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TOWARDS WHOLENESS



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(A QUAKER GROUP)

NEWS

Friends Fellowship of Healing Spring Gathering: 8th/10th May 2009, will be held at Wesley College, Bristol, which is set in lovely grounds, and easy of access by road and rail. **Ruth White**, spiritual counsellor, guide and author of many books about spiritual growth and healing, is going to explore how working with the chakras can nourish our own growth and healing as well as others. There will also be creative activities which will complement Ruth's guidance. Cost of weekend will be £120. **No bookings taken till February** then please ring Margaret Western on 01460-74182 to book, and then send her a deposit of £30 (cheque to be made out to Friends Fellowship of Healing, please).

IMPORTANT: from the Membership Secretary

During the past year I have had to return a lot of cheques to members who appear to have forgotten that they pay by standing order. Now, this rather cancels out the advantage of standing orders as it not only gives me extra work, but costs the FFH money. So in future all cheques will be accepted and any that are superfluous to the subscription will be accepted gratefully as donations. If you are in doubt as to whether you pay by standing order may I suggest that you check your bank statements. Practically all standing orders are taken at the beginning of January each year as the sub is due by 1st January. If you are still uncertain please then call or email me and I will endeavour to put you straight.

Just a reminder – if you receive a printed note with this edition it means that you are due to pay a subscription by 1st January. You can use the standing order form to do this by immediately sending it back to me duly completed for the first payment at the beginning of January OR you can immediately send me a cheque payable to *Friends Fellowship of Healing*. By doing it immediately you won't forget and I won't have to keep reminding you.

PLEASE, if you possibly can, fill in the standing order form as this does save so much work.

It is also a good idea to let me know when you change your address, and if you think this might be permanent, please leave a little note with your papers so that someone will find it and inform me. This saves wasted postage when the Post Office returns undeliverable journals.

Finally, all the above applies to your *Friends Fellowship of Healing* subscription and **NOT** to Quaker Spiritual Healers, which is the province of Geoffrey Martin and is quite separate. Thank you.

Ruth Martin

CLARIDGE HOUSE – DEPUTY MANAGERS

Keith Marsden retired from his post of deputy manager of Claridge House at the end of August after over seven years dedicated service. Before coming to Claridge House Keith had a varied career. His experiences included a period as apprentice gardener; service in the Church Army, a long period in the insurance world and working in the L'Arche community as a mental health support worker. Prior to coming to Claridge House Keith had Quaker and Friends Fellowship of Healing contacts in Wales and Canterbury.

Keith soon established himself at Claridge House as a popular and much loved member of staff. The increasing computerisation of office work was a challenge for him but he accepted that he had to master it. His knowledge and enthusiasm for life frequently bubbled up in his conversation. He learnt circle dancing and became a very good instructor for guests at social events.

Early this year Keith had a recurrence of a heart problem. This was an indication to him that it was time for him to retire. Keith now lives a few miles away in Godstone. I am sure readers will want to join the trustees and staff of Claridge House in wishing him a speedy return to full health and a long and contented retirement.

We welcomed in August Nigel Kielczewski as Keith's successor. Although his father was Polish he has spent all his life in England. He has three grown up children. Much of his career has been spent in work related to education welfare. He has been a Quaker for twelve years, served as an Overseer, co-clerk of Tottenham Meeting and as a member of an Area outreach committee. His interest in healing has been a developing one and now central to his life. His interests include photography and poetry. He has run workshops which combine the two topics. Nigel has moved into Keith's former flat in the House. We hope he will find fulfilment in living and working at Claridge House.

Alan Pearce

Perhaps the most neglected of all the advices is that we should live adventurously. If there is one wish I would pray the Spirit to put into our Christmas stockings, it is warmth, openness, passion, a bit of emotion that doesn't mind making a fool of itself occasionally.

Gerald Priestland

CATEY AWARD FOR ACCESSIBILITY

What is a Catey award? Many of us at **Claridge House** did not know until a letter arrived last May to say that we had been nominated and short listed for such an award. It is a highly prestigious and much sought after prize in the hotel and catering industry. There are about twenty categories.

We were invited to attend the 25th anniversary award ceremony at The Grosvenor hotel in London. A black tie event did not appeal to trustees. However, I and Pat Pique agreed to attend. There were over a thousand people present, dining at more than a hundred tables. It was quickly apparent how much an award meant to those present. During the evening we learnt that Claridge House was going to get first prize in a new Accessibility category. We were surprised and naturally delighted.

One of the judges, Peter Hancock, chief executive of Pride of Britain, said: "Our winner was selected not on the grounds of having the best equipment or facilities, and it clearly does not compete with the finest hotels in terms of overt luxury, but thanks to the attitude of the staff and management – and the profound understanding of the needs of visitors, whether they be wheelchair users, partially disabled, or suffering from a mental problem such as depression."

Our achievement was underlined by the shoal of congratulations received and gifts from firms in the catering trade.

Trustees are pleased to know that our work has been recognised. We are conscious that some of our furniture and equipment needs replacing. A modest programme of improvements is being started this autumn.

Alan Pearce



*A lady went into a key-cutting/shoe-mending bar recently. As she was waiting to be served, another woman came in and said to the man behind the counter
"Do you do instant healing?"
to which he said
"Sorry, dear. We don't do miracles on Wednesdays!"*

Maryrose Price (1939-2008)

Maryrose was born in Troon, Ayrshire, and spent her first twenty years in Scotland, latterly at university in St Andrews, before moving south to London where she met John, her husband, on a social work course at LSE. She worked as a social worker, primary school teacher and later as a yoga teacher. Her three children, Rupert, Simon and Heather grew up in Enfield and many will recall the house on Gordon Hill and the warmth of her welcome and the generosity of her spirit.

When her first granddaughter was born in 2001, Maryrose moved to Woodstock where she spent the last seven years of her life being Granny-Carer for both grandchildren, Erica and Freya. She accompanied and encouraged them as they took part in all the many rich activities that are available to many children today. Ruth White, a spiritual consultant and teacher, knew Maryrose for at least twenty years. She was a regular member of the groups and courses that Ruth ran, travelling to France, Scotland or Berkshire in order to be part of these and as can so often happen, they came to learn a great deal from each other. Over that period of time they also became good friends.

Ruth White says:

“Maryrose was full of fun, adventure and spontaneity. Ever curious, always wanting to explore and learn.

“There is a quality which human beings can have, that I have often described as ‘the inner golden child’ and Maryrose had this in abundance. She knew how to play, how to keep a sense of wonder and how never to grow old inside.

Her death came quickly, almost before she, or anyone else had realised how ill she was – and that seems appropriate. She died in the midst of a rich and active life without going through an ageing process or a lingering illness. The suddenness and speed of her death inevitably left all who knew and loved her with a sense of shock, but whenever there was a journey to go on, Maryrose was always ready and eager to travel. I saw her in hospital a week after she went there and a week before she died and was very impressed with her quality of stillness and tranquillity. Although the visit was short because she suddenly tired so easily, I came away with a sense of peace, calm and blessing, bestowed by her, as she prepared to make her transition.

