

Southern Africa Quaker News

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Southern African Quaker News

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Editorial

Quakers are often a diverse group of people, and the things that concern us and we feel called to care for on the earth are often diverse as well. I think that is most definitely the case in the latest issue. I wondered how to really write this editorial and give it a focus, as there are many things on the go.

Quakers continue to live in the spirit of Ubuntu and that reflects in our concern for the Xenophobia in South Africa at the moment, as well as how we continue to shape our community and care for the earth, and remember Friends who have passed. But the Quakers have also been out and about with fun activities like travelling and getting books published.

I feel we have much to be grateful for in our community, even if we sometimes are slow in getting ourselves to action.

I want to thank you team of proofreaders, Martli Tuffin, Nonkululeko Busiswe Gwangqa and Graham Thomas and graphic artist Heath White for their continued help with this publication. Without all of you, SAQN would be far less enjoyable for all. With that, readers, please do enjoy this issue. We all love to know what our different communities are doing, and that is best served with contributions to the details provided.

Bronwen Ellis

BMM Picnic, August 2026



We had a lovely time at the Botswana Monthly meeting fellowship and picnic Sunday — Samantha Mirasu

QUAKER ACTIVITY

Open Letter to the SADC Heads of State and Government

On the occasion of: The 46th SADC Summit,
Durban, South Africa, 17 August 2026

A Quaker call for peace, equality, justice, and the just sharing of our region's resources



We write as Quakers, out of a conviction that has guided our community for over three hundred years: that there is that of God in every person. This obliges us to see the full and equal humanity of every man, woman, and child within SADC's borders, regardless of nationality or papers. That conviction is being tested. Across the region, and with particular sharpness in South Africa, we are witnessing rising xenophobia and Afrophobia, attacks on foreign nationals, the scapegoating of migrants for economic hardship, and exclusionary rhetoric from public platforms. We have sat in worship with families and with migrants who live in daily fear simply for being African in another part of Africa. We cannot witness this in silence, and we do not believe SADC can afford to either.

Our testimonies speak directly to this moment. Peace – xenophobic violence, and the silence that permits it, cannot be tolerated by a community founded on regional peace and security. Equality – no person's worth is diminished by their nationality or migration status. Justice – we call for equal protection of the law, and accountability where officials or political actors incite or fail to prevent harm against foreign nationals. Community – a regional body that permits one member

state's people to be turned against another's is a community in name only. Simplicity – we ask leaders to resist the easy politics of blame and do the harder work of honest governance. Care for one another and the earth – a community that cares for its people must also care for the land and resources their futures depend on.

We do not believe this violence arises from nowhere. It grows in the soil of unemployment, inequality, and the daily struggle for scarce resources – conditions that turn neighbours against one another. A just peace requires a just economy: fairer regional trade and labour arrangements, and the equitable sharing of our region's considerable wealth, so that no community feels it must fight another for too little.

We call on you to:

1. Publicly and unequivocally condemn xenophobic and Afrophobic violence and rhetoric wherever it occurs within SADC member states.
2. Ensure national governments investigate and hold accountable those who incite or carry out attacks on foreign nationals.
3. Uphold the rights and dignity of migrants, refugees, and displaced persons in line with SADC's own protocols and Pan-African solidarity.
4. Invest in fair labour mobility, equitable resource-sharing, and inclusive development, so that scarcity no longer breeds division.
5. Support truth-telling and community dialogue, so that healing can begin between communities set against one another.

We write as neighbours and co-inhabitants of this region, trusting that within every migrant and every leader alike there is a light that violence cannot extinguish. We hold your deliberations in the Light, and ask that you meet this moment with the courage the promise of regional solidarity requires.

In Friendship and in hope,

The Quaker Community in Southern Africa Yearly Meeting on behalf of Friends across the region



My Quaker Faith: A living Art of Transformation

Personal Spoken Ministry and Reflections from my Quaker travels

**A movement from
“I must be strong
to survive” to “I can
be soft and still be
held.”**

*Sikhuphukile Nare,
Bulawayo Quaker
Meeting*



Dedication

To All Friends Across the globe for the support, warmth and love they give to Friends travelling on ministry.

Acknowledgements

My small local meeting Bulawayo Quaker Meeting.

My Dear Yearly Meeting (SAYM).

FWCC Africa Section and Friends in East Africa.

FWCC World Office, Britain Yearly Meeting and Friends in the UK.



Feelings came like soft rain, easing fear and pain.
Small moments stitched me back, A hymn under one bulb, laughter in a late kitchen, a hand on my shoulder.
Smiles taught me to trust; laughter taught me to breathe.
The ministry that kept me was simple — steady presence, quiet service,
Friends who made a home.

Now I remember the roads both outward and inward: faces that held light, benches that taught me to listen to small still voice within me.
So, I say the most beautiful things in life are the quiet chairs, the shared bread,

the lamp left on for a late traveller, the patient listening that let grief loosen. They are the people who kept me, the places that healed me and the moments that made me whole. Now when I travel, I look for chances to keep:

to sit, to listen and to help in the ordinary ways that heal because those days taught me purpose again!

I looked down at the beautiful mountains and across the waters of Lake Kivu. Oh, how I marvelled to see God's handwriting there — light on the water, ridges across the earth — and I asked, who can be like Him?

In that place I met a friend who connected to my soul: a beautiful sister.

We loved one another, but our tongues were different, so we could only greet with smiles and warm hugs. In that simple exchange my faith became a living, shared thing. That quiet greeting taught me the truth of our shared Light: there is that of God in everyone



**Gisenyi Rwanda
December 2023**

What then is the purpose of life?

If it is not to be compassionate, to be honourable,
and to make the lives of others a whole lot better?

We moved up and down, cleaning the streams.

Little children joined — small hands in the water,
laughter like birds. Their pride in a clean stream
warmed me; the work felt lighter for their joy.

Visited a beautiful woman who runs a meal-after-school program, and heard all about how it has changed the
lives of the young girls and boys in the community

My chest tightened, then opened — a steady tenderness, deep gratitude for care given.

To me this represented the small Quaker acts: hands at work, silence kept,
listening that honours, simple care without show.

The Light we follow showing itself in small changes of day:
clean streams, a quiet welcome, a child's bright face.

