidance for our Young Friends who are faced with making some career choices now. More variety came from the musical interludes between sessions. This ministry impacted Friends differently. For some it was a welcome space to unwind and reflect on ongoing discussions, for others it was welcome space in which to seek the silence after a difficult session, yet for others it provided time out to just enjoy the music and sing along. We believe these additions to the usual YM program added value and we will stand guided by Friends if they wish them to be replicated in future Meetings.

Walking the talk

For a community that, like the rest of the world was locked down, the Southern Africa Quaker Community has really put their faith into action on issues of social justice and caring for the planet. In response to requests for food assistance from Botswana, Lesotho, Harare and

Bulawayo Meetings during the lockdowns, the Quaker Funds Committee reported on having met these needs timeously. The same level of support was extended to data needs of various Friends who attended MYRM and YM thus facilitating inclusivity in all programs. Indications of a healthy bank balance by the YM treasury went a long way in reassuring the Quaker Community of continued support for outreach programs. We hail once more Shane Petzer's creativity as a practical step and a rallying point that inspired many Friends even under a Covid era. Similarly, many of our South African Friends were hailed for having come forward to get their hands dirty helping in the clean-up exercise following the attempted insurrection in Gauteng and KZN in the wake of Jacob Zuma's incarceration happening a couple of weeks just before YM. True to our Quaker peace testimony YM issued a statement condemning the violence and advocating for peace.

From within its members YM also received for consideration as a Big Quaker Project the River Rescue Project that aims to restore and maintain polluted rivers around the Grahamstown area, a good initiative in caring for the planet. This is in addition to the peacebuilding project proposed by KZN. These were some of the examples of walking the talk that were shared at YM which have increased visibility of Quakers in the region.

It is encouraging to note that, while health challenges under Covid threatened to distance some from the divine and shake our spiritual beliefs, other Friends found an opportunity for "being the breath and light of

God" through increased service thus creating "... a strong sense of community which did not previously exist."

The way forward

YM remains tasked with monitoring progress with the PAR group initiative to see whether more Friends show interest beyond the Economy/Poverty and Digital Media PAR groups that have already started. Interest has been registered in getting Peacebuilding and Bible Study PAR Groups going. This would definitely widen the scope of participation of Friends in various social issues and Quaker Concerns. Even though we received a report on Children's activities, their program will remain separate and almost independent for now. It is envisaged that Young Friends may have a separate program in future, even though for this YM they were merged with the main event. YFs were definitely not allocated enough time in the program and this should be adjusted in future. The YM Elders could have been allocated more responsibilities during the course of YM and this will be adjusted in future Meetings. Time remained a great constraint impacting on minute writing. Some minutes ended up being completed outside the main gathering which was not in keeping with Quaker principles. Similarly some nominations had to be carried over for finalization at a later date by a committee nominated by YM.

YM expresses sincere appreciation to the technical team, Meetings that availed their zoom facilities to accommodate us and for our kindred organizations for valued support.

Right: Year-end rain brought floods of litter along with the much needed water to the Eastern Cape. Helen Holleman's River Rescue volunteers have been picking it up and helping the Makhanda rivers and springs flow again.

Below: The orange marks on the map show the places where River Rescue volunteers have been working over the past year.



Quaker Community in Southern Africa endorses SACC statement

1 August 2021

At their recent virtual meeting the Quaker Community in Southern Africa was made aware of the following statement of the South African Council of Churches.

"The South African Council of Churches (SACC) is dismayed and perplexed by reports that Government intends to destroy recovered loot, including food products, in the face of massive poverty and want. The SACC appeals for a change of heart over this, and that recovered goods should be placed in the trust of reliable humanitarian non-profit organisations to distribute those goods recovered in good working order and which remain intact, in accordance with appropriate criteria of the needs across the country. "In this regard the SACC has written to the Government with an urgent appeal to consider a humanitarian distribution process of recovered goods.

"We consider it unthinkable, and borders on obscenity, that even food can be consigned to destruction when we all know the extent of poverty and want in South Africa - the country with the highest levels of inequality in the world," said Bishop Malusi Mpumlwana, General Secretary of the SACC. "We hope that, if the decision to destroy these

goods has indeed been made, that it can and will be reversed," he concluded."

The Quaker Community in Southern Africa notes that in the spirit of James 2:14-26 the idea of faith without action is empty: Religion needs to be matched by action in the physical realm, as stated also in Micah 6:8. God is looking for men and women to do what is fair and compassionate to our neighbour.

We believe the Spirit is leading many churches in SA in this response.

The Quaker Community in Southern Africa endorses the intention of the SACC statement. Every peaceful and fair effort, by the law enforcement and other appropriate authorities, should be made to identify and return stolen goods to the original owners. Where this is not possible, we propose *Gift of The Givers* and *The Red Cross* as excellent organisations to receive these goods as soon as possible, to be distributed to those in most need as a matter of urgency. *Community Chests*, which are also good local bodies that support orphanages, early childhood centres, preschools and crèches, could also be excellent recipients for local distribution.

Sipho Nsimbi and Justin Ellis
Co-Clerks

Statement on the Failed Insurrection and Civil Unrest in South Africa

1 August 2021

26 years after the advent of democracy in South Africa, we have experienced our first major insurrection. It is still early days, and facts may yet come to light that shed entirely new aspects on what has happened. Thus far, what we have seen suggests that this was not a coup attempt in the classic sense, but rather a bid by a faction of the ruling party to so destabilise the country as to make the president and his faction's grip on power untenable, thus opening the way for the former faction to take back control. They were taking advantage of the poor and vulnerable and using them as pawns in their political interest. The pandemic has already ravaged livelihoods, and subsequent to that the insurrection has

made it much worse. Unaccountable elites are fighting amongst themselves without regard for the law or the general population. Huge sums of money that were supposed to be used for public good have been stolen through massive corruption.

The insurrection consisted of, inter alia, breaking open shopping centres to create multiple looting opportunities for an impoverished, locked down population and criminal elements, and then burning these same centres; inciting looting, destruction, and inter-racial conflict on social media; targeting and seeking to destroy infrastructure, including the N3, factories, and a chemicals plant in KZN; and – although

this needs further investigation – taking steps to ensure a weak to non-existent response from the police, again, particularly in KZN.

The label “insurrection” is correct. The sabotage was wide-ranging and organized. There were attacks on transport (transport routes and the Port of Durban) and the health system – including a blood bank – and after attacks on warehouses, distributors and Cipla, there is now a shortage of chronic medications in the province. Very worryingly, efforts were also targeted to disrupt communications networks and curtail journalism. There has been harassment and intimidation of the journalists who are covering the protests in KZN and Gauteng, and the deliberate destruction and looting of four community radio stations.

South Africa is hardly the first African country to endure insurrection after political transition. The DRC had its prime minister assassinated a year after independence, and its first coup five years later. Nigerians suffered their first coup six years after independence. Ghanaians nine years after. Algerians three years after. Benin three years after... And these were successful coups. In each case, citizens were left with a sad, helpless feeling as the democratic process was aborted, and unaccountable elites proceeded violently to grab power from each other with no regard for the law or the general population.

In South Africa, mercifully, the narrative is turning out differently. We are 26 years into democracy. Despite the setbacks associated with state capture, our institutions of democratic governance are maturing. And when insurrection strikes, it fails to spread. Instead, it peters out and the centre holds...

And alongside the still-lingering smell of burning comes the sound of sweeping. People, spontaneously, are cleaning up and the nation, distancing itself from the insurrection, is cheering them on. Even some instigators seem to feel the mood, posing now on social media, brooms in hand.