“Many people from every aspect of her life were able to attend Maryrose’s funeral. We all dressed colourfully. The clowning group to which Maryrose had belonged for a couple of years came in their clown attire and make-up, bearing balloons. It seemed to me that this spoke of her ever-young heart and her ability to face whatever life, or death has to offer, colourfully. The gathering showed the love that Maryrose generated wherever she went – but was also an acknowledgement of all the love she gave to so many.

“Maryrose, you are much missed here by your still incarnate friends and loved ones, even though we know that your light continues to shine brightly. I

know also that you have been welcomed to the life that lies beyond, as a lively new-comer – but also as an old soul.”

Maryrose was also, for many years, an active committee member of the FFH, and we shall miss her warm and delightful presence at our meetings. She was non-judgemental and had the quality of seeing only the best in people.

A memorial meeting was held for her at Winchmore Hill QMH on November 8th.

Experience: A Modern Psalm

‘The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...’

(Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians 5:22)

*How shall I sing the song within me,
The wordless song of the singing Word?
How sing the joy that liberates compassion,
The joy that frees the soaring soul?
How sing the bursting peace within me,
The quiet, restless, moving stillness?*

*For I must sing, and sing aloud,
I may not murmur beneath the breath,
The joy I know must be transmitted,
It leaps to find its recognition.
The peace I know, wills peace,
It must be shared with every man.*

*For the song I sing is the song of love,
And love will not rest, nor be alone.
Love seeks and finds,
Forever finds the human heart in sinful desolation.*

*O loving Spirit, translate my words,
Let my song be heard and understood;
Give me the grace to sing my song,
Plain words to sing your sweet simplicity.*

*I will live the song, for the song is life,
Let my words and my life be true to your Spirit.*

David Pritchard Jones

In later years everybody's attention turns to the physical and practical difficulties of our being here, from arranging accommodation to managing weakness. Opportunities for change of scene and for conversation diminish as we begin to outlive our friends. People are less able to make their own decisions. Intellectual, religious, and especially spiritual matters can appear secondary, but they are just as important, as long as our remaining health permits.

By intellectual I had in mind keeping up access to information, which these days is not limited to books. Perhaps we don't know, or can't cope with the technical changes of T.V. I have heard of people who would be helped by a set with a larger, clearer screen but who feel, it seems to me unwisely, that they should not spend money on what they think of as a luxury rather than an essential means of receiving stimulating ideas. And then of course, and better still, there is the computer. Plenty of today's older people belong to the pre-computer age and even when sight allows can't reach the endless variety of material on the internet, or even the on-line news programmes. Isolation can be the scourge of later years. We should accept with rejoicing anything which counteracts it, especially internet and email, and in my view do our best to master them and even use them, not only as a way of keeping social contacts but as a spiritual and religious resource.

I count spirituality and religion separately, because though they interact they are quite distinct.

Spirituality may be, and often is, associated with religious beliefs and doctrines. It may strengthen them but it is not dependent on any creed. Religion has its own usefulness but has only an indirect link with spirituality, for religions are derivative and in many ways local constructs, whereas spirituality is universal. Spirituality has its origin in wonder at the all-pervasive fact of life, at the mystery that we, though based on the material, are not limited by it, but can experience and think about a whole realm of perception that goes far beyond it.

Our spiritual awareness develops as we become aware of what is meant by being alive. It becomes richer as we recognize that this strange power of growth and awareness is used and enjoyed in some degree by all manner of creatures. Some of us discover that the "material" of those bodies and even the earth on which we all move is not at all what it seems. The heavy body and the "sure and firm set earth" are nothing of the kind, but only an effect produced by the movement and the mutual attraction of what seem to be immaterial energies. What we know as spiritual is a universal experience, because it is based on the

reality of existence itself and that wonder which is life. The more we learn about this the more we value it, and what we value we care for, so that our spiritual awareness becomes the foundation for morality, both in our dealings with other people and in the wider world with other forms of life, and of course with this very unusual planet on which we live.

Spiritual awareness provides its own authority because it is directly based on the facts of existence. Though we may value the teachings of a prophet or teacher these are not essential. In human development probably some sense of the spiritual came first, but then in most societies was turned into the basis of practical moral codes. These are consequently more likely to be a product of the culture into which we have been born, a collection of moral and social practices usually said to have been first taught by some revered personality from the past, often one so remote that it is impossible to separate real from mythical. Unfortunately even when the original teacher has pointed to spirituality, as Jesus with his talk of life more abundant, later followers usually preferred group rules and practices. Religious practices and doctrines can give useful cohesion to a society subject only to a slow rate of change, though even so we know from history that they could get out of step with changing conditions. The tension between religious tradition and direct spiritual insight is probably as old as humanity but the spiritual should always be primary.

The believers, or at least the leaders, in any religion have often been very conservative, using it to maintain their authority system, so that in the past, and in some regions even now, necessary changes have been linked with violence and persecution. When people could not travel very far or meet people from other religious traditions it was easy to assume that your own was superior and the only right one. Amongst very many others Fox and his companions found this when they tried to show that customary beliefs and practices left out the underlying universal spirituality. But within the lifetime of many of us this insularity has been destroyed and it is increasingly easy to see a religion as the product of local conditions.

Religion may not have very much to do with spirituality but we can see that it has a function, especially for people in later years. Though past dominance of priest against congregation has often obscured it, religion has nearly always been a group activity. In our times however the role of priest or minister has changed. Hardly authoritarian now, he or she has become visitor and counsellor to the members of the congregation, who see themselves as a fellowship for mutual support. The activities and even the shared rituals bring companionship, which is especially attractive as we grow older and earlier contacts fade or are taken away. There are plenty of examples of people in later years taking

up or returning to church attendance and, when they are not able to go out, welcoming a visit from the minister or another church member, both for the immediate stimulus and for reminding them that they are still valued.

Young people on the other hand are usually comfortable in their skins and take for granted that body and mind are united, and not to be thought of separately, but form one whole, an idea many psychologists now tell us we should accept. However, as we go through childhood we are not likely to be guided towards spiritual awareness, even at some basic level such as that of a life force. If children are offered anything at all it is usually only the conventions and stories of some traditional religion. This is regrettable because these are only derivative and not directed to the glorious fact of life and growth, from which comes the love and care for all things, as summarized for example in the well-known old phrase “reverence for life”. Attention to this leads on to the full awareness of the spiritual. But this takes time to develop and may not progress very far until people are well on in years.

In age we seem in outward appearance to be cut off from most of the activities that have given us stimulus and a sense of worth. Yet a strong sense of the spiritual, if we have developed it, will enrich all that we have been able to keep and also give us independent confidence that we belong to a living whole.

This confidence can be strengthened by some forms of meditation, especially if we are already into the habit of it. As long as we are able to think and imagine, we have the freedom of our minds. We can find wonder and surprise by exploring thoroughly even the commonplace things around us. We can choose some object, and concentrate on it, to explore its origins, its make up and its links. We may not be free to travel as we used but there is still a world of exploration and recollection open to us, which constantly quickens our sense of wonder at this complex world in which we find ourselves. If we have learned to notice and cultivate the world of sight and sense as well as the inner world of thought we shall be kept busy for a very long time. And of course we shall be drawn more strongly to the sense of the invisible power behind all existence.