This changed me. My faith moved from idea to action —
from knowing about the Light to living by it.

My view of travel shifted: journeys are not about sights,
but about people who teach you how to keep.

Botswana & Eastern Cape

June 2024



WPM, South Africa

August 2024

At the Quaker World Plenary Meeting, I stood
among Friends from across the globe under the
words, "I am because you are." It felt like Ubuntu
made visible, a living witness that we do not walk
alone.

As I moved among young people with different views, different beliefs, and different stories, I thought of
George Fox's words: "Walk cheerfully over the world, answering that of God in everyone." Those words came
back to me like a quiet light. I learned that to walk cheerfully is not to ignore differences, but to meet it with
love.

In that gathering, I saw how Quaker life can hold many voices and remain one body. I saw that love does not
ask us to be the same. It asks us to listen, to honour, and to stay open. That was my lesson: that the Spirit can
bind us together even when our minds do not agree.

Looking back now, I am grateful. That meeting changed the way I see people, the way I see faith, and the
way I see myself. It taught me that friendship is holy, that
difference can be a gift, and that there is indeed that of
God in everyone.

'Called to be a prophetic witness of God's love'

These words I saw stuck on a wall in Uganda. Some letters
not so clear because it seems the inscription had been
there on the wall for years and no-one seemed to continue
to care about it. I saw them on the first day of the Young
Adult friends retreat and I just had a "mmmmm" in my



***Travel on ministry Kenya & Uganda
Iganga YQCAA Retreat
December 2024***

spirit. Then on one evening a friend asked the DJ to play music 'All my life I have been carried by grace'.

Suddenly the words were vivid.

Am glad to say that I was travelling during my most heartbroken seasons. The pain I was taking, one minute at a time. I had just lost one of the most meaningful relationships in my life at-least at that time I felt so. Then when I read that inscription I looked around and suddenly I was brought to tears. I have been away from home for a month now, but look how much loved I am in this foreign land of Kenya and Uganda. The people spoke a language of which I was only able to figure two words, but look how mindful they are of me. I felt in that moment no-one could understand how I am living in that scribble of 'called to be a prophetic witness of God's love. Because here was I broken with what I thought was love but here I was in the middle of nowhere in a strange country receiving love of Friends. Was that not proof enough I was being called to be a prophetic witness of his love?

***SAYM, Modderpoort
January 2025***

'For I saw there was none among them all that could speak to my condition. And when all my hopes in them and in all men were gone, so that I had nothing outwardly to help me, nor could I tell what to do, oh then I heard a voice which said, "There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition and when I heard it my heart leaped for joy."' — *George Fox*

This sat with me in my home YM Southern Africa. We had been in this isolated resort near the borders of Lesotho and South Africa. A beautiful, peaceful and mountainous place to be. I woke up and went on top of the hills to seek God because I was in one of my broken seasons. I sat quietly crying and speaking to God in my heart and suddenly I had a scripture that came to me, this was my first time to experience this. I read it and it said 'yes I still do these things for my people again and again so they may be healed and enjoy life'



***Inspired at Oxford Quaker Meeting
House, Britain
May 2025***

"When I look up, I see stars; and whenever I look down, I see that I am always among Friends."

These words have stayed with me for the longest time. They take me back down the memory lane to when I was eleven, standing for the first time inside a Quaker

meeting house. Looking back now, I am still amazed at how that quiet faith I stepped into, in a small room—with just a few empty chairs and a few people sitting in silence—has had such a magical, rippling effect, far bigger than I could ever have imagined or understood.

How could something that seemed so small that day grow into a presence I now find in every corner of the world I set foot in? The thought of it fills my heart with so much gratitude.



'Healed By the Tending Love of Friends'

These seven words sat with me during my last days of one of my biggest travels, staying close for almost a week. Having a Friend who spoke so touchingly about community at the Swarthmore Lecture made them shine even more. When I went to bed that night, the seven words became bolder and more intense in my heart, and my soul was deeply compelled to give thanks for my Quaker community in a way I had never felt before.

I began to count the number of days I had been away from home, and they were exactly twenty-six days of living and travelling among Friends. For some reason, in that moment, I was taken back to thirty days earlier, before I left my home—my little one room that I loved so much as a student. I had this vivid memory of myself tossing around on my bed, my eyes flooding with tears and my heart pregnant with pain.

This pain was not from anything that was happening to me in that moment, but from a sudden realization that, after I had gone through one of the most heartbreaking seasons of my life and survived it, I had only been able to heal from the issues that led to that broken version of me. The identity or version of myself that those issues produced was still not healed. That identity was indifferent. I had become so indifferent about almost all parts of my life.

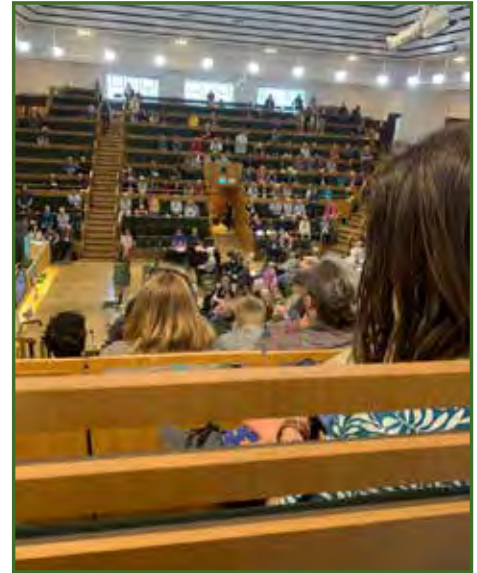
Standing there thirty days later, for the first time in a long time, I felt alive. I felt present. I was full of dreams, hopes, and inspirations. I had a million things I longed to do in the service of others, while remaining true to myself when I got back home.

Why? Because I had been healed by the tending love of Friends. I had found myself again. I had found that girl again.

I was brought to gratitude, because this did not happen to me because a Friend read Quaker Faith & Practice to me, or because I spoke to them about how I felt. It happened because I was given so much love each of the twenty-six days, I was there. I was treated with so much softness.

