

FRIENDS FELLOWSHIP OF HEALING



THE HEALING MINISTRY

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In 'The Friend' of 21st June 2013 Andrew Backhouse wrote a very thoughtful piece on the subject of spiritual healing and our attitudes towards it. The Friends Fellowship of Healing is very glad to have the subject opened up as we feel somewhat misunderstood at times! The minutes to MfS that Andrew refers to stem from FFH members' concern that many Quakers do in fact regard healing as a flakey occupation and that the idea of healing has been conflated with new age weirdness rather than simply being what we do. All of us. Often.

Meeting for Sufferings was kind enough, and open enough, to ask us for a brief and I am going to put forward much of it here verbatim; I hope that even the most sceptical will be able to see that all Quakers engage in healing work, though we give it different names and different emphases.

The Friends Fellowship of Healing (FFH) feels very strongly that healing is integral to Quaker life; even that leading a Quaker life is in itself a way of bringing healing to the world. 'Letting one's life speak' and trying to act from a connection with the Light, the Divine, God, call it what you will, is healing work, whether it be expressed in outward work or more inwardly. The value of reconciliation work, prison reform, prison visiting, work with troubled young people, our schools, the work of QUNO, and so much other Quaker activity is incontestably and *visibly* valuable. It is work which takes place in the outer world, though its effects reach into the inner world. It is

all healing work; it is love in action and makes the Divine more manifest in this physical world.

The Friends Fellowship of Healing works with the inner world. This can have visible and obvious results in the outer world, but this is not our specific intent; our intent is simply to make that connection between the Divine and our familiar daily world and, by consciously holding others in that Light, to enable that connection for those others. We know that the inner world is as real as the outer world and that change starts in people's hearts; and that change comes by grace. We try to be a part of facilitating that grace.

Of course this work is not unique to the FFH, but it distresses us deeply when our part in the work of bringing healing into the world is dismissed as something which 'just a few Friends are interested in'. Surely all Friends respond when asked to hold someone in the Light. We do not expect everyone to feel called to participate in healing in the way that we do it but we do feel that in fact every Quaker does participate in healing, be it in prayer, a welcoming cup of tea, or many far more concrete works. We all understand the value of doing what Love requires of us.

We are aware that part of the problem may be the actual word 'healing' which is often erroneously assumed to be synonymous with curing (or trying to cure) physical illness and may be considered to have failed if no such cure takes place. Healing touches the whole person and can transform us at a spiritual and mental level even though there may be no obvious outer result. Healing is not about promising miracles, nor is it a substitute for medical care. Having said that we should also be aware that historically,

the otherwise inexplicable curing of illness was in fact considered to be evidence that the agent of this cure really was divinely inspired. It was simply a side effect of their connection with the Light; and this of course manifested itself in the life of George Fox.

We feel that Quakers sometimes succumb to the prevailing view that inner work is a luxury, not practical, and that letting our lives speak means going out and Doing Things. We would like the inner work of healing to be valued by the Society, and to be considered as much a part of Quaker work as is, for example, peace work. We would like it recognised that healing takes place on many levels and that the inner is as valuable as the outer. The inner life has a practicality and is very much in the Quaker tradition.

Hilary Painter
Former Clerk to FFH Committee
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To find out more about FFH:-

Stephen Feltham, Membership Secretary
Friends Fellowship of Healing
6, Ferris Place, Bournemouth,
Dorset, BH8 0AU
Tel 01202 532 601
friendshealing@gmail.com
www.quaker-healing.org.uk