But what of the future? We have, we hope, done our best to live usefully, to be helpful to others, and to gather as much knowledge of the world as we can. Gradually, but sometimes with alarming suddenness, we have found our range diminishing, though hopefully we have stayed in charge of our mind. Yet our bodies will come to the end of their time and then to all outward appearance our minds will have gone as well, our affections and our store of understanding evaporating into nothingness. I was about to say “like a summer mist” but of

course the moisture that made it is all still present, though we can no longer see it. Are we so dependent on our bodies that we cannot function without them? Will everything we have become disappear like the turning out of a light?

Through long ages this has been the great puzzle, with arguments and assertions this way and that. A frequent view today is that we should be content with the idea of life ending with physical death. It is said to be enough, if during our time, we have helped to make life more bearable for others. We have taken care of the future, probably by passing on our genes, but more certainly by transmitting the knowledge we gained from our predecessors and whatever we have been able to add to it. We have played our part. Should we expect more?

When we are young, or feel young, there seem to be many ways open to us, but in time we realise that we are on a one-way track leading to the ending of our own existence. For most people, after many years and probably some period of pain and incapacity, death is more friend than enemy, a welcome relief from the distressing processes of dying.

But is death our terminus? Some people assure us that they have positive knowledge, actual contacts with people who have left this life. We may not have shared this experience but their testimony can be very persuasive. For those, like me, without such experience, there is another way of looking at the situation, which seems to point in that direction by an analogy with the physical world. We are assured that here nothing can be destroyed, that energies can change but not disappear. This gives us reason for thinking that the self, the unity which we have made of our life here, does not disappear into nothingness, but continues as a being independently of the physical basis to which it has been united.

If we have reached a conviction that reality is fully spiritual we shall be satisfied that whatever is happening to us is a move in the ongoing life of the whole of existence. We have been privileged to play some small part in it and can be content with whatever the future holds. For my part I accept both the testimony of those who report communication with that world beyond death and my own conviction that life is indestructible, so that I can look forward to the future whatever its form. Death leads to the next adventure in life.

It is a good discipline to wonder in each new situation if people wouldn't be better served by our silence than by our words.

Henri J. M. Nouwen

Is it there – happiness?

It can be, if we create an inner sanctuary for ourselves –
a sacred place lined with tender loving care for all humanity
including ourselves.

For we need to like ourselves in this sanctuary – where there will be
windows of hope, knowing about and finding the joy of life after life.
So older age becomes a sanctuary and certainly not a trap.

In the words of *Maurice Fullard Smith* in his inspiring book *This is It: the Art of happily going Nowhere* (reviewed by Jim Pym in the Summer issue of *TW*):

“There is nothing to prove and nothing to lose
This is the life we are meant to live.
It will be as it will be.
We will let it be.
We are still –
We are at peace.”

Seeking

*Are you there – happiness?
Where is your smiling face?
Once upon a time you were a grace
In my life.*

*Where are you now – happiness?
Are you hiding in old age?
Surely I will find you
As I turn the page
Of my life.*

*I do not need you – sadness –
I see you all around.
The mindless ones, the loveless ones,
I see them in my life.*

*You must be here – happiness –
To warm my older age,
Finding you in the love of God,
Always in my life.*

A JOURNEY FROM CANCER AND BEYOND... MY TESTIMONY

Bob Jacob

It was the moment I'd been dreading – the door of the isolation room at Poole General Hospital which had been my home for what seemed like weeks now, was opened and in walked my consultant with the news so long awaited, "I'm afraid to tell that you have cancer. Have you any questions?"

Yes, of course the questions were supposed to come flooding out, but they did not. As far as it was possible for me, I reassured the consultant, fresh from his team meeting, that, not only were there no questions, but that I now needed time to soak in all that this would mean for me, my family, loved ones and work colleagues. The date, 12th November 2005 at 10.15 am, forever imprinted on my mind. It was a time to just be still, and a complete peace enveloped me as tears rolled down my face. This was a real spiritual moment for me, and the beginning of my healing.

The tears were to flow more, simply because of my fear of needles, and the understanding of the absolute pain and discomfort which had to be endured if the medical profession were to be allowed to partner me in my recovery. And if, for one minute, anyone thought that I was going to play the part of the 'compliant patient' they had reason to think again! It was a meeting of minds, understandings and methods, which brought about such a change in me, for, while death holds no pain for me, life had been, and would continue to be, an adventure.

Now that the illness which was within me, as far back as May 2003, had been named, my research led me to some amazing facts which, taken on board, would change my life. The efficiency of the medical team who worked with me at the cancer care centre, my GP, district nurses, Twi-light Nurses and ambulance crews who brought me through a hundred emergencies need high praise for their dedication. But no one told me that, on receiving my first 'cycle' of chemotherapy my arms and legs would be the size of tree-trunks and lymphodema would set in. Or that, as a consequence of cancer drugs, I would experience tinnitus, diverticulitis, rigors (violent shaking), numbness in hands and feet, swelling of major organs, night trauma and loss of appetite. I also lost all my body hair. I was confined to a wheelchair, and needed help to wash and dress and get those damned lymphodema stockings on in the morning. Organising care, benefits, support networks, social contact and visits became like a military operation. I could not speak for more than a few minutes without becoming exhausted. A few friends stayed with me, surprising me with their love and thoughtfulness. My own experience as a social worker was to

prove valuable in enabling me to put everything into perspective, but my mind fought against allowing others to take control. Yet, there was a need to accept others to do their job as true partners. My work colleagues did not have the words and did not know what to say, and I found it was, for me, a chance to reach out to them and ease their discomfort.

But there was a hole in my life which could not be filled, whatever my organised regime was. For the first time in my life, my spirit craved a spiritual home and family in which my faith in a healing God rested. Friends told me to “try the Quakers!” And so, one Sunday morning, arrangements had been made to drop me off at the door of Bournemouth Meeting at 10.30 am, just in time for the start of my first Meeting for Worship. I found myself shaking from head to foot.

As soon as I entered, to my amazement, a greeting came, as though to a long-lost friend! “Bob, how wonderful to see you!” It was Anne, a dear friend. Then there was a quick hug from a previous social work student for whom I’d been workplace supervisor. The Meeting was like a breath of fresh air, and, as my spirit sighed “I’m at home,” my mind received the words in a gentle voice, “The Lord is your Shepherd, you have everything you need...” (*Psalm 23 v.1 - amplified!*) Not only had this fearful sheep been accepted, the love, which poured from these Friends, touched my life and, as healing flowed from God, it was for me to receive. Meetings, from that day forward, were acts of worship from a wheelchair, and I wanted to learn all I could quickly.

This is a journey I’m still on and, having been nominated an elder, there is the opportunity to give back time given to me, which brings a lot of fulfilment, challenge, and the chance to contribute to ‘that which is known.’

Then came the greatest challenge of my life. Following a body scan, my consultant came into my ward at the cancer care centre in mid-April 2006 and calmly announced, “It’s not good. Your scan shows that the leukaemia has spread to the whole of your body. You may have months to live but definitely not years. Do you have any questions?”

