



Friends World Committee
for Consultation
SECTION OF THE AMERICAS

Comité Mundial de Consulta
de los Amigos
SECCIÓN DE LAS AMÉRICAS

ABOUT THE WIDER QUAKER FELLOWSHIP

The Wider Quaker Fellowship is a program of Friends World Committee for Consultation Section of the Americas. Through our mailings we seek to lift up voices of Friends of different countries, languages, cultures and Quaker traditions, and invite all to enter into spiritual community with Friends.

The Fellowship was founded in 1936 by Rufus M. Jones, a North American Quaker teacher, activist and mystic, as a way for like-minded people who were interested in Quaker beliefs and practices to stay in contact with the Religious Society of Friends, while maintaining their own religious affiliation, if any. Today, WQF Fellows live in over 90 countries, and include non-Friends, inquirers, Quakers living in isolated circumstances, and active members and attenders of Friends meetings and churches. Wider Quaker Fellowship depends on the financial support of its readers to provide this service.

Wider Quaker Fellowship articles are also available on the web at www.voicesoffriends.org under "Quaker Thought Today"

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Friends Center, 1506 Race Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102 USA
tel: 215.241.7250, email: wqf@fwccamericas.org

Cover art: © Steve Fick, www.fick.ca (Detail of "Maasai Woodgatherers" based on experiences at the World Gathering of Friends, Kenya, 2013)

Being Salt and *Light*

Excerpts from Plenary Speeches

2012 WORLD CONFERENCE OF FRIENDS
(QUAKERS) IN KENYA



The Wider Quaker Fellowship
La Asociación de amigos de los Amigos

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The following are excerpts from plenary speeches given at the historic World Conference of Friends that took place at Kabarak University in Kenya in April 2012. Over 850 Friends from 51 countries around the world gathered to worship, sing, dance, hear talks, participate in workshops, and learn from each other.

The theme of the Conference is taken from Matthew 5:13-16 in which Jesus tells his disciples:

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (New International Version [NIV])

Excerpts from all but two plenary speeches have been included in this pamphlet. The speech by Noah Baker Merrill, an American Friend, was omitted because it has been published in another WQF pamphlet called “Where We Are Changed.” He concluded his powerful prophetic message by declaring:

“If ever the world needed the authentic, life-giving challenge that animated our spiritual ancestors, it needs it now.”

For reasons of length we also omitted the speech of Guatemalan Friend Karen Patricia Gregorio Henriquez de Calderon, who vividly recounted how she felt, and what spiritual lessons she learned, when gunmen attacked a restaurant where she was dining and killed all the occupants except her. After sharing her horrific story, she expressed gratitude to God for sparing her life and for giving her the opportunity to give this testimony in a safe environment:

It was a very special blessing to have shared my testimony. It has been greatly useful to me to do it, since it is very dangerous to tell such a thing in my country due to the critical situation that it represents. But I wanted to tell it here because it could be profitable to many and we can freely express that we live in a broken world but God gives the answer. He is here and nothing nor nobody will separate us from Him. Because He has promised to be with us until the end of the world; in the meantime, we must be the light of the world and the salt of the earth!

We hope that these selections will convey some of the amazing diversity among Friends world-wide, and also our efforts truly to be Friends despite our differences in theology, worship style and culture. The pamphlet begins with a prophetic challenge from a Kenyan theologian named Esther Mombo, followed by talks testifying to how Friends are (or can be) salt and light in a broken world

—Anthony Manousos, Editor

QUERIES / QUESTIONS

These queries/questions are based on ones supplied by David Niyonzima.

1. Why do we see Friends not being light and salt as much as we expect?
 2. Is our testimony distracted by internal conflicts and strife? How can we get past this?
 3. Are our internal hurts and conflicts so deep that they cannot be penetrated by the light and healed by the salt?
 4. Can I change and be salt and light?
 5. Can we as a Religious Society of Friends change and become salt and light?
 6. How can we help enable that to happen?
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Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services, does community work for the healing of traumatised people, including children and women who have been sexually assaulted. There are peace-building initiatives by HROC (Healing and Rebuilding Our Communities), the Friends Women's Association, which assists women who are HIV-positive, and peace schools and peace committees which work regardless of ethnic identity.