After the lecture, the feeling was so overwhelming that, for the first time in my life, I was thankful for all the pain and suffering I had gone through in my upbringing. I came to terms with this statement:

"If I were given an opportunity to choose another life, free from suffering, I would still choose this one, if it meant that I ended up with my Quaker community."



***Inspired at Britain Yearly Meeting
May 2025***

'I appreciate being treated with so much softness because in all my life I have had to show up strong'

These are the words that sat with me during my stay in Milton Keynes. The Love, warmth and comfort offered to me by Friends stood as a mirror, reflecting back to me the best moment of me. For the first time I had people gathered to celebrate me, in my heart I kept asking 'how is that even a possibility?' I have never even bothered to dream of it or wish for it. For the first time strangers gathered and celebrated each and every small achievement I have ever had. For the first time I seem to be a masterpiece of the room. I seem to be the reason for the well deliciously baked pizzas by the kitchen. Different kinds of food brought in for sharing, including my favourites! What an aweeee! Because of that so much love received at that moment I have



***Inspiration from my stay in Milton Keynes
May 2025 & The Friend January 2024
"This is how love has changed me"
Kate McNally Westminster Meeting***

become a better person. I count on that love, never more than when I am not at my best self and when I need reassurance that I can find my best self again. The remembrance of that safe harbour of that love lets me love my worst self until I can find my best self. Or at least my better self.

Knowing that the harbour of that love is there, I am not as afraid to confront my darker side, to examine my faults fearlessly, to understand them and what triggers them. It's the safety of that love that enabled me to accept and grow away from my darker side. It holds space for me to be broken and to heal. From that love it opened my eyes to the great deal of seeing that God also loves me just as I am. This is how the tending love of friends healed me. First the knowledge of Friends loving me just as I was at that moment and then the knowledge of God's love.

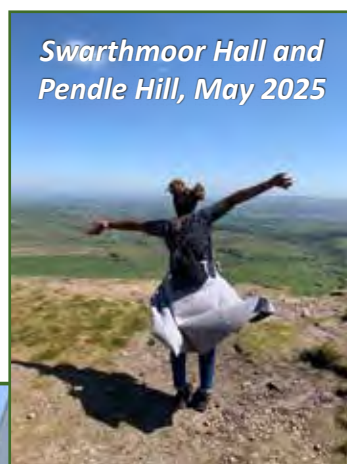
I now try to live each day knowing that God's love is there, knowing that I don't have to change to be worthy of that love. When I can do that, I am able to work to become the best version of me that is possible. Not to earn love but because of it

'Love is a powerful emotion that is able to transform'

I saw that there was an ocean of darkness but then I also saw that there was an ocean of love that flowed over and overcame – George Fox –

Love is a strong motion that can change and heal our hearts. This was one of the peak days of my travels after living and traveling amongst friends for almost 20 days. Now that I was up on Pendle Hill. I breath the fresh air from that hill and that statement sat with my heart because when my journey began my heart was in a broken state and now I see the ocean of love from Friends flowing over and healing my heart from all scars. I saw a healed version of me walking cheerfully over the world.

Again, walking up the Hill with Friends was my favourite piece. Getting to walk slowly up, resting and waiting for each other to catch up and celebrate getting to the top and viewing things from Fox's perspective and finally having a meal on top there is a moment that remains close to my heart.



Jesus Lane Cambridge, May 2025



Baby Jossiah

Skuppy in a soft voice Baby Jossiah shouted from the bottom of the round staircase during a silent meeting for worship.

Well I have a theory and has proven true for me over the years Babies sense positive energy and light spirits. That alone brought me to peace because I knew it meant I finally found my peace and my positive energy. I was finally light again. A confirmation that the ocean of light has flowed over and overcame my heavy heart. The confirmation that I am walking cheerfully over the world.

**Britain Yearly Meeting
May 2025**



Selly oak

The Gift of Sisterhood!

I praise you because your mercies are new every morning. I praise you because there were days I struggled to catch my sleep. I praise you because there where days I struggled to step out of bed. I praise you because there where days I struggled to keep breathing and now I praise you because I sleep peacefully, I step out of bed before sunrise with a tremendous will to catch my dreams and I am not only breathing but fully living. See he does a new thing!



Finally, I celebrate the gift of sisterhood

World Quaker Day

Mai Kiki, Quaker Community Harare

We had our Meeting for Worship (MfW) as usual, and soon after, we visited our friend Johari Hayeshi, who isn't feeling well. We went to her house and had a nice lunch. We were six adults, two young friends, and one child. We had a wonderful time together and took a picture.

These are additional sharings from 2 friends:

First from Locadia:

We gather to reflect on the importance of loving our neighbours. As Quakers, we believe in the inherent worth and dignity of every individual, and we are called to demonstrate love, compassion, and kindness to those around us.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR?

Loving your neighbour means recognising the shared humanity that binds us together. It is about treating others with respect, empathy, and understanding regardless of their background, culture, or circumstances. As we strive to love our neighbours, let us remember that love is an action, not just a feeling. May we be inspired to demonstrate love, compassion, and kindness to those around us, and may our actions reflect the values of our Quaker faith.



Second from Kelly Abijah:

As George Fox once said, "The law of love is the law of life." Albert Einstein echoed this statement saying, "The most important question is whether you are in harmony with the universe." Today, let us focus on loving our neighbour as ourselves. When we do, we will find harmony with the universe and fulfil the law. Let us spread love, kindness, and compassion and make the world a warmer, more loving place.

African Quakers Reimagined

Integrating African communal spirituality, Ubuntu, with Quaker faith and practice

Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge, Quaker Community Western Cape

In the year 2024 we celebrated the 400th birthday of George Fox and held the FWCC World Plenary Meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa, and online. Held under the theme: “Living the spirit of Ubuntu: Responding with hope to God’s call to cherish creation – and one another” the World Plenary considered three interrelated themes: Ubuntu, care for creation, and healing and repairing relationships in light of historic and continuing injustice. Along with the epistle of the Plenary, Friends produced a “Tapestry” document weaving these themes together.

Most of the world’s Quakers live in Africa. It therefore made sense to frame the World Plenary Meeting 2024 on the theme of Ubuntu, a philosophy known and used in various countries of Africa, and originating in Southern Africa.