As we digest the news that, in our hour of need, the state’s security forces may prove unwilling or unable to defend us, we are also coming to an understanding that our yearning for peace, and for our democratic adventure to continue is powerful, powerful enough indeed to stop an insurrection. Powerful enough that now the President is feeding on this power, as he seeks to lead us forward. Amid all the pain and loss, we celebrate this.

As Quakers, we should recognise these signs of the times. Our peace testimony has long led us to scepticism about the ability of state security forces – and to joyful optimism about our own capacities – to honour that of God in all of us and to nudge us in the ways of peace. We believe in power from the bottom up. We believe in living one’s faith, in the power of a good example.

Hundreds are dead from this insurrection. We mourn



their loss and pray that each of their families may know peace, and receive justice. Tens of thousands of people have lost their livelihoods or their businesses. We commit ourselves to finding effective ways to show our solidarity with them, to being part of the clean-up, of the rebuilding.

Recognising that South Africa’s immense inequality, worsening poverty levels and its violent history and present have left our nation akin to a tinder box, let us also commit ourselves to the search for ways to rebuild better, more fairly, more inclusively, and more kindly. South Africa is in pain, but our democratic adventure continues. As we, as Quakers, strive to live adventurously, may we all seek and find ways to play our part in this rebuilding. We must work hand in hand with civil society to alleviate the widespread poverty in every way we can.

The real problem that needs to be addressed is that, notwithstanding acute pain in GP and KZN, most of Southern Africa is an area in crisis and in danger of becoming unviable. A real concern is that if the underlying structural inequalities are not substantively addressed, we will return to the status quo, and this will continue to explode.

South Africa emerged from Apartheid as the most unequal country in the world. However, despite significant fiscal resources and high levels of tax collection (over R1 Trillion a year) our government has simply not conducted itself with integrity in ensuring public resources are used to dismantle structural inequality. Individual actions are important, but not enough; we must also act collectively as a society.

We commit ourselves to being part of the process to ensure that no one goes hungry, to creating a politics of care, a culture of nurturance, and local economies that uplift and strengthen communities, to restore hope and address the structural issues hampering social change.

Co-Clerks

Sipho Nsimbi and Justin Ellis

Quaker Community in Southern Africa

QUAKERS SPEAKING

Helen Holleman, Eastern Cape Quakers

I think that the Quaker testimony that has had the most profound effect on my thinking and the way I live, is the one that 'There is that of God in everyone'. What I learned from the many years I spent in the Anglican church that 'we are brothers and sisters in Christ', just never had the same impact. Setting my feet on this particular part of the Quaker path, I found myself actually looking for God in other people, and that spun my world-view in totally different directions – the way I saw actions, heard and read words – was both shaken and stirred! It helped me see differences and look beyond them – it led (and still leads) to moments of strange intimacy – discussing Jane Austen with a car guard, or Rastafarian diet with the guys who pick through our rubbish. I just don't remember feeling about people that way before I came to Quakers.

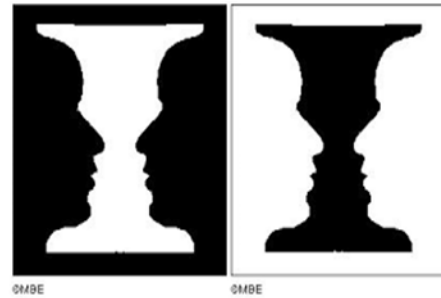
So when my Hindu friend in the laundry greets me with– the light in me sees the light in you 'Namaste'– I feel she's as much a Quaker as I am Hindu.

But I have a problem with the word 'God' because it carries so much baggage, and when I use it, I'm never sure how it's being heard, what's being assumed by my listener. A Friend (capital F) in the Eastern Cape Quakers described God as a powerful flame, a fire, and we are the sparks that fly off that source of energy. Each one of us carries the power to warm, to cleanse, bring comfort, bring light – and, at the same time – to burn the house down, to maim, to hurt, damage, to destroy utterly.

I didn't say 'either bring light OR destroy', I said 'bring light AND destroy.' Each of us has the capacity for both. So much of the way we're taught to think in the western paradigm is 'either ... or'. The years I spent living in the Far East taught me that, really, life is more of a 'both... and' arrangement. It was hard at first, holding opposites in tension – but again, it opened my eyes as the Quaker testimony had, and the world spun in another direction again.

Over time it has become easier to live with paradox – sometimes, even comfortable. But I have discovered that it is necessary to move to a position where I find myself saying, 'I just don't know'. And that's OK. It makes living with uncertainty tolerable – I no longer feel I have to control everything – or anything! I've learned it's OK to be useless at some things, because it opens up opportunities for others.

Thinking about positive and negative spaces also helps me – I'm sure you're all familiar with this illusion,



for example: Are you looking at a candlestick or at two faces? Or both? It's not either/or; it's both/and. And if you were to draw



this tree, would you draw the white spaces, or the black ones? Focus on the white spaces and you see something different. What interests me, is that you need both – the reality emerges where negative space meets positive space. And that seems true of life, too.

I've wondered why the pandemic has left me so inwardly undisturbed – am I emotionally dead? Stupidly detached from events? Was it the research I happened to be doing into pandemics, before Covid was a word? Was it 12 years of boarding school? Was it the resilience my parents lived out? Certainly, the resilience of early Quakers nourished my courage – a feeling of 'if they could do it, so can I'.

What has also helped is learning to live with the Zen Buddhist approach that 'it is what it is' – not what I hope it will be, not what I think it should be. Learning to look at what it is NOW and deal with that has opened up unexpected opportunities, opportunities I would have been blind to if I'd been hoping or looking for something different. So, I no longer hope – because hope holds within itself the seeds of its own disillusion. Taking the NOW, everything that makes this moment, the people, the sounds, the textures, the smell, the light, associations and memories, and asking – if this is my life in this very moment, what do I want to do with it?

Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama agree that the

first step to joy is gratitude. So start by saying ‘thank you’ for this moment – as you pick up the knife to slice vegetables, open your eyes to the morning light, stand shivering in the wind, wave to the car guard, even as you pull another handful of disposable nappies out of the river, say ‘thank you’. It can be difficult, but It’s very simple.

The light in me sees the light in you.



Shane Petzer, Quaker Community of the Western Cape

Dear Friends

Our more recent drama on South Africa’s landscape (riots and looting in Kwa-Zulu Natal and Gauteng Provinces) has created a seismic shock throughout the country. No singular event has opened the wounds of our inequality more succinctly than the experience of what we have gone through in the last few days. As a Yearly Meeting we are ALL in shock! No matter where

we might be in the region, what we have seen has cut into our faith and selves, deeply. None of us can claim that we have not been affected - we all have. We are all deeply interconnected, if it’s not through family, it certainly is through f/Friends and f/Friendships. In effect, we are all affected and we are bearing witness not only to the impact, but to the consequences. We hold our Meetings and communities in the Light as we face the opportunities to heal and come to grips with what has happened. We need to move forward.

James Epistle holds resonance for me and I am sure it does for many Quakers. So much of what is spoken about in his writing is an attempt to connect faith with action.

James 2:14-26

What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.

You foolish person, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our father Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is considered righteous by what they do and not by faith alone.

In the same way, was not even Rahab the



prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

As Quakers this message from James asks us to think about the value of faith without action. Whilst superficially we might applaud the doers and the rescuers in this seismic quake of the more recent events - they truly are our heroes: those that rise to the occasion to be the hand of God in redemption: the feeding, the caring, the nursing, the counselling. That is not enough Friends. Our call as Quakers, is not the call to apply the balm - our call is the call tied up in our Testimony's - the call to see the hand of God (us) in doing the Kingdom, bringing about His Kingdom, the democracy of God - the here and now of doing His work in our life here today. Our call is to do and be the systemic change we need to be to bring about the kind of social and political justice that is needed to bring about the Kingdom of God, not in the here-after, but in the here and NOW.