So what are we doing as Friends? How are we living as the light and salt that, of course, comes from Jesus Christ? What is the church meant to be? Mark Andrew wrote, "The church is a place to give rest to your soul, a place of gathering where anyone should be able to come and involve themselves with a community of believers who are joined by common faith in the Lord Almighty. Church is a lifetime of discovery as people brace themselves against their neighbor, so both are able to stand and walk together."

I have a few suggestions. Friends are to get past their own issues. Friends are to not say or be anything that is contrary to our intent to learn and serve. Friends are to be active listeners. Can we listen to each other as Friends? Can we learn from one another? I recommend that we Friends analyse and become involved in the community's physical, social and spiritual needs, and be sensitive to the economic, psychological and spiritual needs of the community. We should be creators of initiatives that will make a difference in the world and we should implement them, just like the early Quakers did.

1. WHERE ARE THE QUAKERS?

My name is **Esther Mombo**, and I come from Bware Yearly Meeting, Kenya. I teach at St Paul's University, an old theological college where many of our Quaker pastors in East Africa have trained, and where I also trained after Friends Theological College or Friends Bible College as it was then called....

Salt and light are important metaphors and are appropriate symbols to the followers of Jesus, then and now. During his life and ministry, Jesus ministered to a broken world. That broken world was characterized by issues on the political, economic, social and religious fronts.

[This] conference gathering is [calling us] to renew and re-commit ourselves to the issues that are showing the image of God amongst the people.

[But] we are wavering, we are between yes and no, we are in the middle. Why are Quakers, who are distinctively known to be the people who say the truth, now in the grey area between the truth and the lie? Is it because we compromise and have not maintained our principles? It means that we've lost the essence of being salt and light.

As light we are called to show the way. Without light we bump into each other and fall into the ditch. But light says, here is the road, take it. Here is danger, avoid it. We are called to shine and we shine better when there is darkness and not when there is light. One dark evening I saw a *matatu* [public transport van used in Kenya] that had no lights, yet it was written at the top: "I have the light of Christ." It was dark, it had no beam lights, but it was written, "I have the light of Christ." That *matatu* was not being seen because it couldn't show its lights.

And sometimes maybe we are in total darkness. People don't see us, people don't hear us, people don't feel us, but we still continue to claim that we are Quakers of the light. Without light and salt the world is in a very bad shape. With the light and salt, the world becomes a safer and better place. It is our duty as Friends to make this world a better place to live....

When Mahatma Gandhi said that the problem with Christianity in India is Christians, he was looking at the fact that people do not practise what they say—not following Jesus who was their leader...

Where are the Christians? It was John Stott who said, *“If the world is rotten don’t ask why the light is broken. Ask, where are the Christians?”* So if our contexts are rotten, we need to ask ourselves, where are the Quakers? Where are the Quaker Christians? People need to see the work of the salt and people need to see the work of light in us. The Christians amongst you are known to be Christians by the way they love one another, not by the way they talk about one another. As salt and light, Christians are called to be involved in society...

2. I DO NOT UNDERSTAND VARIOUS FRIENDS’ BELIEFS BUT I BELIEVE WE ARE ONE

I am **Pradip Kumar Lamichhane**, 35 years old, living in the countryside of Kathmandu, Nepal with my wife, five years old son, father, mother and grandmother. Nepal is in between India and China and is popular for trekking and mountain climbing, with Mount Everest the highest peak in the world. Currently I am working for an IT Consultancy Company which provides System Solutions, mostly in virtualizing corporate houses, cloud computing, solar systems, etc—all green stuff. People love the word *Green* nowadays, especially Quakers—which is why Friends are active in projects relating to climate change and earth care. So in the computer field, I and my colleagues are working towards better and sustainable systems.

In around 1994 American Friends sent Indian missionaries to Nepal and I am one of the fruit from them. I am an Evangelical Friend but I don’t do as some Evangelical practice, e.g. I don’t kneel down and pray for a long time loudly in the early morning. I don’t go to preach [the] gospel and do not do much Bible reading. Only I listen and speak to God silently as well as loudly, inwardly as well as outwardly. So you may guess or name to which culture of Friends I belong....

we are meant to be. I am very much convinced that we are made to be salt and light, and I like this version of the message of this conference, “You are here to be salt seasoning that brings out the God flavours of this earth. You are here to delight in bringing out the God colours in the world”.