My mouth could not utter a word, my spirit remained silent. The same calmness enveloped me as it had those months earlier, but this time my knowledge was that my journey was a continuous one and that only good could come out of this situation. My physical and spiritual healing was assured even if it meant passing through death. Practically, I wished to live at home with all the support around me, to live out my life with renewed purpose, and my wishes were granted. As soon as I was settled into a ‘disability flat’ with my carers, my

mind turned to practicalities and I set about the task of writing a Living Will. Colin Ryder's book, *I Beat my Cancer*, inspired me, and I realised that a radical invasion of my body by rogue cancer cells needed a radical and well thought-out solution. The prayers, letters, cards and practical support were all invaluable, but so was my own research into ways to fight a disease which had, by this time, taken over my body, but could never defeat my mind and spirit.

Please let me share something of my experience with you. It may resonate in some and be the means of a healing touch from these pages.

My first area was to change my diet and eat only fresh vegetables, fruit and salad with no cooking. I drank green tea, nanoi and pomegranate juice which all contain vital nutrients – and a pound of black grapes a day, which, along with pineapples, contain the enzymes which can activate a body's natural defences. I also ate dark chocolate with a cocoa content of about 85%.

The knowledge that friends and family from all around the world were praying for me, holding me in the Light and sending positive thoughts kept me going through the darkest experiences. Worship, music, good literature, as well complementary therapies all proved to be healing. The secret for me was to carry on life as an adventure to be had, to maintain a positive outlook, and to use every opportunity as it presented itself to work with my medical team. I went from wheelchair to crutches, and then to walk a full 50 yards by myself! Healing power surged through me like gentle waves on a seashore. Healing prayer radiated heat throughout my body and my tired limbs began to get stronger. Although I had many a fall, the distance I was now walking increased to 200 yards, and my hair started to grow back. In early January 2008, a letter arrived asking me to attend for a colonoscopy at the cancer care centre, and, two days later, a MRA scan was requested urgently. Two days after that, I was told that "We cannot detect any cancer in your body, you are in complete remission."

There were no questions from me, but my consultant tried to explain away the events of the past years with a medical response. "Sometimes the scans and tests can be incorrect," he commented, "we may have been wrong". There was nothing, at that moment, which was appropriate to say, just "Thank you."

I am not going to tell you that, at this point, my journey through cancer is complete. As many who go the journey will tell, the drug regimes, chemotherapy and radiotherapy with high levels of toxicity have their effects, as I've described. There has been no let-up in continuing to need support and medical care as I recover from treatment. This is never the end of the story, but

the beginning of a new page, a new chapter, and a release into the reality that life now has a new purpose. Much of that is found working with Friends in my Local and Area Meeting and becoming involved with Quaker work at a more national level. I'm open to where the Spirit leads me in days to come and to always be involved in the work of healing which, I believe, is the gift within.

I am happy to receive comments or feedback about my testimony from anyone at bob.jacob@tiscali.co.uk or on 01202 514332.

I Beat my Cancer by *Colin Ryder*. Richardson, Quantum Books, 2004. ISBN: 0-572-02972-1

Thinking

*If you think you are beaten, you are;
If you think you dare not, you don't;
If you'd like to win, but you think you can't it's almost a cinch
you won't.
If you think you'll lose, you're lost,
For out of the world we find
Success begins with a fellow's will –
It's all in the state of mind.
If you think you are outclassed, you are;
You've got to think high to rise.
You've got to be sure of yourself before
You can ever win a prize.
Life's battles don't always go
To the stronger or faster man,
But sooner or later the man who wins,
Is the one who THINKS he can.*

Anon

CLARIDGE HOUSE 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 Alison Green or Nigel Kielczewski, Claridge House, Dormans Road, Lingfield, Surrey, RH7 6QH.
Tel: 01342 832150. Email: welcome@ClaridgeHouse.quaker.eu.org
Website: www.claridgehouse.quaker.eu.org*

Nov 21st-23rd QUAKERS AND THE ‘LIFE THAT NEVER ENDS’ (£170)

“Death cannot kill what never dies” said William Penn. His words have comforted Quakers and others in time of bereavement. This weekend we will attempt to move beyond doubt, and raise awareness that we live in more than just a physical world. *Cherry Simpkin and Rosalind Smith, both members of FFH and healers with QSH, also members of the Quaker Fellowship for Afterlife Studies.*

Nov 24th-28th DRAWING: A COURSE IN HOW TO SEE (£290)

Those with no talent or previous experience, can now draw with skill and confidence. This structured, but straightforward, course shows you how to see and to draw as an artist does, by engaging the creative right side of the brain. Drawing becomes a relaxing discovery of the beauty and complexity of the world. *Dennis Massey is an experienced tutor who has been teaching people to ‘see’ for more than 15 years.*

Nov 28th-30th REIKI II (£170)

Being attuned to Reiki II increases your Reiki, enabling you, by using Reiki symbols and mantras, to treat yourself and others at a deeper level, to deal directly with mental/emotional aspects and to send out distant healing.

Jill Cooper is a Usui and Karuna Reiki master and EFT practitioner.

Dec 8th-12th and Dec 12th-14th YOGA TO BEAT FATIGUE

(Midweek course £290) (Weekend course £170)

(Combine the courses for an additional £11 for Friday lunch.)

Fiona Agombar, author of Endless Energy, qualified as an instructor with the Yoga for Health Foundation.

Dec 19th-21st WINTER SOLSTICE (£170)

As we witness the sun returning from the darkest, still point of winter, you are invited to engage in the healing power of imagination and metaphor, through painting, stories, movement, meditation and ritual – to explore how this turning point of Light may illuminate you and your path towards Spring.

Deborah Kelly is an Arts Psychotherapist.

Dec 24th-28th CHRISTMAS BREAK (£420)

Dec 31st-Jan 4th NEW YEAR BREAK (£320)

Jan 5th-9th NEW YEAR PERSONAL RETREAT (£160)

Advance into the New Year with a personal retreat. Take advantage of the unique peaceful atmosphere of Claridge House to give yourself time and space for spiritual reflection. *Follow your own path* to where the spirit leads, with House Quiet Times and, this week, a daily shared gathering.

Jan 9th-11th YOUR FUTURE STARTS NOW (£170)

A course for anyone wanting to make changes and take charge of their life. Using a combination of Creative Visualisation, Psychology, Bach Flower Remedies and Spirituality, we will weave our way towards a new future. Let go of the past, improve or change relationships and heal your body. **Angela Davies**, *Quaker*, is a trained counsellor and registered Bach Practitioner/Teacher.

Jan 19th-23rd CRAFT WEEK (£160)

A relaxing stay with opportunities for craft activities midweek, including card and jewellery making with **Alison Brice**. Materials will be charged at cost price.

Jan 23rd-25th BOUNDLESS ENERGY (£170)

Discover how to release emotional and physical energy by letting go of your problems and learning to love yourself just the way you are. Recharge your batteries on this gentle and uplifting weekend. **Angela Elliott** is experienced in the use of creative visualisation to help groups and individuals to achieve their full potential. She is a trained Clinical Hypnotherapist and writer.

Jan 26th-30th VOLUNTEER MAINTENANCE WEEK

Please phone us for details on 01342 832 150

Jan 30th-Feb 1st DOORWAYS INTO SILENCE (£170)

A peaceful, contemplative and mainly silent retreat. Using a gently guided method of stilling the mind, we will access our own interior silence and strength.

Rosalind Smith, *FFH*, healer with *QSH*, trained counsellor, and experienced facilitator.