How do we do this? We do this through discernment. We do this through faith in action - to be our Testimony's not only in word, but in deed.

In more recent times our Thursday evening gatherings have brought up many discussions. For some 6 weeks I journeyed with Friends on zoom to explore our own version of Testimony: we called it PISCES (Peace, Integrity, Simplicity, Community, Equality and Stewardship). Our challenge in this time, is not to merely ruminate or to talk about how we come to taking Testimony as abstract theological notions, or broadly shared values we hold in some kind of Quakerly consensus (ever careful not to make a doctrine or a creed out of our Testimony's) but for them to be as living expressions of HOW we live out our lives as Quakers in the world today.

Much of what we will be called to do in the coming days, is not to be in delirious prayer, but to be in the world, taking risks to make meaningful change, in the world that so desperately needs us. It is to be in risk taking, in action and in a walking in deep and sincere faith, that that which we are doing is in tandem with our Testimony's, our Quaker faith - this

provides the underlying, the underpinning philosophical and theological drive to forge a way forward.

I believe that today, at this Yearly Meeting, God is calling us, as a Community to re-dedicate ourselves to a renewed faith, to a faith in action. We need to be risk takers! Not just in word, but in deed. I believe we are at a trajectory and a cusp of something new, a new beginning. Like the good Friend reminded us of Picassos quote, that out of destruction we create - we create the new! Creation comes from destruction!

Friends, let us truly live our Testimony, let us live our faith and bring action into the world we inhabit. So, it's not about us emerging from the pandemic and the troubles of our world, but it is to be active invigorators of spirit led social change.

My testimony remains inspired by Micah's prophetic call to do justice, love mercy and to walk in humility in Gods active enabling of me living out my Quaker faith in life today (ref Micah 6:8)

May this Yearly Meeting, with all its newness, and potentiality to shift us, bring the necessary impetus for us to move forward as a collective body, called to be a



#FloralMinistry Yearly Meeting 31.7 - 1.8 2021 #QuakerPeaceDove

chosen and special people, bearing a new witness and testimony to our broken and troubled world.

Finally, in thinking about our recent riotous troubles in the face of this pandemic, I am, as a Quaker, am challenged by James' Epistle 1:20 idea that "the anger of men does not achieve the righteousness of God". I do have to ask "Does it"?

Can we make sense of pandemic, insurrections and troubles in our economic, social and political lives? Can we create out of the destruction?

Friends! I think we can.

Let us BLOOM!!!! Peace be with you! Let's do this!

Finding the Light

Tiyiselani Maphiri, Quaker Community of Johannesburg

Friends, whilst my 5-minute talk at SAYM could only cover career highlights, I am thankful for the opportunity to testify about how the Light pierced through the dark moments of my life and career.

Courage? Skill? Emotional intelligence? If you were to travel on any worthwhile career journey, what is the one thing you would take with you? With hindsight, all I see is grace which allowed me to walk in love.

Love flows through, under, over rocky places and in the main, my career is represented by a dichotomy of social vs corporate, within an often still polarized South Africa. Yet, the delightful humanitarian surprises and gifts along the way far outweighed the challenges. Grace, on the other hand, is beautiful because it carries you even when you don't know it.

After returning from a year on student exchange in Switzerland, with all its splendor-filled mountains and streets that felt so narrow, my teenage mind had a clear plan. There were many questions from the Swiss that I had not been able to answer as eloquently as I wished (in any language) even with my private, convent, 'rainbow-nation' school education. Oddly enough though, there is something about having grown up as a Quaker child that prepares you for an international worldview, and I never felt inadequate, even when I looked and sounded obviously different. The year in Switzerland was reminiscent of my 10th year which I spent in Lancaster with my mother and amongst Quakers, and had been equally exciting. The plan I later followed was tertiary studies at WITS University in Johannesburg whilst working... I studied as widely as I could after realising the extent of the North-South

gaps. I hustled equally hard, starting with a job I had done during High School — waitressing — and soon thereafter in Customer Services of a retail outlet. My high school education was comparable in cost to a year at University, so working contributed immensely to ensuring that I did not fall through the cracks ... Again, grace.

After my undergraduate studies, sparked by a partnership, my entrepreneurial reached a career

pinnacle with event management work at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Leading up to the year 2000, I was an events supplier with various corporate organisations, and all events were celebrating social impact in the Education and Environmental sectors. Now, in the midst of COP26, I have the same passion, but my career has evolved from stakeholder relations and funding of non-profit organisations. In the corporate world the expectation of measuring social return on investment (ROI) using profit variables was overwhelming. ROI — Really? This brought forth activism from within as a voice for civil society and it



Tiyiselani Maphiri

was a reminder to me of why I entered this career — to make a difference in South Africa. The Law, Political Studies, Sociology, International Relations and German Language and Literature prepared me for the work itself but not for the politics surrounding the work. I had the privilege of hiring and developing others, but the one time I let go was a blow. What do we do when our lives do not say what we want them to speak? This circumstance was not lasting and I found that simplicity and truth work best to anchor the soul. Thankfully, I continued to work in the same field for years thereafter

and appreciated all the more how South Africans were creating their own good news as social justice champions with very few means.

It was only after the birth of my second son that I changed my work pace. In my new field of work, with students from all over the world, I learn from them as much as they learn to speak English from me. The timing was extraordinary as my marriage of 13 years ended with a small baby in my arms. But, I had support from my mother who is my education muse and living example of resilience. It is during this time that I found my way to my original spiritual home, I did not need to speak in the circle of Friends. Many a Sunday, I just wept and enjoyed the strength of seeking together. In listening I learned again the power of vulnerability

and the silence could not be louder when the Covid 19 Pandemic started. There was a convergence of my healing journey with my lecturing which is an outpouring of my skills as a mother, as a spiritual person of faith and as an anchor who understands how embarrassing and challenging it can be to learn a new language in a foreign land. The fulfillment in this career comes in Love's creative expression of making English fun and easy whilst celebrating world heritages. Teaching English as a Foreign Language at a University for the past four years has been enriching and although I am sometimes tempted to revert to the corporate world, every day I experience a contentedness that only comes through knowing, presence and a continued walk in love.

Identifying the cracks in the thick Apartheid Wall

Mmereko Emily Ntilane-Mnisi, Quaker Community of Johannesburg

“There is a crack in everything. That is how the Light gets in.”

Leonard Cohen, 1956-1968

It is difficult to write/talk about my career without giving a historical snapshot of the problems of education and development that have been deliberately designed and implemented by European settler-colonialism and apartheid in South Africa. On the other hand, it is also that humbling experience to acknowledge that only a few of us got opportunities for further study and even fewer had the support and stability during the apartheid years to succeed. Indeed, in my particular case, academic and professional qualifications took a long time to achieve because of such obstacles, but they served as building blocks in my career path – in the end.

I am a qualified teacher. I have just completed my 7th Teachers' Certificate namely, Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) Online. I decided to study this online course because I was no longer able to continue the Face-to-Face Training and Accrediting trainers and teachers as Facilitators, Assessors and Moderators as a Registered Training Provider for *The Education Training and Development Practices Sector Education Training Authority (ETDP SETA)*; due to scarce NGO Funders and Covid 19 pandemic.

I think my love for teaching began when the principal of my first school, Grootvlei “Bantu” School asked me to serve as a part time teacher for Grade R. This experience motivated me to complete my Grade 9 (Junior Certificate) and Matric through Damelin Correspondence College, and consequently I applied for Teachers' Course. I completed my *Lower and Higher*

Primary Teachers' Course within two years instead of four, because I already had teaching experience and a “good” command Afrikaans, which I had picked up from the Farmer's children where I grew up.