You have heard things about Burundi, but probably not as much as you have heard about Rwanda. In 1993, more than 250,000 people died, and about 800,000 were internally displaced. Probably more than 400,000 Burundians were living in exile, mainly in Tanzania. As you have heard, just like in Rwanda, the recurrent clashes between Burundi Hutu and Tutsi tore up social ties and exacerbated the hatred between them. It was very, very traumatic, very, very hard. This dark picture shows why light and salt is needed.

In Burundi during 1993, Friends in Mubuga were able to hide each other. We went there to encourage them because we had heard that when Hutus looked for Tutsis to kill, the Tutsis were hidden by Hutus. And when Tutsis wanted to find Hutus to kill, the Tutsis hid Hutus. Friends were able to stand and shine. In a refugee camp in Mubuga, a Tutsi lady heard that Tutsis youngsters were going out to kill Hutus in revenge. She heard them planning how they would do it and she said to herself, “No, even though these people are not from my tribe, let me go and warn them so they may hide or run away.” So she woke up very early in the morning and went village by village, house by house, shouting, “Run away! Very early tomorrow morning there are people who are going to come and kill you. Go away!” Those who heard her went to the other side, so that when the youngsters came to kill them, the houses were empty. She saved so many, many lives.

Yes, it is possible that we, Friends here today, can be light and salt. We too can save lives. We have responded to the crisis in Burundi through other organisations. Several are represented here and I know there are many more going on in the country. For example, the Ministry of Peace Under the Cross of Friends has been involved in conflict resolution initiatives. My own organisation,

1999, we saw a need to expand the ministry and, with support from Friends in Norway and other places, we began the Friends Peace House which has helped many Rwandans to reconcile and to be reintegrated into normal life. Christine and David Zarembka witness to the work that the Friends Peace House is doing.

I worked not only in the church, but also in the traditional justice system of Rwanda called *gacaca*, which helped to solve problems caused by the genocide, such as reintegrating released prisoners and counseling genocide survivors.

All of this was done through God's power and His unbelievable grace. But the work continues. In a place where more than one million people died, the journey to solve problems is still very long. The children of the perpetrators need help with their studies so that they do not fall behind other students. Also orphans and widows need support and places to live. At this time, eighteen years since the genocide happened, many perpetrators who received sentences for seventeen to nineteen years are being released from prison. If we do nothing for them they could return to evil ways. As Friends we believe these needs must be prayed for and a tangible response given to them, not only in Rwanda, but also in the many other countries experiencing similar problems.

9. TRAUMA HEALING AND RECONCILIATION

I am David Niyonzima, the Executive Director of a local organisation called Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services. It is a ministry that we established to respond to the needs of the country of Burundi and some of our activists are very senior practitioners and consultants. I like this work very much because it's my way of being light and salt.

We do a lot of live music in my church, but is joyful worship enough? Are we going to do more than joyful worship? My passion is to help Friends go beyond that and get involved in the community. I said that I liked this very much because it stresses the meaning of why God wants us to be where we are, being what

When I first heard the theme of the World Gathering ["Being Salt and Light in a Broken World"], I found it difficult to understand. It is a long, hard sentence, not easy to understand all at once. After long silence and seeking I found my awareness growing and finally I knew how really important the theme is for all of us in this time and this world and for Friends...

I am asked often by many friends why I am still in Nepal as I have valid visas for the US and UK. People spend millions to go there. I tried to answer them that I am really OK here. They think I am a fool and I think they are mistaken. I am happy as I am, I will try to make a difference from where I am and what I have. I am happy to support my church as I can. I am happy I am able to send a few poor children to school. I am happy I am able to run small NGO to support poor people. I am happy I am able to feed my old parents. I am happy to play with my son. I am happy to give tours to Quaker friends who come to visit Nepal. I am happy doing Green IT stuff.

You might wonder why I am doing this.... I call this a sustainable project for mankind. Others helped me to be an IT guy, so I help others so they could help more people. It is like a gospel which keeps on spreading. I share this experience with others and encourage them to do the same—help others as you have been helped. During my childhood and teenage years, I have experienced poverty, crying every day for food, so I understand what a small help can change the life of people and bring peace and joy. Don't think if you are supporting one person he or she only is benefited. No, there will be several people who will be indirectly getting help. So let us try to make a difference together.... If we don't do, who will do it? Somebody said to me, don't worry, God will do. "*Hakuna Matata*" means no worries. What a wonderful phrase, Friends.

