

TOWARDS WHOLENESS

No. 150 SPRING 2018

£2.50



The **Friends Fellowship of Healing** is an informal group of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). (*Registered Charity number 284459.*)

Since its foundation in 1935, it has sought to uphold the cause of a healing ministry, and seeks to be a channel to help people towards health and harmony of body, mind and spirit, which it believes is God's purpose for everyone. It has prayer groups attached to many Meetings, and also postal groups to enable isolated people, and those who may be unable to join a local group, to co-operate with others in the service of healing prayer. The Fellowship holds conferences, retreats and workshops held either at a residential centre (Claridge House, Dormans Road, Dormansland, Lingfield, Surrey RH7 6QH) or elsewhere. All members annually receive three issues of **TOWARDS WHOLENESS**, the journal of the Fellowship, published in March, July and November.

ANNUAL FEES

(which include all necessary insurance/materials/newsletters etc.)

FFH Member	£15
QSH Full Healer Member	£35 including FFH
QSH Healer Couple	£45 One copy of TW and Including FFH
QSH Probationer	£35 Including FFH
Associate Members	£21 Including FFH

NOTE: if insurance is paid to another healing organisation then the fee for QSH membership is the same as for an Associate Member - £21.00.

Cheques, payable to Friends Fellowship of Healing, should be sent to The FFH Membership Secretary, 6 Ferris Place, Bournemouth, BH8 0AU.

US members please contact our agent, Richard Lee, 1201 Walsh Street Lansing, MI 48912. Tel: 517-285-1949 email: richardlee3101@att.net regarding payment via him.

Letters, articles, news items and other contributions for ***Towards Wholeness*** should be sent to the editor, Rosalind Smith, 4 The Walks, Stanton, Nr. Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, IP31 2BX. rossmith@btinternet.com 01359 252248.

Deadlines: February 1st, June 1st and October 1st.

For further information about the **FFH** please contact the Clerk: David Mason, 2 Fir Avenue, New Milton, Hants. BH25 6EX. 01425 626112.
david.mason1948@gmail.com

Donations for the work of the Fellowship are most welcome.

Cover photo: Bibury stream – Editor's photo

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FRIENDS – YOUR FFH NEEDS YOUR HELP.

Please give some thought as to whether you could become a little more involved with FFH. We are hoping to recruit more members onto the committee – which isn't as onerous as it might sound! We have only two meetings annually – one at Friends House in the spring, and the other as a residential weekend at Claridge House in the autumn. ALL expenses are paid. Please contact the Clerk, David Mason (contact details on inside back cover of TW) if you feel this might be for you!

The Postal and Phone Link Groups give prayer support to people seeking reassurance and healing. Some members have joined these groups because they are physically isolated by handicap, age or geography. Others may already belong to a local healing group and are able to give additional commitment by also belonging to one of the postal or phone link groups, or are simply committed to the power of prayer.

All are welcome to join. If you would like to help in this way, please write to one of the Postal Co-ordinators (***Robin Goodman and Muriel Robertson***, contact details on inside cover) with a few details about yourself. Your letter will be passed on to one of the group secretaries who will then contact you direct and give you the names of two or three people to uphold in prayer regularly.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Friends,

I have been privileged to be the editor of *Towards Wholeness* since 1999, and it has proved to be a very rewarding and enjoyable job. Through it I have made many friends, amongst Friends and others, and it has never been a problem to find enough material to fill the journal's pages – in fact sometimes there is too much to include and a decision has to be made to leave some items until a later date.

But the time has now come when I really feel that someone else should take over. *TW* needs a fresh outlook, perhaps from someone younger than myself, who would implement some fresh ideas without losing the essential essence of our work towards wholeness in all its aspects, spiritual, mental and physical.

Although it would need someone with a good command of language, and a certain expertise on a computer, nevertheless one would learn as one went (as I did), and often it is just a matter of inserting contributions, perhaps after a little editing if necessary, straight into the journal. I must stress again that the rewards outdo the effort involved! I would hope that whoever takes it on would be amenable to working alongside me for a few issues with the intention of taking over completely when they feel confident to do so. And I would be only too willing to be available if or when the need arises.

Friends – please give serious thought to this, and if you are at all interested contact me firstly by email and then I would contact you back for a phone conversation about what is involved.

With thanks

Rosalind Smith

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

THE HEALING STREAM.

Jim Pym

I have been interested in Spiritual Healing now for nearly half a century. I was fortunate to come across it when I was still young, and, while I do not claim to know many of the answers – or even the questions – I feel I have discovered a few things. I would like to share a few of them:-

There seems to be a lot of confusion these days as to what spiritual healing actually is. For me, it is the Stream of Infinite Goodness which flows freely from the Divine to all beings. All we have to do is to let it flow in, to, and through us. However, this little word ‘All’ makes it sound very simple, but it seems that it is not. Though the simple essence does not change, what has is our ability to accept simplicity without question, just because it is there right before our eyes. Part of the dis-ease of the modern world is our need to always be able to describe what happens in ‘scientific’ terms. We live in an increasingly complex world, where we are not content to allow simple Truths to pass without attempting to analyse them. We find it hard to accept that there are areas in which this may not be possible. It is possible when we are dealing with the finite and timebound, where the senses rule supreme (though even in the world of the senses we have to accept that there are limitations and the evidence of the senses is not always true). However, with spiritual healing we are dealing with the infinite and eternal, with an essentially mystical experience, and in the last resort there are no words or concepts that are adequate.

Anyone who looks at the healing scene today, and compares it with that of the sixties and seventies must notice some real differences. It was truly a ‘Golden Age’ of spiritual healing. In this golden age, spiritual healing was highly newsworthy. Hardly a week would go by without stories of ‘miraculous’ cures in the local and national press. Healers like Harry Edwards could fill the Festival Hall in London, while others like Brother Mandus of the World Healing Crusade could fill big churches for a healing service. Such spiritual healing was seen as a gift and a vocation, to which people were called. People like

Harry Edwards and Phil and Kath Wyndham evolved their gifts within the Spiritualist movement, which taught that, although the healing comes from God, it administered by spirit guides who know how to apply the spiritual power involved. Others such as Brother Mandus, Dorothy Kerin and Elsie Salmon had their roots in mainstream Christianity (even though the religious establishment mostly resisted spiritual healing within the churches). There was also the metaphysical tradition, typified by Christian Science and Unity, which was basically Christian but had its own theology, and healers within the Jewish, Moslem and Hindu communities, though they mainly served their own constituencies. The main thing about spiritual healing was that it was recognised as a ‘Gift of the Spirit’ emerging from genuine and deep spiritual belief and practice.

No matter what tradition a healer came from, he or she expected – from their experience – actual healings to take place. The mind-set of the time is summed up by a card that was distributed by the World Healing Crusade, encouraging all to ‘Expect a Miracle!’. I can truthfully say that I have personally witnessed most of the miracles mentioned in the New Testament. I know that prayer and meditation ‘work’ and I have observed and researched their effects. They not only bring wholeness to the one who prays, but also, in addition to their inner fruits, they can – often instantaneously – change physical conditions for the better.

