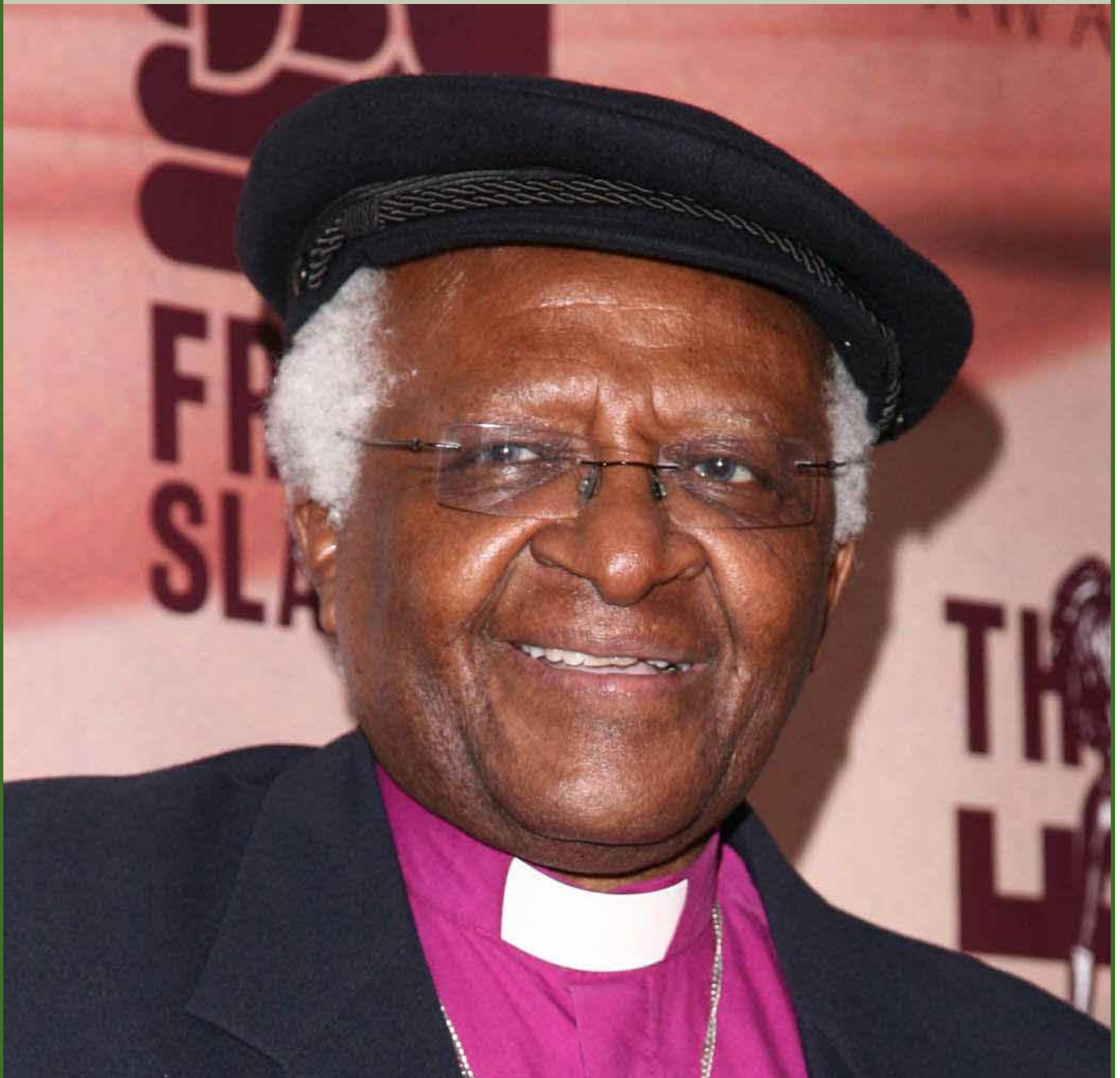


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Please direct requests to:
SAQNeditor@quakers.co.za

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Please visit our website
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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

When I wrote the last Editorial in January, Mzansi had been in Covid lockdown for some two years. Since then, we have had – still have – the Omicron variant and the lockdown which, while relaxed, is still with us.

I also reported then that Susan Winters had agreed to come on board as an assistant editor – and we have now been joined by Bronwen Ellis as another on the team.

In February Archbishop Emeritus, the much-loved Desmond Tutu passed away. This issue carries a statement on his passing from the YM Clerks.

Many of us will be following the unfolding disaster in the Ukraine, with the heart-searing images of people fleeing the destruction. And some will remember the threat by Vladimir Putin about using nuclear weapons, which awakened a whole string of memories in Susan Winters, who writes about

growing up ‘in the shadow’ of the development of nuclear weapons.

A more Quakerly engagement is Anthony Barlow’s account of his father’s involvement in the Friends’ Ambulance Service, and this issue has the first part of his account, together with information about the book he has published on the letters written by his father to his mother during the war.

Writings and illustrations can be submitted to any of the editors at the email addresses below. And illustration must please be in jpeg format of fairly high resolution.

Wouter Holleman – wouterholleman43@gmail.com

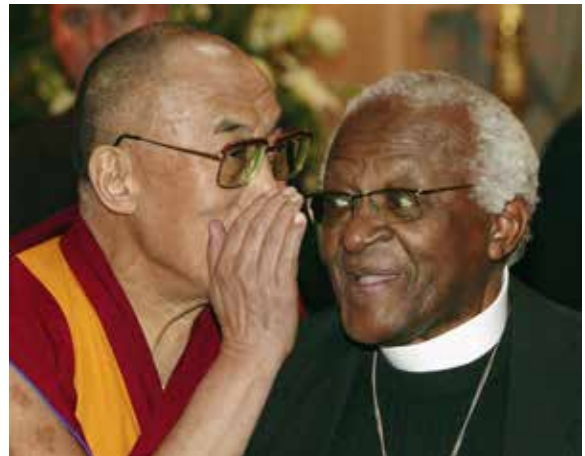
Susan Winters – sundance.farm@gmail.com

Bronwen Ellis – ellbro001@gmail.com

Wouter Holleman



Statement on the Passing of Archbishop Desmond Tutu



Quakers in Southern Africa give thanks for the life and witness of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. A number of Friends had the privilege of working with him for justice and peace.

We join with a multitude of people of all faiths and nationalities who have been deeply touched by Desmond Tutu during his long life spanning several challenging eras.

Desmond Tutu was a man of prayer. His courage and actions blossomed from deep spiritual experience and insight. He very often acted boldly, in a spirit of love and compassion, but sometimes also with a sense of impish fun and humour, showing us the true liberty of those who devotedly follow God.

Despite having no means other than the truth and his own presence he influenced us all to primarily value our common humanity, ubuntu.

May we all remember him and follow his example.

Issued by Siphon Nsimbi and Justin Ellis, Co-Clerks of the Yearly Meeting of Quakers in Southern Africa

30 December 2021

<https://www.quakers.co.za/>

REPRESENTATIVE MEETING MARCH 2022

Memories and thoughts from the Representative Meeting by Zoom of 26 and 27 March 2022

Justin Ellis, YM Clerk

It was a meeting of Friends – some 20-30 of us from all over Southern Africa – so, of course, there are formal minutes to say what happened. But what will stick in my mind from this meeting?

Firstly, I recall just the pleasure that people took in each other's company. As southern African countries we are very dependent on each other economically.

But to enjoy this spiritual connection across our borders was something special for me, even if only electronically. It was also special to be joined by Tim Gee, new General Secretary of the World Office of the Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), and Bainito Wamalwa, clerk of the Africa Section of FWCC. This all against the background of Russia's war in Ukraine, this daily horror in the news, that will drive up our fuel prices and deprive us of food, because some people seemingly cannot find the humble way to peace.

Secondly, I will remember that at this meeting we took an important decision to support a Universal Basic Income Grant for Southern African Countries, starting with South Africa. This social security measure is part of our own search for peace. It comes after a year's work by our PARⁱ Group on Poverty and Inequality. BIG won't happen without us getting out there and standing up for it. We also agreed to support a short list of projects, that are part of our outreach, and to engage in a new kind of

Bible Study that will start with the preoccupations that people have today, rather than with some selected Bible verses.

Thirdly, the short histories of our Meetings that we shared with one another left an overall impression of how our meetings in this part of the world were often established by expatriates and settlers of various kinds

and gradually taken over by locals. The transition might be hazardous. We depend as a faith community on the cohesion within relatively small groups, and between those groups. We have no ambition to have large congregations. It might have been different if we had had missionaries who came specifically to start Quaker churches. But perhaps we need to think more carefully about whether we still have an evangelical obligation to work on our resilience and growth.

Fourthly, it was encouraging to hear the plans of our Young Friends and the

Children's Meeting, particularly as the Covid Pandemic seems to be waning.

Finally, it was exciting to hear some multi-dimensional thoughts on the theme of our next Yearly Meeting scheduled for January 2023, "Living the spirit of Ubuntu: Responding with hope to God's call to cherish creation – and one another". We have taken this theme from the theme of the FWCC World Plenary Meeting due to take place at Riverside Sun Hotel in South Africa in August 2024. Our conclusions will hopefully contribute to that meeting.



ⁱ PAR stands for Participation, Action and Research.

Interview with Benoni Nyakuwanikwa, Harare Monthly Meeting

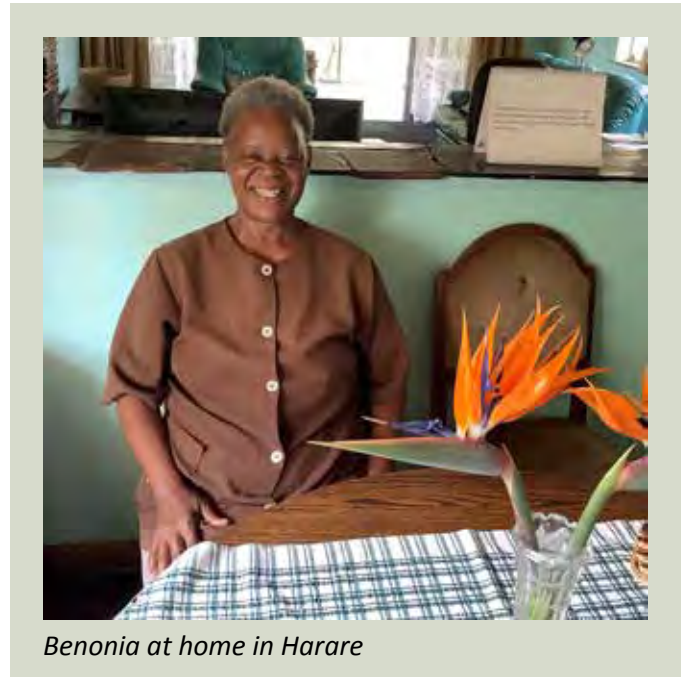
By Nancy Fee: 17 September 2021

Nancy: When did you become a Quaker?