But I will do whatever I can till the end of my life to bring peace and joy to impoverished faces.

This has been a tough job and made my head heavy. I don't understand very well at all about theology, but this my small mind understands: that God loves everybody and he wants us to give

saltiness and shine to the world.

I do not understand clearly about trinity, but I know God is with me.

I do not understand clearly about heaven and hell, but I know God is with me.

I do not understand clearly what is sin, but I know God is full of mercy.

I do not understand clearly about salt, but I know I have to be salty.

I do not understand clearly about light, but I know I should shine.

I do not understand clearly about FWCC, but I know I should be connected with it.

I do not understand clearly about unprogrammed Friends, but I know they are my Friends.

I do not understand clearly about programmed Friends, but I know they are my Friends.

I do not understand clearly about evangelical Friends, but I know they are my Friends.

I do not understand clearly about liberal Friends but I know they are my Friends

I do not understand clearly about different types of Friends, but I know they all are my Friends.

I do not understand clearly about Friends various beliefs, but I believe we are one

HAKUNA MATATA means no worries.

Let us pray together.

3. LIVING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

My name is **Carmela Lao**, who hails from the islands of the happiest people in the world, the Philippines.

I don't know if you've already been to my country but if you are planning to, I'm positive that you will notice how happy the Filipinos are with their lives despite the raging price hikes tied

survivors in my family. Of my extended family members, 92 died in the genocide, leaving only myself and three of my children (one is here with us, Silvie Umutoniwase). I survived, but I didn't know for two months that my children had survived. During that whole time I thought I was the only one. My heart that was completely broken, full of sadness and pain, full of hatred, desire for revenge and other feelings a person who lost 92 family members would feel.

When I fully realized that I had survived, I experienced the Light shining in all these places in my heart. This power I experienced was not human power but power from God.

Fifteen days after the genocide began, in a place where we fled for refuge, I met others who had even worse wounds than my own; some had lost every single family member. I comforted them and encouraged them to persevere. After a while, I returned to where I had lived: the houses had been destroyed and there was no food or clothing, but the hardest thing was hearing that those who had killed your relatives were now searching to kill you.

Still I continued the ministry of helping, comforting and encouraging the survivors to persevere. (Later, I also helped the killers to not be afraid and taught them that they needed to ask for forgiveness for what they did in the genocide.) Eventually, as people began coming out from where they had taken refuge, the Evangelical Friends Church of Rwanda resumed its ministry, preaching the gospel and helping with the extreme problems. This helped me to see that I wasn't alone and led me to continue the ministry of reconciling people to each other and healing the wounds in people's hearts.

I want to use this opportunity to thank Malesi Kinaro who, during that difficult time in Rwanda, came to teach us how to help our people who experienced trauma. Her coming was very important for us.

In partnership with the Evangelical Friends Church we continued the work of reconciling Rwandans to each other. It was very difficult. Some people did not understand but we continued to comfort, teach and challenge them until they understood. In

abuse of natural resources, the greedy values of our financial system. We care deeply about our planet. What can we do together? What can we do in our homes, in our worshipping communities, in our countries, and even internationally?

The question is can Friends be the resource in certain niches of these issues—or other issues—for the world to turn to? Can we truly have an impact as we once did? Is there a small part of this challenge of global change where Quakers can be empowered to make a difference?

I don't have the answer—you do! You've met each other now. You know our differences and you know that we share the desire to live the Kingdom now—however we may understand it. This is an opportunity to model what we have been talking about this past week.

We have the tools of trusting God, knowing Grace will support us if we discern with prayer and care. Using these tools we can empower and inspire our communities at home and keep our connections alive.

I have great hope for us as the Religious Society of Friends. Thank you for letting me serve you.

8. TESTIMONY OF A RWANDAN PEACEMAKER

I am **Sizeli Marcelin** from Rwanda Yearly Meeting. I am one who has met Jesus and I am one of the peacemakers in my country.

This world and those who live in it experience horrible disasters: earthquakes, floods, volcanic eruptions and other natural calamities strike the earth; wars, disease, and epidemics attack people. Afterward, many people experience severe depression that causes them to long for death. The world is in very difficult times, but for the countries in the Great Lakes region of Africa, it is very bad. Most of you probably know about what is happening in Congo and Burundi, and that in Rwanda, where I am from, we experienced genocide in 1994.