The other significant factor about that time lay in the recognition that prayer healing – also known as absent or distant healing – was as important, and as effective, as personal one-to-one treatment. The healing ministries mentioned above were actually built on this practice, with many thousands of people being helped each month. Some healers worked alone (with help in typing replies etc) while others evolved a practice of group healing. Several healers reported receiving hundreds and even thousands of letters each week, many of them reporting betterment or even cures. Many healers made these reports available to independent researchers who verified them as true reports. However, all this has slowly changed, and the personal

(contact) healing practice has become seen as the most important, with distant healing a sort of ‘back-up’.

Spiritual healing had a place within Quakerism from the earliest time. Members of the ‘Valiant Sixty’ such as George Fox and James Nayler were known for their gifts of healing. The late 17th century was also a Golden Age of healing. Fox even wrote a *Book of Miracles* telling of these practices, and left money in his will for its publication. However, the manuscript was ‘lost’, largely due to the fact that Friends feared being caught up in the witchcraft persecutions which were around at the time. The manuscript was later reconstructed by Henry Cadbury, and was re-published a few years ago by Quakers Uniting in Publications.

The Stream of Healing is still flowing, and it is up to us to make the intention to be more positive in acceptance of its blessings. With our practice of silent waiting on God, Quakers are ideally placed to do this, if we can remember our testimony to simplicity. We can re-affirm our testimony to spiritual healing as a gift of the spirit, and once more become immersed in the Divine Stream of Healing which flows from a deep awareness of the Living Presence of God and acceptance of the unconditional nature of God’s Love. In this way, peace and harmony can be restored to body and mind, and to the very earth itself.

If we can do this, we will not have to worry about decreasing membership, about obscure theological differences of belief, and many of the other problems which beset our Society – and our society – at the present time. It is possible, indeed, more than that, it must happen if we are to survive.

One topic that never seems to grow stale or old is theodicy: justifications for the existence of God, or more broadly speaking, Apologetics, those intense arguments defending and defining one's own or denominational theological position. We all have a vested interest in this because, excepting those people who blithely think their own subjectivism is self-evidently right and true (and so incarcerate themselves within the deep circles of ignorance), nobody wants to suspect that their own beliefs are founded on unreason, prejudice, ignorance and folly; to actually suspect that they were would, at some profound level, begin to undermine our self-image, and so our confidence. Besides, the New Testament itself urges us to 'give an account of our faith to all who ask us'. Whilst Quakers, of course, may not see that in doctrinal or dogmatic terms, nevertheless, they too wish - and profoundly so - to persuade others of the reasonableness and superiority (ouch! But, for example, isn't peace better than war?) of their way. To do this, then, in the public domain we need to enter into that wrangling with the words - apologetics - that can be so divisive. But at least, perhaps, one benefit might be that if we accept the challenge we will not end up in Dante's ante-chamber to Hell in his *Inferno*: a place where nameless throngs who did not support God or the devil flee the biting insects; they played it safe in life and refused commitment to any principle, and so not only are they unfit for Heaven, but Hell rejects them too! However, Hell for Quakers is another issue for another time!

Before looking at specific arguments for the existence of God in part 2 of this article, I would like first to consider a. The allied topic of why we come to believe in the first place, and b. What really are the roots of atheism, as opposed to its purported objections to belief; in other words, its stated and overt objections really conceal a deeper point which is hidden even from most - but not all - of the atheists themselves.

I think that there are three primary roots of faith, and that actually they are all equally important; but that if you consider any world religion, and if you consider Christian denominations specifically, as I shall, we find that one primary root has assumed ascendancy over the other two, and so led either to what we might call ‘distortions’ or, more positively, ‘developments’ in their faith. What are these three primary roots?

First, people come to belief in their religion because of tradition. This tradition at its simplest level can be that their parents and grandparents believed this ‘strand’ of faith; and more grandly, cathedrals, churches, monuments, pyramids, ornamentations, arts and crafts and much else besides can extend the lease of life and significance of certain beliefs well into the future. Indeed, in terms of Christianity both the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches are powerful exemplars of a faith that is transmitted through ‘tradition’.

And this is all well and good, except that after a time all traditions become corrupted and decay; furthermore, the essential danger of tradition is that it leads to an overemphasis on rituals and hierarchy.

Hence, in the West, we come to our second primary root: scriptures. If the Roman Catholic Church was primarily bound by its tradition, the Protestant Reformation, in reaction to that, decided that the ultimate authority in matters of faith was not tradition, but scriptures, and more specifically, The Bible. The ‘word’ (as opposed to ‘The Word’) was the measure of all things; so hang tradition, which now came to be seen as little more than superstition.

Of course, the danger with this approach is fundamentalism and literalism (which is, counter-productively, an inability to read the Bible at all, or at best to use it like Satan did in his temptation of Christ in the wilderness – taking quotations out of context to prove ‘points’) and fragmentation. This latter point is important because it meant that with the Bible being translated into vernacular languages, anyone and their dog could have an interpretation and set up a sect,

which is precisely what has happened and has been so damaging to Christianity.

Finally, the third root of belief is personal experience, and obviously this is where Quakerism fits most comfortably, having rejected Biblical literalism. In other words, what this position supposes is that human beings can have a personal experience or revelation of God that is entirely independent of any tradition, or any scriptures, and which is entirely valid and efficacious. Indeed, even the Bible testifies to this, most notably when Paul talks about pagans who follow their conscience and do Christ-like things even without knowing about Christ, or when Christ on the cross tells one of the thieves he will be in paradise with Him.

The danger with this type of root, however, is subjectivism and an over-emphasis on seeking spiritual experiences for oneself at the expense of contributing to the world generally. It has to be said, of course, that in the case of Quakerism (for there are many other Quietist and cloister-orientated movements) provision has been made against that eventuality even in the title of its most important ‘scripture’: *Quaker Faith and PRACTICE*! However, if that sounds good, let’s not forget that its lack of hierarchy, leadership and traditional methods of evangelising has meant that in the UK, with a population of over 60 million people, only about 27,000 are Quakers; so there is a downside if – a big IF - we measure religion by its population or numbers.

Emphasis, then, on any one of these roots has led to a very specific religion. Each religion goes through periods of readjustment if they are to survive and adapt to contemporary circumstance; and so, for example, over-reliance on tradition caused Catholicism to lose ground during the Reformation, and thus in the Counter-Reformation aspects of the importance of scriptures assumed a greater prominence in their thinking. But the important thing to realise is that all three - like the Trinity itself - should be one: they should all converge in one dynamic process, reinforcing each other, to convict each individual of the existence and presence of God. That is, ideally!

When we come to consider what I consider to be the four most powerful arguments for the existence of God, we may see how just how these three roots fit in, and especially how compelling, paradoxically, the argument from personal experience is. But before we get to that, what about atheism and atheists: if we have three primary roots of belief, then what are the roots of atheism?