Benonia: I have known the Quakers for the past 40 years. I grew up as a Catholic, and we went to catholic schools. And we were forced into going to Church. After I had done my O-levels, I decided I wouldn't go to church. My father said that I was then out of the house. Fortunately enough, that same year a lady from the Quakers visited our place which was a high density area, where black people lived, and introduced us to Quakers. She invited me and the people I was working with to come to the Meeting House, which was in a better off area, and which was mostly white people. My friends and I would walk from our place to the MH, about 6 km for Sunday Meeting for Worship. And there we would mix with the Quakers, who were mostly white. The only other time I had been with white people was with the nuns at boarding school. This was 1976, and we were Rhodesia, and under white minority rule.

MfW was an eye opener for me. After a time, I began feeling at home. Because of that, I built some confidence in myself. I learnt that I was able to have direct communication with God. This was so different from my Catholic upbringing and schooling, where we only could reach God through the priest. Having to mix and mingle with other people, including foreigners, made me feel quite comfortable, and I built my confidence – now understanding that there is that of God in each of us, no matter our colour, background or other factors.

Over the following years, I have been an active member of Harare MM. Though I had a break for a few years because of distance and transport problems. I was now working and earning, and had my own transport. Then I began coming to the Meeting very regularly, and got more involved Business Meeting. At the same time, the older white members, many of whom were foreigners, were leaving the country. In 2016, our last Wardens, who were from BYM, retired to New Mexico. I took over as clerk then, and have been working with other Members to run the Meeting.



Benonia at home in Harare

Harare Monthly Meeting

HMM has always been a small meeting, with less than 10 members, and a handful of children and YFs. We have tried by all means to sustain the Meeting, by encouraging Friends to come to MfW on a regular basis. We have a MH and warden's cottage about 4 km from the city centre, on a large plot with mature trees and a garden. Our latest project is a joint vegetable garden which helps Friends to increase their family food supply. We have a borehole and a good supply of water at the MH, as this can be a problem for friends at their homes.

Economic and other struggles in today's Zimbabwe

The last twenty years have been very difficult in Zimbabwe. We see many people struggling to survive, including putting food on the table, and paying for children's school fees. This applies to the majority of Zimbabweans, including Friends. The political instability and poor economic situation are major factors. As well as recurring drought, with only infrequent good harvest. We are already feeling the effects of climate change, which is making a difficult situation even worse. People can only afford the absolute necessities. Sadly, friends often do not have transport money to come to Meeting.

Covid arrives in 2020 – and a difficult environment was made worse

Life becomes even more difficult with the arrival of Covid-19 in March 2020. Lockdown was introduced, and gatherings, including religious meetings, were banned. Schools and workplaces were closed and curfew was introduced. It felt like life had come to a full stop. Everyone was isolated. The majority of Zimbabweans

make a living through the informal sector. The Covid restrictions meant that they had no income, and many went hungry.

The only way we could keep in touch with each other was through the phone, and WhatsApp. I talked to everyone regularly, and we tried to keep our spirits up. The Southern African Yearly Meeting (SAYM) had introduced a food assistance programme for Quakers suffering during the drought in 2019. This continued, and proved to be a lifeline during the Covid-19 lockdown. I was able to collect the funds from YM, and give to our friends. At least we knew that people could eat, and survive this difficult time.

About the middle of last year, we had our first major wave of Covid infections, and hospitals got overwhelmed, and there were many deaths. About March this year we had our second wave, and Covid came very close to many of us, with deaths among families and friends. We thank God that no one in our meeting has been infected or died.

Harare Meeting: coming through Covid together

As a member of a very dispersed Yearly Meeting covering 6 countries, electronic communication is very important to us. By mid-2020, this included zoom

Meetings for Worship. Some of us in the Harare meeting were able to join the regular Sunday MfW held by Johannesburg Meeting, which made us feel less alone and isolated in a difficult time. Sadly, not all friends can participate, as some live in rural or other areas with poor connectivity, or do not have smartphones. It has been important that the Yearly Meeting has assisted us with data, for MfW, and regular business and other meetings.

Vaccination has come to Zimbabwe. All of the us in the Meeting have received both jabs, except for two who will receive theirs shortly. Zimbabwe has also reduced lockdown, and we are now allowed to have religious gatherings. We are now making plans to clean and sanitise the Meeting House, and will start holding physical meetings again in the next few weeks. Being a small meeting, and having had to go through so much hardships in the past years has allowed us to become closer. And to help each other, and focus on our spiritual life together. I am sure our coming together in physical MfW will help us to further strengthen our community, and determination to help and support through the continuing difficult economic and political life in Zimbabwe.

If Life Gives You Litter, Make Flowers: Testimony on the life of Shane Petzer

3 September 1967 – 5 October 2021

Shane Petzer died suddenly on 5 October 2021. He had been for a medical check-up shortly before, and everything seemed fine, but on that Tuesday evening he experienced chest pains, and died in Scott's arms as the paramedics arrived. His death was met with an outpouring of love and respect from a range of different individuals and organisations. Shane will be remembered for so many things.

A beautiful life

Shane worked actively towards making the world a more beautiful and equitable place. The art gallery, Magpie, that he started with his partner Scott Hart was so much more than an art gallery. It truly was a collective, and it demonstrated vividly the eclectic love for the bright and beautiful that its eponymous magpie displays. It was a haven of light, love and tranquillity, and its intended aim was to show that beauty can be found in the most unlikely places and materials. Perhaps Shane's most lasting memorial will not be a rigid, monumental statue of bronze or marble, as is usual for 'great men', but a

twirling, colourful, playful kaleidoscope of discarded bits of plastic remodelled into spectacular artworks. Chandeliers made from waste and discarded materials are Magpie's signature product, and are treasured world-wide: the Obamas had two in the White House, for example.

But it wasn't just chandeliers and plastic flowers – Shane was a keen gardener, and shared his love and knowledge of plants with his wider community. Perhaps his greatest achievement as a gardener, and as one of the organisers of the 'Barrydale in Bloom' open garden weekend, was including small township gardens that had been created on a shoestring budget with more dash than cash. The 2021 festival, which had been scheduled for shortly after Shane's death, went ahead dedicated to his memory.

Community

Shane was committed to the Barrydale community. He chaired both the *Net vir Pret* board and the Barrydale Health Committee for many years. His concern for



health issues and love of gardening came together when he was instrumental in establishing a pretty garden with shade and seating for patients waiting to attend the local clinic. Shane was involved with the community policing forum, and Victim Empowerment Programme for rape survivors.

In order to support businesses by attracting tourists to – and keeping them longer in – the village, he established the Barrydale Arts Meander as an added attraction for the Giant Puppet Show that *Net vir Pret* presents on the Day of Reconciliation. This initiative successfully converted many potential day trippers into overnight visitors.

Derek Joubert of *Net vir Pret* says how Shane's "dynamic and wide-ranging interest in community affairs in our village" would be missed.

Sex work advocacy

His pioneering work in co-founding Sex Workers Education and Advocacy Trust (SWEAT) was a particularly courageous move in 1996, when, that sort of thing was not openly discussed. Gordon Isaacs, a manager at SWEAT, said of Shane that he was "an international powerhouse, actively involved in the international and national profile of civil rights, social justice and the decriminalisation of the sex work industry. As a man having lived healthily with HIV for 20 years, he also advocated for the universal treatment of people living with HIV."

A tribute to Shane's life and work on the Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) website states: "Shane was internationally renowned for his work advocating for the rights of sex workers, including campaigning for the decriminalisation of sex work, and for advocating for the universal treatment of people

living with HIV. [...] He was also instrumental in the early history of NSWP as he registered the organisation's first constitution in Cape Town in 2002, where he established the first Secretariat and was our first Global Coordinator."

Shane and Quakers

Shane first attended Friends meetings in Pietermaritzburg in 1987, where he had been a theology student and got to know Mark and Julie Povall. He moved to Cape Town, and was supported by Friends in his objection to military service, and became a member of CWMM in the early 1990s. As a conscientious objector, he was sentenced to do community service as a bereavement counsellor at the State Mortuary. After that he became a seconded worker to the AIDS Support and Education Trust (ASET) in Cape Town, supported by British Friends.

Shane went through a traumatic period of questioning, and distanced himself from the meeting for a while, but reapplied for membership in 2016. In the decade or so that he had been away from Cape Town he had got married to his partner of 15 years, Scott Hart, and had established a life and a business in the small town of Barrydale.

Shane 'attended' YM 2021, where he and Scott presented a workshop on flower making. "I loved his 'let's do this' approach to life," says Amanda Gibberd of this workshop. "His energy, enthusiasm and support for Scott's delicate insight into creating beauty out of rubbish made glorious watching. [...] Nothing was too much. It was like a big game."

Gone but not forgotten

Shane is survived by his mother Marlene, father Henry and his two sisters Wendy and Cheryl and by his husband Scott, and their two daughters – Jaime aged 27 and Rebecca aged 22 – who live with their mothers, Patricia and Mary Ann.

In her reminiscence of Shane, Amanda Gibberd says how, having only first 'met' Shane at the virtual online YM 2021, their relationship was "brief, intense and inspiring; a meeting in the void of internet space. And because of this, it is more difficult to believe that he is no longer with us in the earth space. Like a spring flush of Namaqualand daisies, I will remember Shane. I will make plastic flowers and plant them in my garden."

Di Salters eloquently describes Shane as "this lovely man who will be missed by so many, and who totally walked his talk."

But his loss is probably best described in a tribute from the University of the Western Cape's Centre for Humanities Research: "Shane was a singular being, and the world is now more ordinary without him."

Testimony to the life of Annanias Khuphe

Annanias Khuphe passed away on 10th November 2021 at the age of 84 while receiving medical attention in hospital following a short illness. He was at this time living in his rural home some 40 kms from Bulawayo where he had been allocated a piece of land. Because of this distance and poor health, he had not been attending Meeting for several months though contactable by phone. Friends received news of his death with great sadness but found comfort in that he had spent his last days doing what he loved best, farming. He had been a neighbour to John and Kelita Schmid for years but finally joined the Bulawayo Quaker family in 2005 after his retirement from serving in the internal audit department of the Bulawayo City Council. It was this proximity that made it possible for Annanias to offer much needed help to John and Kelita Schmid during the implementation of their Food Relief program.