Feb 6th-8th EURYTHMY – an introduction (£170)

Eurythmy is movement to poetry and music, expressing the meanings of sounds and tones through gestures. It opens us to wider consciousness and spiritual awareness. It also focuses on the body, making it more flexible and fluid. This is a workshop for beginners. Please bring soft shoes. **Diana Fischer** trained in Switzerland and the US. She has taught adults and children, including people with learning difficulties, since 1985 and runs an Eurythmy training centre.

Feb 13th-15th LET THERE BE LOVE

(£170)

A love for words both written and spoken
A love for the earth and all that is therein
A love of life, of friends and memories
A love of discovery, of self and surprises

*A weekend for writers and non-writers with **Ted Walter** a poet and creative writing tutor for over 25 years.*

Feb 16th-20th YOGA TO BEAT FATIGUE

(£290)

A gentle yoga course suitable for all abilities, which will include fatigue-busting methods such as special breathing techniques, meditation and health boosting yoga postures. Also suitable for those with moderate ME/CFS.

***Fiona Agombar**, author of **Beat Fatigue with Yoga**, trained in yoga therapy with the Yoga for Health Foundation, and in India.*

Feb 20th-22nd GENTLE YOGA TO BOOST HEALTH & STAMINA

(£170)

During the weekend Tim will be encouraging alignment, balance and concentration through gentle yoga postures, meditation and mantra (sound) and also a little philosophy. The focus will be on physical and emotional balance to boost energy and stamina. Suitable for all ages and abilities, especially those with ME or other health problems.

***Tim Francis** trained and subsequently taught at Ickwell Bury. Currently teaching in hospitals, Tim has been teaching yoga for 15 years.*

Feb 27th-Mar 1st EMPATHY, HUMOUR & THE SACRED MIME CLOWN

(£170)

Reconnect to the playful child within, through the imagination of the clown and the world of mime. A fun and interactive workshop with soft gentle exercises, using the breath, voice and physical movement. We will spend time listening to the quiet space inside and explore dance, stillness, mime, improvisation, clowning and the red nose.

***Reuben Kay** is a teacher and performer of Sacred Mime Clowning.*

March 6th-8th RELAXATION, MEDITATION and HEALING

(£170)

Relaxation of body and mind is one of the essentials for healing meditation, both for ourselves and for others. This weekend will focus on techniques of relaxation as ways of enhancing our meditation, allowing an increased flow of spiritual harmony and peace through our whole life and being.

***Jim Pym**, author of **Listening to the Light**, is a spiritual healer and meditation teacher with over 40 years' experience.*

March 9th-13th WRITING POETRY: the haiku way (£290)

Enter the world of Japanese poetry; immerse yourself into the ‘quietnesses’ of Haiku while weaving this technique into your writing. Haiku is a relaxing way of noting the ordinary moments in our lives, and with a complimentary Haiku Journal, you can become part of the Haiku way. *Alan Summers is a Japan Times award-winning poet for Haiku and Renga, a former General Secretary of the British Haiku Society with fifteen years’ experience, and founder of With Words.*

March 13th-15th WORLD CIRCLE DANCE (£170)

Dances from many cultures, a rich diversity of flavour, mood and beautiful evocative music to kindle our innate expansiveness, lift our spirits and open our hearts. Some (optional) Chi Kung and meditation, to enhance our awareness and relaxation, may be included in the programme. *Eve Corrin is an experienced teacher of Circle Dance with a gentle, straightforward and relaxed style of teaching.*

March 16th-20th KINESIOLOGY – touch for health (£290)

Learn how to balance the body’s energy using traditional Oriental medicine and modern Western methods of massage. An introduction to the art of muscle testing and correction to improve posture and reduce mental and physical discomfort. *Peter Morris is a fully qualified Holistic Massage Therapist and Touch For Health Instructor.*

March 20th-22nd SING YOUR HEART OUT (£170)

Experienced singer or someone who has been discouraged from singing, this is the course for you. We will discuss our attitudes to singing, and cover breathing, voice production techniques and singing together. There will be a chance for solos. A chance to have fun and gain experience.

Margaret Frayne is a Quaker, professional singer and experienced teacher.

March 23rd-27th PAINTING SPRING WITH A CHINESE BRUSH (£290)

Spring is a magical time with the new leaves on the trees and the colours of spring bulbs bursting forth. Using traditional Chinese materials and techniques you will learn to paint compositions of spring flowers and landscapes. Claridge House grounds will provide inspiration for your painting.

Maggie Cross learnt the art of Chinese Painting in Hong Kong, where she grew up.

March 27th-29th REIKI I (£170)

Reiki has become known around the world for its ability to channel healing energy, both to those who practise it and those who are recipients. An introductory weekend course in a popular form of healing.

Jill Cooper is a Usui and Karuna Reiki master and EFT practitioner.

QUAKER SPIRITUAL HEALERS EVENTS – 2009

QSH ‘Training’ Course at Claridge House Mon-Fri 24th-28th August.

A mid-week training course in practical healing that gives those who are interested in becoming members of the Quaker Spiritual Healers the opportunity to explore their own potential. Applicants should be sympathetic to Quaker values and have been attending a Quaker meeting for at least a year.

Led by *Elizabeth Brown* and *Margaret Western*, QSH Tutors. £255

QSH Support Gathering at Claridge House. Mon-Wed 9th-11th Feb £145

QUAKERS AND HEALING

Alan Pearce

I have been reflecting on some of the changes and attitudes to healing that have taken place in my long association with Claridge House, the Quaker centre for healing, rest and renewal at Lingfield in Surrey.

The dedicated Friends associated with its founding in 1953 focused their attention on distant healing. Petitionary prayer, sometimes expressed in paternal language would feature in the daily Quiet Times. Friends and visitors to-day tend to find it more acceptable and to be more comfortable with inclusive language and to express their concerns for individuals and situations as ‘upholding in The Light’. The intention and the sincerity remain but the way different. Truth is eternal but our understanding and ways of expressing it change.

Interest in contact healing at Claridge House did not come to the fore strongly until the 1980s when Damaris Parker-Rhodes particularly encouraged Friends to be more adventurous, to trust and offer themselves as channels for healing – to put into practice the teachings of Jesus. The work of the centre expanded. While the prime purpose of providing a place of rest and renewal continued, contact healing was introduced and courses run on many aspects of healing, including complementary therapies, music and the arts.

Healing is an area which requires particular discernment because people can mistake their guidance or forget the divine source from which it comes. Some Friends are also uneasy about its place in Quakerism.

We all have the potential to be healers. Every meeting for Worship has the possibility of being a healing experience. Healing does not have to be through the laying on of hands. It can be for example a kindly word or gesture, a letter or phone call. Undoubtedly some people do have a special healing gift. At the minimum, receiving the loving attention of another can help relaxation and assist the body to work more freely. At times emotional blocks are released and physical benefits result.

Misconceptions remain. This may be because of confusion in associating spiritual healing with spiritualism, or the idea that orthodox medicine is not valued, or a lack of awareness of the strong place healing played in the life of George Fox and some of the early Friends. The misconceptions have in part resulted in Claridge House not being part of the Yearly Meeting structure or receiving central funding.