This is most delightfully encapsulated (some generations ago) in that great atheist's, Aldous Huxley, remark that "Those who detect no meaning in the world generally do so because, for one reason or another, it suits their books that the world should be meaningless". It suits their books - what a lovely line. Put another way, they do not wish to be constrained in their pursuits of what they want; and further, and importantly, they do not wish to acknowledge their contingency - their subordination to God. More recently, this was expressed even more pungently by leading American scientist and polemical atheist, Dr Thomas Nagle, who said, "I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that... It is just as irrational to be influenced in one's beliefs by the hope that God does not exist as by the hope that God does exist." There - we have it - arguments for the existence or non-existence of God have little to do with reason and science: they have everything to do with irrationality, which is to say with emotion. People believe or disbelieve on emotional grounds and then seek out the evidence to support that view. It thus requires an emotional openness for anyone to be persuaded by the 'evidence' or arguments for belief. Since most people - probably - are not emotionally open, then they remain stuck mostly in the traditions in which they grew up, or in rejecting those traditions. Either way, these are not 'true' reasons even if they appear so to those who have them.

So to be very clear here, science has no bearing on belief, except a false bearing where people want to use it to discredit faith because

they are already orientated to do so by prior emotional concerns. As GK Chesterton remarked: “There are arguments for atheism, and they do not depend, and never did depend, upon science”. And more recently, the leading scientist (who led the Human Genome Project), and Christian, Francis Collins observed in his book, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief*, “The major and inescapable flaw of Dawkins’ claim that science demands atheism is that it goes beyond the evidence ... Atheism itself must therefore be considered a form of blind faith, in that it adopts a belief system that cannot be defended on the basis of pure reason”.

In part 2 of this article I shall address head-on what I consider to be the four great and powerful arguments for the existence of God, and necessarily the attacks atheists make on these arguments since if they were allowed to stand uncontested their whole elaborate facade – of, for example, ‘free thinking’ - would collapse.

But before moving to part 2, let’s just reflect further on the power of tradition. This could be, and almost is, an argument for the existence of God, but not really in a form that any one religion would accept, since they all have different and differing traditions. But while I don’t include this in my great four arguments it is worth pointing out the following: first, that from the beginning of recorded history all peoples knew that this life was not the end, and so testified to a supernatural reality; second, that from the beginning there has been widespread testimony across so many cultures that there was a golden age in which longevity, health and peace were enjoyed, and so that human history has been more a regression than a progression; and that thirdly, along with the awareness of the supernatural there has been a strong component of a forthcoming judgement. The ancient Egyptians, the Greeks and many more beside all knew and spoke of judgement. And in a way, too, the religions of the East did the same, albeit in a different way. Buddhism, generally perceived to be the least judgemental of all religions, has judgement built-in, for what is reincarnation if not a wheel of Sisyphus that results from our own self-condemnation?

Whilst I am not using these points as part of my four key arguments, yet what amazes me is the blithe indifference and ignorance of atheists to the essential power of these facts. Do they not, at any point, give one pause for thought? Can so many of our ancestors be so wrong? Can we really explain this widespread phenomenon merely as superstition and delusion, as if our forefathers and mothers were all simpletons who'd believe anything? Well, I for one don't think so.

Life-Cycle

*Little seed to earth did fall,
Became a tree, so very tall.
Tree, in turn, much fruit did bear,
Eaten by monkeys browsing there.
Monkeys, too, by leopard slain,
Higher part of food chain.
Through all this the seed endured,
Future offspring thus imbued.
Part and parcel of destruction
Comes the source of life's creation.*

Peter Horsfield

For decades I've turned to writing at times of difficulty or confusion, or when I've been seeking understanding and spiritual insight. This writing has taken many different forms, amongst them poetry, journaling, unsent letters and spontaneous outpourings.

In recent years I've taken to dialoguing with what I call Loving Spirit (God, the Light, Universal Spirit or whatever else I might have chosen to call it). The process usually follows the same pattern. It starts with me having a moan or a question, often like a wingeing child to a parent, and then it unfolds into something much deeper, where insight comes which is far beyond my everyday understanding and which often takes me by surprise. I don't know where this comes from. Maybe it springs from my subconscious – a complex synthesis of things that I have experienced, read about or otherwise taken in without even being fully aware of it. Or maybe it is a spiritual wisdom, located I know not where, that communicates to me through the vehicle of writing. As with ministry within meeting for worship I actually don't know. That said, all I do know is that there are times when what I write chimes with a deep knowing within me that is of a higher, or deeper, order than my everyday self and leaves me feeling different.

The piece below came to me recently, prompted by a deep concern within me to understand the nature of suffering. The process has had a profound effect upon me.

J. I had an epley maneuver from a doctor on Thursday, in the hopes of stopping this lightheaded/dizzy ear thing that I've had for weeks. But this didn't help. What can I do about it now?

L.S. The 'it' doesn't matter – whether it's your back, or dizziness or any other bodily discomfort. For you, these discomforts are present in order for you to be motivated to grow in understanding of yourself, your deeper self. It has been these pains and discomforts that have

taken you more deeply into mindfulness and, now, self-compassion training. This is the most valuable and important things for you to be doing at this time, for yourself and also for the world.

J. So where are these ailments coming from: you? Do you inflict these things upon me in order that I should learn and grow?

L.S. Yes, and no. Yes, in the sense that I created human beings who are susceptible to all these life experiences and, no, in that I gave you free will. So much of your pain and discomfort is caused by your (and by your I mean humanity's as well as your individual self) willed choices which are not in line with love and harmony. When there is free will and every available choice for humans to make, mistakes will occur and some of them will cause pain of various kinds until the lessons have been learned. Like the loving parent, I can give suggestions, guide and help when asked, but only when 'my children' have tested their independence of me and choose to return to me can I be of any help. In that sense, I am as powerless as you feel yourself to be.

J. Is it ever possible to be pain-free? Am I chasing an illusion to seek relief?

L.S. Again, yes and no. Pain is intrinsic to the human condition. It is what protects you from damaging yourself further e.g. the pain of a burn stops you continuing to hold a burning hot pot and therefore from seriously damaging yourself. No, it isn't impossible to be free of pain, with considered choices based on self-knowledge and combined with a sanguine attitude towards what arises and passes away in your experience. Everything arises and then passes away. Refusing to accept that fact is at the root of so much of your suffering. No amount of clinging will make something last forever, nor any amount of pushing away make something go before it is ready.

J. So will this dizzy etc. condition pass away?

L.S. Of course.

J. My fear is that my ailments keep being replaced by something else that is horrible. I see that happening all the time around me: look at Janette, and so many others suffering terribly at the hands of cancer, and then dying; and that's only one of the many forms of suffering that I'm seeing at present.