I, the one standing here in front of you, am one of four

up with the lack of employment means; the devastating damages brought by the recent geographical disasters that we experienced; the separation of family members caused by immigration for job opportunities—these are just *very few* examples of the problems a typical Filipino is facing. But regardless of all these, the joy of the fact that we are still breathing, that we are still able to wake up in the morning to experience God's grace in our lives, is what reflects in us; that is why we are able to curve our lips in a smile and to open our mouths for a hearty laugh.

Before I go on, let me first give a short background of myself. I am a university student, currently in my final year in college. I am taking up bachelor in communication research and I will be able to graduate next month, which makes me really excited. I am an Evangelical Christian. Back in my church, I am one of the youth advisers. I was also appointed to be our church's music director and I gladly accepted it for my love of music and my passion for using it to worship and glorify the name of the Lord.

Today, I was tasked to give a presentation about the Kingdom of God part of the theme. At first, I found this topic really challenging. But by God's guidance and grace, it became the topic that I would like to talk about.

Friends, to live the Kingdom of God in this broken world, we must live it in our lives first. As we welcome God's love in our very hearts, the Kingdom of God will automatically manifest in us!

I have a friend. Her name is Rina Saynes. Before, she works as a paralegal for a non-government foundation. She frequently visits jails, interacts with prisoners and helps for the follow-up of their cases.

When she first set foot to a jail in Manila, she saw the terrible condition of the prisoners in there. The prisoners have so many physical needs that are not supplied. There are abused prisoners and also the treatment that is given to them is very, very bad.

But God showed this situation at hand for her heart to be warmed and be filled with compassion to work for the change in this community and in those people enveloped in brokenness.

So after some time of continuing her paralegal works, she

discovered that these prisoners have greater needs, more important than their physical needs...Most of these prisoners are already abandoned by their loved ones. Left alone, forgotten.

Imagine yourself being alone, having no one to support you, no one to listen to your stories, to your future plans to change. *Would you think you would still have to change for the better when all of the people that you love leave you?* Do you think you would still have that hope to motivate you to live your life in a new page? That would be really hard. But with the help of this friend of mine, these people realize that life is still precious after all. That with everyone turning away from them, there is still someone who will never, ever leave: God. And He alone is more than enough to inspire them, to aid and motivate them to change. He alone is more than enough to give them hope that, despite all this hurt that they experience in the night, it will vanish in the morning and will be replaced with an outburst of absolute joyfulness; that despite the harsh things that they have done, they are still entitled to a second chance to right what went wrong with their lives. Rina is a proof that anyone could be an agent of change. Anyone could be an instrument to establish a manifestation of God's Kingdom here on Earth. All you have to do is to live out what is within you.

Friends, living out the Kingdom of God is not really that hard. All you've got to do is to *believe* that as we walk with Jesus we will be able to experience His unfathomable love and compassion, His goodness and His grace. We will be filled with so much of these that we will not have enough room inside us to store these that we just have to give them away to other people....Friends, let us always remember that *with Jesus in our hearts, change will start.*

4. THE PARABLE OF A MATCH AND A CANDLE

Ramon Andres Gonzales Longoria Escalona, pastor and former clerk of Cuba Yearly Meeting, and clerk of FWCC, shared this parable, from Pastor Milton Giefe of the Evangelical Lutheran Church:

Once upon a time a pastor read a parable of a match and a candle.

will never come. It must come from you if it is to come into being.

I have learned many things from my work with our Quaker United Nations Offices. The lesson that relates to my dream is how they discern their areas of work. They are always interested in hearing about the concerns of Friends around the world. But we usually express our concerns in big broad areas and with only a very small staff they have to figure out where their skills can best be applied. They look for areas of work where no one else is working at the UN. Then they spend months and years bringing this concern to the attention of more and more people and delegations. When this concern is finally on the agenda of bodies such as the UN Security Council or the Human Rights Commission, they know other groups will take it forward and they look for the next area of work.