Although I now live in Cambridgeshire my involvement in the Centre continues. I visit it most weeks to help care for the two acres of beautiful gardens and in my capacity as clerk to trustees.

Like many residential centres it struggles to comply with legislative requirements and heavy overheads. At times its future has been uncertain. The need for the Centre remains, and indeed grows. The main categories of guests include people with cancer, chronic fatigue, physical disability, carers needing respite and professional people seeking rest from stressful jobs. I find it intensely satisfying to see how many benefit from just a few days rest.

The Centre is a great source of outreach for the Society. More than sixty per cent of the guests are not Quakers and many are introduced to the Quaker way of worship for the first time. Some have gone on to attend their local Meeting and into membership.

The trustees and managers seek to base their work in daily worship and to be faithful to being ‘open to new light’ and ‘to approach new ideas with discernment’. At present there is an intention to include more retreats in future programmes as well as continuing to provide for individuals to have retreats.

I feel deeply grateful to be associated with Claridge House and a member of a Society that continues to seek and change as new revelation of the Truth may come.

*(Originally published in **The Friend** and reprinted with permission)*

A REMINDER... *that a bursary fund is available for those **FFH** members who would like to attend any **FFH** gatherings, and courses, or short stays, which may be held at Claridge House, or other venues. Reductions on the prices of these events are discretionary taking into account the individual circumstances of each person.*

*Applications need to be made through an overseer of your Meeting, which should then be forwarded (either by post or phone) to the Treasurer of the **FFH** (name and address, etc. on the inside back cover of **TW**).*

This year I went to Lisieux – twice. I was one of the thousands who visit this small town in Normandy every year. What is the fascination? It all started at the dawn of the 20th century, when, according to the local guide book, “a miracle occurred to shake the town out of its peaceful existence... France and later the whole world discovered the life and message of a young Norman Carmelite, Sister Thérèse of the Child Jesus.”

Saint Thérèse of Lisieux is one of the most popular saints. She was born in Normandy in 1873 and became a Carmelite nun, entering the Lisieux Carmel when she was only 15. She lived there for 9 years, cut off from the outside world, until she died of tuberculosis at the early age of 24. Towards the end of her life, her religious superiors, aware of the depth of her spirituality, ordered her to write about her spiritual journey. After her death in 1897, these writings were published under the title *A Story of a Soul*. The book was an instant best-seller and Sister Thérèse became a huge religious celebrity. People prayed to her and felt they were helped. Many healing miracles were attributed to her intercession. By popular demand the Catholic Church began the Cause for her Canonisation and she was declared a saint in 1925. She was made a Doctor of the Church in 1997.

As with other great mystics, Thérèse’s message is about Love and humility. She calls us to trust in God’s Love as a little child trusts a devoted parent and to give ourselves to that Love absolutely in whatever way we may be called to serve. She called her philosophy her “Little Way”. She teaches that we can serve the Divine in small everyday matters as much as in great deeds and that it is only by accepting our own “littleness” that we can achieve true spiritual greatness and be an instrument of Divine Love.

My own interest in Thérèse arose many years ago through a personal experience. It was this which led me to become involved in the healing ministry. However, until this year I had never been to Lisieux and I thought a visit was well overdue.

My first trip was with Anthea and George Lee. We stayed in a friendly family hotel from where we played tourist, visiting the various places in Lisieux and taking occasional trips to other parts of Normandy. We went to Lisieux’s 12th century Norman cathedral where Thérèse worshipped as a child. We visited the Basilica built in her honour and which dominates the town. We went to Les Buissonnets, the house where she lived before entering the Carmel. We all felt a tremendous power of healing love in those places associated with Thérèse. Her presence is very strong and many feel she communicates with them personally.

My second trip was with Beth and Peter Allen as part of the retreat run by the Fellowship of St Thérèse, an Anglican organisation run by the Reverends Sue and Graeme Parfitt from Bristol. This time we stayed at the Saint Thérèse Hermitage, a Spiritual Centre for pilgrims next to the Carmel. People come here from all over the world and from all faiths. There was a Buddhist monk visiting during our stay.

There is a deep sense of peace here. Swifts swoop overhead and the Carmel bell occasionally adds to the prayerful atmosphere. A statue of Thérèse seated with a book open in her lap looks out across the secluded gardens, as though watching over the pilgrims. The healing energy in the Centre's chapel is so strong that it is hard to leave it.

The Hermitage is run by nuns from an Order based in Burkina Faso in West Africa. They are of various nationalities. They serve part of their novitiate here before being posted to work in Africa or other parts of the world. The nuns would sing to us after the main meals and we would all join in Aves to Mary. Beth and I were amused at ourselves as staunch Quakers indulging in such activities. We both joined in with enthusiasm, not only in the interests of ecumenism but also because Mary represents that pure relationship which we can all have with the Divine. I believe that the healing power of the Spirit can only work if there is something in the recipient which responds to it. To me, this is the "Mary" principle. It is not a passive, submissive principle but an active, transforming energy which receives the healing power and uses it in whatever way is right for the individual. It converts Divine Grace into wisdom. Through it we grow spiritually and realise our own Divinity. So when I join in praises to Mary I am singing to that within each soul which responds to God.

There were eleven of us on our retreat. We were a very ecumenical group of Anglicans, Baptists, Catholics and Quakers, and of both lay and ordained. The retreat was led by Judith Carpenter, a liberally-minded Roman Catholic from Bristol. The theme was the Beatitudes and their relationship to Thérèse's teaching. The programme included talks and times for group reflection through worship-sharing in the manner of Quakers. We held a daily Eucharist in which every one played a part, e.g. reading a passage or saying a prayer, and shared in the bread and wine. The ordained retreatants took it in turns to preside. I was particularly moved at one service where Judith led up to the consecration and then handed over to Sue. Knowing of Judith's own call to the priesthood, I wondered how this felt for her. Thérèse herself longed to be priest and I know that she would support both Sue and Judith in their vocations. I thought of the hurts that need to be healed in struggle for equality in both their Churches and felt thankful that we are all priests in our Quaker tradition.

One day we had a healing service. Graeme and I were asked to offer healing. He used the sacrament of anointing with oil and I used the laying on of hands. Some asked for healing for themselves and some for others as though by proxy. We also had sessions for distant healing where we each contributed the names of people and situations to our communal ‘pool’ of prayer.

Outside the formal sessions there was time for individual reflection and sight-seeing. I would often go up to the Basilica to sit in the Chapel set aside for private prayer or to practise my French by listening to the guides or translating the quotations among the mosaics which adorn the interior. Once I was charmed by the singing of a group of French children on an outing to learn about Thérèse.

I went to the town cemetery where Thérèse was originally buried and where thousands flocked in the hope of healing. Among them was Edith Piaf who was cured of blindness as a child after being brought here by the prostitutes she lived with. Now the site of the grave is marked by a statue of the saint.

On her Beatification in 1923, her body was moved to the Carmel, where her remains are now kept in a special Chapel of the Reliquary. Here, an effigy of the saint on her deathbed lies in a glass case surrounded by flowers from grateful devotees. Around the walls there are plaques thanking her for intercession with the words “Merci pour la guérison” (thank you for the healing) repeated many times. A stained-glass window depicts Thérèse appearing to soldiers in the trenches in World War I.