L.S. All you are seeing is the suffering. You're not seeing the ever-present potential for growth in these situations, not only for the people who are suffering but for all those involved with them. Because you are more aware than many people, and associate with others who are too, you are capable of seeing how all this is about refining your understanding and capacity to love and to know love. That is the most important lesson in all human life. Love requires all manner of personality qualities such as patience, compassion, endurance, tenderness and it is through all of these tough experiences that such characteristics can be developed. Every human soul comes into life needing to know love fully. That is the task on this plane, the only task. On the way to this evolved state lie many temptations and false trails. Some people even go as far astray as Hitler did, because they got consumed by their egos, being unable to see anything else. And their souls suffer terribly for it. Nonetheless, deep inside, everyone has the desire to love and be loved fully. That is in essence what life is for. Understand that, and you will understand all suffering in a different perspective.

To be mindful is to live in the present moment, not to be imprisoned in the past nor anticipating a future that may never happen. So much of modern life is feverish anticipation of future activity and excitement. We have to learn to step back from this into freedom and the possibility of the present.

Bede Griffiths

CLARIDGE HOUSE NEWS AND PROGRAMME

Bursary assistance available, depending on individual personal circumstances

Please enquire when booking.

For booking details –, and other tariff, including daily rates and special breaks – please contact The Manager, Claridge House, Dormans Road, Lingfield, Surrey, RH7 6QH. Tel: 01342 832150.

E-mail: welcome@claridgehousequaker.org.uk

website www.claridgehousequaker.org.uk

LED DAY RETREATS

Wednesday April 4th SILENT DAY

How listening and being quiet can allow a soothing calm to heal the heart and soul.

(Not suitable for beginners)

*Led by **Lina Newstead**, a British Wheel of Yoga Diploma Course Tutor, who runs private classes, meditation retreat weekends and longer yoga courses.*

£50

Thursday May 3rd CONTEMPLATION & MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

Refresh your practice or learn mindfulness meditation with an added twist

*Led by **Lina Newstead**, as above*

£50

Wednesday June 6th WALKING MEDITATION

Explore different ways to use walking meditation, both indoors and outdoors, rain or shine! *Led by **Lina Newstead**, as above*

£50

March 16th - 18th 10 places FOCUSING WITH QUAKERS

This weekend will introduce Focusing, an approach to self-care and healing, accessing personal truth, and deepening spiritual experience used by many Quakers. Through pausing, going within, paying attention to the felt senses in our bodies, and offering compassion to whatever we find, we can grow in awareness, self-acceptance, and peace. ***Madeleine Kay and Carol-Ann Hooper**,*

Depart 2pm Sunday

£250

March 20th - 22nd 6 places THE SPIRIT OF POETRY

“In the beginning was the Word.”

We shall bring along, hear and look at poems that move us. We will share poems we have each written, speaking out for our inner selves. We will experience resonance on various levels. As shared themes emerge, we will write to express our personal poetic responses. We may find new meaning for ourselves in light of our time together. *“A poet’s autobiography is his poetry; anything else is just a footnote.”*

Yevtushenk

***Francis Standish**, an experienced Retreatant interested in contemplative learning in conjunction with silent reflection.*

Depart 2pm Thursday

£210

April 6th - 8th 9 places GENTLE YOGA - for fatigue and stress

A gentle yoga course, suitable for all abilities, that will help restore and balance energy. It will include soothing breathing techniques, gentle yoga postures, simple meditation and nurturing relaxation. Suitable for those with moderate ME/CFS.

Leah Barnett, who has been teaching yoga for ten years and has taught a number of retreats for those with ME/CFS. Depart 2pm Sunday £250

April 9th - 13th 9 places YOGA RETREAT WEEK

Why travel far away for your Yoga retreat? Simply come to Surrey for a full timetable of posture work, breathing, deep relaxation and meditation. Wonderful vegetarian food will help cleanse and heal your body. All in a peaceful, spiritual setting that will re-energise your mind, body and spirit.

Lina Newstead, a 'British Wheel of Yoga' Diploma Course Tutor who runs private classes, meditation retreat weekends and longer Yoga courses.

Depart 10am Friday £420

April 13th -15th SILENT RETREAT

Using Mindfulness meditative techniques, this totally silent retreat offers us an opportunity to be still in the late spring/early summer growth to enhance our experience of newness and wonder. *Anne Simpson, an experienced Course Facilitator and Quaker Healer, will be running this silent retreat.*

Depart 2pm Sunday £250

April 3rd - 5th 6 places MASSAGE RETREAT

When you hurt yourself, you instinctively use your hands to rub the affected area; Massage is an extension of this technique. Andrei's soothing massages will relax you in both mind and body. At the end of the Massage Retreat you will leave the comfort of Claridge House relaxed, refreshed, longing to return. The retreats run from Tuesday 10am to Thursday 4pm and includes two full-body massages. *Andrei Illes, a professional massage therapist and teacher with many years' experience.* £275

April 26th - 29th 8 places KNITTING TO SOOTHE THE SOUL

Ask any knitter why they're addicted to knitting and they'll say "because it soothes my heart and mind, and it gives me a huge sense of achievement". Bring a new pattern you're itching to begin and we'll also design a light shoulder wrap for summer, incorporating lace and cables. *Hilary Grundy, a lifelong Quaker who promotes knitting as therapy.* **Depart 2pm Sunday £345**

April 30th - May 2nd 6 places SOUL WALKING RETREAT

Silent walking is a means of becoming more aware of ourselves and our surroundings. Walking is a return to our most basic self, putting one foot in front of the other; we can simultaneously explore our inner selves and the outer truths.

Charlotte Standish, who, after a lifetime of teaching Modern Languages, now leads small walking groups, facilitating inner and outer journeys.

Depart 2pm Wed

£250

May 1st - 3rd 6 places MASSAGE RETREAT

When you hurt yourself, you instinctively use your hands to rub the affected area; Massage is an extension of this technique. Andrei's soothing massages will relax you in both mind and body. At the end of the Massage Retreat you will leave the comfort of Claridge House relaxed, refreshed, longing to return. The retreats run from Tuesday 10am to Thursday 4pm and includes two full-body massages. **Andrei Illes**, a professional massage therapist and teacher with many years' experience. **£275**

May 11th - 13th HEART-MINDfulness: awaken your Body's Wisdom

Establish, deepen and expand your mindfulness practice by exploring your body. During this weekend you'll learn to connect with different areas of your body, touching them with loving kindness and tuning into their various rhythms. This learning experience will transform your physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being. **Lotus Nguyen**, Mindfulness trainer and coach.

Depart 4pm Sunday

£265

May 22nd - 24th 11 places TAI CHI - the Gift of Health and Wellness

Do you wish to stay healthy in the years to come and improve your quality of life? Then dare to join this gentle but active retreat, where you'll get to know the secrets of Tai Chi and what makes it so special everywhere. It's for all ages, suitable for inactive or elderly people wishing to gently raise their activity levels. Please bring comfortable clothing. **Andrei Illes**, teaches Chen style Tai Chi in his local community and is a member of the Tai Chi Union of Great Britain.

