

CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN AFRICA YEARLY MEETING
ST AUGUSTINES'S PRIORY, MODDERPOORT, SOUTH AFRICA, 27 APRIL – 3 MAY
2016

We send loving greetings to Friends everywhere. Some sixty Friends came from four African countries to Modderpoort in the Free State. The venue was an old Anglican Mission Station school complex and we looked across to the blue-red Maluti mountains in Lesotho some fifteen kilometres away. We were joined by eight Friends from Britain Yearly Meeting and Churchill Malimo from the FWCC's Africa Section. For six days, we shared in: meetings for worship, worship sharing, meetings for worship for business, a Summer School, special interest groups, seven- (and some fifteen-) minute talks, excursions (including viewing rock art of the San people), and the Richard Gush Memorial Lecture.

Children and Young Friends enriched our Meeting. Young Friends had their own programme but also spent much time participating in the main programme.

We were inspired by the range and quality of actions for peace and justice on the part of Friends. These include AVP (Alternatives to Violence), Phoenix Zululand (Restorative Justice in prisons), Beans and Blankets for Babies, Zimbabwe Food Relief Action, the Quaker Peace Centre and the school-based work of the Friends of Hlekweni.

Summer School sessions over one day included Friendly Bible Study, a Q&A session, featuring weighty Quakers, and AVP.

We have always been aware of our diversity but this YM showed up some of the challenges we face, which are:

- Tackling immediate needs (which caused us to set up a hunger relief fund to support families in Bulawayo and Lesotho), and longer-term issues (the facts that climate change means that drought is now the norm across wide sections of southern Africa).
- Building interpersonal peace (via AVP for example) but also living in socio-economic environments characterised by violence, poverty and inequality.

Such challenges were highlighted in the Richard Gush Memorial Lecture, presented by Jennifer Kavanagh and titled No Other; a journey into one-ness, which can be found on our website www.quakers.co.za. It is almost impossible to summarise a lecture so full of rich insights and we point you, as Jennifer did, to one of our own Advices and Queries:

“Do we divide our worlds into spiritual activities, family life, secular pursuits and political action, into good people and bad people, us and them, old ways and new ways? Let's make them one. Let's find the goodness in the other, the infinite in the humdrum, the wisdom in the ancestor, the eternal in the here and now.”

We conclude this Epistle with a Haiku written during the meeting:

If you are feeling down
Or uncertain of how to act
Try love
Love never fails

In Peace and Friendship
Justine Limpitlaw
Helen Holleman
Co-Clerks