A powerful concept from Southern African philosophy, particularly among Bantu-speaking peoples, Ubuntu emphasizes:

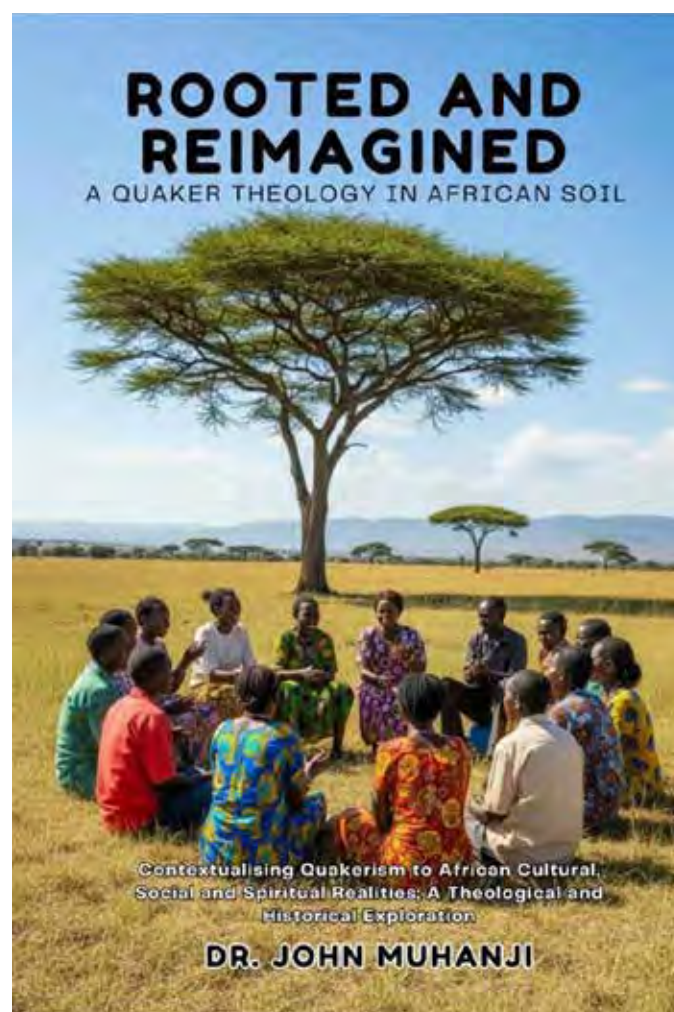
- Interconnectedness: “I am because we are” – identity comes from community.
- Humanity through others: Treating others with dignity and compassion.
- Shared humanity: Recognizing our common bonds.

The theme of Ubuntu lives on in three important initiatives that have emerged since the World Gathering in 2024:

1. The Ubuntu Trust Fund - a fund to facilitate communication and collaboration across colonial boundaries that continue to divide us.
2. The Ubuntu Website, a digital platform for exchange of ideas and co-creating a decolonised idea of who we are.
3. African Quakerism for the 21st Century – Rooted and Re-imagined, a transformative and liberatory narrative from dependence and division to self-reliant and united in our diversity.

In October 2025 Quakers from East, West, Central and Southern Africa gathered in Accra, Ghana to celebrate a hundred years of Quakerism in Ghana. At the gathering, which included celebrating World Quaker Day, under the theme: “Who is my neighbour”, we examined many themes including a discernment of what it means to be an African Quaker in the 21st Century. We raised the concern that as Africans we have been divided along

colonial lines. Our resources have been extracted and exported to build countries outside of Africa. More troubling still, our mindset and institutions have become complicit over the years in a narrative in which Africans



can do nothing without the West.

We considered the question: “What can we, as African Quakers, do to address this divided world?”

In response, two initiatives have emerged: First, an African Quaker Trust, funded primarily by African Friends, to support travel for inter-African gatherings and improve our communications infrastructure.

Second, the Quaker Ubuntu website—a Pan-African platform for sharing our witness on social justice, deepening our spiritual practice, and connecting our meetings. We collectively discerned the need to work across borders, promote dialogue with our neighbours,

and collaborate to address the forces dividing the world—making active our Quaker values and the principle of Ubuntu. We agreed that we need to change the narrative in Africa. African Quakers must deepen our connections with one another and raise the importance of Quaker values across our continent.

We have identified four regional hubs—East, South, Central, and West Africa—to coordinate this work. Ghana will anchor the West African hub. Both initiatives were adopted as a programme at the FWCC Africa Section Triennial in Uganda, held from 26 February to 1 March 2026.

Building on the theme of Ubuntu, Dr. John Muhanji, Director of Africa Ministries, Friends United Meeting, has published a book: *Rooted and Reimagined – A Quaker Theology in African Soil*. He says, “African Christianity must transcend inherited colonial frameworks to rediscover its voice from its own soil.” He says: “For African Quakers, this means moving from borrowed language to contextual expression. It means re-examining inherited structures that do not serve African realities; recovering African communal wisdom that aligns with Christ’s teaching and naming and dismantling internalised spiritual inferiority.

Decolonising does not mean rejecting Quaker theology. It means returning to the Inward Light of Christ as our ultimate authority; allowing Christ to illuminate African culture from within and freeing our imagination to express Quaker faith in African categories. As Muhanji explains, for Quakerism to succeed in Africa, it needs to connect with local culture, deepen spirituality, and build strong communities. This means focusing on how Jesus’ teachings guide not just individuals, but the whole community towards fairness and positive change.

This is spiritual liberation—not rebellion.

Rooting our Quaker faith in Africa is not optional; it is a theological imperative. “Without it, African Quakerism risks remaining a mirror of its missionary origins, structures shaped more by colonial legacy than the spiritual vibrancy of African communities. This urgency becomes even more apparent when we confront unresolved contradictions at the heart of Quaker missionary history: While Quakers were vocal abolitionists and active in efforts to free enslaved people, they often failed to welcome those freed individuals, many of African descent, into their worship communities. Their silence, exclusion, and hesitation to extend full spiritual fellowship to black people raises an unsettling theological question: What moral or spiritual authority did they carry into Africa if they could not recognise the full dignity and spiritual agency of African

descended people in their land?” (Muhanji, 2026).