Depart 2pm Thursday

£245

June 1st - 3rd 11 places HEDGE SHAMANISM

Hedge Shamanism is a safe* cross-cultural shamanism which anyone can use to work with mother earth and to help themselves move towards becoming whole. Shamanism is as old as humanity itself. During the experiential workshop, we will work with some of the universal shamanic techniques and learning. We will create a Mesa (a Shamanic alter) and work with stones, fire ceremony and journeying. This course is suitable for beginners but the materials on working with stone people will be new to Claridge House students so those who have attended previous courses will be most welcome to attend. *Medicine plants are not imbibed in Hedge Shamanism. **Sarah Fox**, a Quaker and Shamanic Practitioner who practises in London and has previously run Shamanic retreats in Glastonbury, Stonehenge and in Portugal.

Depart 4pm Sunday

£265

June 8th - 10th 11 places MEDITATION RETREAT

Meditation is a practice to improve one's quality of life making it flow with ease. In challenging times it can help to build mental resilience and strength to cope with whatever life has to offer. Bring calm and clarity to your life. These practices are taken from Mindfulness, Yoga and Buddhist traditions and are accessible to everyone. Simple mindful movement, deep relaxation, sitting and walking meditation will be practised.

***Lina Newstead, see above* Depart 4pm Sunday**

£265

June 19th - 21st 9 places CALLIGRAPHY

A course for all levels, from beginner to advanced, covering learning/improving/ experimenting with one or more scripts, depending on previous experience, and using them in the lay-out and design of short texts. Scripts will include: italic, foundational hand, uncial, Carolingian, italic capitals, Roman capitals, copperplate, blackletter, versals; other scripts are possible including modern pointed pen scripts.

Gaynor Goffe, a well-known calligrapher and tutor with over 30 years' experience of teaching calligraphy, a Fellow of Calligraphy and Lettering Arts Society.

Depart 4pm Thursday

£265

June 22nd - 24th 9 places GENTLE YOGA - for fatigue and stress

A gentle yoga course, suitable for all abilities, that will help restore and balance energy. It will include soothing breathing techniques, gentle yoga postures, simple meditation and nurturing relaxation. Suitable for those with moderate ME/CFS.

***Leah Barnett, who has been teaching yoga for ten years and has taught a number of retreats for those with ME/CFS.* Depart 2pm Sunday**

£250

(If there are any QSH members who could help with healing at BYM, please contact David Mason, details on inside back cover.)

QUAKER SPIRITUAL HEALERS' NEWS and EVENTS

NEXT QSH TRAINING COURSE -Monday-Friday 10-14 September at Claridge House. Further details in the Summer issue of TW.

If any full healers are thinking they may want to become tutors for the QSH Training Course please contact Kay Horsfield
horsfield.k@gmail.com.

THE PAIN AND SUFFERING OF LIFE

Michael Lewin

In Buddhism the First Noble Truth is about acknowledging the reality of suffering, an acceptance of its presence in our lives. We all suffer; you cannot get through life without some exposure to it, an undeniable fact that faces us every day of our lives. That's why many people turn to religion in trying to make sense of it, trying to reach out for greater understanding, especially in times of discomfort and despair. Even though the universality of suffering is given there are still many individuals who endure their pain, wrap up their wounds without seeking any understanding or attempted remedy. Some may even engage in denial, resistance, or worse, fierce combative mode to 'fight' the 'invader'. This is tragic. Over the years I have known a number of individuals placed in this category, people who 'fought' angrily and persistently against their suffering hoping that they could somehow 'defeat' it, overthrow its stranglehold and thereby become 'victorious'. Unfortunately, all too often the fighting only increased, along with the intensity of the suffering, taking it to a new level.

Suffering seeps into our lives as an uninvited and unwelcomed visitor but we do need to listen to it, try to understand what it is saying then seek to enter into a space of negotiated reconciliation with it where we can maintain some degree of magnanimous equilibrium in our minds and bodies – a healing...

Many of us may try to avoid our suffering, take up the view that there are many more interesting areas of life to concentrate on, but in reality there's not because unattended the suffering will only grow.

I once tried gently suggesting to an ex-colleague, who had been in a bad way mentally for quite some time that he should try exploring some Buddhist writings, try following a spiritual path that may throw some deeper understanding on his plight and lead him on the road to some degree of recovery. He was sceptical, but nevertheless I said that he should pursue this course of action, explore its full depth with commitment and trust, adding that he should treat it as if his very life depended on it. Later I realized that it did! He soon started coming around to my suggestions and read books on ... Buddhism, meditation, addiction, somatic and stress reduction techniques, etc, etc. Then he ventured to a meditation centre and joined a class. When I bumped into him about a year later I noticed a change in his manner, he was much more relaxed and positive – somehow at peace with himself. He admitted that he felt so much better - like never before - simply because he had worked on himself, because he had opened up to a world outside of his narrowly focused, fearful mind. He had found a path - whether he knew it or not - and this provided the necessary impetus for him to make further progress. He told me that if he had continued with his previous life he might have died. Yet in one way he did - he died to his old life in order to embrace the new one, and along with a supportive sangha, a nourishing fellowship, I feel that he will continue on his journey of self-discovery and improvement, the one we are all on...

LETTERS

From Robin Goodman: Isle of Harris. Inverness Meeting.

I felt prompted to respond to Judy Clinton's article, 'Spontaneous Writing' in *TW* (Summer '17, No. 148), having re-read several times her journal entry which was included in it. Recently I have been deeply bereaved no less than three times, one after the other, all deaths too soon, oh far too soon (in human terms that is). Others needed much comfort too and I became very weary, sad and did not know how to 'just carry on'. After returning from my younger brother's funeral I took to the garden with a will. I love the garden and was sad at how neglected and overgrown it had become; so I set to. I concentrated on the garden. Uncovering plants was a joy.

I did not realise until I read Judy's journal entry that what I had been doing was exactly as she said, concentrating with my whole mind and paying attention to the immediate task. A spell of wonderful warm sunny weather helped. Each night I was very tired. I slogged at that garden, and then smiled at the bits rescued and restored. Finally, after weeks and weeks of this I was utterly exhausted, but then we had a holiday booked. We arrived, sat on a favourite seat looking down the loch and for the first time since last November I felt myself relax. I recognised the fatigue.

Slowly, during the week, I began to feel better and equally slowly began to look at the grieving and found that by working so hard my mind had had a rest from grief and had processed the pain and it had become manageable.

Grief, like any pain does not just go away. One hopes that it becomes an acceptable part of memory; we can walk alongside it. Judy has shown me how effective this approach to difficult times can be. For that I thank her.

From Christine McCarthy, Pontypridd

Last October was a difficult month for those of us who volunteer at our local cathedral as two helpers died within three weeks of each other. One was leading a very full and useful life and still young in years.

I knew both of these ‘Jeans’ and was shocked at their sudden passing, taken from us without warning. ‘Taken so suddenly’ was the phrase used by the Dean, who led the first funeral. This repeated over and over again in my mind and I was drawn to look at the outside of the second Jean’s home in Llandaff. This was because I expected the curtains to move, or a noise to come out!

Then, in November, the eleventh day of the eleventh month commemorated the death of so many men, all expected to come back, to lead normal lives, perhaps to have children, or carry on with the jobs they were qualified for.