Tshiya Teacher Training College (for Basotho's only – see Group Areas Act 29/30 of 1950) was interesting in the sense that the medium of instruction was supposedly English, but we were forced to learn the Theory and Practice of Teaching in Afrikaans – simply because our lecturers were Afrikaners – “Die beginsels van onderwys.” But, this experience turned out to be an advantage because I studied Afrikaans & Nederlands as one of my majors in a BA degree at the University of Limpopo (the original name was Sotho Venda, Xitsonga only = SOVENGA University). We had an engaging, active, liberated Afrikaans lecturer who introduced us to Breyten Breytenbach, a South African novelist, essayist, poet and painter known for his opposition to Apartheid. My other interesting majors were Sesotho and Biblical Studies.

Biblical Studies? Well, my parents and my elder brother had strong backgrounds in Theology. They had a collection of Basotho History and Bible Study books for children and adults which I used at the farm where I grew up. This is where I started *teaching voluntarily*, as a teenager, teaching my fellow African children and farm workers how to read and write.

At the end of my degree (1976) I taught in Tzaneen and later in Bushbuckridge. In 1981 I went back to Johannesburg, and taught in Orlando High School. It

was during these years when I realised that I do not have pension fund from the Apartheid Government. The reason given to us was that our salaries were too low. Our salaries were determined by race and gender (Black women were therefore placed in the lowest rung). This was difficult to accept because I knew that this situation would affect me in future – may be forever. “This was one of the best examples of systemic/structural poverty” as the former SA President, Thabo Mbeki, would put it.

I continued with my studies – nevertheless. I did two jobs as a teacher during the day and Adult Educator in the evening so as to save money to further my studies. I obtained my Higher Education Diploma with distinction (UNISA). This was encouraging. Another motivation was that Wits, Pretoria and RAU (now called UJ) were (in the nineteen eighties) no longer Whites Only Universities.

The highlight of the hard work was my B. Ed distinction in Wits University. This achievement earned me a scholarship with the British Council to study for my M.A. degree in Lancaster University, UK. So, this felt particularly special because I earned this through research, pure hard work and outstanding results. I did not obtain it because I was this “poor South African woman”.

My life in Lancaster was the most fulfilling experience. Other than the gained an MA in Linguistics with distinction, the highlight was that I was one of the few students who were allowed to visit different Adult Centres all over UK. Again, again because of my teaching and facilitator experience. Another highlight was that I discovered the Lancaster Quaker Meeting through my ten-year-old daughter, Tiisi. Greta Seally, our host and kind landlady invited her to her Meeting – of adults who strangely worship in Silence? This was the Meeting that referred [pointed us?] us to Quakers in Southern Africa. In Lancaster I felt that I truly was a child of the Universe, and not this “caged apartheid being”. I had this wonderful opportunity of looking at Apartheid South Africa from a distance, and learnt that *all* South Africans were affected by Apartheid, in one way or another.

Coming back to SA, I continued working for the Department of Education at a management level. The highlights here are: In 1994 I successfully led the National Nelson Mandela Adult Literacy Campaign in Gauteng Department of Education. From 1995 to the late nineties, I was part of the team that was involved in the restructuring of the National Department of

Education. We had to strive for a single department instead of nine different Apartheid-era departments. As a result, I was involved in the process of developing a number of Education Policies in the Adult and Inclusive Education Fields.

On retirement, I continued as an accredited ETDP SETA Training Provider, training Facilitators, Assessors and Moderators, and I continue as the Alternatives to Violence Facilitator. I link my international and national travels to my Teaching Career and AVP Facilitator/Quaker experience. I travelled and co-facilitated AVP in South Africa, Lesotho, Namibia, New Zealand, Ireland, Brazil, USA, Switzerland, Egypt, Jordan Palestine and Israel.

I often think about my parents who encouraged me to follow my dreams and I look back with gratitude for the opportunities that were afforded to me by different organisations and individual Quakers. These unique support structures and hard work in my teaching career allowed me to live adventurously.

So, if you ask me again: What is your career? I will say: “A highly qualified, experienced teacher and ETDP SETA accredited Facilitator, Assessor, Moderator, Online Adult Educator, Learning Material Developer as well as a Seasoned and Well-Travelling Alternatives to Violence Project Facilitator.” Wow!

If you ask me about the thoughts I am wrestling with, based on my long journey in accessing education, I will answer: *“Equality without Equity is a complex and perhaps an impossible dream of the past, as well as of the present South African setting”.*

If you ask me about my thoughts in relation to my career, I will say: “Teaching is the most exciting, challenging and enriching profession of all – it keeps one young, at peace, in-touch with trends and puts you on a lifelong learning journey – against all odds. It is advisable to trust the challenges and the support organisations, in particular, Quaker structures, that the Almighty (Modimo) will offer you through Grace along the way.”

Finally, I know that the Young Friends may not be affected by issues such as discriminatory pension fund systems and/or experience racial barriers to learning in the way as I did, but I would still advise them to check their pension fund structures in whatever career they choose, and consider a top-up career, such as full time or part time teaching.

“Equality without Equity is a complex and perhaps an impossible dream of the past, as well as of the present South African setting”.

— Emily Mnisi

Sadie Stegmann

31 July 1934 to 3 December 2019

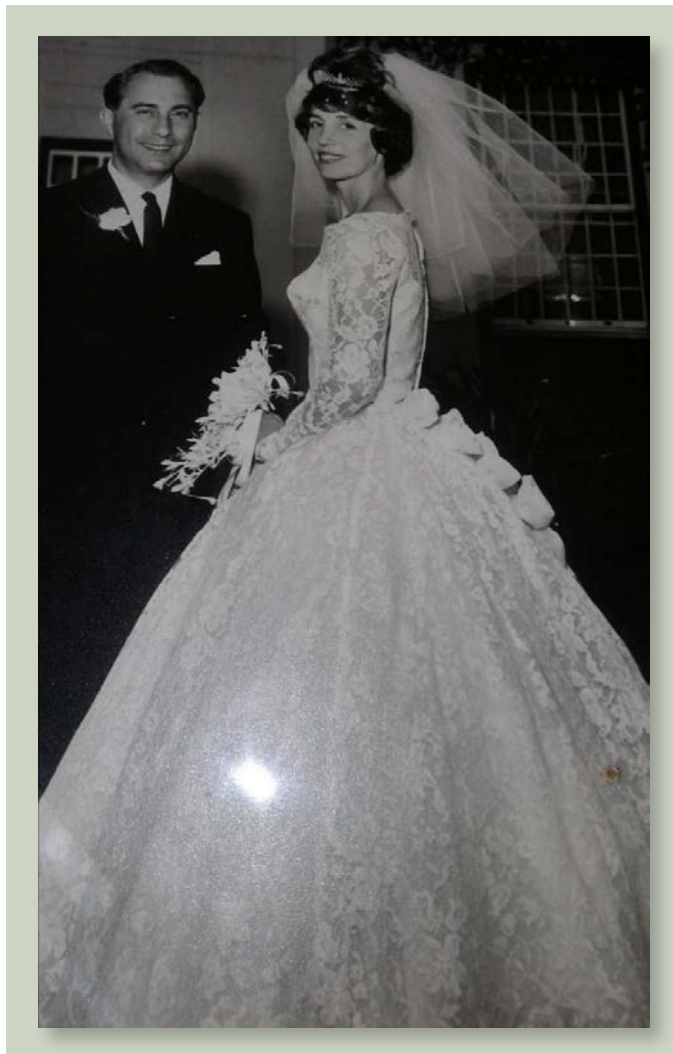
At Sadie's funeral a fellow Quaker described her as a Question Mark - a very apt description. Not only did her shape resemble a question mark when she sat with her feet up on the chair in front of her at Meeting for Worship on Sunday mornings, I think to many Quakers in the Cape Town Meeting she was an enigma and her complex character was never quite fully understood. It took me, as one of her closest friends, many years to do so, and still she sometimes surprised me right up until the end of her life in the Eleanor Murray Home in Woodstock, where she lived out the last two years of her life until, as she believed, she would be with George again.