Our journey as Quakers in Africa is meaningful only when it is united with the collective growth of our faith across the continent. Our theology must speak from African realities—poverty, war, governance, land, youth, migration, exploitation of people and the environment. By working together, we not only nurture our spiritual communities and define our own path, but also contribute to the global tapestry of Quakerism. The strength of our unity, our shared vision, and our commitment to shaping our own destiny will inspire and enrich Friends everywhere.

Central to our shared journey is the spirit of ubuntu—‘I am because we are.’ Ubuntu reminds us that our individual and collective well-being is deeply intertwined. As Quakers, embracing ubuntu means recognising that our faith flourishes through mutual support, compassion, and collaboration. By living out these values, African Quakers can offer a powerful example to Friends around the world, demonstrating

how unity and community enrich Quakerism globally.

In celebrating early Quakerism the “challenge now is for African Friends to engage that tradition, not as a static inheritance but as a living witness, to renew its theology, re-interpret its practices and retell its story from African soil.” Let African Quakers

climb our own mountains and meditate on George Fox’s vision when he saw an “ocean of darkness and death, and an ocean of light and love. The ocean of light and love overcame the ocean of darkness and death.”

Leslie Sergius Ephson, Clerk of Hillhouse Meeting and Member at Large of the FWCC Africa Section Central Executive Committee, has created a WhatsApp Group which he calls a space for African Quakers to explore and shape our identity, rooted in African culture and Quaker values. The aim is to create a community that values African spirituality, critical thinking, and mutual respect, guided by the philosophy of Ubuntu. The expectations are to engage respectfully and critically; share perspectives and listen actively; support and encourage one another; and keep discussions focused and productive.

The three initiatives: The Ubuntu Trust, the Ubuntu Website and the Discussion on African Quakerism need our support and active participation. Please look out for updates and information on how to get involved on our social media and the Ubuntu website once it’s up. United in our diversity: Silent and Pastoral Friends—Women and Men—Young and Old—Working Together. Let us stand together in unity, supporting one another as we build a vibrant and impactful Quaker presence in Africa and beyond.

*Central to our shared journey is the spirit of Ubuntu—
‘I am because we are.’*

Start with One Plant

Bronwen Ellis, Quaker Community Western Cape

January this year began with words from my landlord that I found almost frightening. Our neighbour had recently bought himself a chainsaw and wanted to try it out. He planned to cut back the trees in his garden and offered to help with the two large *Eugenia* trees in mine, which they both agreed had gotten “out of control.” My landlord hoped he would cut them down altogether, but I knew I would miss their shade in the all too hot Cape Town summers. Luckily, they were only pruned, less shade but still there.

This somehow brought my back garden back into focus. I had done nothing with it, truly nothing, since the COVID-19 lockdown. That time had been about fear and simply getting through each day. I hadn't thought to clear leaves, make compost, or tend new plants. Yet the man with the saw inspired me to clean it up and try again. With food and everything else ever increasing in price, a few free veggies could only help.

The garden was buried under a carpet of leaves that hadn't been cleared in five years. Middle age and the changes in my body after forty have not been kind, so I had to pace myself. Every day, once the heat had passed, I went out for an hour or two and did what I could. Eventually, I could see the ground again. Like most urban spaces, this garden is little more than a glorified strip of concrete. I set up pots and planters, dug out seeds from the back of the cupboard, and restarted a compost pot. Slowly, a few things began to grow. Then something as dangerous as a chainsaw emerged: I was a woman with ideas.

I have gone into this older, and I think wiser, than before. These are the lessons I have learned:

- Take it one step at a time. Start with one plant. You may dream of a thriving garden filled with variety, but begin small. I started with a few onions, no pests are really interested in those.
- Work with nature, not against it. Yes, there are pests, but flowers and herbs can confuse them with their scents. The soil here is poor, so I have looked into growing fynbos plants. They thrive locally, have medicinal properties, and can treat common ailments like colds or sunburn, cheaper than the pharmacy.
- Do it on a budget. Soil and compost require some investment, but seeds can be harvested, cuttings can be grown, and containers can be upcycled.

What do I already have that can become a pot?

Without realising it, I wanted a space for myself and a deeper connection to nature. What began as a way to save money and grow food has had other side effects. It is empowering to say, I put this together from cuttings,



seeds, and upcycled materials. Even if I only eat one plant, it feels powerful to look at it all and say, I did that. And of course, I will eat more than one.

If I can live outside a corrupted capitalist system and give less money to the rich, that feels like resistance. My small attempt to restore fynbos helps the environment. The fruit trees I planted are little carbon sinks. My garden will not save the world, but it will provide more flowers for the bees nearby. I have not stopped monoculture and pesticides, but I can stop supporting them quite so much. Growing your own food makes the earth just a bit healthier.

It is good for me, just me, for my mental health. To sit in the garden surrounded by greenery and simply be. Humans are animals, highly intelligent but animals nonetheless. We forget this. The outside world is our natural habitat, and we feel better when we spend more time there. The garden has been a gift for my mental health. I often say: if you feel down, get outside and touch some grass. That too feels like resistance, choosing joy in a world that often wants to make you feel small and helpless.

Gardening has long been a form of resistance. I have even gathered rainwater, though my tanks are small. It makes me wonder, what if we could all live with less reliance on government? In South Africa, water provisions have been poor. If the government will not look after us, we must look after ourselves and each other. Homesteaders I have watched on YouTube all say the same, success comes when you find community.

History reminds us of the victory gardens of the world wars. With supplies going to troops, governments encouraged ordinary people to grow food. Seeds were distributed, and people were taught to garden. It meant stability and order. But after the wars, the focus shifted to economic growth. There is little profit if everyone feeds themselves.

I wonder, if the US government had not discouraged



gardening, and if people had food security, would the idea of immigrants “stealing jobs” have taken hold so strongly? And here in South Africa, with xenophobia brewing, if every South African knew where their next meal was coming from, would they really fear foreigners seeking a better life?

Henry Kissinger once said: “If you control the oil, you control nations; if you control food, you control the people.” I believe more of us need to take back control of our own lives. Save seeds, get your hands in the dirt, and grow your own food. Resistance is fertile.