The best we can hope for is that peace, or healing, took place before or at the point of their departure. In the Bible it is described as the “Peace that the world cannot give”. In John’s gospel he goes on to say this is the peace that Jesus leaves with us.

Perhaps those who wait expectantly sample a peace that comes from that waiting, and can be confident that those who died realised a feeling of completion also?

DISTANT HEALING - COUNT ME IN

Em Hardy

Elizabeth Angas’s suggestion on Distant Healing (*Towards Wholeness* 149, Autumn 2017) is just what I was expecting/hoping for from joining FFH and I opened the magazine straight to the page with her article.

About seven years ago a Quaker Friend and I began a regular Healing Meditation each week doing just as she suggests. We took the names of people and situations, put them in a ‘pot’ on the table in front of us, said a short dedication and ‘held the Light’ for half an hour. We added flowers, incense and what felt right for us and the ‘pot’ was a Tibetan bowl. Just as she says, the results may not be perceptible to us (sometimes they have been very obvious!) but we have been asking for the greatest good and we can’t second guess that.

My friend died earlier this year and I have continued the practice with others, although as a Quaker practice I have felt as though something, besides my friend was missing. Our Local Meeting had a discussion-come-workshop the other week about the extent to which we put 'faith into action' in our local community. We had slips of paper on which to write the contributions we make in specific areas and I found myself more and more uncomfortable. Once upon a time I would have stuck a number of sticky slips on the board but that day I wrote 'Meditation' and 'Peripheral' on my slips and there was no obvious place to put them.

For various reasons, over the last few years I have become less active in the community, doing my best to be quieter and go within seeing it as my contribution to healing in a wider sense. What struck those of us at the workshop was that maybe my distress was because there didn't appear to be an obvious place for this kind of contribution, even though I am convinced Healing prayer is Faith in Action and actually the very, very best I can do, whatever my circumstances. The Friends present suggested that I should work towards making this a Concern that they could support me with.

A Concern? Well, yes! I've looked up in QF&P how to go about it although you may think that what Elizabeth Angas has suggested is sufficient. I think she's absolutely right - also that it needs to go further. QF&P suggests outlines for holding specific Meetings with specific intentions - Clearing, Threshing, Support, Business, etc - but although there are exhortations to 'hold in the Light' (A&Q 3) there is no suggestion - like Elizabeth's - about how to go about it. No specific guidelines for Meetings for 'Upholding in the Light'.

The QPSW "seeks to support Friends to translate faith into action and to be part of a movement for positive social change" and their website describes their 'Turning the Tide' course programme which includes a section on 'Spirituality and Activism'. 'Activism' for me generally indicates a hands-on approach even when preceded by prayer and I have never thought of silent meditators as 'activists' - so is it time for me to rethink my interpretation? Is there a place for healers as Activists? One Friend I know is quite clear that a life of

prayer is spiritual activism. Is it then that we need to be SEEN as activists?

It seems ludicrous that within Quakers I haven't had a sense of Healers being the forerunners of 'Faith in Action'. Is it just me or is this a clear perception? Elizabeth Angas's article gives me the confidence to ask the question with some passion. I see a distinction between the hands-on healer and healing as being part of a spiritual silent discipline - contemplation - made more powerful and effective when done by more than one person, especially when done with synchronicity and with specific intention, most particularly in relation to some of the horrors taking place in the world today.

I will pursue the idea of a Concern and I hope to join Elizabeth and others in a 'joined-up' approach to healing. I so agree - "wouldn't it be even more powerful if we all joined together?" Please count me in.

And the following from Elizabeth Angas:-

An Extra Way for doing Distant Healing for all FFH members (if willing).

Most of the Readers of *Towards Wholeness*, know that Quakers *Hold in the Light* any person or situation which they wish to have healed. Thus, we send a 'healing prayer' to the Holy Spirit, believing that we become conduits (or channels) for that Healing and Creative Power.

No intercessory words are usually used (or telling God what to do!). Instead, we simply tune into whatever we believe is the Divine Source of Healing and indicate the need (e.g. - Pam's mum who has cancer). We are therefore having the Intention and the Faith that healing will be sent.

We believe it is 'a Thy Will be Done' situation. - So that a holistic (body, mind and spirit) response which is the best one, will happen.

The result will perhaps not be perceptible to us, nor necessarily be a cure but maybe will instead be a peaceful passing - whatever is God's Will, regardless of our hopes or desires.

Most FFH members will be sitting in a healing circle, once a month and doing this. Or maybe, as well, you *Hold in the Light* whenever you hear on the radio, or in some other way, of some tragedy (e.g. an earthquake) so you are moved to send healing as an individual.

However, there are so many, many situations in this world which we need to ask to have healing sent to. Also, wouldn't it be even more powerful if we all joined together, on a certain day each month to *Hold in the Light* individually in our own homes? We could then tackle in turn, some needy situation which we were all Naming together.

So I am suggesting that we have one Need we each all pray for each month by *Holding in the Light*, doing this alone, but joining all together on the same day.

-
The needy situations are listed (below) and assigned a certain day in each month. As TW comes out 3 times a year, we could have a different one named for each of the 4 months. Making 12 to *Hold in the Light* each year.

I do hope you will all be willing to join in, in this experiment? It may result in something powerful happening? Thank you.

The Topics and Dates List for TW

Fridays at 12 noon seems to be a date and time which most people can remember. But if one forgets one of the Fridays in the month (or the time- 12 noon) it wouldn't matter as God works in Eternal Time (i.e. not in Chronological Time)!

2018 Towards Wholeness - 4 x a year of 3 monthly issues:-

- March - The prevention of conflict and unrest in the world.
April - The sustainability of our planet.
May - The prevention of famine and disease. Education for good nutrition and organic agriculture.
June - The upholding of democratic and peaceful governments.
July - The maintenance of music and art in our world
August - The provision of a sound education and culture for everyone.
Sept - The maintenance of wild nature, animals, birds and fish on land and sea.
Oct - The education and provision of doctors and nurses and other health professionals for an effective NHS and a healthy world.
Nov - The teaching of philosophy (i.e. right thinking) ethics, morality and spirituality to prevent extremism but instead create a balanced peaceful world.
Dec - The control of populations so there is housing and facilities for all.
Jan - The development of a fairer, more equal world.
Feb - An understanding of justice and compassion by all, so crime is no more.