We had not been able to go to the Carmel on my first visit to Lisieux as the public areas were closed for alterations. By my second visit they were open again and we could visit the tomb and the nearby ‘Relics Room’ displaying items associated with Thérèse. On seeing these, we thought how the austere life she led in the Carmel contrasted with the comforts of her bourgeois family home.

We would often come to the Carmel to hear the nuns singing the Divine Office in the Chapel. I felt particularly aware of Thérèse here, as I thought how she, too, had sung the Office in this Chapel. I felt Thérèse’s presence most especially in the court-yard where I would go for quiet contemplation away from the crowds. The pure Love I felt here was overwhelming.

I left Lisieux feeling that my spiritual batteries had been recharged. I thanked Thérèse for her intervention in my life and vowed I would return.

THE WOUNDED HEALER

Peter White

*“For thou dost sin and grief destroy
So that the broken bones may joy
And tune together in a well-set song.
Full of God’s praises
Who dead ones raises:
Fractures well set make us more strong.”*

George Herbert

One of the main ways of being healed is being listened to by someone who really cares, and knows from their own experience that they too have been healed in the same way. “Accept one another as Christ accepted us” is a Christian way of describing the basic and fundamental ethos in genuine healing.

Creative Listening as experienced among Friends may be seen as a way of healing too, and people in need of healing may come together to form a therapeutic community. Here they may learn to listen and to accept one another and experience deep healing.

It is interesting to note in the record of the healing ministry of Jesus as related in the Gospel of Mark, *“He healed many who suffered from various diseases, and drove out many devils. Very early next morning he got up and he went out. He went to a lonely spot and remained there in prayer.”* Jesus had given so much of himself as a healer that he knew he must go back to the place where he could find his own source of healing in prayer to the one he had learned to call his father, one who listened and understood.

“As we enter with tender sympathy into the joys and sorrows of each others’ lives, ready to give help and receive it, our meetings can be a channel for God’s love and forgiveness and healing.” (Advices and Queries 1.18)

Vital for the meeting is a community accepting, nurturing and welcoming, which is the basis of all else. Such a community is made up of a wide variety of persons with their own personality that is unique and valuable, yet at the same time can be very vulnerable in all kinds of ways: unloved and unloving, our failures can be a burden to ourselves and others.

The question of mental health and ill-health in our meetings focuses on *“our seeking to know one another in the things that are eternal,”* and in our everyday life today personal relationships are frequently disturbed, and our personal identity becomes threatened in many ways.

Listening to one another in a sensitive way and in depth is often thought to be of secondary importance compared with speaking, and is given little consideration. Certainly our elders and overseers are expected to be schooled in listening as we enter into the joys and sorrows of each other's lives.

Then there is listening to God. Are our meetings corporately and personally doing that, not only in Meeting for Worship but on all other days? I suppose that if and when we listen to God, God finds it easier to listen to us, which ensures that in the end our praying is likely to be more realistic and effective.

A SHORT STORY!

Once upon a time – there were a little old man and a little old woman who had been married for more than 60 years. They had shared everything. They had talked about everything.

They had kept no secrets from each other except that the little old woman had a shoe box in the top of her closet that she had cautioned her husband never to open or ask her about. For all of these years, he had never thought about the box, but one day the little old woman became very ill and the doctor said she would not recover. In trying to sort out their affairs, the little old man took down the shoe box and took it to his wife's bedside. She agreed that it was time that he should know what was in the box.

When he opened it, he found two crocheted doilies and a stack of money totalling £40,000. He asked her about the contents.

“When we were to be married,” she said, “my grandmother told me the secret of a happy marriage was to never argue. She told me that if I ever got angry with you, I should just keep quiet and crochet a doily.”

The little old man was so moved; he had to fight back tears. Only two precious doilies were in the box. She had only been angry with him two times in all those years of living and loving. He almost burst with happiness.

“Dear one,” he said, “that explains the doilies, but what about all of this money? Where did it come from?”

“Oh,” she said, “That's the money I made from selling the doilies.”

Anon

REPORTS

QUAKER SPIRITUAL HEALERS' SUPPORT WEEKEND:

13-15 June 2008, at Scottish Churches House – led by Jim and Annie Miller.

Scottish Churches House comprises three old terraced cottages joined together to form an ecumenical residential and conference centre. There is a good train service to Dunblane from Edinburgh and Glasgow and the Centre is just a five minute walk from the station.

Our group met for afternoon tea on Friday. We numbered nine in all, three men and six women, with a wide range of ages, and as we introduced ourselves in the first session, we discovered we also had a wide range of experience. Some were accredited healers, some came out of curiosity, and others to see if they might want to become healers. Our programme gave plenty of time for discussion as well as healing.

Over the weekend we plied Jim with very searching questions and observations on the techniques and practice of healing. He remained completely unfazed, delving deep into his knowledge and experience of having witnessed a whole gamut of healings here and in other cultures. He shared with us his own lifelong experience as a healer to aid us in developing or reinforcing techniques for good practice. We spent some time on attunement: we talked of attuning to the person coming for healing, but also how to attune to the Source of healing power, which, for me, is Divine Love.

Annie led us into practising giving and receiving healing from the group, and then sharing what we experienced. In pairs we then tried using the techniques we had learned to offer one to one healing. On Saturday evening, aided by soft music and the gentle burning of incense, we helped one another to relax as we took it in turns to lie on a treatment couch. That ensured a good night's sleep!

Over the weekend we gelled together as a group and our experience of healing made us responsive to each other's needs, manifesting in many simple ways.

For me, the highlight of the weekend came in our Meeting for Worship which Jim introduced as an "intention for healing". He read the Bible text of Jesus' healing of the man who was paralyzed and who was brought by his friends and lowered through the roof. Moved to give ministry I became aware, and for the first time recognised, the magnificence of God's love manifest in my life.

I know that I can say on behalf of the group a big 'Thank you' to Jim, Annie and all other members of our group.

Maureen Anderson



Addicted to Love: from Rehab to Heaven? by **Clare Catford.**

Darton-Longman-Todd. 2008. 134 pages £9.95 ISBN 0-232-52728-8

I read this book through at a sitting and with great interest. I think anyone struggling with bulimia or indeed addiction of any kind would find it helpful and informative.

Clare, a broadcaster and journalist, who has spent many years presenting and reporting for the UK leading TV and radio networks, describes her secret struggles with depression and what she calls “love addiction” and how she has found healing and release by re-evaluating and rebuilding her Christian faith.

Her troubles began when she was hospitalised at the age of six and became deeply depressed and insecure, experiencing her mother’s absences as abandonment. At that time and throughout her life she prayed a great deal but had difficulty believing in a loving and just God. Christianity was something to cling to when she felt lost or lonely but she also found that her sense of shame and self-loathing increased as she failed in her attempts to stop compulsively overeating: “How could God love a bulimic?” When she was able to walk away from bulimia she discovered how angry she was and “great waves of rage” would overwhelm her when she thought back to her hospital experience as a child. However, the diagnosis that she was suffering from clinical depression was what enabled her to get to the bottom of all her turmoil and pain.