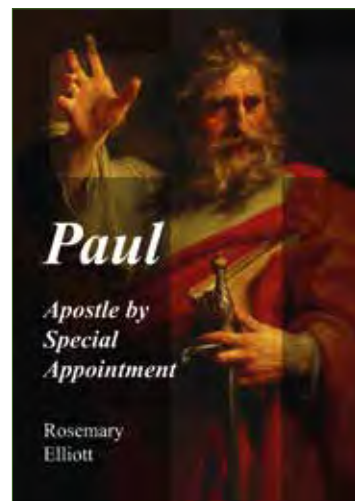
Friends host new book on St Paul

Peter Rose, Eastern Cape Quakers

Quakers have supported the publication of a powerful novelised biography of St Paul by Rosemary Elliott, former East Cape Friend. She tells the story of Saul of Tarsus from his days of fervent persecution of the followers of Jesus of Nazareth through his final execution in Rome. It covers his missionary journeys in detail and introduces the many friends who supported and loved him.

Rosemary Elliott was a social activist who farmed and worked in the disadvantaged communities in the Sundays River Valley. She began her research into the life of St Paul after the township Community Centre she had built was burnt to the ground in the chaos of protest action during the dark days of Apartheid in South Africa. Her work among disadvantaged communities had her branded as a 'communist' by some, admired by many and much loved by those whom she served. It became difficult and extremely dangerous to do any more at this time and, as she points out, she found a great deal of strength in the life and struggles of Paul. So began her great project to research and write an interpretation of the life of this remarkable man that occupied most of the rest of her own life which ended in 2018. Hence, the compelling narrative of the 'Apostle by Special Appointment'.

When complete, the book was in the form of a mass of notes and data cards filling several filing cabinets. In the early 1990s, her son, Philip Elliott, secured an old DOS model 386 computer for her, equipped with Manuscript word processor. And this is the format in which it was left until he undertook to convert it into a MS Word doc. And he then had a few copies printed for the family and Quaker Friends. A number of these, including Adrienne Whisson, Rosemary VanWyk-Smith and Helen Hollerman, felt the book should be made available to a wider readership and arranged for the preparation of the book for publication in electronic format. This was done by Quaker Communications Officer Heath White and Emeritus Professor Peter Rose at Rhodes University. The objective has been to provide full and free access to the book on the Web and hopefully its accessibility to a wider readership. And it has been hosted on the South African Quakers website.



At the last minute it was decided not to include these photographs from Rosemary Elliott's life in the book, but they are reproduced here for the pleasure of Friends who knew her and her husband.



▲ Rosemary in 1954



▶ Rosemary Gibson and Talbot Elliott at their engagement party



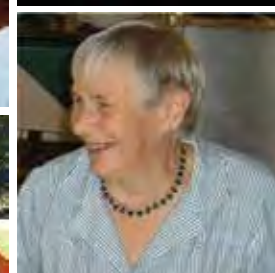
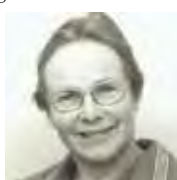
◀ 80th birthday celebration — Rosemary and Talbot



▲ Rosemary & Talbot 1954/55

◀ With Mingo the Dalmation

▶ In 1978



◀ Later years

I Can't Help but Wonder

Hannah Tarindwa, Quaker Community Namibia

In Shona when people greet each other in the morning, we say, “mangwanani, mamuka sei?” and the natural response is, “tamuka kana mamukawo.” Loosely translated it basically says that I have woken up well if you have woken up well too the other one is “tarara kana marara wo”, which means “we slept well if you slept well too”. Of course it speaks to our Ubuntu nature. However, I feel like sometimes when I listen to niceties and what we as humans have termed as polite behaviour I wonder if it's more just pretence covered up nicely and I have an issue with pretence, even in my own life. Lately I have checked in with myself after participating in activities or doing something I didn't particularly like and felt like I was pretending to be present.

This truly bothers me, particularly as a Quaker because essentially that's not part of being truthful, which is a core value I strongly hold as a member of Friends.

However, this line of questioning did not start because I became a member of friends it actually started when I was young. I have always wondered about polite speech. As well as polite actions. For example, nodding when listening to someone to show that you are being attentive.

So, my inquiry is not limited to words alone but also maybe some things that we do like laughing at a joke we do not find funny or giving words of comfort where we don't really have anything really helpful to say and so we switched to generic statements.

As I've grown older I have also been quite reflective about the information I share whether it's with friends or family but particularly friends. And when I say friends I do not mean the Society of Friends I actually mean the people I consider to be part of my support unit my social interactive circle. I have come to realise that there are friends that I do not speak with regularly and when we do speak this unbalance of information sharing. Moreover, I have become a person who watches what they say and how

deep I allow a conversation to go. And it does not sit quite comfortably with my soul first up it said that as an adult I must watch which information I share and which information I withhold.

I cannot help wondering, is this what it is to be an adult, to walk through life filtering what I say to people who I consider to be friends or who are family. I often do so because I do not want to do the alternative where I lie or tell half-truths. For example, sharing about my work or my current personal projects in crochet. I find it almost useless to share about my latest project with some people because I know they are only asking because we have found ourselves in a conversation and so they want to fill in the space. Quietly, I often wonder why is this person even asking they don't really care by the time this conversation is done they would have forgotten it.

This brings me to the heart of my short essay in that really, it's an inquiry on how often are we genuine in our inquiries about other people's lives. Why do we ask after them if only just to make them feel seen or cared for or just to fill in the gap because we find ourselves in a social situation where talk may be expected?

I often wonder how many people I engage with in meaningful conversation that is not only just for the moment but continuous engagement in building relationships. How intentional am I and how intentional are others, towards truly knowing what I do, what I've been up to so that they bear witness and celebrate my joys, as well as share with me my pains whatever might be going on at the time.

Have we become a Society of niceties such that we ask generic questions like, “How is your project progressing?” or say generic things like “Happy birthday” in WhatsApp groups without really taking time to consider what it means to the recipient? Even when we are the recipients of messages, do we even expect others to truly care about us? Are we now simply living in a space of detached engagement?

I can't help but wonder.