Even as one of my longest serving friends—I had known Sadie 35 years—so there is much of her life that I only know anecdotally. She was born to Afrikaans parents, one of three siblings and spent much of her childhood growing up in Bredasdorp. She left home to go to Stellenbosch University and graduated with a degree in accountancy, but she told me that she spent more of those years partying and having a good time than she did studying.

Not very long after that, and after a few romances, she met her beloved George, as she told us at Meeting every anniversary of that fateful day, on a bus, or rather getting off a bus which she quickly got back on again having passed George. The rest as they say is history and they remained married for 52 years after Sadie rather hurriedly learned English so that she could understand George and his family.

They spent some time in Durban with George's work, but he had a major heart attack and by-pass surgery aged 45 and they 'retired' to Cape Town, as he was told he should never work again. Life from then on was not easy for either of them from stories I have heard from family and friends, but they did their best to enjoy what they could, holding lively parties and mixing in high Cape Town society. They seemed 'joined at the hip' to many who knew them, and so it is difficult for me to separate Sadie out to tell just her story, but I will try.

She was extremely intelligent and bright, but after her marriage Sadie didn't for the most part go out to work, as she wanted to be home to take care of George. They were told after his operation that he probably didn't have that long to live, and so being his primary caregiver took up a lot of Sadie's time and energy. She was an avid competition entrant and won many prizes over the years and was often heard on the radio on quizzes or



chat shows. However, she did a lot of 'voluntary' work and I am sure did a lot more than I know about, but I do know she helped set up *The Haven Shelter* and also *Ons Plek* in Cape Town as a refuge for homeless mothers and children. For years she went to make sandwiches at a Buddhist ashram and was a play lady at Red Cross Children's Hospital. For many years she also belonged to, and enjoyed, a Bible Study Group.

All of this 'work' came out of her deep Christian faith and she was very happy to discover Quakers, where she could be the kind of Christian that mattered most to her, along with George. She was an active Member of Cape Western Monthly Meeting, attending Meeting for Worship and Monthly Meeting without fail where she made her presence felt. She was Treasurer of the Meeting for many years, only giving up the post when technology caught up with her!

She took an active interest in the Quaker Peace Centre, though she never formerly held an office there. She always said that being Treasurer was more than enough and so never took on any other role. She was one of the founder members of the weekly

Prayer Group and I was blessed enough to share those meetings with her and other Quakers over the years. And she was a regular participant at annual retreats that the Meeting held and managed to get to Yearly Meeting once or twice.

Sadie battled with depression on and off for most of her life, but the last few years were not a happy time as concerns about Georges declining health and finance weighed on her heavily, but even through this time her faith never wavered and she did what little she could for the disadvantaged that she came across. Eventually she and George were no longer able to attend Meeting and so the ties grew tenuous, though a few Members did their best to help ease the increasing burden. George died peacefully at home in 2017 and with him the light that had given Sadie's life the most meaning went out, and she passed herself just over two years later.

Sadie added joy, wisdom, comfort, challenge and sometimes sorrow to our relationship but I consider myself blessed to have had her as a F/friend for so many years. My life would have been poorer without her.

Caro Attwell, May 2020

As a child I remember Sadie was always the most glamorous, liveliest and certainly the most entertaining of all our family members. She was the ultimate eccentric aunt!

She had a wicked sense of humour, a glint in the eye and a particular ability to engage with children.

When I was young I remember listening to her on a radio show each week over a period of several months where she was quizzed on the subject of Egyptology, she had a brilliant mind.

We spent many a happy Christmas at their old Cape Dutch house, Coornhoop, in Mowbray, with their fine antiques and artworks. These Christmas gatherings were filled with her humour, spontaneous song and home-made delicacies. Sadie and George had many good friends, enjoyed wine tasting and were renowned for their decadent dinner parties.

Throughout her life she worked relentlessly for charity, in particular for the Red Cross Children's Hospital where she did a huge amount of volunteer work. Through the Quaker network she was further involved in helping

others over many years.

In her spare-time she bought and sold furniture and other objects of value which was a real passion of hers. She entered many competitions and won tons of things over the years including a car. She had an avid interest in news and current issues and could often be heard calling in to the radio. Her letters would regularly appear in the local newspapers.

She was dedicated to George and supported him all his life. In the early days after they were first married they lived in a Victorian terraced house in Tamboerskloof. Later George was transferred to Durban where they lived for several years. I remember Sadie telling me how she used to jump into the cupboard in fright and hide there during the afternoon thunderstorms.

They moved back to Cape Town where they first lived in Coornhoop and then, after George's heart attack in the late 1970s, he took up a job as manager of an old age home in Three Anchor Bay. After that they moved to Observatory and then to Mowbray where they lived in the same house for many years. During that time George took up a position at the University of Cape Town's Conflict Resolution Department. Sadie supported him enormously in this position and during this time they met many interesting people.

She was a dear friend to many, a good listener and was always available in times of need.

We will miss her greatly and remember her as she was, with great fondness.

May she rest now with George, in the peace that she deserves.

**Paul Truscott, Quaker Community
of the Western Cape**



Ons Plek refuge for homeless mothers and children in Cape Town

John Harding

28 December 1927 to 23 June 2021

Lee Taylor:

Two weeks ago, I attended a Meeting for Worship for the grace of God in the life of John Harding in the lovely old Sibford Meeting House in Oxfordshire, Britain.

Martin Wilkinson was there, and - connected by zoom - Shane Petzer and Richard and Pushpa Knottenbelt.

Alma and John Harding were British Friends who were deeply committed to personal witness - they joined Quakers whilst living in (then) Southern Rhodesia in the 1950s. A Friend, David Leonard, wrote that 'they lived together through the hardening of race relations in Rhodesia, and the declaration of UDI. Some continued to accommodate the Smith regime one step at a time, but John and Alma reached a point at which Truth would allow them to go no further and they turned their lives into a fine witness to racial justice and harmony.' John and Alma lived and worked in South Africa, Botswana (at Kagisong), and in Zimbabwe where they were wardens at Harare Meeting for a while, and also provided service at Hlekweni Rural Service Training Centre - John as Finance manager and Alma helping the women establish a bakery, and at Samathonga school. Alma was involved in administering prison education in Zimbabwe.

John was Africa Secretary at Britain Yearly Meeting in the 1980s and Alma was Warden of the Friends International Centre, and worked for FWCC and at Friends House, Britain.