His calm disposition made him the “go-to-person” in BQM for many of our Friends. He also served in the role of YM Elder in one of the Yearly Meetings. In 2008 he was nominated to the position of Hlekweni Trustee (in replacement of the late Edna Caddick) to facilitate accessibility since the other two Trustees were Harare based. His background in auditing was useful when BQM nominated him to be finance assistant and to give oversight on Bulawayo Quaker Meeting finances. This he did for 3 years while also being one of the signatories to the bank account up until 2020 when he laid it down after finding it difficult to fulfil the role as he was then based out of town. The range of responsibilities that he shouldered within a short time of becoming a Quaker speaks volumes about his unassuming servant leadership for which he is fondly remembered. MHDSRIP



QUAKERS THINKING

Power, Truth and Freedom – reflections on the confrontation between Jesus and Pilate

– based on the Gospel of John, chapters 18 and 19.

Justin Ellis, Namibia Monthly Meeting

The trial and execution of Jesus is so terrible a story that it is a struggle to read it. And yet, Jesus had started his public campaign of faithfulness to God with a warning about the cross that lay ahead. At the climax of his campaign in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover festival – a celebration of the liberation of the Jewish People from slavery in Egypt – Jesus had prepared himself with great care for his arrest and trial. So the things that happened and were said during this crisis must surely clarify what Jesus was about.

The background is a familiar one to us: a formerly

free people now under the colonial rule of the Roman Empire. The Jewish people are looking for a leader, promised in their scriptures, who will free them from oppression.

As the governor of this remote and rebellious territory, Pilate had undoubtedly noticed the emergence of Jesus as a leader and received reports from his spies. Like a good lawyer, Pilate asks questions to which he thinks he knows the answers, and which will lead to a guilty verdict.

But Jesus seems to have the measure of Pilate. He

convincingly denies that it is his aspiration to be the king of the Jews, or to lead a violent insurrection. In any case, if that had been his plan, it had obviously failed, since the religious and political leaders of the Jews had just rejected him and were now braying for his blood.

Actually, Pilate seems unworried by the prospect of a violent and rebellious king of the Jews. He is willing, for instance, to release the rebel Barabbas. Pilate has the might of the Empire behind him. Any violent Jewish rebellion is misguided and will undoubtedly be mercilessly crushed. In fact, Pilate would find it convenient for Jesus to be seen as the King of the Jews, so that he could make an example of him. Indeed, at the end of the day Pilate deceitfully does just that, putting a notice on Jesus' cross to say that Jesus was the king of the Jews, apparently as a warning of what happens to rebels against the Empire. Pilate may also have written this notice as a backhanded rebuke to the chief priests, that they had failed to recognise the greatness in Jesus.

But Jesus does not deny being the sole leader of a movement. He makes clear it is not a movement aimed at taking power by force and demanding obedience from all. His movement is from 'another place', not from a palace, but the unseen, spiritual realm, where people are free to make their own choices, and be accountable for them to others and to God. It is a movement open to all people, not just to Jews.

Surprisingly, however, Jesus does not define his mission in spiritual or mystical terms, but rather in a very secular way, "to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

This is a challenge Pilate apparently finds discomfiting. After all, the truth is that he is about to crucify a person against whom there is no evidence of wrongdoing. Pilate prefers Realpolitik to truth or listening to Jesus. He has tried, without success, to appease the chief priests by having Jesus whipped, mocked, and dressed in a crown of thorns and a royal purple robe. Now Pilate must either give in to the Jewish leaders and sentence Jesus to death, or risk a disturbance during the Passover week, with crowds in Jerusalem. Ironically, so determined are the Jewish leaders to get rid of Jesus that they even declare their allegiance to Caesar, to put more pressure on Pilate.

Jesus adds to Pilate's disquiet by understanding Pilate's dilemma, saying in effect, 'you were put in a position of authority to administer justice, but the chief priests are demanding that you act unjustly.' This does not absolve Pilate of the wrong he is about to do, contrary to his duty. Indeed, the wrong being done by both parties is explicitly stated and evaluated by Jesus. By speaking this truth, Jesus has become the judge in this scene.

But Pilate's question, "What is truth?" is not a weak riposte to Jesus' statement of his mission. Partly, Pilate seems to use it to dismiss Jesus as an idealist, caught

up in an unrealistic utopianism. We all know that there can be different versions of an incident, and things that are accepted as truth today may be found to be false or inadequate in future. Indeed, perhaps Jesus, as a child of his time, took it as true that the earth is flat and heaven somewhere up above.

That, however, does not mean that truth is a matter of indifference. The careful pursuit of truth is what will make for justice being done, in court and other institutions, for fairness in business and governance, and for progress in understanding nature through science. Truth will tell if we are honest in our relationships and dealings with others, or not. The statement of a truth can bring us satisfaction, happiness and even laughter. The directness, art, accuracy and simplicity of true statements or expressions can be cathartic and help to resolve conflicts or reveal corruption and hypocrisy. In fact, it seems that the quality of our experience or understanding of life is all bound up with the matter of truth.

Being faithful to truth does not mean that there is an absolute truth. Truth comes through a living process, a quest, a search, that requires humility, creativity and openness to learning: that is perhaps why Jesus says there is a need for listening, without which learning, wisdom and progress probably won't happen.

In this text Jesus suggests that arriving at the truth is a struggle, since there are those on different sides in the matter of truth.

In recent times we have seen a great struggle for truth, with President Donald Trump (taking forward a pattern of behaviour) denying the truth that he had lost an election, and using all manner of means, including lies on social media and violence, to try and overturn that truth, with consequences we have not yet seen the end of. Closer to home, the Zondo Commission has revealed the truth about State Capture entailing the surreptitious theft of billions of Rand. In all our countries corrupt politicians and businesspeople conspire to steal from the treasury, even in the midst of a pandemic. Going back to the 1930s, we have seen how Joseph Goebbels used blatant lies, propaganda and bullying to propel the Nazi party to power in Germany and plunge the world into a war that cost some seventy-five million lives.

Fortunately, there are no entry requirements whatsoever for joining the struggle for truth: we are born to it, just like Jesus. This was perhaps one of the things that the religious gatekeepers had against Jesus. Truth-seekers are God's allies whether they know it or not. In the pursuit of the truth we can indeed listen to Jesus, by considering what we know of him and his teaching, and by opening ourselves to the same Spirit that he was in communion with.

There remain, however, severe risks associated with speaking truth to power.

In our daily lives then, we should be among those seeking the truth about the situations we find ourselves in. We should speak the truth despite our fears. We should be true in our dealings. As Jesus said earlier in his campaign,ⁱ “if you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

i John 8.31-32.

Freedom is what the Jews of that time wanted, but most of their leaders were tragically unable to accept the way that Jesus proposed. From 66 – 136 CE there was a series of revolts in Judea. Many Jews were massacred by the Roman authorities. A remnant was scattered about the Mediterranean.

How effective we are in the pursuit of truth in Southern Africa can likewise determine the fate of millions.

Spiritual Guidance

Rory Short – Quaker Community of Johannesburg

For me spiritual guidance takes place mainly through my mind and my thoughts. This presentation is really a trawl through my thinking in recent years, starting more or less from 2012, because a major shift in my understanding of life started then and continues to unfold until today.

This unfolding started with my concern for the environment which led me to look for an organisation to support, particularly an organisation that was dedicated to developing young people’s awareness of the environment. In my search on the web I stumbled across something called Biomimicry. It intrigued me. It was located in the USA, but, I discovered, they also had a presence in SA. So I signed on to their mailing list. Then, sometime during 2012, I received an email from Biomimicry SA inviting me to attend a weekend Biomimicry workshop. The w/shop was to be held in August 2012 and it was titled ‘Systems in Nature’. Now as, an ex-academic and information systems developer, this notification really grabbed me and I immediately signed up for it.

The workshop did many things for me. One was to put evolution into a much broader context than the one in which I already held it. I am schooled in the physical sciences rather than the life sciences. This means that I had up until this workshop not devoted much of my attention to evolution, so my ignorance was really not that surprising.

Evolution is still to this day generally regarded as solely a biological issue, and even within that it is generally viewed as limited to genetics. Its relevance to the evolution of other systems, like social systems for example, is still not recognised widely enough. It is quite wrong and most unfortunate however to regard the knowledge of evolutionary theory as something that should be solely restricted to the life sciences.

The Biomimicry workshop made that quite clear to me. I came away from the workshop with the realisation that evolution is a fundamental characteristic of the Universe right from the inanimate to the animate, which

of course includes life in all its forms.

But where is the Spirit in all of this then, one might ask?

If one acknowledges the Spirit to be the creator and under-pinner of the universe, as I certainly do, then evolution and its related theory must naturally be in accord with what we intuitively know of the Spirit, or our knowledge needs to be adjusted in the light of what evolutionary theory tells us.

What this has meant for me is that I think that the discovered truths of evolution must accord with the intuited truths of Christianity. If not, one, or both, need to be adjusted. Consequently, I’ve been, and continue to this day, to thoroughly enjoy myself trying to check Christian teachings with the truths of evolutionary theory.

We humans have two sources of knowledge, intuition and the ‘scientific method’. Intuition I’m sure emerged along with consciousness and consciousness appeared long before the scientific method of course.

The ‘scientific method’ was first documented in the 1500s by Sir Francis Bacon (1561–1626). What this means is that until the scientific method became common practice humans were constrained to operate largely from knowledge gained through intuition.

This was the case at the time of the unfolding of most religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, or their precursors. As the scientific method was not in use at the time of their founding, the documented truths of their teachings must have been gained through intuition, and, in the case of Christianity, the intuitions of Jesus and his immediate followers like Paul. It is different now, we are armed with the scientific method. Using its findings, I think we can, as Christians, deepen our understanding of the truths in Christian teachings: at least, that is what I try to do.

God is truth. Science is about seeking the truth so, if you think about it, science is really one of the ways of getting to know God. Turning now to what I think presents a big research opportunity for us Christians,

evolution. How do Christian teachings square with the truths expounded by evolutionary theory?

This is actually a vast field of enquiry so I will focus on just one aspect in this presentation, male and female differences. I'm sure that this is something that has probably preoccupied humans since we emerged into consciousness.

Initially, because of the male's natural physical strength in comparison to that of females, men, unthinkingly, and collectively, gave no credence to women as beings equal to themselves. This is shown up quite clearly in the biblical story of Adam and Eve. Eve was created from Adam's rib not as a creature who emerged in her own right, she came after the man and in fact issued from him.

Patriarchy, I would think, is a natural outgrowth of this flawed understanding of women's origin. I am not into patriarchy myself. It has always seemed not right to me. But this feeling that patriarchy was not right, was the only basis I had for my rejection of it. Now I can see a solid basis for this rejection and it is founded on evolution.