FFH GROUPS – JANUARY 2018

BANGOR	Jenifer Gibson, Cum Ty Coid, Menai Bridge, Anglesey LL59 5LA
BATH	Hazel Mitchell, 1 Victoria House, Albert Mill, Dapps Hill, Keynsham, Bristol BS31 1UL
BARNSTAPLE	Janet Richards, 2 The Old School, Old School Lane, Fremington, EX31 3HZ
BEDFORD	Geoffrey Martin, 24 Kingsley Road, Bedford MK40 3SF
BEWDLEY	Margaret Shaddock, 19 Bow Patch Road, Arely Kings, Stourport-on-Severn DY13 OND
BLACKBURN	Beverley Rayner, 5 Southfield Drive, West Bradford, Clitheroe, BB7 4TU
BLACKHEATH	Cherry Simpkin, 78 Courtlands Avenue, Lee, London SE12 8JA
BOURNEMOUTH	Stephen Feltham, 6 Ferris Place, Bournemouth BH8 0AU

BRADFORD	Edna Woodhouse, 1 Beamsley House, Bradford Rd, Shipley, W Yorks BD18 3BL
BRIGHTON	Magda Cross, 41 Preston Grange, Orange Close, Brighton BN1 6BH
CAMBRIDGE	Pat Revell, 12 Rustat Road, Cambridge CB1 3QT
CARDIFF	Ken Timmins, FMH, 43 Charles Street, Cardiff, CF10 2GB
CHESTER	Hazel Goynes, 4 Whitton Drive, Chester CH2 1HF
CHORLEY	Joan Williamson, 34 Runshaw Lane, Euxton, Chorley, PR7 6AU
CLARIDGE HOUSE	Peter Horsfield, Claridge House, Dormansland, Surrey RH7 6QH
CROYDON	Croydon PM c/o Joyce Trotman, FMH, 60 Park Lane, Croydon CRO 1JE
DERBY	Emmaline O'Dowd, 54 Ravenscroft Drive, Chaddesden, Derby, DE21 6NX
DISLEY	Leonora Dobson, Moor Edge, Birch Vale, High Peak, Derbys. SK22 1BX
DORCHESTER & WEYMOUTH	Charlotte Seymour-Smith, 9 Mansell House, Bridport Road, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 3TS
DORKING	Anne Brewer, 53 Chart Downs, Dorking, Surrey, RH5 4DF
ECCLES	David P. Jones, 26 Moss Lane, Sale, Cheshire M33 6GD
ESHER	Betty Sear, Tara, Irene Road, Blundel Lane, Stoke-d'Abernon, Cobham KT11 2SR
EXETER	Bridget Oliver, 10 Second Ave., Heavitree, Exeter, EX1 2PN
FOREST OF DEAN	for venue and times please contact either Mike Green, 01989 485566 or Joy Simpson, 01594 841800
GLASGOW	Muriel A Robertson, 51 Highmains Avenue, Dumbarton G82 2PT
GREAT AYTON	Carole Avison, 4 The Avenue, Stokesley, Middlesborough TS9 5ET
HALL GREEN	Joy Aldworth & Trevor Barker, 5 Velsheda Road, Shirley, Solihull B90 2JL
HARLOW	Elizabeth Wilson, 111 Rectory Wood, Harlow, Essex CM20 1RD
HARROW	Ann Taylor, 79 Hawthorne Ave, Ruislip, HA4 8SR and David Crick, 104 Northview, Eastcote, Pinner, HA5 1PF
HEREFORD	Pam Newman, 82 Bridle Road, Hereford HR4 OPW
HUNTINGDON	Mavis Parker, The Old School House, School Road, Warboys, PE28 2SX
KESWICK	Allan Holmes, 1 Fern Villas, South St, Cockermouth, Cumbria CA13 9RD
KETTERING	Alan Tustin 8 Lumbertubs Lane, Boothville, Northampton, NN3 6AH,
LEIGH ON SEA	Tony Burden, 25 Fernleigh Drive, Leigh on Sea, Essex SS9 1LG
LLANIDLOES	Gwen Prince, Glanafon, Glan Y Nant, Llanidloes, SY18 6PQ
LONG SUTTON	Annette Price, 29 Middle Leigh, Street, Somerset, BA16 0LD
NEWTON ABBOT	Valerie Huish, 13 Brimley Vale, Bovey Tracey, Nr. Newton Abbot, Devon TQ13 9DA
NOTTINGHAM	Mary Brimelow, 30 Private Road, Sherwood, Nottingham NG5 4DB
OAKHAM	Anna Findlay, 44 Well Street, Langham, Rutland, LE15 7JS
OSWESTRY	Humphrey Gibson, 14 West Street, Llangollen, LL20 8RG

OXFORD	Mary Fear, Homelea, Glebe Road, Cumnor, Oxford OX2 9QJ
OXTED	Pat Pique, 17 Altamont, Westview Road, Warlingham CR6 9JD
POOLE	Peter Wilson & Pamela Chadbourne, The Old Stable, Levets Lane, Poole BH15 1LW
PURLEY	Robert & Veronica Aldous, 7a Downs Court Road, Purley CR8 1BE
READING	Jenny Cuff, 62 Redhatch Drive, Earley, Reading RG6 5QR
SHAFTESBURY	Gerald & Doreen Wingate, Shaston, 3 Hawksdene, Shaftesbury, Dorset SP7 8NT
SHEFFIELD	Anne Marples, 55 Mona Road, Crookes, Sheffield S10 1NG
SIDCOT	Jo Hewitt, 2 Oatlands, Wrington Hill, Bristol, BS40 5PL, and Joyce Hinton, 12, Sewell House, Belmont Road, Winscombe BS25 1LQ
SOUTH AUSTRALIA	REGIONAL MEETING
	Enid L. Robertson, 9 Sherbourne Road, Blackwood, S. Australia 5051
STOCKPORT	Joan Armstrong, 14 Tintern Ave., West Didsbury, Manchester, M20 2LE
STREATHAM	Isobella Stewart, 15 Lexton Gardens, London SW12 0AY
TELFORD	Val Robinson and Anne Harding, 11 Arundel Close, Telford, TF3 2LX.
THAXTED	Anthea Lee, 24 Lea Close, Bishops Stortford CM23 5EA
TOTTENHAM	Nigel Norrie, 65 Friern Barnet Lane, London N11 3LL
WANSTEAD	Mary Mallinson, 26 Calderon Road, Leystonstone, E11 4EU
WARWICK	Dorothy Parry, 31 Cocksparrow Street, Warwick CV34 4ED
WATFORD	Ruth Shadwell, 9 Denmark Street, Watford WD17 4YA
WELLINGTON	Zoe Ainsworth-Grigg, 4 Kingdom Lane, Norton Fitzwarren, TA2 6QP
WELLS-NEXT-SEA	Jane Heath, 1a Barney Road, Fulmondeston, Fakenham, NR21 0AT and Joolz Saunders, Caprice, Clubbs Lane, Wells-next-Sea, NR23 1DP
WINCHESTER	Andrew F Rutter, 1 St. Johns Road, Winchester SO23 OHQ
WITNEY	Mahalla Mason, 5 Larch Lane, Witney OX28 1AG
WORTHING	Don Jameson, 26 Wilmington Court, Bath Road, Worthing BN11 3QN
YEALAND	Hazel Nowell, Well House Farm, Wyresdale Road, Lancaster LA1 3JL
IMMEDIATE PRAYER GROUP	- Mike Green, 1 Walford House, Priory Lea, Walford, Ross-on-Wye, HR9 5RT.
URGENT PRAYER GROUP	- Anne Brennan 3 Annandale, South Street, Castle Cary, BA7 7EB, and Margaret Western, 2 Orchard Rise, Crewkerne, TA18 8EH
MOTHER & HER UNBORN CHILD	
	Mina Tilt, 185 Robin Hood Lane, Hall Green, B28 0JE
POSTAL GROUPS	Muriel Robertson, 51 Highmains Avenue, Dumbarton G82 2PT and Robin Goodman, Taigh Nam Borgh, Borve, Isle of Harris, HS3 3HT

A QUIET, BUT WONDERFUL MINISTRY OF HEALING

Elizabeth Mills

For many years, I had a very dear friend. She was “my second mum” and I was her “other daughter”. We loved each other and had much in common. We shared a mutual interest in “the things of the spirit” and always enjoyed not only our conversations, but also our times of quiet together.