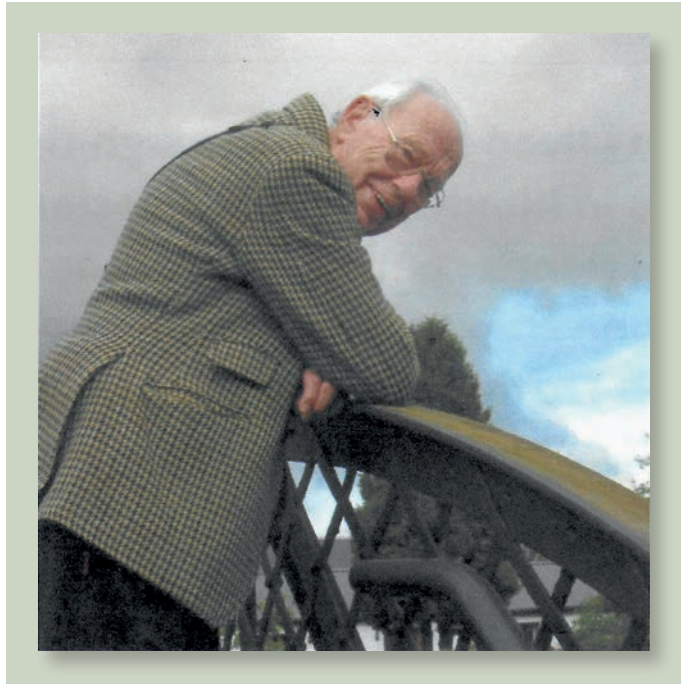
All those they came in contact with knew them as

gentle, caring, unassuming, kind and hardworking people who kept up their interest in Southern Africa into their retirement - for example, they helped sort out the Quaker Archives at Cape Town University Library.

Alma died in 2018, and John in June 2021. I appreciated their warmth and support for Friends of Hlekweni and the work of Zimbabwean Quakers.

Hele Vale, Namibia Monthly Meeting remembers:

I was sent as a QOVS (Quaker overseas volunteer for service) to Swaziland for 3 years (1972-75) when John Harding was Africa Secretary working at Sebenta



National Institute (which run the adult literacy programme) and that started my love affair and long association with Southern Africa. I have been 30 years in Namibia now which I can't believe and was for 12 years on and off in Swaziland! So the current unrest there is really worrying but not unexpected.

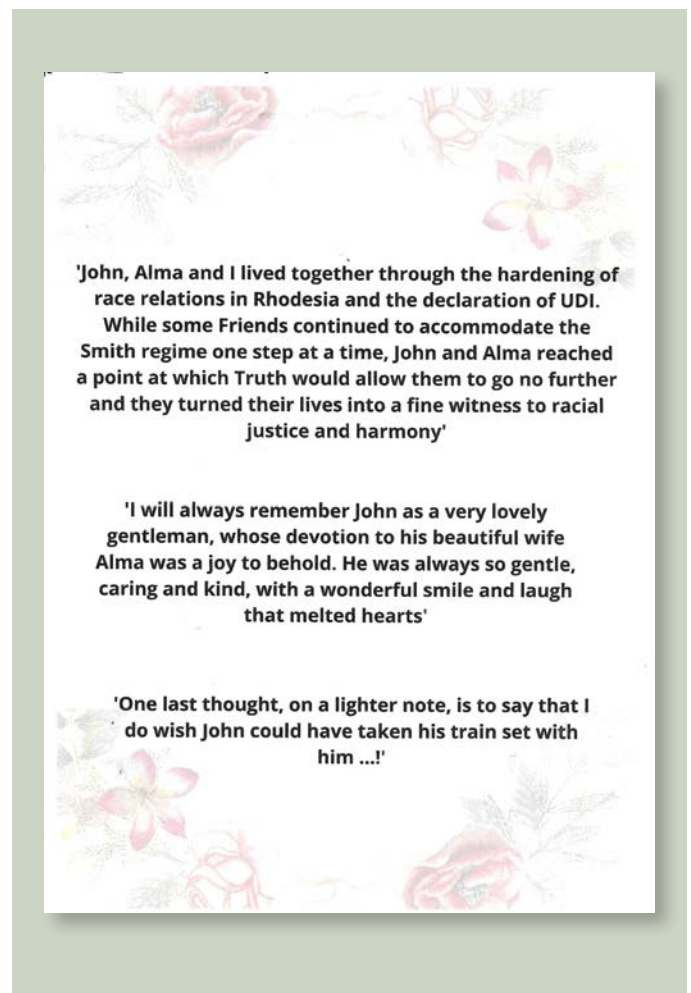
John came to visit me in Swaziland to check on the project. I remember saying to him that I had arranged a meeting with the Minister who was Chairperson of the Sebenta Board. He thought I meant a religious minister so he was surprised when I introduced him to Sishayi Nxumalo, then Minister for Industry, Mines and Tourism. A dynamo and later deputy Prime Minister.

John must have been Africa Secretary for about 20 years at Friends Service Council and then for Quaker Peace and Service. I am not sure when he retired. I knew Alma too since we worked together when she was working for William Penn House next to the Quaker International Centre in Bloomsbury (a five-minute walk from Friends House on Euston Road) which was the venue for many small Quaker groups/meetings including the London Diplomats Group run by Quaker Peace and Service for many years. She was a warm and gracious host and made the meal for the monthly talk/meetings. John and Alma were a modest, hardworking, loving couple very committed to Quaker principles and action.

Shane Petzer remembers

Yes, John and Alma Harding were at one stage heading up the African Section of Quaker Peace and Service at Friends House in London. I met them in the early 90's in Cape Town. At the time I was a Quaker Objector to military service, serving my community service sentence as a Trauma Counsellor for the Department of Forensic Medicine (University of Cape Town) and Salt River Mortuary. I was two years into my 3 year sentence, when a whole lot of us Objectors doing time, downed tools, rejecting and protesting the South African Governments sentencing of us. We all were arrested one by one across the country. We all had legal representation and in the end the State could really do nothing. The country was in rapid change, Mandela had been released and CODESA was starting. We were free to go! I must say I really enjoyed my work as a Trauma Counsellor at the Mortuary, but it wasn't possible to morph that work beyond the community service sentence. To this day, aside from my pilot project at the Department of Forensic Medicine, no crisis mental health services exist for people at any State Mortuary in South Africa! A sad indictment on South Africa!

I wanted to work in HIV/AIDS. John and Alma were aware of my leading in that direction. So Quaker Peace and Service sponsored my salary for a further two years so I could work as a seconded Quaker worker into what



was one of South Africa's pioneering AIDS advocacy and service organisations called the AIDS Support and Education Trust (ASET). As a QPS worker I reported to John for a while, before his position was taken over by Martin Wilkerson. I used to meet regularly with Anne Oglethorpe of the then Quaker Peace Centre and that linked the work within Quaker structures.

I saw John and Alma again in London when I was at Woodbrooke all those years ago. My last memory of them was in a tea garden in the Company Gardens in Cape Town where we met with my late, former Director, John Pegge.

I was aware of John and Alma's work in Zimbabwe and their testimony lived there. They both had a good handle on what the issues were here in Southern Africa! I saw in them, people living Quaker testimony out into the world.

Their passing is an end of an era. For those of us who remain, it is really up to us, to continue in their footsteps. In John and Alma Harding, we certainly have very high standards to measure up to!

May their departed souls, rest in Peace.



Shane Petzer

1967 to 5 October 2021

Tessa Bruning, Barrydale Worship Group, Quaker Community of the Western Cape.

It's hard to know where to begin...

Composing a tribute to a man like Shane, is a task that could, on the one hand, be very complicated. Shane had so many aspects to his rich and fully-lived life, and I am sure that everybody who knew him, each from their unique perspective, would have tales to tell, of humour, compassion, ferocity, tenacity, insightful empathy, solidarity ... and I know that these were all traits that Shane had, and would engage fully, if and wherever needed.

I know too, that the biographical nature of Shane's life journey, is also rich in detail and interest, however, I am not privy to all the detail, so will not try to recount it, for perhaps I will omit something important, or mistakenly emphasise something that Shane may not have thought important enough to mention ...

For such was the man I knew. Reluctant to have the spotlight on himself, deferring to the bigger picture, focusing his message on Ubuntu, on values lived, not merely spoken about.

For these reasons, my tribute to Shane, will be of a personal nature rather than about the causes he stood for, the social and political injustices, or environmental degradation that he enthusiastically and steadfastly challenged, for decades. These facts are in the public domain and he could be proud and satisfied, that his life has made a difference.