Looked at from an evolutionary perspective each one of us, man or woman, is on a distinct evolutionary thread. Each thread is the product of millions of years of evolution, with the threads genetically intersecting at conception, yes, but the threads themselves remaining distinct throughout. Why do the threads have to intersect to reproduce then? The evolutionary advantage of sexual reproduction is that the new generations are genetically different to their parents which outwits parasites that expect a consistent genetic structure

But like any evolutionary thread nothing is set in concrete. So even if, the core of each thread requires members capable of and drawn towards interacting with members of the other thread, particularly for sexual reproduction, but also for general social cooperation, there are also possible members of the threads who are not so clearly oriented in that way, hence gays, lesbians and people of indeterminate sexual orientation or of no sexual orientation at all are also quite possible and naturally so.

Thus any religious teaching that holds that gender orientation that is not strictly either male or female is automatically a 'sin' is in itself, a sin because it is based on ignorance of the ways of evolution.

If homosexuality cannot be classed as a sin, then what action judged within the evolutionary frame could rightfully have been classed as sinful?

To answer this question, we need to look at what could be called the bottom line in the evolution of life forms, it is survival, or non-survival, to reproduction.

Organisms that do not achieve this, drop out of the evolutionary game for good. In other words, if an organism does not survive to reproduce then it's

particular genetic pattern and its possible variations drop out of the evolutionary game permanently.

We are organisms that are endowed with consciousness, however, and consciousness gives individual organisms the choice as to how they individually respond to the events that impact them. On the other hand, unconscious and inanimate entities are just subject to these events, they have no choice in the matter.

So perhaps any behaviour by a conscious organism that could result in it, or other organisms, not surviving to reproduce could be what the more intuitive ancient people identified as 'sin'.

There is though, another factor that applies to conscious organisms only. It is that, through our consciousness the door is opened to the realm of the Spirit, or God. The door is only open though. Because we are conscious we have a choice as to whether to go through the door, or not. To go through it means consciously acknowledging the reality of the Spirit, or, if you prefer, God, by opening the self to him/her/it. It is based on experiencing this fact, for example, that Quaker Meeting for Worship is founded.

So within the evolutionary frame what does the creator Spirit/God wish, or hold in mind, for conscious organisms? Christian teaching is that God only wishes us well. Now the Spirit is all knowing so being able to communicate with it through consciousness must have survival benefits for an organism when it is making choices. Why, because by seeking the Spirit's guidance before acting the choices made are more likely to be in support of survival than destruction. This will mean that the organism stays firmly within the evolutionary game.

So these are just some of my thoughts about the interplay of evolution and Christian teachings.



On connectedness

Helen Holleman, Eastern Cape Quakers

I was asked to open one of the Worship sessions at RM, something that usually requires a focus of some kind. I'd been thinking a lot about 'connectedness' because of a sentence recorded by one of the Environmental Honours students after interviewing an elderly woman who knew the rivers when they still provided water for drinking, washing, recreation. She had said: "When we got a tap in our house, we stopped thinking about the river". This provided such a profound insight into so many of the problems we face today as we have become distanced from the source of our sustenance.

This is what I offered to the group as we prepared to enter into the silence:

Aliveness comes down to one thing—consenting to rise, to be dented, impressed, pressed in upon, to re-join, to open, to ponder, to be where we are in this moment and see what happens, allowing the breath of not knowing to be taken, wanting to see what is there and what is not there. Aliveness springs from our making something of what we experience and receiving what experience makes of us. This is the wonder of the child the New Testament always recommends us to return to, what the philosopher Paul Ricœur calls our "second naiveté". In such a space we allow ourselves to depend on something greater than ourselves, to take what it gives us and respond to it...

Franciscan sister José Hobday (1929–2009), was

a Native American, a Seneca elder, an author, and a storyteller. She explains how her mother taught her to pray:

My mother prayed as a Native American. That meant she saw living as praying and praying as living. She tried to pray her life. She expressed her prayer of gratitude, for example, in the way she did things. She told me many times, "When you stir oatmeal, stir it slowly so you don't forget that oatmeal is a gift and that you don't take it for granted."

She made a prayer out of the way she stirred oatmeal. Doing things prayerfully. That reflected her approach to prayer. She even did it in the way she walked. She taught me and my brothers to walk with our hearts high and to walk softly on the earth because the earth is our mother. As we walked, she said, we should be ready to enter into every moment of beauty and ugliness, of joy and sorrow, of greed and generosity we encountered.

In such a space we allow ourselves to depend on something greater than ourselves, to take what it gives us and respond to it.

This is a marvellous world, full of beauty and splendour; it is also an unrelenting and savage world, but we have to accept our position in the world with as much grace, responsibility and fortitude as we can muster, and try to grow up to our mission of love in this tangle of prospects and torments.

Curbing Our Appetites

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation – 24 September 2021

*From the Center for Action and Contemplation:
Week Thirty-Eight: What do we do with money?*

Sallie McFague (1933–2019) was a renowned scholar in the theological disciplines of ecology, economics, and feminist Christianity. In her book Blessed Are the Consumers, she calls consumerism "the most successful religion on the planet" with catastrophic results for humanity and our planet. However, she also suggests a way forward.

I have been struck by ... the rather shocking practice of self-emptying, of what the Christian tradition has called "kenosis" [see Philippians 2:5–8] ... I believe it suggests an ethic for our time, a time that is characterized by

climate change and financial chaos. These two related crises are the result of excess, our insatiable appetites that are literally consuming the world ... We are living way beyond our means at all levels: our personal credit cards, the practices of the financial lending institutions, and the planet's resources that support all of us.

Could the crazy notion of self-emptying, a notion found in different forms in many religious traditions, be a clue to what is wrong with our way of being in the world as well as a suggestion of how we might live differently? ...

As Fr. Richard mentioned in Wednesday's meditation, when money controls every aspect of our lives, it is extremely difficult to find our moral compass. That's why the practices of simplicity, solidarity, and community that are embodied by people such as Quaker John Woolman (1720–1772) are so important. They show us that it is possible to live an alternative to the dominant culture. McFague continues:

I am thinking of John Woolman, an eighteenth-century American Quaker who had a successful retail business and gave it up because he felt it kept him from clearly seeing something that disturbed him: slavery. He came to see how money stood in the way of clear perception of injustice: people who had a lot of property and land needed slaves to maintain them (or so these folks reasoned). He saw the same problem with his own reasoning ... whenever he looked at an injustice in the world he always saw it through his own eye, his own situation and benefit ... Once he reduced his own level of prosperity, he could see the clear links between

riches and oppression. He wrote: "Every degree of luxury has some connection with evil."ⁱ Reduction of his lifestyle gave him insight into the difference between "needs" and "wants," something our insatiable consumer culture has made it almost impossible to recognize ...

To empty the self is not an act of denial, but of fulfilment, for it creates space for God to fill one's being. We are satisfied by nothing less than God; our deepest desire is to be one with God, even as Jesus was. Made in the image of God, our destiny is to become one with God, so that we too can say, not my will but God's be done. This is not a loss, but again, the greatest gain.

*Contributed by George Ellis,
Quaker Community of the Western Cape*

ⁱ John Woolman, *The Journal of John Woolman, and A Plea for the Poor* (Corinth Books: 1961), 43.
Sallie McFague, *Blessed Are the Consumers: Climate Change and the Practice of Restraint* (Fortress Press: 2013), 6, 7.

My journey as a non-Theistic Quaker

Bronwen Ellis, Quaker Community of the Western Cape

You're an atheist, and a Quaker!?! How can that be possible!?! It is very possible. I stand here in the flesh. Take a seat friend, and I'll try to explain.

I was already very familiar with all that Quakers do and think, as the rest of my family had all joined a good 10 years ago. But it always came back to the same thing in my head. I really love what Quakers are all about, but I just don't believe there is anything out there.

And then a penny in my mind, found its way to the edge of the table. A wise friend (with a small f) had once said to me, "If you can think of something, so has somebody else out there, and it is on the internet." I put Atheist Quakers into Google and there they were. They went with the term non-theistic instead and it did include agnostics. I was more than happy to just have found them and feel less alone. How I got to that point took a bit longer.

I was born in the UK in the 1980s. My parents, both South African at the time, had been on their own journey with the Anglican Church working towards Namibian independence from apartheid South Africa. They had gotten in quite some trouble for it and went into exile in the UK. They continued to support the struggle from there. By the time I was born they had found their way to being Methodist, and that is how I was raised. I never thought much of it, as a small child church was just something that happened on Sundays along with the weekly treat of KitKat.

When I was 7 years old Namibia won independence and I was very unhappily dragged away from my home and all I knew, to the other side of the world to live in this new young country. It did not agree with me to say the least. I was strange and foreign to the other kids. I had a funny accent. I was made fun of a lot and loneliness became a companion for most of my school career. When it came to religion, there was yet another problem. I asked too many questions, and didn't understand why people weren't doing the same. How do you really know God is a man? If God was really talking to the people who wrote the Bible, why didn't he just tell them about evolution and the Big Bang? Life must exist on other planets, so what does God do for the Aliens? Will I meet Aliens in Heaven? That would be so cool, wouldn't it? The church and the Bible could provide no answers to these questions, so I left them behind, and settled on being agnostic. I found solace in *The Lord of the Rings* and the wonders in the Chemistry Lab. And in an age when 'Girl Power' was topping the charts, I found no place for the sexism of the church in my life.

So things stayed until I went off to the University of Cape Town. I was already a vegetarian, so the Hare Krishna society seemed interesting to me. From them I got many free veggie meals, a great cheap holiday in Durban for the Festival of Chariots and concern from my dad, who worried I had joined a cult. No one seemed

to understand the following: I was not there because I automatically believed all they said. I was young, it was fun, and I simply found it interesting to learn about a culture and religion so different to mine. But then, my irritating questions crept back. How do you know reincarnation is real? How do you know memories of a past life are not an illusion? Women's rights, gay rights and evolution were not popular topics here either. The party was over and I left.

A couple of years later I found a Neo-Pagan and Wiccan group. They talked about gender equality and the great Goddess. I found it to be a truly beautiful religion. I loved the connection to nature, to animals, and the self-empowerment through spell work. I stayed there for quite some time celebrating the passing of the seasons and being in a group of like-minded souls.

At this point my studies in Chemistry, though they took a bumpy road, were complete. Want to guess what happened in my newly forged scientific mind? So, how do we have any more evidence that these deities exist than any others? Astrology has been scientifically debunked, so why are we still using it?

Cognitive dissonance can be a slow and painful process. I had no solid scientific evidence that any god or goddess from any school of thought was real. It was a loss I simply needed to mourn for a while. And as often does with age, the despair of the world caught up. If there is any gods who love us, where are they when all the horrors happen to his children? It was pretty safe to say that if I did ever meet God, he would need to beg for my forgiveness.

Out of this, strangely, emerged hope, and I have found if you are willing to look for it the beauty in the world, you will always find it, though not always in the form you expect. Seek and ye shall find, but not for divine meaning, but just for joy and love today, in the here and now, as that is all I've ever really got. One principle of Quakerism started to ring true for me here, though not in the way it may have been intended. We have got to make Heaven on Earth. This is even more so as I know Earth is all we've got. I have also found in my own life, through the choices I make, Heaven and Hell are often things I created for myself, here on Earth.