Let me give you a couple of examples. When the UN formed the Peacebuilding Commission a few years ago, they did not give it much money or status. The New York QUNO saw that this new group needed to build its capacity to help the identified countries which included Burundi. They worked with UN staff in New York to help them be effective in their work and they also connected these people to Quaker work in Burundi. This continues. In Geneva, for several years, Rachel Brett worked to eliminate the use of child soldiers—children not yet considered adults. Finally now there are agreements and treaties signed by most countries agreeing not to use youngsters in the army. Rachel is now focusing on women in prison and their children—an issue that no one else was paying attention to.

So can we as a family of Friends identify some areas of work that we can work on at the local level, the national level and the international level? Since our first days, Friends have been involved with prison work. We all have prisons where we live, near our churches and meetings. Most of them are horrible places that only make worse the problems in our societies. What can we do together?

In our Global Change Consultation process, we learned that all of us are impacted by the effects of our changing climate, our

someone close to you has died or gone away?

- Have you have failed in some way?
- Do you have a long-term illness or disability?
- Are you in a body that shows serious signs of age?
- Do you carry some hurt, some wound?

If you have answered 'yes' to any of these, if you can, please stand up....

And I stand with you.

I believe that those of us who are wounded have a special ministry, because we are wounded, because we are hurt. I cannot tell you *what* your ministry is, only you can find that, but I am sure that there are amongst us people who can speak to needs in this world because they know about hurt. Your ministry might be to help people who have been hurt like you have, but who are behind you on the road.

The US author Thornton Wilder said: *In love's service only the wounded can serve.*

So do not rush to healing too fast; remember there may be a ministry for you in your woundedness. That I am sure about. Your wounds may heal some day and that piece of your ministry will be over for you and will be taken up by others.

But now I cannot see beyond my own questions so I leave you with some thoughts to ponder:

- Just as there is a ministry for the wounded in our communities, is there a role for a wounded community?
- Is the Religious Society of Friends a broken community?
- Are we a broken community, a broken people, a broken society? Do we, through our brokenness, have a role in God's plan?

7. A DREAM FOR FRIENDS WORLD-WIDE

Nancy Irving, outgoing General Secretary of FWCC, shared her vision for the world body of Friends.

I will share with you my dream—one that I have carried for several years now. I am not sure its time has come—perhaps its time

One day a match said to a candle, "I have a mission to light you."

"Oh, no!" answered the candle in surprise. "If you light me, my days will be numbered! Then no one will see the beauty of my shape and color."

Then the match asked the candle, "Do you want to be cold, hard, and never burn for the rest of your life?"

"But to burn—this would hurt and use up my strength," whispered the candle, shaking and full of fear.

"You're right," said the match. "But this is the mystery of your life and your noble mission. You and I were called to be Light. What I could do as a match is very little. But to give my fire to you completes the meaning of my life. I am made precisely to do this, to start fire. You are the candle. Your mission is to illuminate, giving light. As you are consumed, your pain and your energy transform into light and heat. We need this, so you will be remembered. Other candles will carry the light forward. But if you refuse, you will be forgotten."

In this moment, the candle stood up and held her wick to the match, saying, "I beg you to light me."

It is only through giving ourselves to serve others that we can live fully. For this we beg that God will light us, that He will light this community of faith, that as Quakers we will be salt and light, creating His kingdom, living under His sovereignty, giving the flavor of His hope and His transforming light to this broken world, living as children of the light.

5. THE FAITH COMMUNITY THAT STANDS SHAKING IN THE SPIRIT

My name is **Thomas Owen**, and I come from Aotearoa New Zealand. Many people simply call it "New Zealand," but we Quakers call it "Aotearoa" in recognition of the indigenous people—the Maori.

It would do me an honour to greet you now in the Maori language.

E oku tuakana, e oku tuahine, kua tae mai nei I tenei ra—nga mihi nui ki a koutou katoa. Nga mihi nui ki a Io, nana te kore, nana te po, nana hoki te ao i whakatinana. E mihi ana, e mihi ana. Nga mihi nui ki te mana whenua o te rohe nei. E mihi ana, e mihi ana. Ko Te Haahi Tuuhauwiri te iwi. Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena tatou katoa.

To translate, I began by giving praise to God the Creator: “From you came potential, the night, and this world you have populated”. I then greeted our hosts, the Kenyans, the peoples who nurture the Spirit of this land.

I also greeted all of us gathered here today as one tribe, what I called *Te Haahi Tuuhauwiri*. This is the Maori name for Quakers in Aotearoa. It translates literally as “the faith community that stands shaking in the wind of the Spirit.”