Photo by Mathias Reding on Unsplash

TESTIMONY

Kathleen Mary Sowter (née Norris)

9 June 1941 – 28 January 2026

Kathleen Mary Sowter was born on 9 June 1941 in the southern suburbs of Cape Town, the daughter of Kathleen Norris, an artist, and Cecil Norris, Managing Director of the Cape Times. She attended Herschel Girls' School and later studied Nutritional Science and Teaching at Stellenbosch University, followed by Psychology and Fine Art at the University of Cape Town.

She worked for some time in the garment industry, including training others. During the 1980s and 1990s she quietly and actively contributed to upskilling disadvantaged people. This, along with her anti-apartheid activism work was not something she spoke about often, but it formed an important part of her life's expression of equality and fairness.

In 1974, she married Norman Sowter, and together they had two sons, Matthew (born 1977) and Josh (born 1978). She was a caring and wholesome mother. Weekends were often spent in nature, the mountains of the western cape, picnics at Pringle Bay, and walks in Newlands Forest where time together outdoors became a defining part of family life.

Nature was central to Kathleen's life. She was a member of the Mountain Club of South Africa and spent many years hiking and swimming in mountain pools with family and friends. The mountains were where she found peace, freedom, and belonging. She lived most of her life in the southern suburbs of Cape Town, particularly in Little Mowbray and Rondebosch.

Her spiritual life evolved over time. She was involved

with the Ananda Kutir Ashram before becoming connected to the Quaker movement and the Quaker Peace Centre. She gave much of herself in service to others, volunteering for Lifeline, a mental health charity, and many other organisations. She also cared devotedly for her parents in their later years, supporting them until they passed.



Kathleen found joy in life's quieter pleasures. She loved classical and world music, reading, playing bridge, and thoughtful one-to-one conversations. In the evenings, she sometimes enjoyed a small whiskey with milk as a way to unwind and loved a strong coffee and dark chocolate. She was equally content in silence, never needing attention or recognition.

Kathleen was a strong, thoughtful, and deeply principled person, with a sharp and playful wit. She was observant and inquisitive, with a genuine interest in people. When you were with her, you felt heard and understood.

Although her final years were marked by Alzheimer's they were spent in happiness and joy with excellent care provided by Sarah Valley care home.

Kathleen leaves behind her sons, Matthew and Josh, her sister Jean, and the many family members, friends, and lives she shaped. She will be remembered for her integrity, her kindness, and the quiet strength with which she lived her life.

**Graham Thomas, Quaker Community
of the Western Cape**



BOOK REVIEW

Paul: Apostle by Special Appointment, by Rosemary Elliott, published by Philip Elliott, 2025, available on Amazon Kindle and on the SAYM website.

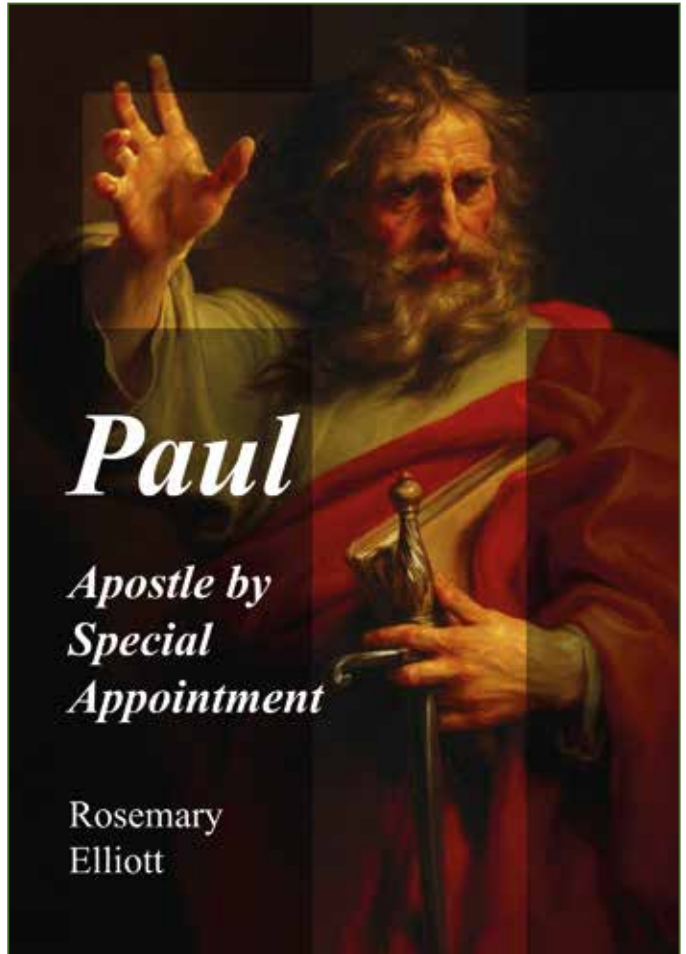
Peter Rose, Emeritus Professor, Rhodes University

Rosemary Elliott's powerful novelisation of the life of Saul of Tarsus, 'Paul – Apostle by Special Appointment', tells the story from his days of fervent persecution of the followers of the Nazarene through to his final execution in Rome. This is an enthralling, one might even say a rip-roaring, account of the life of one of the most singularly influential of human beings. His encounter on the Damascus road propelled him around the world in a breathtaking series of missionary journeys. And he was uniquely placed, as a gifted lawyer trained by Gamaliel, the top Rabbi of his time, to grasp the deep significance of the life, work and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth.

Paul left a series of letters, the subject of his penetrating insights, that have been foundational in the development of Christianity into one of the major religions of the world. That is a great story in itself and is the subject of a huge and brilliant scholarship in both biblical and historical studies. But perhaps less attention has been paid to the narrative of the life, and particularly the intense human costs paid by Paul, in his missionary endeavours. This is the task Rosemary Elliott set herself.

The work is richly footnoted so that the reader can follow the foundation from which the 'Life' is recreated. But her principle objective seems to have been to keep the narrative moving rather than for the dynamic of the story to become bogged down in the academic debates, important as they are, that cover virtually every aspect of Paul's life and work. That is well covered in many other works. Sticking to this objective may have given fewer quotes of more profound scholarship, but has given us the easy read and compelling story of the life of this remarkable person.