Her adored husband was also a spiritual seeker and together they had met a great variety of people and learned many things. Some of these people were within the church, but many were in fields outside it too: all spiritual seekers of some kind. They themselves were deeply Christian, but very open-minded in many ways.

One of the people they met sparked their own interest in healing. They met him in the early years of their marriage. This man was an active member of their church and he had a deep and abiding interest “in the practice of spiritual healing by prayer and the laying on of hands.”

He started a group which met together to pray for healing. This group met every Friday evening for many years and my friends were quite young when they joined him. She always told me how indebted they were to him for all that they learned from him.

Just as my friend was a generation above me, so this gentleman was a generation above them. When he died, Joan and her husband decided to carry on the practice of sitting every Friday evening, now in their own home, to pray for those they knew of who were in need.

It was a quiet practice: not something they shouted from the rooftops, but they were faithful to this practice and they were dedicated. Somehow word spread and it seemed that many came to know of what they did and they would ask them to pray for people. My friend always had a long list in her book: every name faithfully written down and held in the Light as the person’s name was spoken.

There was real dedication here and an absolute faith that she was “communing”: that her prayers were being heard and that in some way, shape or form that she did not understand, help of some kind

would be given. It may not necessarily be a healing of the body or the physical symptoms but perhaps a peace of mind or an acceptance. She was not so much looking for ‘results’ as living with faith that each person for whom she prayed would in some way be encompassed and held in the Love and Light of God.

And it was for this reason that she persevered. When her husband died, she herself was bereft and did not know how she would carry on, but she did carry on and did so in the firm belief that although he was no longer physically with her, he would in some way still be sitting alongside her and working with her to pray for - and help others who were in need.

PLEASE NOTE:-

After very many years of dedication both Rosemary Bartlett and Joy Simpson now feel it is time to lay down their involvement in the Immediate Prayer Group. We thank them for all the years of prayer and healing, and wish them well. Mike Green is still in the Group.

BOOK REVIEWS



Exploring Doubt: Landscapes of Loss and Longing by *Alex Wright*.

Darton-Longman-Todd. 2016. ISBN: 978-0-232-53060-5. £12.99.

I am not usually influenced by the cover of a book but I admit to being immediately moved by this one. It shows a photograph of a lowering, open sky and the hauntingly bleak, flat marshes of the north Norfolk coastline: wild, wet and wind-swept, beloved of artists, walkers, bird-watchers and others. A single rowing boat lies tilted on its side amongst the dark green vegetation and rivulets which flow towards the not far distant sea.

This single lonely boat is almost a metaphor for the content of the book – the place in which any of us can find ourselves when we have experienced loss in our personal lives: alone and stranded. The author found himself in this condition on the breakup of his marriage, and the sudden disintegration of his life as he knew it. ‘I felt lost on an uncharted map of darkness...I had no map, no plan, no safe haven and no way of reaching safe harbour. The idea of God seemed almost impossibly far away.’

This initially overwhelming feeling of doubt and sense of despair gave way to a determination to ‘make it through’ and he found himself drawing on the hope and solace offered by friends, a rich blend of literature and ‘the solitariness and melancholy beauty’ of the Norfolk coastline, and his realisation of the inherent importance of doubt and uncertainty in the process of moving forward.

The author touches upon the history of the area and its three well-known mystics, Richelde, Julian and Margery Kempe, and this leads on to a wider consideration of medieval mysticism, that which has often encouraged us to try and think of what God might be in terms of what he is not. He quotes from the anonymous mystical text, *The Cloud of Unknowing*, written in the second half of the fourteenth century, “If you wish to enter into this Cloud, to be at home in it, and to take up the work of contemplative love as I urge you to, there is something else you must do. Just as the *cloud of unknowing* lies above you, between you and your God, so you must fashion a *cloud of forgetting* beneath you, between you and every created thing. The *cloud of unknowing* will perhaps leave you with the feeling that you are far from God. But no, if it is authentic, only the absence of a *cloud of forgetting* keeps you from him now.”

Many mystics have felt abandoned by God: St John of the Cross speaks of the dark night of the soul ‘a dark contemplation that is painful to the soul’; Teresa of Avila once said to God, ‘Lord, if this is the way you treat your friends, no wonder you have so few of them’. Similar expressions of doubt are found in the writings of the Umbrian

mystic Angela of Foligno, and the medieval Beguine mystic Hadewijch, who writes of something called ‘unfaith – a loving doubt in relation to God which deepens the soul’. Many of us, perhaps most, can resonate with these doubts and misgivings at least during some part of our own lives.

He speaks about the Psalms and their relevance to us today, finding a profound value in ‘immersing in the darkness, in a preparedness to enter the pit – to experience desolation, deprivation and the loss of all hope’ because only then ‘may we fully experience the light that blinds us when our release is eventually secured.’

(Alex Wright is Executive Editor for Religion and Classical Studies at L.B Tauris Publishers. He has written other theological books and his work has often appeared in *The Guardian*.)

Rosalind Smith

FACEBOOK

For those of my generation who do not comprehend why Facebook exists, I am trying to make friends outside of Facebook, applying the same principles.

Therefore, every day I walk down the street and tell passers-by what I have eaten, how I feel at the moment, what I have done the night before, what I will do later and with whom.

I give them pictures of my family, my dog, of me gardening, taking things apart in the garage, watering the lawn, standing in front of landmarks, driving around town, having lunch, and doing what everybody does every day. I also listen to their conversations, give them the ‘thumbs up’ and tell them I like them. And it works just like Facebook!

I already have four people following me: two police officers, a private investigator and a psychiatrist.

Anon

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Prayer Group for the Mother and her Unborn Child: Mina Tilt, 185 Robin
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The Manager. welcome@claridgehousequaker.org.uk 01342 832150
web site:www.claridgehousequaker.org.uk

IF YOU ARE THINKING OF MAKING A WILL...

have you considered leaving something to the FFH? A specimen form of words could be: "I give and bequeath (state what...) to the Friends Fellowship of Healing (being a Charity registered under the Charities Act, No. 284459), to the registered address of the Charity as recorded with the Charity Commission at the time that this bequest comes into effect, AND I DECLARE that the receipt of this legacy by the then proper officer for the Fellowship, shall be a complete discharge to my Trustee(s) for that legacy."



FFH PUBLICATIONS

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