So what do I think will happen when I die? Probably not much, but I won't be around to bother about it either. Am I afraid to die? Yes, of course, I think anyone who isn't, is quite mad. But there is nothing I can do to stop it, so I will accept this thing I cannot change and get on with loving the delights found in today. I hope a cherry tree shall be planted over my grave and I will give back to the earth and live on in its blossoms every spring.

That acceptance helped me to another Quaker truth. There is that of the Light in everyone. We are all in this scary, tangled beautiful mess together. We need each other. We all feel the same feelings and share the same human needs. This our Light, our common humanity. Although some of us do awful things to meet these needs.

Life, death, love and everything in between on the great adventure are scary and overwhelming. That is why they are often beyond words and we need to slow down and just be.... and in the Quaker silence of doing this together, I have found some incredible moments of peace and the sense of community that seems lost to the world in so many ways at the moment. I am not going to pray it continues, because that is not up to any higher being — it's up to me.

So, who do I think I am listening to in the silence? Probably myself, and this is important: I should listen to myself as I am the only who will do anything with my life, and my subconscious has often figured out where I should go before my conscious does.

I do see Quakerism as a way of living more than a belief system, and maybe the next step — including all beliefs — also includes not believing? Perhaps this is how the first non-Christians in Quakers felt.

And with regard to irritating questions coming up, I hope I shall continue to ask them. I have heard it said that Quakers should be "a place we go to have our answers questioned", and I shall go forward with that and hope my life shall speak for its self, though it is lived in different truths.

Should curiosities be sparked, more information can be found here: <https://nontheist-quakers.org.uk/>

Whitewash, corruption versus the truth

Pillemon Takarindwa Chirimambowa, Bulawayo Quaker Meeting

It may come as a surprise that this word "whitewash," in one form or another, is also found in the Bible. Whitewash is a solution of lime (or other whitening substance) and water, and it is applied to surfaces such as walls and fences to cover up blemishes and to make the surface look better.

The literal word "whitewash" is also often used in a figurative way. To "whitewash" can an attempt to cover up or hide something. Whether an object, a behavior, or an action. It is an effort to deceive or to conceal the truth. This word is now mostly used today in a very negative way.

The use of “whitewash” in the Bible

As with many English words, the use of this word or forms of it varies depending on which translation or version of the Bible that one reads. In Ezekiel 13, God spoke through His prophet Ezekiel and that His prophets were being dishonest with His people. They were deceiving the people into thinking that their wall of protection against their enemies was strong and able to withstand the efforts of the enemy to invade their city. When in reality, it was not at all what it had been made to appear to be. The construction of the wall was dangerously defective, but the prophets saw to it that whitewash was applied to the weak areas of the wall to cover up the flaws and the gaps in it. Whitewash made the wall look like something it really wasn't! This cover-up was done at behest of religious leaders!

Corruption is often covered by whitewash by Christian leaders and their members. They are afraid to reveal the truth in order to maintain good relationships. As Elders, do we speak the truth to our members? Friends, do we speak truth to power all times?

Jesus spoke of whitewashing as He dealt with the dishonest scribes and Pharisees in Mathew 23. They could appear to be so pious and righteous while they were actually just impersonators of righteousness! Notice His reprimands in verses 25 and 26. “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outward, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.”

In Acts 23, we find Paul employing this term as he responded to the unlawful action taken by the high priest Ananias. In verse 1, Paul testified before the high priest. “.... men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” Because of this, the high priest ordered that he be struck on the mouth (verse 2). But Paul wasn't through yet! In verse 3 he told the high priest. “God will strike your whitewashed wall! For you to sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?” Paul's message to them was, “You are not genuine — you are a fake!”

We have seen very clearly from the lives of some false prophets, some scribes and Pharisees, and from a priest that it is quite possible to apply spiritual whitewash to oneself in an attempt to appear to be much more than what one actually is!

Is there a lesson anywhere in this for us today? Surely there is. We learn from Proverbs 23: 7 that “as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” This tells us that if your thoughts are unrighteous, you are unrighteous, and we are just like those scribes and Pharisees, like dead men's bones, rotten and smelly, regardless of how well we fool others on the outside!

Nature forms us, sin deforms us. Prisons try to reform us, education tries to reform us, but it is the power of God that can transform us.

This is food for thought for us when we are dealing with matters in our Meetings for Worship for Business.

Thoughts about the N-word

Susan Winters, Eastern Cape Quakers

I'm probably not alone in quietly feeling a little weepy about Ukraine, along with the news of the nuclear complication coming too close to reality. This cannot go on.

South Africa or other distant countries are not exempt from this, even the fallout from nuclear warfare. Not to mention Putin's agenda of owning the world. But that's not what leaves me quiet. Nor is it the sad, sad exercise of watching a small country be chewed bit by bit by the monster next door. When is enough enough? Will Zelensky know? How do we make sense out of the vast contrast of courageous citizens and their steadfast leader meeting nose to nose with a seething madman set on destruction of half the planet?

For me it's déjà vu. Growing up in Oak Ridge Tennessee, home of the bombs dropped on Japan to end that world war. I was born two years after the end of that war. It was an idyllic life for children, all scientists and their families; there was neither wealth nor poverty

in a town built all at once and then sealed off from the real world of the South. Even the arrival of television in the 50s didn't bring much truth with it. Our lives were spent in utter security in a crime-free town of steep hills perfect for roller skates and bicycles, and tall tulip trees, and adopted families of aunties and godparents that replaced the ones we rarely saw in other parts of the country.

In the back of our minds we knew something wasn't right. We knew our town was a place where great, mysterious, and dangerous things went on. Ten miles outside the town there were three huge factories where our fathers worked, with odd names: Y12, X10, K25. They had secrets, too big for little minds. We did not know enough to be consciously afraid. We just knew we were different. We whispered the rumour: we were first on the Russian bombing list.

Of course, sometimes it made us feel special, like the kid with a broken arm.



Nuclear test, Bikini Atoll (Denver Post)

There were evacuation routes, gravel roads that went into the distant wooded hills. The one next to my house was the best sledding slope in the world, hundreds of metres of steep hills and curves; an ultimate challenge and source of pride in accomplishment was to stay on the road all the way to the bottom. In warm months I could follow that road through gentle, leafy woodlands of dogwood and oak, with clear streams to watch, and explore for hours. There were wildflowers and birds to know, and autumn leaves to wade through and branches to use to build imaginary houses. There were evening games in the yards of shouting neighbourhood kids. Our school-free days were spent walking up and down the streets to find friends for play. Although we had school busses for transport, I often walked to and from school. Just because.

In school, we had those silly nationwide drills for nuclear attack that included hiding under our desks. But we also had drills in which we were led into the woods where we squatted in the leaves with our hands over our necks, or we were marched outside the building along the streets to locations according to what index cards said our destinations should be.

My father's assigned destination was always different.

Air raid sirens were tested every day at noon. They were on tall poles all over the town. There was fencing and great gates at every entrance to the town. Since the end of the war, they had always been open but

they remained a reminder of the history of secrets and the potential need for security again. My parents' cars still had the windshield stickers needed for entry to the town.

Planes were never allowed to fly overhead.

My family left Oak Ridge for Ohio when I was 13. The real world was enough of a shock that the hidden issues of Oak Ridge were left behind. The underlying understanding of something invisible that was big and dangerous gave way to the introduction to more immediate realities of poverty, racism, social inequities, ignorance, encountered for the first time. For once I knew and understood my father's work, to create the first electric car for General Motors with Union Carbide.

As the years went on, the United States focused more on internal traumas that gathered force during the civil rights struggle and the explosions over the Vietnam War. The exposure to the tearing apart of the social fabric of the 50s, the rebellion of women, the degradation of urban poverty and drug use, was a different kind of anxiety to plod through one day at a time.

I married a man upon his return from Vietnam; I became a single parent and struggled to break into full-time newspaper photojournalism. Through the work I learned that anyone's life can be destroyed in a matter of minutes as spontaneous violence erupted on city streets. I married a man of mixed race. I became a Quaker. I changed my course and did things to help

the less fortunate, and ended up on this little piece of the earth in Africa focusing more on that earth and her fascinating inhabitants than people.

Yet as I watch what happens in Ukraine and the N-word appears I am taken back to that world of 60 years ago, when it kept my community immersed in constant invisible tension, and that feeling a child has that something is very wrong, that it's scary. And now it's in the hands of a madman. We are all at risk in one way or another. My inner child lies awake at night again, as she did those years ago in that peaceful town, looking out the window at a streetlight, wondering again, will it happen now, what will it be, when will it end?

There is no dealing with someone who is stark raving mad. No diplomacy, no warnings will matter; he does not care. All the Zelenskys in the world cannot do the caring for him. Right now, it's out of our hands. And, like that little girl, the world around me is quiet and peaceful but I am afraid. I am very afraid, for all of us.

Perhaps a long-term solution for the world will emerge. Right now, that time has either passed, or is yet to come. I put us into the hands of those who are wiser than me to make that happen.

The series, *Manhattan*, is a jacked-up view of what went on in the Manhattan Project in Los Alamos, New Mexico during the development of the atomic bomb. Oak Ridge was kept in the background, yet it was where the bombs were built. My father had a significant role in the purification of uranium. He rarely spoke about it. When my high school class read the book *Hiroshima*, I

asked him...why? He told me about the American lives that were saved, the ending of that war for the world. He showed me the old newspapers that announced the first bomb dropping, and disclosed the identity of that "secret city" in the hills of Tennessee, my home. That was their agenda, their mission, and they succeeded.

After the war my father went on to be a key developer of a special nuclear reactor in Oak Ridge. His photograph was on the front page of the papers. Then he was project director of that reactor for the Atoms for Peace Program in Geneva. We have the photograph of him showing the reactor to President Eisenhower. We were proud then. However, I cannot be proud of my background, the man I call my father, for his role in nuclear energy and being part of the end of a war.

Because the bombs were dropped on civilians in Japan. That was unforgiveable. As Putin repeats in Ukraine.

In *Manhattan*, the one thing that feels true was project leader Robert Oppenheimer's doubt about going forward with the bomb for moral reasons, and there were others who feared what they were unleashing on the world. That has been documented. I never asked my father if he questioned what they were doing, but I doubt he did. The project started as an arms race with Germany and there was real danger Germany would get it first. He had no religion, no spiritual side. His responses left no illusion that he had no use for Oppenheimer. But I find myself asking him, my ancestor now, what did he do, what did they do, did they understand what it would mean to the world? It's 60 years later and I can still feel that young girl's fear, for all of us.