On behalf of *Te Haahi Tuuhauwiri o Aotearoa*, I greet you all, sisters and brothers of the Quaker world....

In the week before this conference began I met with many Kenyans who had been affected by the post-election violence of 2007-2008. The brokenness was clear—lives lost, homes destroyed, relationships shattered. With new elections looming, we pray for Kenya that history will not repeat itself. Just as we pray for a permanent end to violence in the Congo, Rwanda, Burundi... and the many, many other fires of conflict still burning across our planet right now....

Like the cells that make up our bodies, we seem destined to divide—and once divided, to convince ourselves of “our” own rightness, and “their” wrongness.

This is the broken human relation. And I feel it is this that underpins all of our conflicts and self-destructions—corrupting our equality; corrupting our community; corrupting our efforts to see that of God in everyone. This broken relation is the seed that spawns all other brokenness in the world.

Our own society—Quakers—is not immune to the pull to distinguish into us/them categories. We have split into factions since the first days of George Fox, James Nayler and John Perrot, and continue to split to this day, as meetings decide they are

- We live simply, not greedily, respecting the planet we live on.
- We make responsible use of the talents given us and the opportunities offered us.
- We have integrity and are honest.
- In short, we live as if the Kingdom of Heaven was here now; as if we were in the Kingdom of Heaven, making present God’s Kingdom here on earth.
- We are the living sign of God and by our living will be prophetic.

The second part of my message, about brokenness, is much harder—harder for me and harder for you, and I ask that together we hold a moment of quiet, and in that quiet each to pray to God for the strength to be really honest.

Let us each pray silently to God for strength.

We live on a broken planet; in our communities there are broken people.

We want to heal brokenness, where ever we see it. It is uncomfortable for us, as well as being uncomfortable for the person or thing that hurts. If somebody is grieving, for example, we ask kindly how they are, hoping that they will say they are fine, so we can go our way unperturbed.

We encourage people to get over their problem and get back to normal.

We are bad at sitting with pain.

Are we too keen to mend things, to have it all smooth again?

But the repair of brokenness does not come quickly—for some it comes never. For instance, when my marriage broke up it took me several years to recover. Why God—why so long? What were your plans for me in those years of brokenness?

Are we rushing so much to repair things, are we so focused on making the future better, that we miss some opportunities in the present?

Here’s the part where I need your help and your honesty..... Please think about your response to the following questions:

- Do you carry feelings of grief, or sense of loss? Perhaps

I also want to talk about brokenness, so there are two parts to this message. But first, community

There are Friends among us who remind us of the importance of each of us individually accepting Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, and it is right that they should so remind us. I have been wondering whether we can also think of a COMMUNITY being saved, and what this might mean and what this might look like.

In the Old Testament there is only a little talk of personal salvation and a lot of concern about the salvation of the *community*—the Tribes of Israel—the salvation of people collectively.

People in Old Testament times understood that sin affected the health of the community; that if people were to be reunited with God then the covenant relationship with God had to be restored....

So if the world body of Friends, if *our* community is saved, what does it mean? And what are the marks of a community that is saved?

I think it means the following:

- We are united with God—we work in God's strength
- We listen to God—follow God's promptings.
- We listen to each other, for God's promptings may come through other people.
- We respect the diversity amongst us—not everyone has the same gifts or the same callings and we know there are many ways to God.

I mentioned earlier that I am a scientist; I am also a woman, and there aren't so many women scientists. A lot of my life is trying to make things easier for women to be scientists and to encourage those who already are. It has become clear that businesses, research groups, all sorts of organisations that have women as well as men in their senior positions are more flexible, more robust and more successful. Diversity is good. So I celebrate diversity in the Religious Society of Friends.

- There will be disagreements in a diverse body, but we should see them as points of growth. And remember that creativity is often at the margins.
- We aim for justice for all, and a peaceable world.

irreconcilably drawn in different directions. As a result, there are many branches to our family tree—many of which have been drawn together here at this grand “family reunion.”

While we cherish our differences—and so we should—it also must be noted that it is never so sad as to see a community you love divided. When our “we” turns into an “us” and “them.”

However, despite our own Quaker breakages, I believe that in Friends' philosophy is the key to overcoming the splits and ruptures that characterize human social experience.