When she was very troubled about a relationship she began attending a Twelve Step Fellowship where like-minded people shared their struggles with love, sex and relationship addiction. Her comment on Step Three might well have been endorsed by George Fox: “My own will had me clinging onto the relationship like a drowning man clings to a buoy - Step Three offered another perspective: we made a decision to turn our lives over to the care of God as we understood him.”

Clare thinks that addiction is more common amongst Christians because there is so much fear associated with being honest and open about sexual desire and relationships that the feelings are driven underground, where they become even more potent. Clare’s book is admirably open and truthful and by laying her life and experience open she allows a more honest discussion of 21st century dilemmas and beliefs.

Anthea Lee

Into the Silent Land: the Practice of Contemplation by **Martin Laird**. Darton-Longman-Todd. 2006. 154 pages ISBN 0-232-52640-0. £10.95

I have read, reviewed or just dipped into many books on the practice of contemplation and meditation, and I have no hesitation in recommending this one as the best I have yet come across. Martin Laird is Associate Professor in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at Villanova University and the author of several books on theology.

He speaks of contemplation as “this subtlest, simplest, and most searching of the spiritual arts”; and although he recognises “the wild hawk of the mind” as being something which we are all in thrall to, he gives what amounts to commonsensical guidance as to how to cope when the constant chatter in our heads threatens to sabotage our efforts.

He speaks of the “Three Doorways of the Present Moment” calling on the age-old wisdom of resting in the present moment – the Now. And the way through the first of these doorways is the Way of the Prayer Word – the use of a word, or phrase, that acts as a shield from external thoughts, stills our mind and teaches us the discipline of “loving attentiveness”.

The second doorway is approached when we find the prayer word has become ‘second nature’ and is more interesting than the “internal videos that continue to play”. We have learnt how to meet thoughts with stillness. It is here that we may find ourselves more open to “simple, direct engagement”.

When, after much practice, the third doorway is reached, we may find ourselves waiting in the silence of just being – in a state of pure contemplation, where we become aware of Awareness.

For anyone who has not yet found a guide to meditation and contemplation, this conveniently pocket-sized book should prove most helpful.

Rosalind Smith

A Walk in the Woods by **Stephen Feltham**. Published by 4Thoughts (Sofotech Ltd.) £7.99 ISBN 978-1-906654-00-9

The book starts as a very ordinary early morning walk in a woodland in Spring, but very soon the reader is plunged into a world of the imagination, with a definite philosophical twist as we are taken past the objects and creatures the author meets.

Written in a down-to-earth manner, and with a great deal of humour, this book is delightfully illustrated and captioned with the author's own photographs of the woodland walk, and takes only half an hour to read. But you are left with a great deal to think about; and will want to read it again – and again.

Leonora Dobson

The Power Behind the Mind – thirteen lectures on the yoga of self-knowledge by **M V Waterhouse**, published by Shanti Sadan. First ed. 1986, second ed. 2006. 212 pp. ISBN 0-85424 -039-X £6.00. **(Note: Readers can purchase this book from the publishers post free at 29 Chepstow Villas, London W11 3DR; just mention that you read my review in *Towards Wholeness* when ordering).**

If the thought of a book on yoga summons up pictures of twisting yourself into strange and impossible positions, be assured that this is not that kind of book. The Yoga referred to is Raja or the Royal Yoga, and has as its basic premise that knowledge of the Divine which is the essence of all the great religions.

Marjorie Waterhouse was one of the first pupils of Hari Prasad Shastri, a gifted teacher and enlightened soul who came to England from India in 1929. After his death she became the warden of his centre in London, a position she held for seven years. In this role she too became an accepted teacher, and this book is taken from a series of her lectures on the subject.

In this form of yoga, the mind is seen as both the vehicle through which enlightenment can be found, and the barrier to that enlightenment which has to be overcome. One great sage expressed it as being “A thief becomes a policeman in order to catch a thief”. And the first step is to recognise the power of the mind. However, it is not merely the power of our individual mind that is dealt with in this book; rather it is the Power of the Divine, which is the source from which our minds gain all their creativity, compassion and energy. And the nature of that power is Love.

In order to release this greater creative power into our lives, we have to learn to love more. One of the author's favourite sayings was, “We do not yet love the human heart sufficiently”. In this book, through a gradual and gentle exploration of the mind through meditation, she unfolds for us the possibilities contained in this limitless power of Love. She quotes her teacher as saying that “Love and worship can be practised like any other art”, and she gives us ways in which we can do this.

The book has thirteen chapters, each of which examines an aspect of the title subject in her gentle yet penetrating way. It is difficult to name favourites, but the ones which spoke to me particularly were ‘Renunciation’, which, she

reminds us, is really spiritual freedom; ‘Action’, which has to be based on spiritual inspiration and be free from desire; and ‘The Conservation of Energy’ in which she examines the way in which the energy generated in meditation can be used more creatively and joyfully. In this, she quotes the sage Shankara, who said “One may live the life of the world or be a monk, live in society or in a hermitage, but he whose mind is devoted to the joy of the contemplation of God, he is happy, happy, happy”.

This book is a gem of spiritual instruction, and a doorway to the understanding of the universal nature of yoga philosophy. It will be helpful to anyone, of whatever religion or spiritual tradition, who seeks this Joy.

Jim Pym

Struggling to be Holy by **Judy Hirst**. Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd. 2008 (new ed.) 132 pages. ISBN 10: 0-232-52734-2 £9.95

Judy Hirst is an Anglican and teaches pastoral ministry. This means that the subject is addressed through Christian understandings. When Judy offered to write a book to the title of *Struggling to be Holy*, she added, with a quip, that she knew more about struggling than being holy. This attitude pervades the book – which is both dry-humoured at times and serious. I found it enormously reassuring. It is very readable, a comparatively short book to read (with clear print, which is a bonus for those with less than perfect sight!), and the power and seriousness of what she has to say continues to work within me.

I found Judy’s anecdotes (about both her own experiences and those of other people she knows) a very immediate way in which she makes her points clear. Her sharing of her own struggles, put in the context of her deep understanding of spiritual and religious matters, made me warm to her as a writer: she isn’t someone pontificating from a distant pulpit, who gives the impression of being ‘holy’ and therefore someone remote from us. I found myself, as a consequence, able to recognise and accept both my own struggles and my capacity to be holy.

Judy’s chapters cover important subjects: Hiding from God, Dealing with our Desires, the Gift of Forgiveness, Paying Attention, Friendship, and Success and Failure. Her text is full of references to biblical texts and other authors. She leaves us with questions at the back of the book, relevant to each chapter, on which to reflect.

I found this book reassuring, but also challenging. It would make an excellent focus for group study and discussion.

Judy Clinton

A Prayer for Meeting Someone

Teach me something I do not know.

Let me catch your love of what you

know and I do not.

Fill me with enthusiasm for things

of which I yet know little.

Let me touch the mystery and wonder

of this world through your love and joy.

Let me inspire you out of my love

for that which fires and sustains me.

Let me expand your interest and zest

for all that there is to enjoy.

Let me light the flame of your understanding

in things currently unknown to you.

Then, when we part, may we both be

the richer from our meeting.

Blessed by what life has to offer.

Amen

Judy Clinton

FFH PUBLICATIONS

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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 (*Maureen Anderson* and *Muriel Robertson* – *addresses on next page*) 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.