QUAKERS IN ACTION — THEN AND NOW

Quaker faith in action in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Gregory Mthembu Salter – Quaker Community of the Western Cape

Our vocation to live our faith in action is always being tested in this turbulent world, as we grope our way towards being principled and pragmatic, to being wise as serpents and innocent as doves. The DR Congo presents particular challenges to those wishing to advance the good — few, if any countries are as richly endowed with resources the world craves, from water to copper, to tin, to coltan, to oil, and few populations have endured such a miserable history and desperate present. Experience and God's grace have made Congolese resilient ... and complex too. As is true everywhere, but is a defining reality of the Congo, so much is unrevealed about what people are up to, and why. In a land of few salaries and much hardship, people wear multiple hats. Some of them are invisible to the naked eye.

It is easy, almost inevitable, for outsiders to get the wrong idea.

There have been people coming from elsewhere with the intention to do some sort of good in Congo for 140 years, and some have achieved impressive results. But the country is also littered with the debris of failed, collapsed initiatives, initiatives that often failed, not because of a lack of good intentions, but because some

force, some nexus of human relations they hadn't thought about scuppered the effort, or because key contextual issues were missed. Many Congolese, many international aid workers and those in the UN mission in DRC have become cynical, going through the motions with little expectation that anything much will change.

After twenty years of working in the DRC, seeking to work with Congolese people to inch the country and our world to a better, kinder future, I have so far, with God's grace, retained my hope and faith and resisted cynicism and despair. I will briefly talk about two initiatives I have been involved in.

The first was from 2007 to 2011, when I served on the UN Group of Experts in the DRC. The UN Security Council's sanctions committee appoints groups of experts to each country where a UN sanctions regime applies. There are no sanctions against the Congolese government, but there are sanctions against the many non-state armed militia active in the country, and particularly its east. The job of our group, and all subsequent UN expert groups was to identify the leaders of these militias, who was supplying them weapons, and — and this was my job — figuring out how they were paying for them.



*An aerial view of the towering volcanic peak of Mount Nyiragongo, near Goma in eastern DRC.
Source: MONUSCO/Neil Wetmore, CC BY-SA 2.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons*

One of the answers to this question was that the armed groups were — and are — imposing taxes and levies on supply chains of minerals, particularly gold, tin and coltan, being dug by hand by artisanal miners and then traded, eventually making their way, usually via refineries in Asia, into our daily lives, particularly via mobile phones and computer circuit boards, which these days means nearly everything.

But whenever our UN Group approached the international commodity traders and the end users who buy from them, meaning the vehicle manufacturers, the airplane manufacturers, the circuit board makers, Apple, Samsung and others, they always said they had bought their minerals in good faith and had no idea what was going on at the point of production.

My solution was to insist that they found out. I introduced a recommendation that companies sourcing minerals from conflict areas conduct due diligence to establish who was supplying them, and under what conditions. And if they found evidence of armed groups profiting, they needed to stop buying. To my surprise, the UN Security Council put the recommendation in a resolution. After a later Group of Experts accused several high profile companies of funding conflict and failing to do due diligence, and recommended them for UN sanction, these companies complained to the British and American governments on the Council. These governments, rather than sanction such high profile companies, insisted that the Group of Experts clarify what was required.

So, I was brought back to write due diligence guidelines for companies sourcing minerals from conflict areas. Working with the OECD, I did just that. The guidelines came out in 2010, and have remained in place ever since. They have been incorporated into Congolese and now EU law, and have been expanded into other sectors, like textiles, and today a whole compliance industry has grown up to implement it.

It isn't perfect: due diligence and traceability has never really worked for gold, which remains a major source of conflict finance in eastern DRC, and even with the other minerals, over time, people at every stage in the supply chain have increasingly found ways around the rules.

There have been some unfortunate and unforeseen consequences too, for example with lots of donor and industry money being spent on tracing the origin of

minerals and rather less on raising the living standards of those eking out a living by digging dangerous pits.

At times, I am overwhelmed by all the mess and bad faith and wonder if it was all worth it. But overall, we have reduced conflict financing in DRC, and we have also changed the debate — no longer can international commodity traders, who are very powerful, but love to disclaim their responsibilities, claim that they have no responsibility for how the goods they trade are produced.

Another initiative is much more recent, and in fact I am working on it now. It is this. The eastern Congolese city of Goma is home to 1-2 million people and is

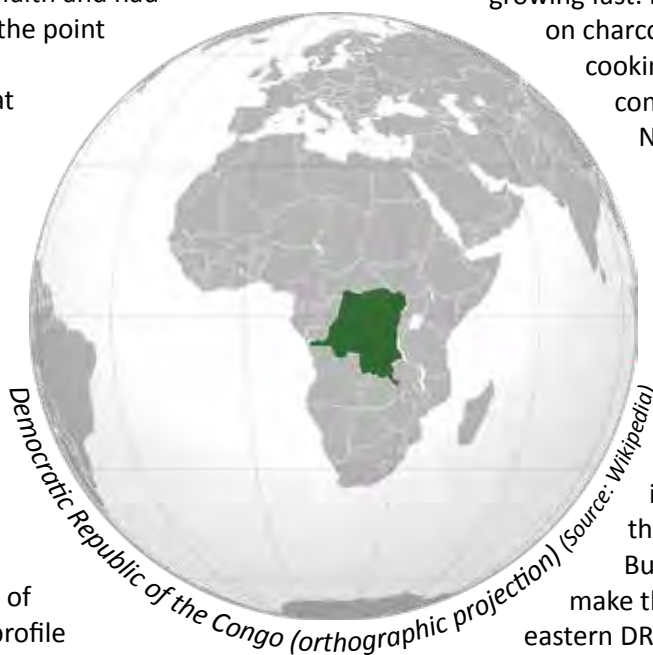
growing fast. Nearly everyone there relies on charcoal for fuel, particularly for cooking. Most of this charcoal comes from the nearby Virunga National Park, where the rate of deforestation is growing in consequence, as precious hard woods are felled. USAID is supporting a local company to market and distribute LPG gas instead. It too has a carbon footprint, but much less so than charcoal's and a shift towards it would help ease pressure on the forest.

But, but ... thousands of people make their living from charcoal in eastern DRC. And as with minerals, armed groups, and particularly the FDLR, a militia of Rwandan Hutu people, including some of those who perpetrated the 1994 Rwandan genocide, today collect illegal rents worth millions of dollars to them annually from charcoal supply chains. USAID wanted to know what would happen if people in Goma really do switch to gas. What will happen to all those livelihoods? What will the FDLR do? The consultancy company I run is currently working with Congolese researchers to try to work out just that, and to come out with recommendations to mitigate the risks.

I really want this project to succeed, and not to join the debris of failed development initiatives.

To achieve these outcomes in my work, I strive to be ethical and, in the face of so many complex political divisions, where crimes have been committed on every side, to be on the side of Life. I also strive to be pragmatic and not to flinch from any reality, no matter how disturbing. That is why I call my company Phuzumoya, drink the wind, embrace the Spirit, embrace what is. It often feels like walking a tightrope, and I'm sure, in fact I know, that my mistakes are legion.

But that, nonetheless, is my experience of living my Quaker faith in action.



River Rescue – Jan 2020 to March 2020

Helen Holleman, Eastern Cape Quakers



New Year, 2020, Jarvis Street

Inspired by Afroz Shah's example (he was the muscle and inspiration behind cleaning up Versova Beach in Mumbai), I looked at the bridge and Jarvis Street, and

Helen Holleman (right)

Gloria Papu and Ntombomzi Monakali (below)



thought, "It's not as big as Mumbai Beach". After all, my dream was very simple: just get the river clean enough for kids to play in again — safely.

So, I donned my oldest clothes, gumboots, gloves, got on my scooter and headed off to Jarvis Street to start cleaning up. Within days, two other women had joined me, Gloria Papu and Ntombomzi Monakali.

We worked every day, rain or shine, filling black plastic bags. We each tried to fill ten before calling it a day. But there were problems:

- How could we get the bags to the dump?
- Old motor car tyres won't fit into bags — neither will broken washing machines, old TVs, bits of barbed wire, blankets, or tree branches — and broken glass tore them.
- A huge, abandoned recycling dump above the bend of the river was the source of a constant flow of rubbish into the stream.
- Sometimes the smell of sewerage was overpowering and we gagged our way through the morning.

It wasn't all 'downs' — there were 'ups', too:

- Every taxi that drove across the bridge hooted encouragement, and passengers sometimes clapped and cheered;
- People with bakkies and trailers offered to cart the

bags to the dump;

- One morning — totally unexpectedly — a front-end loader appeared and did in half an hour what we could not have accomplished in months;
- Vuyolwethu Jezi joined us and worked tirelessly — quite often on his own — and at every opportunity;
- More volunteers came to help, usually on a Saturday morning, and the cleaning up became delightfully social, filled with laughter and banter;
- The man responsible for the recycling dump appeared and started clearing it up.

When the water eventually flowed freely under the bridge again, we heard it sing.

Evans Street Bridge

Upstream from Jarvis Street was the Evans Street bridge — blocked. Elizabeth Davies lives in Evans Street. Some people live for themselves; some live for the wider community — and Elizabeth is one of the latter. A small group of River Rescue volunteers came to help together with about a dozen children from the neighbourhood. We set to with a will and freed the river to sing again ... but ... also to flow further downstream through an immense sewerage leak on its route to the Jarvis Street Bridge.



Evans Street Bridge

Vukani

The houses in Vukani stretch up on either side of a valley at the bottom of which a stream struggles down to the Bloukrans/Mrwetyana River (see photo on the next page). The valley is verdant and, at first glance, looks like something out of an idyllic pastoral painting.

Closer inspection reveals layers of rubbish under the kikuyu and alien vegetation. Silt has clogged both bridges, creating a wetland upstream of each of the bridges. The lower wetland is fouled with sewerage and it is too dangerous to work there now.



End of March 2020 – Covid and lockdown – but not the end ...

Overseas – Round the Cape to Durban, and the kindness of strangers

Anthony Barlow

June 1942

My father writes in his memoirs of the reasons for his posting and his eventual sailing.....

It had become increasingly clear, as sections of the Friends Ambulance Unit were now working with the British and French Armies as well as in Syria, and while another section was due for Ethiopia, that a senior Unit officer was urgently needed in the Middle East, who would be responsible for the whole field. Already there had been difficulties in arranging loans or transfers of personnel between the Hadfield Spears Hospital and the British Army work. The Syria clinics were expanding and further workers would have to be transferred to them. In general, with possibilities of further work afoot, there would be great advantages in pursuing a correlated policy. So it was agreed that a senior officer should be sent out.