For me, Quakerism is based on the principle of that of God in everyone—the radical testimony that the Divine Light exists in us all, and can be connected with through compassionate reflection.

For me, Quakerism is also a movement against the human-made trappings of the world. When George Fox rallied against the ‘hirelings’ of the 17th century British church—against their rituals and hierarchies—he encouraged his followers to distinguish between the true calling of the Holy Spirit (the authentic spiritual experience), and the false machinery of the society of priests who claimed to be gatekeepers for it.

I find his message truly inspirational: both defiantly rebellious against the flawed social structures of humankind; and reverently humble before the universal glory of God that so vastly transcends these structures.

If Fox's message is an attempt to liberate the human experience of the Universal Spirit from worldly trappings, then I see in it also the attempt to liberate us from the “us/them” divisions that plague our thinking and practice.

Our tendency to divide into “us and them” is a false worldly trapping. The brokenness of our social world is not a natural certainty. Our lack of agreement is not an inescapable fact of life. It is something we create and construct and nurture. Brokenness is in the eye of the beholder. And as such, we have the choice to reproduce it, or to overcome it.

While the history of humanity can be seen as a succession of divisions and conflict, it can also be seen as a history of ongoing

attempts to overcome our divisions and attain unity. The work of the United Nations, Friends' international peace work, the inter-governmental panel on Climate Change, to name just a few, are recent international examples of this.

The Africa Great Lakes Initiative's reconciliation and mediation work happening right now here in Kenya, Rwanda and Burundi is another—which, to my mind, is some of the most important work Friends are doing right now. It is a privilege to be here to witness it.

In Aotearoa our great attempt to find unity between Maori and European colonisers is an agreement called the Treaty of Waitangi. It is a treaty, signed 172 years ago, identifying both races as protected subjects of the British Queen, while ensuring the right to self-governance and cultural preservation for Maori and European alike.

Over the last 170 years, and, indeed, in many contemporary affairs, it is easy to see where this agreement has been broken and Maori rights denied. However, optimistically, the Treaty is an attempt to overcome the us/them division and to find a common path—not one that disregards difference, but respects it, and respects the right to be different while still being accepted and protected within one peaceful civil society.

For Quakers in Aotearoa, the Treaty is affirmed as a faith in practice effort to answer that of God in everyone.

If one believes in that of God in each other, then to disrespect the “other” is to disrespect God. To exclude the “other” is to exclude God. To kill the “other” is to kill that of God in them—not only in the present, but also in any future movement of the Spirit within.

This radical belief in each other's precious Divinity is the seed that guides our actions. This is why in Aotearoa New Zealand we Friends uphold the rights of Maori and other minorities, why we advocate the rights of prisoners, and why we condemn all wars and the taking of lives. This is also why we affirm the rights of same sex relationships....

The Kingdom of God knows no exclusions. The kingdom of men does—the kingdom of broken relations—the kingdom of “us”

and “them.” But in the Kingdom of God there is only one—there is only “we.”

And how may we reach this?

I think the answer is the same as it's always been. Only love will get us through: our love for God; our love for that of God in each other; our love for the faith that none of us may be right, but all of us are righteous.

While human relations may be broken, the human spirit is not. The human spirit is truly transcendental. It is not bound by the colour of our skin; the amount of money in our pocket; the name above our church doors; or the names of our ancestors.

Quakers, Christians, Muslims, pagans, atheists, criminals, offenders, victims, oppressors, and the oppressed...

God's Light shines in all of us. No one is forgotten.

We are all brothers and sisters of the faith community that stands shaking in the wind.

6. HEALING A BROKEN COMMUNITY

My name is **Jocelyn Burnell**. I come from Britain, from the ‘unprogrammed’ tradition. As an “unprogrammed” Friend, I would not normally prepare a message in advance—nor would I normally speak for 20 minutes! Here I have to do both, but all of us are doing things a bit differently this week in order to help the whole body.

My daytime job is as a scientist—an astronomer—I study the stars and galaxies and black holes. I study the birth, life and death of our universe.

In my country I am a leader in my field, heavily involved in the secular world. So I live amongst the values and the trappings of secular society and try to be a Quaker presence in the secular world. I have a reputation for integrity, and I am proud of that.

I have been involved in some of the planning for this conference and know that at this stage of our week together we are moving into the Plenary sessions where we hope to pull things together.....As we go into this stage I have been thinking about community.