On the other hand, writing a tribute to a man like Shane, could be a very simple task... that's how I will approach it, and I will go back to the Shane who I knew, respected and loved. I got to know him as a community member before I knew him as Clerk of the Barrydale Meeting of Friends. In fact, it was knowing him as a person that drew me to Quaker practise at all. I had no intention of joining or attending any kind of group, far less one of "a religious" nature. This is where my curiosity was ignited ... here was a warm, welcoming, resourceful person, popping up everywhere I looked in Barrydale! His diminutive

stature belied his huge impact and influence. Whether one was chatting with the local knitting group, or with a book club, or clinic staff, municipal workers or activist groups ... or artists ... or restaurateurs ... or reclusive individuals ... everyone knew Shane. He had a universal quality that made him accessible to people from all walks of life, yet he did not curry favour or water himself down in order to be "liked". Shane was consistently, unapologetically, Shane. This encouraged each one of us to be truthful versions of ourselves too. What a gift. This is what drew me to the Quaker Meeting. I could doubt, question, challenge ... and yet, I never needed to, because in his home where the meeting was held, I felt at rest. No need to fight. Or bargain. Or resist. Each of the attenders, was fully and authentically present. Shane would hold each of us, in a totally sacred, unassuming, inclusive and attentive way. This is a very rare space for a person to come into, and we shall always miss him for it.

Not one to be deterred by circumstances, Shane found ways to continue engaging with us and run Meetings during lockdown and beyond. His monthly Flower Ministry sent out with inspiring Quaker Advices, kept us connected and in community, through extremely challenging times. When things opened up again, Shane was out and about, greeting, co-ordinating, involved. Right up to the very last day. This is the great shock ...

there was no warning. A vigorous man, arranging Barrydale-in-Bloom, interviewing gardeners, filming gardens, preparing the way for others to enjoy a wonderful interaction. And. Then. He. Was. Gone.

A fitting conclusion to this tribute, comes in a verse Shane once shared with us, written by George Fox in 1656: *"Be patterns, be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come. Let your carriage and life, preach among all sorts of people, and to them: then, you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering that that is of God, in every one."*

Shane did walk cheerfully. Shane saw God in each one. His life did and still does, preach to me. I am forever enriched from encountering him, and the Quaker Community has lost a leading light. May he rest in peace.



Shane Petzer
(Photo by Paul Heinrich, an Australian photographer)

Richard Rohr Meditation: Simple Trust in God's Presence

Living School emeritus teacher Cynthia Bourgeault shares how her early exposure to a simple form of quiet prayer impacted her spiritual journey.

“Prayer is talking to God”: with these words nearly all of us receive our first religious instruction. Certainly I did. As a child, I learned the usual first prayers and graces (“Now I lay me down to sleep” and “God is great, God is good ...”), followed, a bit later, by the Lord’s Prayer and the Twenty-Third Psalm. I was also encouraged to speak to God in my own words and instructed that the appropriate topics for this conversation were to give thanks for the blessings of the day and to ask for assistance with particular needs and concerns.

But for all this, I was also one of the relatively rare few who also had it patterned into me that prayer was listening to God. Not even listening for messages, exactly, like the child Samuel in my favorite Old Testament story [1 Samuel 3:3–10], but just being there, quietly gathered in God’s presence.

This learning came not from my formal Sunday School training, but through the good fortune of spending my first six school years in a Quaker school, where weekly silent “meeting for worship” was as an invariable part of the rhythm of life as schoolwork or recess. I can still remember trooping together, class by class, into the cavernous, two-story meetinghouse and taking our places on the long, narrow benches once occupied by elders of yore. Occasionally, there would be a scriptural verse or thought offered, but for long stretches there was simply silence. And in that silence, as I gazed up at the sunlight sparkling through those high upper

windows, or followed a secret tug drawing me down into my own heart, I began to know a prayer much deeper than “talking to God.” Somewhere in those depths of silence I came upon my first experiences of God as a loving presence that was always near, and prayer as a simple trust in that presence.

Almost four decades later, when I was introduced to Centering Prayer through the work of Father Thomas Keating, it did not take me long to recognize where I was. In a deep way I’d come home again to that place I first knew as a child in Quaker meeting.

What I know now, of course, is that the type of prayer I was being exposed to during those meetings for worship was contemplative prayer. In Christian spiritual literature, this term all too often has the aura of being an advanced and somewhat rarefied form of prayer, mostly practiced by monks and mystics. But in essence, contemplative prayer is simply a wordless, trusting opening of self to the divine presence. Far from being advanced, it is about the simplest form of prayer there is.

Children recognize it instantly—as I did—perhaps because, as the sixteenth-century mystic John of the Cross intimates, “Silence is God’s first language.”

Cynthia Bourgeault, Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening (Cowley Publications)

Hope in Difficult Times

Hannah H Tarindwa, Namibia Monthly Meeting

Hope is the concept of believing that there is something to look forward to especially in a situation where it seems as though there is nothing ahead.

In today’s reality, day to day news seems to be worse than it was yesterday. Misery is around us and seems as though on a daily basis, we are constantly bombarded with images of sadness, melancholy is the order of the

day. All stemming from loss: Loss of income, loss of livelihoods and even loss of relationships.

The world is “developing” at yet people are deteriorating in mind body and spirit. There is a disconnection with ourselves and with others.

There are many coaches and mentors out there, yet more and more people are like lonely satellites floating



Hannah H Tarindwa

in space, looking for something they are not sure of. Spiritual gurus and guides are now accessible from various parts of the world at the click of a screen. Yet depression is high, too high considering that people are living in seemingly peaceful conditions. Families are disjointed and broken homes are the norm.

Is there hope for hope to germinate and grow in such a seemingly dry environment? Are there people who are daring enough to sit in silence and let the Creator speak

to their longing hearts. Are there people ready to help others to be still and for the first time, in a long time, calmly allow the light from within shine though the mirkiness of our difficult lives?

Will it be possible for people to silence the noise they used to fill in the void created from rejected, by parents, by peers and by the world around them, in order to see the light beyond?

True hope is a gift many people need in these bleak times. True hope not hinged on material substances which will come to pass, but that which transcends time, space and our imagination. It is this hope that must be shared as a candle lights another without itself dimming out. This hope which we must seek out because our very existence depends on it, as individuals as well as a species. A hope which does not make sense at first sight, but takes deep roots in our lives.

Now more than ever we must look deeper inside ourselves to find the infinite image of our Creator, instilled inside each of us, for times such as these. To know that we are more than what we see reflected in the mirrors held up by society. To not see what is beyond the brick walls and still believe that there is something there: something magnificent and worthwhile.

We must not only hold on to hope in this difficult times, we must also share it as best as we can.

Love and Light

BOOK REVIEW

Care for the Planet: Towards a Quaker Story, by Murray Short, published by the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) of Aotearoa New Zealand, 2021, ISBN: 978-0-473-57801-5

Wouter Holleman, Eastern Cape Quakers

As you read this COP26 will have been in session in Glasgow, and no doubt there will be verbal commitments a-plenty about curbing greenhouse gas emission, moving into renewables and much more.

The opening sentence of Murray Short's *Care for the Planet* reads:

Quaker beliefs have much to offer as the world faces the challenge of making radical change to reverse the environmental degradation caused by human behaviour.