The choice fell on my father, Ralph Barlow, who was then in charge of the Relief work in London as well as Deputy Chairman of the Executive. So, arrangements were made for him to set sail, along with thirty-three other men, on the long journey round the Cape to Cairo, as the Mediterranean was by then too dangerous. The shipping position was then at its very worst and there were long delays, with our party being assembled, disbanded, then reassembled. And with each new crisis in the Middle East, the question was raised whether it could really be justified for the Unit to send yet more hostages to an uncertain future. But then quite suddenly in the middle of June, the party set sail.

The story of the journey from London to Durban with its ups and downs, and shepherding a group of some 30 COs on a troopship round the Cape was not without its problems. During the long five week trip, he had to maintain morale, keep the men occupied and prepare

them for the tasks ahead. He writes...

Much might be written, and has been written by members of the Unit, on their experiences on board troop ships. For a party of thirty odd COs to live with the Army in such close contact for a period of five weeks, is something of an experience, and is liable to be a great risk. But I was immensely impressed by the way in which Unit members fitted in, and officers on board paid a very well-deserved tribute to their standard.

Settling such a party in, seems a continual progression from one ship's official to another in search of small decisions or necessities, and in the early days I seemed to spend my time wandering about the ship apparently with no results. Altogether it was quite a remarkable experience. We were on the Orion, a luxury liner, still maintaining a prewar standard of living, very different to the later period of the war.

Quoting from my father's memoirs, he here describes the Unit's arrival in Durban and the hospitality of Durban Friends along with the joys – or not of camping!

Eventually after five long weeks at sea, we arrived in Durban, where we were to remain for another five equally long weeks in a transit camp, which we shared with the army.



July 22nd 1942 – Durban

My dearest Joan

At last, we have docked and here we are in Durban and the weather seems set fair. It was nearly nightfall by the time I went ashore and left the huge ship behind, towering above the quay, showing grey in the moonlight. It was a cloudless, starry night with a brilliant moon, throwing patches of light over the black shadows. The town seems pleasant enough, with some fine buildings and wide streets lined by trees of all sorts, giving off delicious sweet smells. Somehow, I managed to find a telephone, and rang the local Durban Friends to let them know we were here. They were most kind and immediately offered to do all they could to help us.

Anyway, here we are, near a railway, rows and rows of tents, surrounded by miles and miles of sand. The chaps are in four tents, and now that we have expelled a swarm of bees from a fifth, I thought I would have one to myself, but it looks as if John G is going to be moving in – though having a Sergeant in an Officer's tent is most irregular – but, hell, there we are. Anyway, it's a very nice tent and it contains a lot of very nice sand, and not much else! We wash in adjoining open tin huts, though trying to keep one's uniform tidy and polished, is a job of a complexity all

its own.

But generally, people are very good and the Officers of one regiment from the Colonel down, seem to have quite adopted me, and the kindness of local Friends is really overwhelming. They regularly have 12 or 15 of the group out every day, taking us on rides, giving us meals and baths, or even lending us a car. And their obvious enjoyment of our coming is humbling. We had a meeting with a group of local Friends about the possibility of forming a branch of the FAU out here, and they started the meeting with a Minute expressing their sense of spiritual renewal arising from our visit here.

It's rather wearing, disciplining the lads in the morning, playing the Camp Commandant, then in the afternoon and evening discussing Quaker matters and being the weighty Friend! However, we had a good meeting, making some progress in our discussions and I said I would write fully to Gordon Square¹ about the possibility of a local branch. After all, it could be very useful, firstly as an advance base, secondly for supplies and lastly as a base for a small number of personnel. We decided to send a joint message of greeting to London Yearly Meeting. You didn't know just how weighty a Friend your husband is, did you?!



Once in Durban, they encountered yet another hiatus as they waited for a boat to become available for the onward journey through the Indian Ocean and up the Red Sea to Suez. This period was also enormously frustrating, as all involved were only too anxious to get to the theaters of war and begin the ambulance work for which they had been trained when they originally joined the FAU.

Throughout the trying long weeks in Durban my father had to find work to occupy the Unit's time yet again, but through the extraordinary kindness of South African Friends, he had been able to provide the men with hospital training, where they gained valuable experience of tropical diseases, which would eventually stand them



welcoming us into their homes and lives. Not only do they let us have baths but give us meals and take us on trips into the country. It's quite wonderful...

The memoirs continued ...

Another day. All the usual things – a parade, talks, censoring letters... I do so wish we could now be moved on to Cairo, as time creeps on. However, a lovely change this afternoon, as Maurice Webb kindly lent me his car, and I and a couple of others took a wonderful drive out to a place called the Valley of a Thousand Hills. The road winds endlessly uphill through town and scattered suburbs, all apparently unplanned. A few poor scattered hovels here, and some stately houses with manicured gardens there, all with wonderful views down across the town and out to the blue sea beyond...

It was a perfect, cloudless afternoon, a bright hot sun, and the air fresh and bracing. As we climbed higher and higher, the trees dwindled and the ground became broken into hills and valleys, unlike any other scenery I'd ever seen. Then to our right a great stretch of country, vanishing into a mass of hazy blue hills and valleys, covered all over with coarse thin grass. A magnificent sight. The birds were exciting too, but very baffling. I saw a very bright yellow bird, another with a long, stubby black beak, and a Kingfisher with a brilliant red head. I really must find a book on these local birds.

When we got back home, I called on Dr Herbert Standing and his wife Lucy, who are now living out here. Do you remember them? My mother would of course, as they are from my parents' generation, both now over 85, very frail, though their minds are still very active. For many years they were Quaker missionaries in Madagascar and he had also been the Headmaster of a Friends' school out there, for all of which body of work, Woodbrooke honoured him with a Fellowship. They seemed genuinely pleased to see me and keen to hear news of Friends from Woodbrooke.

Half of Britain's Quakerdom seems to be either living out here or on a visit! Another recent arrival is Alfred Braithwaite's cousin, Francis and his wife, Elsie. I had never met him before, but as I know the family and was at school with Francis' brother Arthur, I called on spec last night. I would have picked Francis out anywhere, as he is the spit and image of his brother. He and Elsie were both very pleasant and friendly and I liked them a lot...

Later that evening we had a Quaker Meeting at (left) Maurice Webb's house, with about 18 of us and some 10 local Friends. I spoke, rather on the lines of what I once said long ago at Selly Oak Meeting, based on that quote from Revelations on 'the things that remain' – you'll remember it: "Strengthen the

in good stead. They had also been royally looked after by local Friends and been able to see something of the country.

From my father's memoirs:

"One of the lasting memories of Durban will be the wonderful hospitality of Durban Friends. No-one who experienced their embracing friendship can ever forget it. They invited us into their homes, gave us meals, lent us cars, took us out into the country to such local landmarks as the Valley of the Thousand Hills, familiar to all who have passed through this city, and just offered help whenever it was needed."

This is well illustrated in a letter from SA Friend, Maurice Webb, to my mother:

"Dear Joan, Last Monday evening a voice on the telephone said 'You don't know me, but I am with the FAU...' and I said, 'You are Ralph Barlow', having been prepared by a cable from Gordon Square. Ten minutes later Ralph was in our home, and I hope that he felt at home. We were certainly very glad to meet him."

My father writes about this in a letter to my mother, Joan:

In the evening I met up with a local Friend, Maurice Webb, the Clerk of South Africa Yearly Meeting, to have some discussions about the possibility of forming a South African FAU. Finally, I went over to see another SA Friend, Florence Bayman, who had invited me for supper. She was so kind, letting me have a bath, which made me feel a hundred times better. I know I've said it before, but I cannot express often enough how kind local Friends are here, in

things that remain before they die, for I find that what you have done is not yet perfect in the sight of God."

I am writing this now after lunch in the Webb's house, from which I have a splendid view out over the garden to the skyscrapers that rise along the front and the sea beyond. Their main garden contains many different trees, from exotic pears and palms, to mangoes and bananas; whilst in the kitchen garden they grow dwarf beans, tomatoes, peas, carrots and various vegetables I can't even identify. I had better stop now as I have been asked to write a message for the South African Friends' Bulletin, which I haven't even started yet. God keep you, my very dear wife, Love Ralph

July 1942

The next day, I went over to see Maurice Webb again, who is now our new best friend. He is such a kind man, a type of liberal Friend, who likes to busy himself with a hundred good causes before breakfast! But he is genuinely anxious about what's happening in South Africa, and is concerned that Friends come and live out here, not as missionaries, but to take a job.

He is a well-connected Friend, and very sound, I think. I thoroughly approve of him. He took me a run round on his way to collect his wife from one of the University Colleges, where she is taking a course. On the way back we visited one of the parks on the outskirts of town, from where you get a splendid view of the broken, hilly country inland on the one side, and over to the sea on the other. We saw a number of monkeys and some birds called Honey Suckers, which are gaily coloured, yellow, black and blue, about the size of wrens.

We ended up going back to his place for supper, and while I do not as a rule like vegetarian meals, theirs was very good. Oranges, apples and bananas to begin with, then a paw-paw, which has a curious taste, somewhere between a melon and a pumpkin, followed by macaroni cheese with sweet potato and peas. All very delicious.

We had a long discussion about the racial problem out here. He told me how, when Gandhi was here as a young lawyer early in the century, he was refused entrance in quick succession, to a 1st class train compartment, and to a church where he was going to hear the missionary teacher, C F Andrews speak. The result, like St Paul on the road to Damascus, completely changed his life, from being a successful, rising young lawyer to the Gandhi we've come to know. In fact, the more one stays here, the more one is aware that this country bristles with problems, but the racial problem is uppermost.

The imposition of the colour bar is really terrible,

preventing any consorting between natives and Europeans. The whites say that the towns are only for Europeans; but as they need native black labour, they expect them to come in just for a limited period to work, and then return to their families. While they are here, they have to live in barracks, as they are not allowed to own property or rent, and their wages are a pittance and much lower than those paid to whites.

There is very little housing for them anyway, and what there is, is very poor, and of course they couldn't afford the rent in any case. I'm just a visitor here and don't yet feel I know enough to make a fuss, but it really is a fearsome problem and all so terribly wrong.

They leave their villages for up to three to six months at a time to earn money, but what they earn is hardly enough to pay their taxes let alone the increased expenditure of having to live in town. Meanwhile, their wives back home are scarcely able to keep their land properly cultivated. In addition, there is a large Indian population, politically unrepresented, even though some of them are quite wealthy. Maurice is much involved with helping native clubs and trying to assist the black people to cope with such housing difficulties, and he says the churches are also doing their best.

There is an unspoken racial cloud, which lingers constantly at the back of one's mind. It hovers as yet unheeded, but one day it will surely engulf this nation.

Durban is essentially a European town, with its fine marine parade, broad streets and splendid shops, and though, of course, there are a number of well-educated black people, but I am afraid they are mostly kept in the background as road sweepers, servants or just general labourers. Terrible. After supper we all went to the French club together, and now I'm back and writing to you in the Officer's mess.