Rosemary Elliott, social activist and Quaker Friend, began her research into the life of St Paul after the township Community Centre she had built was burnt to the ground in the chaos of protest action during the dark days of Apartheid in South Africa. Her work among disadvantaged communities had her branded as a 'communist' by some, admired by many and much loved by those whom she served. It became difficult and extremely dangerous to do any more at this time and, as she points out in her Forward, she found a great deal of strength in the life and struggles of Paul. So began her great project to research and write an interpretation of



the life of this remarkable man that occupied most of the rest of her own life. Hence, the compelling narrative of the 'Apostle by Special Appointment'.

Apart from the engaging and easy-to-read story, the book is an important resource for understanding the people, the places and the times. As an academic reviewer has pointed out, it could be an important ancillary aid in teaching in seminaries and universities, in addition to its interest to a general readership.

The project of bringing the book to the public was undertaken by her son Philip and with the encouragement of the Society of Friends—the Quakers. The book is thus available as a PDF download on the South African Quaker website (www.quakers.co.za/publications/paul-apostle-by-special-appointment/). It is also available on Amazon Kindle.

Building Peace and Community

Alternatives to Violence Project Around the World

Since its beginning almost 50 years ago in Green Haven Prison, New York, the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) has spread to over 80 countries throughout the world. AVP's workshops on community building, communication, and transforming conflict, have been offered in prisons, schools, regions that have experienced extreme conflict, refugee camps, and the general community. Through its dynamic approach to experiential learning that appeals to both adult learners and young people, AVP has changed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

Download the first chapter

You can download the front material (including the table of contents and the bios of all 62 chapter authors) and the first chapter (including an introduction to AVP and a brief overview of the chapters) for free at the link below. The first chapter starts on Page 22 of the PDF.

<https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/building-peace-and-community-front-and-chapter-1.pdf>

Ordering the book

Paperback (ISBN: 9798385106042)

We are waiting for the international distribution to be finalised but it is available in the USA from the publisher Kendall Hunt for USD\$40 and through Amazon (in at least some countries).

It might be worth trying a few places as the price can vary. We have been told that it will be available from

the following sellers. We have provided direct links to the book for any stores where we know the book is available:

- Australia & New Zealand – Amazon Australia, Dymocks, Fishpond, The Nile
- UAE + Middle East – Magrudy's, Zoom Books, Kinokuniya, Pan World
- UK – Amazon UK, Blackwell's Book Depository, Waterstones, World of Books
- USA – Kendall Hunt, Amazon USA
- It is also available through Amazon stores in a few other countries, including:
- Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Spain, United Arab Emirates

We will update this list as we find out about its availability and other places you can buy it.

eBook (ISBN: 9798385106042)

The eBook is available now internationally from the publisher Kendall Hunt for USD\$10.

You can download the book onto two devices (e.g., a computer and a phone). Unfortunately we were not told until after publication that buying the eBook only gives you access to it for 5 years. We are quite frustrated because we realise that this is a book that you might want to refer to for years. We are exploring what we can do about it.

Helping to promote the book

Please help us promote the book by sharing it on AVP (or other) websites and social media. There are a range of resources you can download at:

<https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/building-peace-community/book-promotional-material/>

You can also help us promote the book by leaving reviews on Amazon, Goodreads, or other places.

Royalties

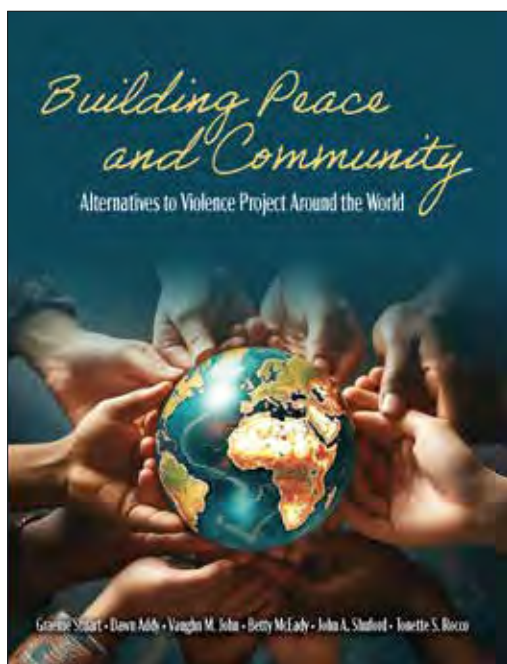
All royalties from the book go to Alternatives to Violence Project International to support their work

More information about AVP

Two good places to start are <https://avp.international/> and <https://avpusa.org/>

Published research and other literature about AVP can be found at: <https://avp.international/literature/>

Contact Vaughn John at: johnv@ukzn.ac.za
University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa



AFTERTHOUGHTS

Thoughts of concern

I have been increasingly concerned with the number of colourful enticing adverts promoting gambling on the TV channels. Very often they are in prominent spots such as prior to the news, and present Casinos as pleasure palaces where money flows freely and is always a certain reward.

For many, this will be very enticing and frequently it will be for people with little money in their pockets.

Do other Friends have this concern? If so, should we be making our voices heard, expressing the pitfalls and dangers of gambling and casinos?

Rosie Smith, Eastern Cape Quakers

A Near Miss

I didn't often attend Johannesburg Monthly Meeting, but have special memories. I will start with a Sunday, in the Johannesburg Meeting House. I was up from KZN and offered to help with childrens' activities during meeting.

Does anyone remember the beautiful creations made by sticking odd bits of food onto paper? The supplies were abundant and bits of pasta in different shapes, red and brown lentils and many different colours of beans were on hand in jars, lined up in the childrens' room.

I walked into help just after the little ones had got stuck into their artistic efforts. I came in right on time to prevent the pouring of an elderly Friends ashes from a funeral urn onto gluey paper. With an impressive dive I grabbed the upturned urn and popped back the lid.

There must be a lesson in this somewhere. Thinking it could be something about where to store ashes while waiting to be sprinkled. Hopefully this was a once off happening and pieces of art weren't already in the homes of Friends from previous Sundays. Could these pieces have been displayed on the walls, mantle pieces and fridges of parents?

The ashes were eventually sprinkled in a special place and hopefully, not too heavily taxed. This was a long time ago and all was not lost. At least I think it wasn't.

Julie Povall, KwaZulu-Natal
Monthly Meeting