In the 35 pages of his paper, Murray Short takes us on a journey from the radical origins of Quakerism that drove the passion of Quakers to change the world. But, this passion – a spiritual conviction – has largely been lost. He continues the journey, exploring our behaviours that are shaped partly by our beliefs and by the

worldview of the cultures we grow up in. Many of these beliefs

"... are conveyed to us in the form of narratives or stories, which illustrate and affirm our beliefs, and as George Monbiot says, "... facts and figures have no power to displace a persuasive story." We may be confronted with a plethora of facts about the climate crisis but the powerful stories that convey our beliefs will continue to influence our behaviours."

... and then Short explores the creation story as recorded in Genesis, ending with

The snake asked the woman, "Did God really tell you not to eat fruit from any tree in the garden?"

"We may eat the fruit of any tree in the garden," the woman answered, "except the tree in the middle of it..."

The snake replied, "That's not true; you will not die.

God said that because he knows that when you eat it you will be like God and know what is good and what is bad."

... and that this is a warning that knowledge is a double-edged sword, for with knowledge comes freedom of choice.

Short explores the nature of Dualism – the separation of the divine, the spirit, from Nature, the Earth and material Things. He contrasts this Dualism with Monism where the Divine and Nature are of one substance. To illustrate this monist worldview Short describes the values of the Para Kore Maori programme, which was established to achieve zero waste as:

Our values acknowledge our connection not only with all people but with all things living and non-living with whom we share this planet. We acknowledge our hākuī Papatūānuku, and our matua Ranginui from who we all descend.

We communicate from the perspective that we are all interconnected; we are linked through our genealogies, our relationships with each other, and our inseparable ties with all living and non-living entities with whom we share this planet. We build relationships with others based on the understanding that we are them and they are us.

Short introduces Martin Buber's ideas about two different modes of existence, that of 'I-Thou' and that of 'I-It', which manifest three different spheres, that of 'life with nature', 'live with other people' and 'life with spiritual realities'.

The 'I-Thou' mode establishes and maintains the world of relation, both person-to-person and person-to-nature encounters. This is fundamentally a reciprocal relationship, the mode of 'subjective and personal, and of involvement and community'. It is emotional, intellectual, creative and spiritual. It is through

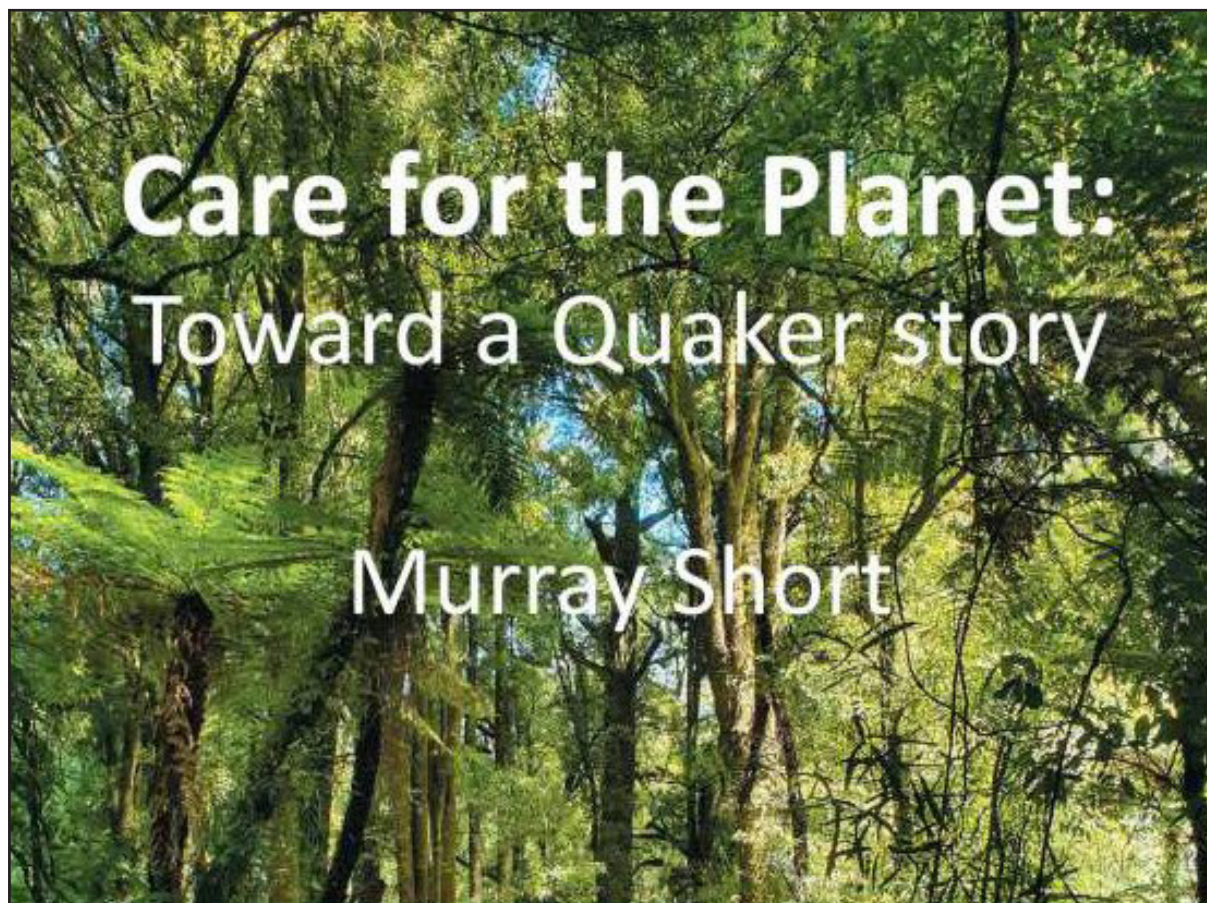
reciprocity in relationships that we develop a sense of self.

The 'I-It' mode establishes, maintains, observes and analysis the world of things. It is a world without reciprocity, where the 'I' is dominant. In western tradition we tend to see nature as separate from ourselves, as part of the 'It'-world.

In a western tradition – culture – we tend to see nature as part of the 'I-It' relationship: forests – timber – is there to be utilised, while the 'I-Thou' relationship exists not only between people, but between people and nature as well. This is of course significant when we talk of sustainability.

Short carries this towards exploring the 'building blocks for a Quaker story', a new 'Theology' in the sense of needing to reinterpret and build on and/or replace our 'existing stories' that would contribute towards the creation of story, expressed by the Yearly Meeting of Aotearoa New Zealand in 2000 as:

Let us recognise the diversity of life, its independence and balance. The inherent wisdom of life astounds us. From cells to ecosystems, we see a self-organising, self-repairing, cooperative whole. Our human focus needs to be widened to encompass the whole web of life. We need to change from domination to participation. The process will not be easy. Our belief in simplicity will help us to live full and joyful lives without devouring the earth's resources. We can cheerfully do more with less.



That's here - That's home - That's us

On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you've ever heard of, every human being who ever was lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering. Thousands of confident religions and ideologies and economic doctrines. Every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every superstar, every supreme leader, every saint and sinner in the history of our species, lived there...

On a mote of dust, suspended ... in a sunbeam.

The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that in glory and triumph they can become the momentary masters of a fraction ... of a dot. Think of the endless cruelties visited by the inhabitants of one corner of this pixel on the scarcely indistinguishable inhabitants of some other corner. How frequent their misunderstandings, how eager they are to kill one another, how fervent their hatreds, our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the universe, are challenged by the point of pale light, our planet ...

is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity in all this vastness there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves. The Earth is the only world know so far to harbor life. There is nowhere else, at least in the near future, to which our species can migrate. Visit, yes. Settle, not yet. Like it or not, for the moment, the Earth is where we make our stand.

It has been said that astronomy is a humbling and character-building experience. There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits that this distant image. To me, this underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another and to reserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known.

Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space, by Carl Sagan, Ann Druyan. 1997