BOOK REVIEW

Let us dream. The path to a better future, Pope Francis, published by Simon & Schuster, London. 2020, ISBN 9781398502208

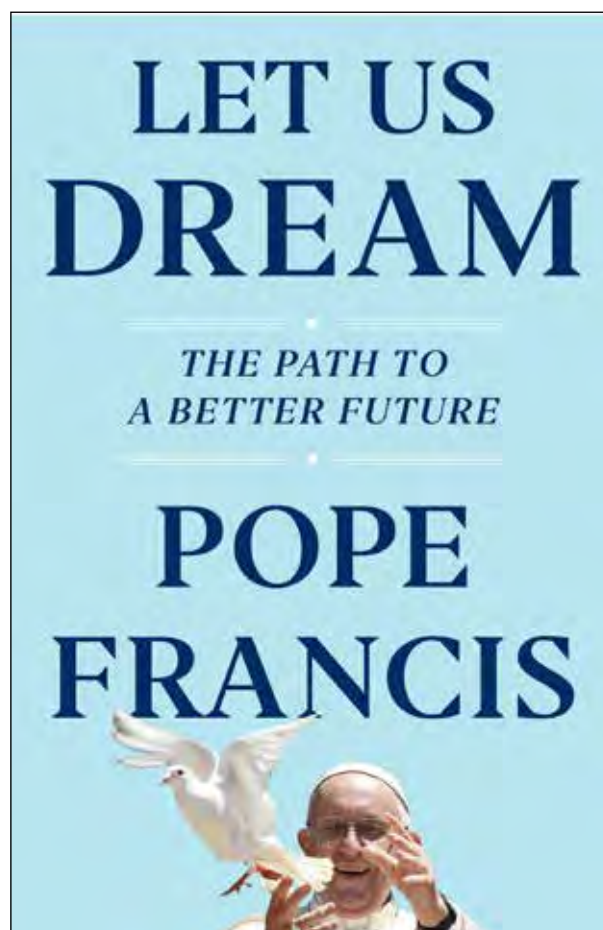
Geoff Harris, KZNMM

Since his election in 2013, Pope Francis has inspired countless people with his humility, simplicity and wisdom. This book, written in response to the new era resulting from Covid-19 but with roots in the threats associated with climate change, will inspire and challenge those who read it.

Its 140 pages are broken into three parts - a time to see, a time to choose and a time to act. Readers will find different contents which they find compelling and I focus on four particular themes in this review.

First, Francis emphasises the individualism which drives free market capitalism has had its day. It has delivered the goods to some individuals but has left many others, within their own countries and elsewhere, in precarious situations. Their vulnerability has been worsened by Covid and climate change. It is time, he argues, for a change towards fraternity and the common good. The challenges we face are just too great to be left to rich individuals and rich nations, who bear much responsibility for climate change and who, left to themselves, will continue acting selfishly and irresponsibly.

Second, he writes extensively about discernment, by which he means 'to think through our decisions and actions, not just by rational calculation but by listening for His Spirit, recognising in prayer God's motives, invitations and will' (p. 54). Quakers will connect with



this, given the discernment processes they use to determine whether some idea or concern is from God or is just an idea.

Third, Francis emphasises decision-making processes based on the principle of synodality ('walking together'). He has set up three, on the family, on young

people and on Amazonia. 'At each, more than two hundred bishops and cardinals and laypeople gathered from across the world to carry out a discernment over a period usually of three weeks, at the end of which the bishops voted on the concluding document' (p. 83). What seems to have characterised these synods is a very specific attempt to 'pay attention to what the Holy Spirit has to say to us' (p. 85). Again, there is much connection with Quaker decision making at Yearly Meetings.

A key aspect of synodality is the way that differences and disagreements are handled. There is a strong temptation to break into for and against groupings. This was certainly the case in the Synod on the Family, where '... the Spirit saved us in the end ... [via a recognition of] Aquinas's teaching that no general rule could apply in every situation [which] allowed the Synod to agree on the need for a case-by-case discernment ...' (p. 88). This is not saying that such breakthroughs always happen - or happen quickly - but they give us much hope.

Francis argues against the desire by many to turn

life into simple positions of yes or no, black or white, for us or against us. The challenge for us is to engage in dialogues to discern the good together and possibly reach a new synthesis in which the good from both sides is retained. The early Church's example of wrestling with whether new Christians from non-Jewish backgrounds should be subject to Jewish laws (Acts 15) provides an example. With trust in each other, we can 'move forward together on the same path, even with all our shades of difference' (p. 82).

Finally, Francis speaks of the power and potential of social movements. 'Organised in a global archipelago of associations and movements, they represent the hope of solidarity in an age of exclusion and indifference' (p. 120). I'm sure he would encourage us to let thousands of such movements and projects bloom.

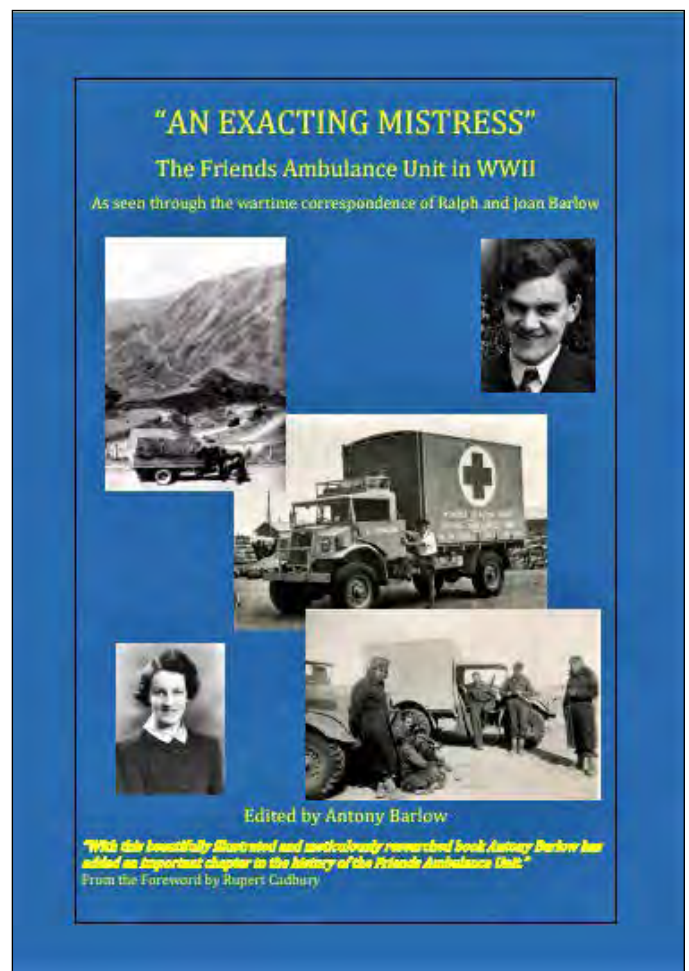
Covid, climate change and capitalism can easily overwhelm us but this book is profoundly hopeful. Francis sees the issues clearly; he tells us how we can choose God's path for us; and he encourages us to act.

"An Exacting Mistress": The Friends Ambulance Unit in WWII – As seen through the wartime correspondence of Ralph and Joan Barlow, Anthony Barlow, published by Quacks.

Anthony Barlow

As a child I can remember rooting around in our attic and coming across boxes of letters belonging to my parents, which they had written to each other during the turbulent years of the Second World War. I sometimes started to read them, but it seemed an intrusion into a world they were reluctant to talk about, concerning events that were not my business. As I grew into childhood my elder brother and I would, from time to time, dress up in my father's FAU uniform, pretending I suspect to be soldiers rather than pacifists, not really understanding the concept. But later still at my Quaker boarding school, Leighton Park, I mixed with other boys, whose parents had also been in the Unit, and I gradually understood further. In fact I became very proud that my Dad had been a Conscientious Objector and wanted to know more.

Growing up in an old Quaker family, affected me more than I realised, and despite intellectual challenges from my peers, my beliefs have not veered far from my father's or from the Society's historic stance, holding as I do even more strongly to Friend's core pacifism. Gradually, as I wrote more about Quaker history, I felt that I was capable of tackling the huge subject of my father's life as a CO and his decision to serve in the FAU, and confident enough to confront my long-cherished project of editing my parents' war-time correspondence. Sufficient time had elapsed, my parents were both dead, and I began to realise that if I didn't do it, then probably no-one else would, and worse, the distance of time



would mean that memories would fade and be lost for ever.

I no longer felt inhibited about trespassing into their correspondence or even into the intimacies of what amounted to love letters. The more I studied them and familiarised myself with them, the more I understood

why their love survived the separation of war; how they supported each other when the other was down or depressed and how the constant iteration of their love for each other never became routine, but served as a constant reminder of why they had got married in the first place and why they would eventually emerge stronger than ever. For this reason, I have not held back from keeping in the correspondence's many endearments, as to leave them out would be to omit a vital part of their story, as it helps us to understand why they grew together when so many parted.

The letters date from 1939/40 soon after my father joined the Unit, and provide an historic archive of a relatively un-recorded part of Quaker history. He soon finds himself alongside fellow CO's at the Manor Farm in Northfield, Birmingham, training with others who had also just joined, such as Duncan Wood, Jack Frazer, Brandon Cadbury, Tegla Davies, Michael Barratt Brown, and Richard Symonds amongst others. He then moves on to working in Poplar Hospital in the East End, becomes Deputy Chairman, before travelling out to the Middle East as Officer in charge, and on to East Africa, India and China, and eventually being invalided out with encephalitis which he contracted in Ethiopia.

The undertaking has been in many ways both thrilling

and revealing, but by no means simple, and there have been many editing problems along the way. Thrilling, because as I progressed, I almost felt the presence of my parents watching over my shoulders as I worked; revealing as, inevitably, I discovered things I didn't know about my parents; and problematic in the way editing any letters from 80 years ago is bound to be.

It has been an enormous privilege to be able to bring this to fruition and to have the support of family and friends, as well as the help of the many descendants of Unit members who served with my father. As I neared completion, it has been borne in on me that within a few short years, not only has my father's generation long since gone from us, but we now in our 80's, will shortly have died too. This, therefore, is the eleventh hour to preserve memories as near to first hand as possible. I trust everyone who reads these pages will enjoy not only an important part of Quaker history, but the wonderful descriptions, the joyous humour and the loving tenderness, that kept this relationship of two very special people together.

Published by Quacks it is being sold at £20, but I am happy to offer 25% discount to Friends. This would be £15 plus £3.50 p&p. Please contact me at artspublicity@hotmail.com



Below: Frank J. Stevens, a Friends Ambulance Unit ambulance driver, with his vehicle in Wolfsburg, Germany, possibly 1945. Source: Vernon39, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons