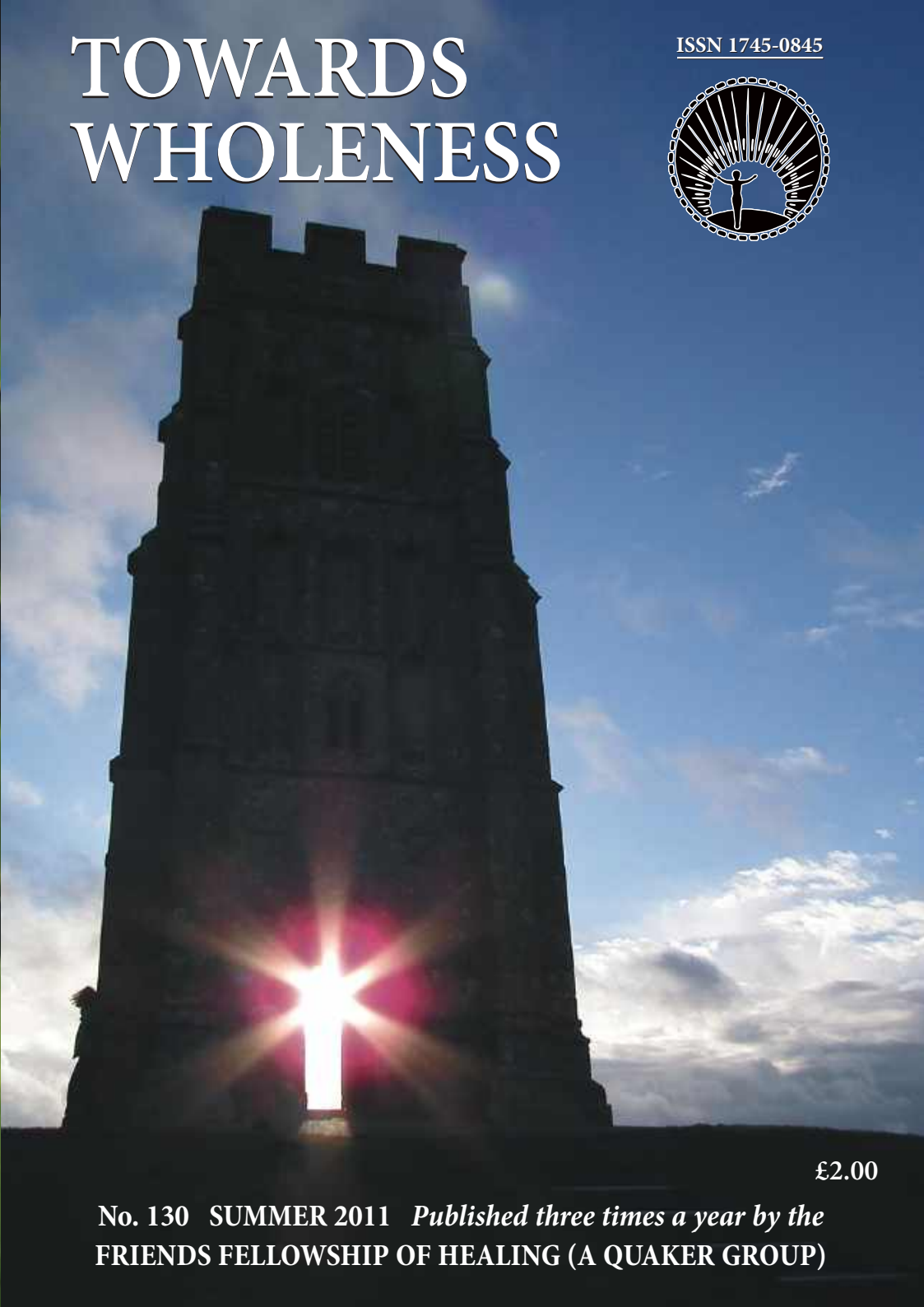




TOWARDS WHOLENESS

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FRIENDS FELLOWSHIP OF HEALING (A QUAKER GROUP)

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 in its 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.

The minimum subscription is £10 per calendar year for UK, Europe and all overseas countries (£10 Sterling only). Cheques, payable to Friends Fellowship of Healing, should be sent to the membership secretary, Sandra Kirk, 17 Southfields, Glastonbury, Somerset BA6 8DW. Tel: 07761 534730 Email: sandi.ffh@btinternet.com

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

For further information about the FFH please contact the Clerk: Hilary Painter, 2 Gunhild Close, Cambridge CB1 8RD Tel: 01223 243452 Email: paintermarden@ntlworld.com

Donations for the work of the Fellowship are most welcome.

Front cover photo: Glastonbury Tor at dawn – by Stephen Feltham

Back cover photo: Pink rose – by Nicholas Rawlence

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The Fellowship is a registered charity (number 284459)

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."

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The **AGM** of the **FFH** will take place at Yearly Meeting at Canterbury on Tuesday Aug 2nd at 12.45 pm. As usual there will be a book stall, and healing/ counselling will be available.

There are many different paths up the Mountain of Holiness. In addition to the Christian path, there are paths of other faiths, and even the path of the humble and reverent agnostic. In all of them the Holy Spirit can be at work.



Those who are holy bring a blessing of peace to our hearts. They are fully present and free from all rushing and straining. They seem to live simultaneously in two worlds, the one that is familiar to us, and the spiritual world of which we ourselves sometimes have glimpses.

Margaret Macleod

Alan Russell Pearce: 3rd August 1930 - 1st February 2011

Alan was born in London where he spent his early years, attending a Steiner school, before being evacuated during the war to Minehead in Somerset. His father was a postman, and his mother an Anthroposophist. After leaving school he worked at County Hall for the London County Council, later to become the Greater London Council, where he rose to become an assistant director-general before a fortuitous early retirement on its abolition, at the age of 55.

Alan was a life-long vegetarian, and a Quaker from his early 20s. In the 1950s he was on the committee of the Quaker Vegetarian Society in London. He moved to Guildford to set up home, and attended Meeting there for many years, and later in Cambridge and at Claridge House. He had a deep interest in healing, and gave much of his spare time to the work of the Society of Friends, and particularly to the Friends Fellowship of Healing which he chaired for 16 years, finally relinquishing the post in 2000. He will be remembered for his calm, quiet, and peaceful approach to life, always seeking to avoid conflict, and to help others, and for his skills as a clerk.

He had three sons and two grand-daughters, who remember him fondly as a kind and gentle person who set an excellent example of how to lead a good life. And yet, underneath that kindly, quiet Quaker exterior, there was a strong will, and a determination that whatever he set his mind to it would be done thoroughly and well

Alan was a keen walker, leading many rambles for the Guildford Vegetarian Society around the Surrey countryside. He enjoyed the company of the Society members, and had many good friends in the Guildford area. He was also a keen gardener, loving to visit places like Wisley, and he enjoyed his garden in Guildford, as well as devoting time to the garden at Claridge House, a place he felt drawn to for its peace and healing qualities, and for which he had great love. There are many trees and bushes that he took a personal delight in planting, and they will continue to grow and blossom for very many years to come.



THE FIVE STAGES OF HEALING

Michael Lewin

What is the source of our first suffering? It lies in the fact that we hesitated to speak. It was born in the moment when we accumulated silent things within us.

Gaston Bachelard

Life is a struggle for most us; a contested experience of trying to cope with attendant pain and distress that visits our lives and takes lodgings. We have our good periods, moments of pleasure, enjoyment, even delight, but too often we are thrown back into our suffering which makes us question the validity of what is happening to us and the inevitable surfacing of the big question: Why? But if we look closer at life, fully engage with its movements and dramas we can start to realize that suffering is an inevitable part of this journey. No one escapes from its clutches; no one is exempt from its presence. There are no get out clauses, no fierce negotiations that we can enter into that will help eliminate what is making a hold in our lives. So what are we to do? How can we proceed?

Below are outlined the Five Stages of a Healing Practice which have served me well over the years and which could (hopefully) guide, support and inspire you to take up a different, more positive position with your plight – I sincerely hope so....

AWARENESS

Whether we are searching for physical, emotional, mental or spiritual healing the path starts firmly and squarely with bringing awareness to our condition. This may seem an obvious statement but nevertheless many of us could be walking around in pain without even being fully conscious of it. Certainly distress can sweep into our lives quite suddenly and violently, making us fully aware of its presence. Its dramatic eruption engaging our attention, often disproportionately, making our lives a misery. But there are other times when there is an imperceptible slow introduction of pain, just under our threshold of awareness, which can largely go unrecognized and unattended. Wherever you are placed on this continuum in terms of attentiveness be mindful that our ‘visitor ‘ is here for a reason and needs our consideration and response. If we react automatically with a knee jerk response we are likely to cause more damage, more suffering. What is required is our entry into a quiet mode where we can start to learn how to listen intently to the voice of our visitor so that we can take appropriate, sympathetic action. Life dictates that we should work with our pain, our suffering, in order to transcend it. A full, human existence in an imperfect world of *samsara* brings so many challenges, but we have to recognize their power to shape our lives negatively, and then, with skilful application, try to transform them. Rilke once said that “*we squander*

our pain” meaning that we do not listen to what the experience is trying to tell us so we do not learn. Yet it is only through bringing a soft awareness to our plight, within a non-judgemental framework, that we can start to listen and understand our suffering; putting us in a position of potential metastasis – transformation.

A POSITIVE ACCEPTANCE OF SELF EMPOWERMENT

A vital requirement of any healing practice insists that we open ourselves up to a positive expectancy that says we will get better. Not necessarily cured, restored back to full health – although this remains a possibility – but certainly an improvement, if only on a slight incremental scale otherwise it could be argued, what is the point? We must constantly affirm and commit to the potential of getting better. Despite how difficult our situation is we do need to rid ourselves of fear and anxiety, anger and despondency, which holds us back and prevents us from taking the first few steps forward in the knowledge that a healing power can improve our lives. Our world is largely determined by our thoughts for they constantly shape and influence in which direction we go. By choosing optimistic, but nevertheless realistic options, we make ourselves available for the good to enter our lives. Having a goal in life, a vision that can utilize our full energies often concentrates our minds wonderfully thus distracting us, in a constructive way, from our, at times, obsessional, repetitive, negative thoughts. We may slip back at times, and this is understandable, but if we are determined we will get back on track in order to put into practice the tools we need.

Mistakes are part of the journey, here to give us corrective feedback so we mustn't criticize ourselves if, and when, they appear in our lives. Failure always carries the seeds of hidden opportunities to begin again and we must never ever, forget this. Recently, at a particularly low point in my life I asked a friend if we got a second chance in life and he replied: *'Yes, and a third, and a fourth, and a fifth chance...'* Which, for me meant that provided we keep on trying to push open the door of opportunity a new future remained firmly in view as an achievable goal.

APPLICATION OF TOOLS

One of the major tools for delivering a better existence is relaxation. Both mentally and physically this is a major tool for healing. Our bodies are living, breathing organisms that contain sanctity therefore we must treat them as well as we would any cherished possession. Relaxing showers, leisurely baths, calming massage, full body scans, nutritional diets, gentle exercise like *tai chi* or yoga, cycling or walking, all contribute to a better, more grounded peaceful

existence. When our body muscles are relaxed our stress and anxiety levels decline, this is a simple reality that we sometimes forget especially in the heat of our everyday activities. We are spiritual beings in physical shells so we must be mindful of this and treat the body, at all times with respect and reverence. Walt Whitman had insight on this when he said: *'If anything is sacred the human body is sacred... To render the body strong, clear and lovely is a religious duty.'*

The other major dimension we must pay attention to in our recovery programme is the mental/emotional life within. Often our pain is deeply internalized, beyond our recognition so we must bring forth the mindful practices of meditation/prayer to assist us. If we can start a small, but regular practice of sitting quietly and peacefully with ourselves – settling down to initially paying attention to our breathing patterns – then a relaxed calmness will descend creating a space of receptivity. And in this opening space issues may very well start to surface speaking to us like they have never done before. Often, in my own practice a core theme that has regularly gained my attention has been that of forgiveness. In my life it has been too easy for me to get irritated, frustrated or angry at people's behaviour and then allow this to affect me. And what I noticed was the more judgement I brought to bear on the matter, the more I seemed to suffer. Unwilling to go on in this manner I soon started a forgiveness practice where I suspended my totally subjective opinions, that held me back in pain, and sought out the healing light of forgiveness. Forgiveness to others and to myself.

Healing invites our active participation in its process of reparation – it asks us to cultivate openness, patience, compassion and forgiveness in order to move beyond our immediate pain into a place of possible reconciliation. And because it involves us in going forward, involves us in growth, do we really have a choice to say no?

MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

If we are to make progress on the healing path we must be careful to monitor the effectiveness of our 'treatment'. Keeping a healing journal could be a way forward. Here we record our progress, however subtle, in order to give us encouragement for the journey ahead. In the normal course of events we normally explore any research/ideas that can lead us to new insights/techniques that can improve our position and this is to be commended. Working out personal strategies for dealing with our plight lies at the very heart of the healing process. We acknowledge that ultimately we are our own physicians and therefore must act in a responsible manner avoiding denial, repression or resistance – which can be more harmful than the very

pain itself. We must drop below the surface of our everyday distractions and preoccupations to discover a much deeper sense of experience – a rich seam of knowing which we need to give voice to and record in a journal. Whatever recovery path we follow, whether traditional medicine, complementary medicine, body movement techniques, meditation, prayers or positive affirmations, whether individually or collectively, all will give us information feedback that needs recognition.

Problems are an inevitable part of the journey – if we encounter no problems on our travels through life then that, in itself, is a problem. A fully lived attentive, meaningful life is one that confronts the inevitable difficulties that we face and treats them as a learning/growth process to get us back on track. When we write about our experiences, both positive and negative, we go deeper, we search for the most appropriate words and phrases to describe them and, as a consequence, understand them more. The fine details, the subtle nuances, that could go largely undetected unless we engage the writing/focusing process. This pragmatic approach of recording can also help us avoid later false recollections, biased/ prejudiced recall, by documenting accurately, at the point of encounter, our experiences and feelings. A healing journal gives both our pain and path a dignity and recognition it deserves and from this we can learn so much. Suffering in silence isn't an option...

ASSIMILATION AND RECONCILIATION

Eventually, after much exploration we are in a position to make some informed choices on what works for us and what doesn't. Research and experimentation is still an ongoing practice; this is vital, but at this stage we are refining our thoughts more, giving clarity to what we have discovered so far through systematic trial and error. Our concerns and worries should now, as far as possible, be translated into action that is visible in every corner of our lives. That's the commitment. That's what we are signed up to do – the wholesale improvement of our lives... A barometer for our well being is not solely expressed in the elimination or reduction of our pain. Nourishing sleep, calmness, relaxed awareness, alertness, renewed energy and vigour are all indicators of our health. Our healing journey now gives us greater confidence and optimism, it shows greater definition, more substance to encourage us to seek out even more improvements.

But, a word of caution – if we are looking for a quick, wholesale cure for our suffering we may be disappointed. Certainly this could happen, and we should never dismiss it completely as a possibility, but with a maturity of understanding we start to recognize more the fact that healing is not necessarily the same as curing. Healing can, on one level, be considered more attitudinal

than physical: a process of accommodating and reconciling to the reality of what has entered our lives and become a part of them. An inner process of acceptance in order to manage them better, more effectively. The words of the Serenity Prayer have much relevance here:

Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference ... Simple yet profound words to live by, to guide us on the path. But it does raise the question: What can we change and what can't we change? In this territory there are no universal, conclusive answers; no words that I can offer up to differentiate between the two. We are all unique, and as such we all need to reflect deeply on this issue. But providing we give to it our full concentration something will eventually emerge from our inner depths to support us. This we must believe.

In conclusion – the struggle with our pain can, at times, be very problematic but if we believe and trust in the higher power of healing then there is always hope of improvement and recovery.

I've always looked upon healing, in essence, as a way of life: something that I'm constantly involved in, reading about and studying. For me healing goes far beyond the notion of a physical remedy, a correction to some bodily ailment. It's much more than this, much more complex. In my experience it involves many dimensions that constitute the wholeness of us, what we are – the physical, emotional and spiritual.

When we are ill we lose confidence in ourselves, a self-erosion that can undermine so much. Healing is about regaining and restoring this loss: regaining our self-belief in order to assist recovery. It is also about making a commitment, a vow to stay alert, explore and observe – without judgement – all that is happening in our minds and bodies. Abraham Maslow once said: *'The ability to be in the present moment is a major component of mental wellness.'* And I cannot help but fully accept this. Looking back into the past, or projecting forward into the future, makes us miss the opportunity to attend to the preciousness of the current moment with all its rich diversity and complexity. What is of real value is this living, cherished moment, in the here and now – not some mindscape that takes us away from this reality.

Our body is the vehicle that carries and supports our life, so treat it well. Never allow it to become a 'foreign country': a remote, strange territory that we feel disconnected from; a place we rarely visit in any mindful, attentive way. We must always acknowledge to our body that we are listening to what it's saying, that we are accepting its invitation to open up and share its inner, deep cell wisdom/ truth. Then we can rest in the knowledge and conviction that we have given our best efforts which will undoubtedly be acknowledged in return.

MOBILIOUS

*The Mobile Phone came like a wolf to the fold,
It bewitched all the young and confused all the old;
It distorted the mind and addled the brain,
With its "I'm at the station" and "I'm on the train".*

*We're stumbling through life with a hand to our ear,
"Just say that again, it's not terribly clear."
The message comes through with a stammer and stutter;
We're filling the ether with clamour and clutter.*

*If you haven't got one they think you are nuts;
They aren't even mentioned in government cuts.
There are sudden loud voices you hear on the street;
You hear all their secrets – it's far from discreet.*

*It shames you at concerts, disturbs you in bed;
If there is no signal you're living and dead.
Instead of a rollicking time with your chums
Your friends are just buttons you prod with your thumbs.*

*You can turn up the weather, or check on the score;
Now mothers don't speak to their babies no more,
They're retelling gossip or scandal or worse,
So is it a blessing, or is it a curse?*

*What happened to English? You see that I'm vexed:
Our beautiful language reduced to a TEXT.
It's more than obsession and worse than a habit,
It's making us stupid and monosyllabic.*

*I'll leave it at that, or you might think me bitter.
I've not made a mention of Facebook – or Twitter.*

Alfred Moon

Walking in nature is the best way I know of restoring myself to sanity when I've lost perspective on life and my part in it. I'd lost that perspective a few months ago, partly though having the second bad cold in as many months, partly because last winter seemed to have gone on for so interminably long and partly because ... well, who knows? A combination of things no doubt. The net result, whatever its causes, was that I was feeling depressed, miserable and out of sorts with everything, most of all with myself.

On waking, I stared from my bed at the grey sky and the drizzle-covered window, and listened to the tempestuous wind. My cold had given me a bad night and I was not feeling happy. Although my body was inclined to stay put in the warmth of my bed, my deeper self urged me to go into the countryside and walk – even if it wasn't for as far as I would normally go. I needed to get out in the air, to move and to go on one of my restorative, 'Look, see and adore God' walks (as I've come to call them). I needed to get away from my self-preoccupied and miserable self and to be led back to the deeper, wiser part of me by the spaciousness and freedom of nature. Maybe some people can sit cross-legged on the floor and reach that state of peacefulness in silence and meditation, but there are times when I have to move in order to go deeper and I need to be helped by expanding into nature. Or I certainly did this morning.

I'm fortunate to live close to a reservoir, and that's where I always head when I need to nurture my soul. It was as well that I wore my wellingtons: the field between my car and the reservoir was very muddy indeed. I mused on the fact that there had been no such things as wellingtons until they came into being in the early nineteenth century – how lucky I am to benefit from the inventive minds of so many people who have gone before me.

Although the wind was tossing the trees about and giving me a good bashing as well, it wasn't cold; in fact, after all the recent sub-zero temperatures, it was remarkably warm and I was grateful for that. A fine drizzle swirled around me, covering my glasses in a mist and obliging me to put my hood up. It wasn't the best of weathers in which to be out. But, oh how good it was to be outdoors and to feel the air on my face and to rest my eyes on distant scenes of water, hills, trees and green fields. I felt a wave of relief – of recognition that this was exactly what I needed.

Nature can teach us so much if we have the eyes and heart to see. I lent on the railings and watched the swirling patterns made on the water by the wind – first in this direction, then in another. Nothing was still. Waves, like those more commonly seen at the sea-side, lapped noisily against the reservoir's containing

walls. The wind continued to batter me. It was not a peaceful scene – and neither was I at peace within myself. But I knew that on another occasion, as I had so often seen before, this area of water would be as clear as glass, reflecting the surrounding hills like a mirror, still and calm. It comforted me to know that when my own turbulence had run its course, I too would return to a more peaceful condition. There is nothing for it but to wait. Life changes perpetually; I change perpetually; it is the way of things.

I walked along beside the water and found a large, fresh-water mussel shell on the ground. I picked it up and marvelled at the colours that gleamed at me from within it. This Creator of ours loves beauty, that is for sure. I popped it into my pocket to take home to enjoy again later. What a treasure – a free gift.

I looked up and saw maybe a hundred gulls flying high above the rough water. They were wheeling and dipping and I was intrigued to watch them. They often came very close to one another but, despite the speed at which they were flying, not once did I see one bird crash into another – never, come to think of it, have I ever done. No highway code with sign boards and speed restrictions for them. They flew as if perfectly choreographed and I found them exquisite to watch. Their flying seemed to be for the sheer pleasure of it – not once did a bird dip down for the purposes of fishing out something to eat – they just rode the air-waves, much I imagined, as surfers do on the sea's rolling breakers. They did it because they did, because they are birds and that's what birds are designed to do: fly. What, I asked myself, are humans designed to do? What am I designed to do? I let the question hang in the air, and to be buffeted around on the currents of my mind.

I focused on one gull and watched it for the next ten minutes as it flew and flew – first high in the sky, then swooping lower before riding the next air current up to the heights once more. What energy! And for what? Because it could, because it felt joyful doing it? Who knows? What I do know is that it brought me a tremendous amount of pleasure as my eyes followed its flight. Sometimes it joined the other birds, at other times it flew separately; sometimes it flapped its wings vigorously, at other times it just rode the current – what an expert! I watched it as it flew away into the distance and finally disappeared into a bank of cloud. I noticed that the other birds had gone too.

Slowly I walked back towards the car, picking up a few more shells as I went. I negotiated my way back through the mud, clambered over the stile, took off my boots, put on my shoes and drove home. I felt so much better for having spent some time in the company of Mother Nature – the greatest healer I know.

The fullness of joy is to behold God in everything.

Julian of Norwich

REPORTS

FFH Spring Gathering Abbey House, Glastonbury – May 2011

About fifteen Ffriends from the FFH gathered for the weekend at Abbey House Glastonbury. No better location could have been chosen, for the Abbey House, being 180 years old had a magnificent ambience in its architecture and decoration that lent magnificently to the spirituality of the weekend. A surprising little gem was the Cellar Chapel that was beneath the building and although not originally built as a chapel had been sympathetically converted to create a spiritual place that enabled quiet contemplation and the sending of healing thoughts.

Our theme for the weekend was ‘Storytelling’ and this was admirably facilitated by Kay Horsfield with Margaret Western providing valuable support and assistance. We enjoyed a very moving creative storytelling experience where, sitting in a circle and accompanied by the resonant throbbing of a sacred drum, a story was developed with each one of us adding a few spoken words or phrases in turn until the story was told. No-one present had heard it before and never would hear it again. It created a truly unique experience that was taken and enjoyed in the ‘now’ with nothing remaining except the memory that some wonderful healing moments had been shared.

Glastonbury, a modern-day centre for myth, magic and getting in touch with one’s own spirituality, (ably assisted by the commercial efforts of the trades-people and the many ‘healing shops’ in the town), melded wonderfully with the ancient and medieval ethos of the Abbey ruins on whose legends the present centre of pilgrimage is based. On the Saturday afternoon during free time many of us wandered the main street or visited the Chalice Well. It is a very attractive garden with a stream running through it and which, again, called upon the ethos of the town to promote a spiritual ambience and sensibility. Notwithstanding one’s own particular thoughts or ‘take’ on such matters it was still a pleasant and an enjoyable place to be.

Saturday evening was of home made entertainment with an interesting selection of readings and poetry that was preceded by some traditional solo singing from the music-hall era and enthusiastically rounded off with us all getting stuck into a jolly sing-song notable more for its vigour than its musical talent.

The Tor, standing as it does like a sentinel above the town seemed to watch over and bless our gathering and early on Sunday morning a Friend visited the Tor

unaware that he was to enjoy an elevating oneness with nature and with God. The sun had risen across the dawn sky to illuminate, directly through the portal of St Michael's Chapel, the Abbey Ruins and Abbey House in the valley below as if to bless the Fellowship, healing love and intent of our FFH gathering.

This was a very relaxing weekend where time was never a consideration and where the healing ethos of our group was quietly nurtured in a soft and gentle manner such as to carry us forward on our spiritual and healing journeys.

Stephen Feltham

*Silent the blind mists lift
And the trees are seen:
Slender the tall trunks rise
To the leaf-shade's green.
Single the dew-drops clear
In the sunlight gleam,
Yellow the king-cups sway
By the pebbled stream.
All that is shrouded now
Will reveal its face.
Life's in the seed concealed:
Love is its starting place.*

Charles Kohler

The Cleaning Lady

During my second month of college, our professor gave us a pop quiz. I was a conscientious student and had breezed through the questions until I read the last one:

'What is the first name of the woman who cleans the school?'

Surely this was some kind of joke. I had seen the cleaning woman several times. She was tall, dark-haired and in her 50s, but how would I know her name?

I handed in my paper, leaving the last question blank. Just before class ended, one student asked if the last question would count toward our quiz grade.

'Absolutely,' said the professor. 'In your careers, you will meet many people. All are significant. They deserve your attention and care, even if all you do is smile and say "hello".'

I've never forgotten that lesson. I also learned her name was Dorothy.

Anon

Thirty years ago my stepmother sent me a cutting from *The Times*. It was entitled 'St Benedict's rule and the all-pervasive nature of prayer'. But when I read it I thought it was all about love. Indeed although I have re-read it many times over the years I haven't changed my view. Perhaps it is because I always feel close to my stepmother when I do; she has been dead for a long time.

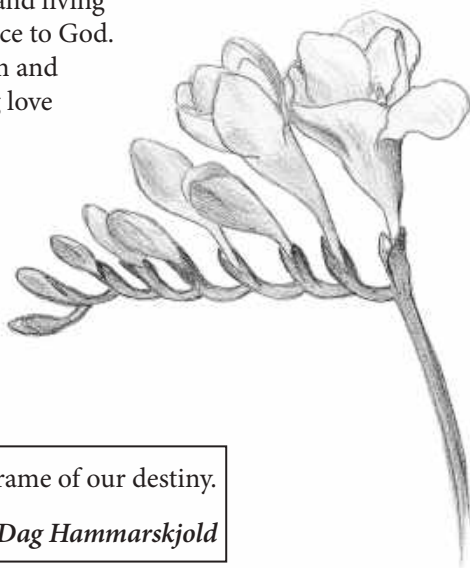
Prayer, says St Benedict, who went on to found a monastic way of life which is all prayer, is something that if you want to do it you should get on and do it without interference from other people. He says we pray because we love, and we love because God loves us first. So prayer is not an elitist activity, it is open to all.

Benedict tells us to listen with an open mind and heart to God's word. This word is to be found in the scriptures, and also in people, in events and in ourselves. The Word of God is given through Jesus Christ and shares our inward experiences. If we can accept ourselves and others lovingly we are accepting him. God may judge us, but that can be a cleansing experience. If we are ready to hear we will grow in truth and love.

Prayer, he says, is a relationship of love. It shapes our lives and therefore is a growing relationship. There's nothing instant in this. The change has to come from within and we have to surrender ourselves to God's love. It may very well be painful, but we must not try and avoid that pain.

All our ordinary experiences of work and living with people are in the field of obedience to God. And through this we learn to obey him and receive his love and give an answering love from ourselves.

St Paul said that we cannot pray, but God takes over and does it for us himself. His spirit is alive in us and guiding and shaping the way we pray, so we really only have to accept that the process is going on anyway and tune in.



We are not permitted to choose the frame of our destiny.
But what we put into it is ours.

Dag Hammarskjöld

**THE
EPISTLE
from the
EXPERIMENT WITH LIGHT**
conference held at Glenthorne – May 2011

To Friends Everywhere,

We have come together to discern how Experiment with Light might be integrated into Britain Yearly Meeting so that it can be supported and further developed, both within Britain Yearly Meeting and beyond.

Experiment with Light is a practice that was developed from early Friends' writings and that is best summed up in the words of Advices and Queries Number 1: "Take heed, dear Friends, to the promptings of love and truth in your hearts. Trust them as the leadings of God whose Light shows us our darkness and brings us to new life."

Paying attention to the Light; seeing what it reveals to us; accepting this reality; and acting upon it, are the four cornerstones of Experiment with Light. Rooted in a rediscovery of a process early Friends went through, it can help Friends today to reconnect to the power that inspired 17th century Quakers. Many of us can testify to the transformative power Experiment with Light has had and continues to have on our lives.

We sense that Experiment with Light is challenging our widespread reluctance to share our spiritual insights, tendency to hide deep emotions, and avoidance of openly and honestly addressing conflict. We feel that it is necessary to be challenged in this way and that Experiment with Light can help us live fuller and more faithful lives, as well as strengthen the spiritual lives of our Meetings throughout Britain Yearly Meeting and beyond. However, we shall not be afraid of changing our ways if we feel that our structures no longer allow us to grow in the Light.

As individuals, we commit ourselves to put our lives under the guidance of the Light as best we can and to support each other in this endeavour.

As a group, we have trusted the Spirit to reveal to us the best way of structuring and of communicating this ministry. While some questions in this respect still require a fuller answer, we have become clearer about the future direction of Experiment with Light.

We ask Friends everywhere to hold this ministry in the Light.

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 David Huxley, Claridge House, Dormans Road, Lingfield, Surrey RH7 6QH. Email: welcome@claridgehousequaker.org.uk Website: www.claridgehousequaker.org.uk Tel: 01342 832150.

July 15 - 17 ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE – for beginners & refreshers (£175)

The Alexander Technique is a learned skill, which improves health, balance and co-ordination and is medically proven as a long-term solution to back pain (BMJ 2008). This gently-paced course uses explanation, lying down, guided activities, hands-on work and discussion to explore the principles involved. Please bring comfortable clothing. **Jill Payne**, Alexander Technique tutor.

July 18 - 22 VOLUNTEER MAINTENANCE WEEK (£80)

Enjoy the fellowship of working, relaxing and of shared Quiet Times, whilst helping the House. *Please phone us for details on 01342 832 150.*

July 22 - 24 EQUANIMITY – the “Release” of Healing (£175)

An informal healing retreat to achieve a state of inner equanimity; recognising and removing impediments to balancing body, mind and spirit. Society encourages more activity, greater acquisition of knowledge and indulgence of our senses. We will maintain a holistic awareness, encouraging release of the inessential, to create space for the healing spirit. **Stephen Feltham**, Quaker, spiritual healer, experienced trainer, poet, has travelled widely in India and elsewhere.

July 29 - 31 YOGA AND AYURVEDA (£175)

An opportunity to explore the wisdom and healing benefits of Yoga and its sister science Ayurveda. Sessions will include physical Yoga, working with the breath, relaxation, pranayama, mudras, healing sounds and meditation, plus talks on the basic principles of Ayurveda, establishing your constitution and an appropriate lifestyle routine. **Bill and Gill Feeney**, experienced Yoga teachers.

August 5 - 7 REIKI II (£175)

Being attuned to Reiki II increases your Reiki, enabling you to treat yourself and others at a deeper level, to deal directly with mental / emotional aspects and to send out distant healing. **Anna Moore**, a Reiki master and teacher for over ten years.

August 15 - 19 YOGA TO BEAT FATIGUE (£295)

A gentle yoga course suitable for all abilities. We will include energy enhancing methods such as special breathing techniques, meditation and nurturing yoga postures. Also suitable for those with moderate ME/CFS.

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

August 19 - 21 WHY WRITE? (£175)

Love working with words? Fascinated by the writing process? On a relaxing weekend discover what words are waiting for you. All wordsmiths welcome.

***Ted Walter**, a poet and creative writing tutor for over 25 years.*

August 22 - 26 LOVING KINDNESS RETREAT (£295)

This meditative retreat will focus on the Buddhist practice of Loving Kindness, incorporating techniques and practice of Mindfulness. It is intended that much of the retreat will be silent to benefit from the blessings of these practices taught by the Buddha as part of the pathway to enlightenment.

***Anne Simpson**, a Registered Homeopath and Quaker Healer who facilitates meditation courses and workshops.*

September 2 - 4 CALLIGRAPHY FOR ALL – including beginners (£175)

It is satisfying to write out your favourite texts beautifully. For those new to calligraphy this course teaches an edged-pen script, layout and design of short texts, and colour in the pen and background. More experienced calligraphers are welcome to learn new scripts and experiment. Individual help and frequent tutor demonstrations.

***Gaynor Goffe**, a well-known calligrapher and tutor with over 30 years' experience of teaching calligraphy.*

September 5 - 9 ACTIVITY WEEK (£245)

Exercise your mind, body and soul. On Tuesday see how nature helps us in our search for the spiritual in our lives with Cherry. On Wednesday and Thursday try Chi Kung and Croquet with Tony (but not at the same time!). All activities are optional.

*Led by **Cherry Simpkin**, a spiritual director and a healer and trainer with Quaker Spiritual Healers, and **Tony Franklin**, Claridge House back office part timer.*

September 9 - 11 BUDDHISM – a philosophy for life (£175)

Buddhism is becoming increasingly well known in the west today. This introductory workshop covers the key Buddhist concepts. During the weekend we explore the origin of Buddhism, its ethical foundation and Enlightenment – the goal of the Buddhist path. The course will include an opportunity to

experience a variety of simple meditative exercises. **John Preston**, a previously ordained Buddhist monk.

September 12 - 16 WALKS WEEK (£245)

This week is an opportunity to visit places of interest and some of the lovely countryside near Claridge House. None of the walks will exceed five miles. Please bring suitable footwear.

Led by **Muriel Fell** of the Crawley Ramblers association.

September 16 - 18 THE LAUGHTER JOURNEY (£175)

We all know that laughter gives us energy and brings us closer to our friends. But can laughing more enable us to make deeper changes in our lives? Discover how laughter helps you develop new perspectives and qualities – including happiness, resilience, confidence and hope. **Jo Eadie**, an experienced laughter facilitator and part of the UK Laughter Network.

September 23 - 25 EXPERIMENT WITH LIGHT (£175)

In the serenity of Claridge House this retreat offers a meditative practice, based on the early Friends' experience of waiting in the Light, to help us explore the deeper issues of our life. This can be searching and powerful, leading to fuller understanding and insight into ourselves and our leadings. **Catherine King Ambler** and **Hilary Pinder**, have practised *Experiment with Light* for more than four years, working with others in this country and abroad.

Sept 30 - Oct 2 QUAKER SPIRITUAL HEALERS: support weekend (£150)

A weekend gathering for full or probationary members of Quaker Spiritual Healers, offering an opportunity to develop understanding of spiritual healing with others on the same path. **Anne Simpson**, a Registered Homeopath and Quaker Healer who facilitates meditation courses and workshops.

October 10th - 14 A HEALING RETREAT (£295)

An informal retreat making space to explore healing needs, both for ourselves and in prayer for others. There will be talks, dialogue, led meditation and exercises, as well as free time for quiet contemplation, walking or interaction with others. One to one sessions and personal healing will be available. A good preparation would be Jim's booklet, *What Kind of God, What Kind of Healing?* **Jim Pym**, a spiritual healer and meditation teacher with more than 40 years' experience, and author of *"Listening to the Light."*

October 14 - 16 "COME HOME TO WITHIN" (£175)

The first Quakers often used these words. How do we come home to the Light within us? How do we then go out and engage with the world, keeping

our inner stillness? **Beth and Peter Allen**, who combine Quaker and Anglican insights.

October 18 THE INSIGHTS OF MEISTER ECKHART – day retreat (£25)

Meister Eckhart believed that everything is part of God and encouraged others to discover their own divinity. On this Quiet Day, we will explore the teachings of this mediaeval German mystic and their relevance to us in our spiritual search.

*Led by **Cherry Simpkin**, a spiritual director and a healer and trainer with Quaker Spiritual Healers.*

October 21 - 23 WORLD CIRCLE DANCE (£175)

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 experience of circle dancing would be useful. (If in doubt please ask to discuss with tutor.)

***Eve Corrin**, an experienced teacher of circle dance with a gentle, straightforward and relaxed style of teaching.*

October 28 - 30 LANDSCAPES AND CITYSCAPES (£175)

The power of place in the writing process. Create innerscapes and explore memory and imagination during a relaxed weekend with words, in good company.

***Ted Walter**, a poet and creative writing tutor for over 25 years.*

November 4 - 6 HEALING VIBRATIONS AND THE VOICE (£175)

The voice has a unique power to resonate the subtle energy centres and transform our psychology towards wellness and true nature. Through toning, chanting, natural sound rituals, Taoist healing sounds, tuning forks and complementary simple movement, discover how vocal vibrations bring a deep state of meditation, where the greatest healing takes place.

***James D'Angelo**, leading therapeutic sound courses since 1994, authority on healing sound modalities, author of *The Healing Power of the Human Voice*.*

November 11 - 13 CORE ENERGY MANAGEMENT (£175)

You and the Universe are made up of energy, so being able to manage it makes sense. This course will give you a set of tools to manage your own energies, especially in the therapeutic situation.

***Chrissie Holmes** has been a CEM coach since 2002; these techniques have changed her life. Foundation for Holistic Spirituality healer for 30 years who supports, facilitates and encourages growth.*

QUAKER SPIRITUAL HEALERS EVENTS

QSH 'Training courses': (Monday - Friday)

September 5 - 9 2011 at Glenthorne

£280

(Please book directly with Glenthorne Tel: 01539 435389)

There will also be one at **Claridge House** in **March 2012** – further details in next issue of *TW*.

These training courses provide a safe and friendly opportunity for those who feel themselves drawn towards the field of spiritual healing, to experience their own potential. If appropriate they can then go on to become fully insured probationer healers, and eventually full healer members of QSH.

All courses are facilitated by tutors from the QSH team of tutors.

(Please ring Ros Smith on 01359 252248 for details of course content.)

QSH Support Weekend:

September 30 - October 2 2011 at Claridge House

£150

Facilitator: *Anne Simpson*



If any QSH healers are going to BYM this year and would like to offer healing while there, please get in touch with Cherry Simpkin (contact details on inside back cover).

Also, if anyone can help with manning the bookstall for a few hours, that would be much appreciated.



HOPE

*Special is the energy here that has a loving grace,
Persuading angst and stress to leave a furrowed face.
Inside it and without there is a healing love and calm,
Restoring peace and balance with its special spiritual balm.
Inside these walls there is a welcome that nought will ever douse,
Thank you, for the healing, that comes through Claridge House.*

Stephen Feltham

A Meditation for Freedom from Anxiety

(To be read out slowly to the group – allowing long silences where there are dots – ...)

This meditation focuses on anxiety – our own, that of people we love, that of people we know.

- Let us take a moment or two to collect ourselves in silence, to be still, to be in the presence of the Divine...
- Recognise the thoughts of this day, the pressures of living, of the constraints of time, and allow them to flow, to spin round our minds and let them settle...
- Take a slow, deep breath and let all the pressures go as you exhale slowly, slowly, – and relax...

For a while, think of all the forms which anxiety can take in our and others' lives.

Anxieties caused by

- rifts in relationships at home, families or work
- illness and loss of independence
- difficult financial circumstances
- anticipating loss, and loss itself
- difficult decisions
- being estranged from the Light

First, become comfortable, balanced and relaxed

- our feet feel the floor gently pressing upwards to support them and any tension in our feet, our ankles, our legs, begins to melt away – they feel heavy and the floor gently accepts their weight...
- a warm wave of deep relaxation begins to move up our legs, muscles become soft and heavy and we feel gentle heat beginning to move into our torsos...
- the muscles in our backs relax and our spinal columns become balanced with the least of effort...
- and the wave of warmth flows up into our shoulders massaging away any feeling of tension and they gently ease down as we relax...
- the glow enters our biceps, forearms and our hands for which, here, there is no work and we let them sink into our laps...
- the wave of warmth extends now to our necks, and its glow moves over our face, massaging round our mouth, our eyes, our foreheads and up onto the tops of our heads...
- The glow now gently removes all tension, dulls all pain, soothes all aches...

And we remain for a moment or two, enjoying this feeling of deep relaxation, of just a sense of being, of heaviness.

- We are aware of the floor supporting our feet;
- we feel our chair supporting our weight,
- we focus on removing every ounce of tension, every vestige of care...

We become aware of a pool of Light bathing us and adding to our comfortable stillness...

Light which gently greets, pulses, soothes and enters every part of our being and for a moment shuts out the world...

While we are held in the protection of the Light we can look at our own worries one by one and we now bring to the Light those anxieties which concern us most....

As we offer our fears to the Light we are enveloped in its love and feel its healing presence...

While we are held in the Light we bring to mind those we love, our friends and those we know who are laden with anxiety and we bring them, naming them, one by one into the Light...

As we offer their fears to the Light they are enveloped in its love and feel its healing presence...

We form a circle holding hands with our loved ones, our friends and those we know, and the pool of Light transforms into a tiny ball of pulsing pure white light in the centre of our circle...

We receive its energy and strength and feel the inner glow of its goodness, evoking our praise and thanks for the presence of the Light within all of us...

And as the Light fades from outside us, but glows within us,
we return to the present
softly taking our time
to open our eyes,
gently flexing our hands, our toes, our shoulders
and returning ...

Graham Allsopp

I spoke to my daughter Josie on the phone recently for an hour and a half. Now I expect you are wondering why that is of any importance. I have to go back in time fifteen years. When my first husband left very suddenly, no goodbye, just a stark letter on the kitchen table to tell me he had left for the 'foreseeable future' my daughter and I were left stranded. My daughter had enjoyed a very close relationship with her father. He was able to answer every question she asked him about her university course and her computing needs, and everything else. So close that in fact I was excluded for years. Not knowing how to change the situation I simply withdrew and waited for her to want me.

With her father no longer in the picture she didn't immediately want me as recompense. In fact she didn't want me at all. Sure that he would have emailed her his intentions she checked her empty inbox in vain. Then she demanded that I tell her where he was. I didn't know. That is to say I knew where he had gone, but not the relevant details of his address.

At the beginning of June that year an old girlfriend had got in touch and on the strength of a few more letters and four telephone calls, three weeks later he left, believing he and she were still in love with each other. His daughter and his wife were shunted aside like so much left luggage, no longer wanted on voyage.

In due course a very acrimonious divorce ensued, during which my daughter said peevishly that she couldn't understand why I just didn't give Dad 'his' things instead of wrangling over them. I explained it wasn't that clear cut, 'his' things were 'our' things and we had to decide sensibly who should have what from the family home, including most importantly of all ownership of our house.

During this time I was having counselling three times a week from a kind neighbour who was endeavouring to help me put my life back onto some kind of even keel. I tried often to pass on her help to my daughter. I wrote to Josie often knowing that for both our sakes we needed each other. It was hard work and often when we spoke on the phone it ended in us making each other cry, after yelling at each other. I didn't know how to get through to her that I was as sad as she was, so I just kept plugging away hoping to win her round one day.

Then a new man came into my life. Apart from telling me I was rushing into a new relationship rather quickly, she seemed to like him. At his suggestion Josie and I met in Birmingham for a day out together just before our wedding. I was telling her about my planned wedding outfit but when she responded that it sounded horrible, I wisely changed the subject. She also said she wouldn't come

to our lovely Quaker wedding, but in the event she did.

We stopped screaming at each other down the phone, but we never had much to say to each other although I continued to ring her.

Three years ago she introduced us to this lovely man she had met and plans to marry. They haven't actually got round the marriage bit yet, but they have bought a house on the Isle of Wight together. It has a vast garden, about half an acre. And our shared interest in gardening has finally healed the rift between us. She is now a fledgling gardener and soon to be a bee keeper too. We can discuss her joys and sorrows of gardening for hours, and what the badgers have done to the bulbs! She can tell me about the birds that come to her garden and we can compare notes. I can even tease her about how dismissive she was in her younger days about my delight when a nuthatch came into our garden. She admitted last night she has never seen a nuthatch, so I advised enticing them with food. Most animals, including humans, can be bribed with food. We now have lots in common to talk about. We exchange plants and seeds and I think we are going to Chelsea together this year which will be a great day out for us both.

Time, as a very old and much loved friend had a habit of saying to me, has a way of working things out. It has in this case, though fifteen years is a long wait. But it has been worth it in the end to have my loving daughter returned to me.

SPACE OF MIND

*Thank you for hearing
what I am saying,
for finding the space
for my words in your mind.*

*Thank you for caring
and sharing the silence,
waiting with me
for thoughts to unwind.*

*Thank you for holding me
in the light of your listening,
until I may find
words of peace in my mind.*

Anne Smith



LETTERS

From Gwen Jones – Harlow Meeting

Elizabeth Angas asks how important it is that participants in a distant healing circle correctly hear the names brought to the circle (*TW No 129 Spring 2011*). As a general rule I feel it's the speaking of the name which is important; for the other participants it may be sufficient to be aware that a name has been spoken. Where we don't know the owner of the name personally we can't visualise them anyway; we don't know their age; aren't familiar with their appearance; and their name may not reveal their gender. Where we do know the owner of a name personally it's more important to hear the name correctly – not that a mistake would be unfortunate! In the same way, early in Meeting for Worship I sometimes look around the circle at each worshipper in turn, silently welcoming them and sending them peace and healing rather than merely being conscious of my own presence in the group. But these are my personal feelings on the matter. Even as healers we are individuals who each experience situations differently.

From Joy Simpson – Forest of Dean Meeting

As one who participates in the Immediate Prayer Group and also in a monthly Meeting for Worship for Healing, I am grateful to Elizabeth Angas for her article which has made me attempt to clarify my thoughts about the necessity of hearing the names spoken and the value of meeting as a group – and I only speak for myself here.

We, in the Immediate Prayer Group, hold in the Light those in need in our own time, in our own homes, and in our own way. Again, speaking for myself, I do not say their names aloud but think of them bathed in the Light in a positive way, trying not to think of their problem.

Having said that, I had long felt the need of an occasional group Meeting together to do this, and was very happy when we decided to start one following the pattern of Friends in Poole and Wimborne about which they so helpfully wrote in *TW* last year (*TW 127 Summer 2010*).

We meet monthly at the home of our very elderly and bright Friend who is unable to travel the long distance to Meeting for Worship. Some of us find it helpful to know the problem of the person we are upholding – others would rather not. Often the name is not heard clearly but the fact of group spiritual energy focusing with the member who knows the name seems to be enough.

That, I feel, is the value to us of being together as a group. If, in the future, we are not able to meet in this way we are considering a Phone Linkup to enable this group to continue to synchronise our Upholding, and try to achieve the group dynamic which I find spiritually uplifting and supportive.

This would be difficult to arrange with the wider Immediate Prayer Group whose many members live all over the country, while our small monthly group members are all from the same Area Meeting and most from the same Local Meeting; but our individual upholding can be equally valuable and effective and has the added virtue of being available at any time, which is so appreciated by those who phone in times of sudden need or crisis.

From Hazel Hather, Weston-Super-Mare

– with thanks to the Group for the Mother and her Unborn Child.

Eighteen years ago my grandson was born, very prematurely and very small. He had excellent care in the neo-natal unit of University College Hospital, London, but we were all wonderfully upheld by the prayers of the *Group for the Mother and her Unborn Child*.

My son and his partner were warned that any part of the baby might not develop properly, but I'm happy to say that he was brought through all these predictions and is now expecting to go to University in the autumn of this year.

I am *so* thankful.

PREMATURE BIRTH

*I swept up leaves the day that Wilf was born,
and every leaf that fell reminded me
of his frail hold on life,
his gentle hovering.*

*But here was infant evergreen,
Bending, not breaking, in adversity.*

*Gradually, as winter waned, he shook away the snows of
our anxiety, and spreading out his springtime roots,
began to grow.*

Hazel Hather

Just to be is a blessing... just to live is holy.

Rabbi Abraham Heschel

In ancient times to know someone's name and to name them specifically gave the speaker some kind of power or control over the person named. Nowadays hopefully knowing someone's name gives us the opportunity to picture them as a human being with all the feelings and circumstances which go with being a person. We can then feel a connection with the fellow human being named even if we do not ever meet them.

Where healing is concerned, Elizabeth Angas is quite right in saying that we as healers act as channels for healing energy to be sent to a person, a group of people or a specific situation. The very act of thinking of someone or speaking their name is an action and therefore a form of energy. We do not know how this energy works and we do not really need to know. Names can be said out loud or held in our thoughts. They can be said when we are alone or in a group.

The **Immediate Prayer Group** never meets as a group, but we send a list of names of those who have asked for our help to an intercessor once a month. The intercessor then upholds the person by name in Love and Light asking that the healing be given that is appropriate to their needs. We send healing in this way and at the time of day or night chosen by each intercessor to suit their lifestyle. I personally picture each person as a figure, a child, or an adult walking towards the Light and I ask that healing be given to them, which is appropriate for them.

We do not need to know why they have requested our help, which is usually by phone, although listening to their needs can be a healing in itself. We do not need to know their surname as each one of us is already known to God. In the Bible it says we are known unto God by name and each one of us is of special value as a result of being called by our name.

Some members of the IPG do not wish to know the reason for requests for prayers: they prefer to picture each person as a whole being. However, we have found that it is necessary to have a person's permission to pray for them. This may sound very odd, but on several occasions knowing they were being prayed for made these people very cross, which was counter productive to say the least.

I am told that those we pray for have felt the power of prayer. I can testify to this as I have recently experienced this power very strongly. When a group does meet for distant healing names need to be said clearly for all to hear, especially for those who are hard of hearing. An indistinct word can be frustrating when calmness and peace are needed. Whether you say a name out loud or in your head when you are alone, what is important is the 'naming' and thus the beginning of the sending of the healing energy to that person or situation. I feel that the spoken word should be clearly heard so that as many people as possible are included in the sending of healing where it is needed.

(Details about the Immediate Prayer Group are on the inside back cover of TW.)

Seventeen years ago, I was going through a painful and traumatic marriage breakdown; I was struggling to bring up two boys on my own – one of whom was disabled; and I had clearly made an error of judgement in entering into another relationship too soon. I remember standing on a beach, the waves high in the tearing wind, and crying out in despair, ‘I don’t have any tools to deal with all this.’ It was a heart-felt prayer.

Only a matter of days later I found myself, quite spontaneously, pouring out all my feelings into an old hard-backed A4 book which I’d found in the bottom of a drawer. And so began my experience of therapeutic writing.

I had always enjoyed writing, especially letters to friends and relatives, and had revelled in producing stories when I was at school. Later I’d enjoyed working on academic essays whilst doing my teacher’s training. So I wasn’t a stranger to writing. But this writing was different. This was an entirely private matter, giving me a means of expressing what I was experiencing, and a way of processing it.

A few years later, having recently come into the Quaker fold, I was introduced to Gillie Bolton’s booklet *Writing the Spirit*. One of the Elders suggested that we might use this in a group. The idea was that we were to use a very specific structure and method that would enable us ‘to know one another in those things that are eternal’.

For the next four years, a number of us met fortnightly. (Over that time, some dropped out and others took their place. I was one of the few who stayed for the whole period.) We sat together in silence and then wrote quickly for six minutes to clear our minds of what was circling in them at the time. Then we would write for twenty minutes in a spontaneous manner, out of our own experience, of matters concerning our spiritual lives (a different topic was presented each week) and how they played out in our day-to-day world. Finally – if we so chose – individuals would share these writings with one another in a loving silence. Sometimes Friends would feel moved to make some response to what they heard; at other times there was further silence.

These sessions were powerful, revealing and deeply healing. We came to know each other in a profound way. As our trust in the process and in each other grew, we were able to be more and more open with one another. This often produced tears, laughter, anger, joy, and any number of other emotional responses. We journeyed with each other, sharing of ourselves in this way.

At the time I was working in mental health and I introduced the method to mental health day centres. This proved to be greatly valued and it was wonderful to see clients beginning to express themselves with confidence.

A year later my elder, disabled, son died at the end of an acute period of alcohol abuse. Once more writing was my life-line as I anguished my way through a long period of intense grief. It poured out in a series of poems (*A Journey of Grieving and Growing through Poetry*), in journal entries, in letters to my lost son, in articles for magazines that I wrote about how this society treats disabled people, and in letters to friends and relatives. In a very real way, writing saved my life.

As I began to recover, I continued to run writing workshops for others: within Quaker meetings, in Quaker centres (Charney Manor, Claridge House and Swarthmoor Hall) and increasingly in other retreat centres. I also took it into day centres for physically disabled people.

Everywhere I took *Writing the Spirit* I encountered the same loving power that came through the combination of silence, spontaneous writing and worshipful sharing. There were often profound breakthroughs made in people's understanding of themselves, others and the spiritual dimension. I always find working with people in this way a great privilege.

Two years ago I started to facilitate weekly sessions with recovering alcoholics and addicts in a rehabilitation centre. I wasn't sure that I could cope with such a client group, having suffered so much at the hands of alcoholism myself, but it is proving to be the most fulfilling work I have ever done.

It grows in other ways too. This kind of writing isn't just for those going through traumatic times. It is also a vehicle for playfulness, joy and great creativity. It can be a means of working through change, finding growth points, discovering new possibilities. It can give people a way of leaving behind stories and letters for future generations. There are as many uses for it as there are users.

I now work one-to-one – as well as continuing to work with groups – and that too is proving to be powerful. People may need individual attention: either to work through something that is too personal to be shared in a group; sometimes to be given the support and encouragement to actually do what they know they can do, but fail to manage; and sometimes to simply share in the joy of their creativity. A huge advantage of working one-to-one is that distance or time need not be an issue: we can work via email, snail-mail or phone, at times that suit us both. This is particularly helpful for people who are disabled

in some way or are caring for someone else and unable to leave home for any length of time.

As no doubt you can tell, I am hugely enthusiastic about this work! I long for more people to experience the benefits that it can bring. I work as a freelancer and negotiate terms and conditions on an individual basis, whether it is for Quaker Meetings, for other groups or one-to-one. If you would like to learn more, please visit my website www.writetohelpyourself.com or email: judyclinton@googlemail.com or phone me on 01452 863627.



Leaders Learning to Listen by **Chris Edmondson**. Darton-Longman-Todd 2010 131 pp. ISBN: 978-0-232-52736-0 £12.99

Chris Edmondson is now Bishop of Bolton and for a time was Warden of Lee Abbey in Devon. It was here that the germ of this book was sown when he was asked to lead a workshop on Leadership and Listening. This led to a conference on the subject and onwards to this book.

There are many quotations both from the Bible and other writers and the book is well annotated. There is an extensive bibliography. One of the quotations is from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*: 'We should listen with the ear of God that we may speak the words of God' and that summarises a lot of the content of the book.

The author outlines why listening is so essential to good leadership (and here I quote from the cover), 'He looks at the barriers to good communication, at the importance of silence and stillness and the challenge of listening to those from whom we differ.'

He talks of the importance of discernment, of the barriers to listening – over busyness, tiredness, the difficulty of stopping and living in the moment. He reminds us that St Benedict and the Celts that followed him teach us that God is anywhere and everywhere – there is nowhere God is not and no one or no means by which he cannot speak. Once the barrier is recognised and down, more listening is bound to be possible.

From all of this good leadership will result.

Geoffrey Martin

Where the Hell is God? by **Richard Leonard**. Darton-Longman-Todd. 2010. 67 pp. ISBN: 978-1-58768-060-1 £9.50

I am always pleased to come across writings by Jesuits. They usually embody great clarity of thought. In this respect, this book on suffering does not disappoint.

The book came about as Richard Leonard struggled to come to terms with a tragic car accident which befell his sister, leaving her quadriplegic. She was only in her twenties. He reasons that God, for whatever reason, has created an unstable planet and imperfect [physically and mentally] human beings. He does not accept that God willfully sends the pain, disease or other human suffering associated with these conditions to His people, but that He does not intervene when nature in the form of earthquakes, floods, disease or pain runs its course. Richard is sceptical of any form of divine intervention. Of spiritual healing he is sceptical and is dismissive of Jesus' healing ministry.

There is a chapter on the life and suffering of Jesus. Richard joins the gospel writers in saying that Jesus came so we could enjoy life to the full. The manner of his death – a killing – could have been foreseen in that he preached a radical doctrine at odds with the authorities of the day. He postulates that God did not need the blood of Christ but used his death to announce the end of death and the reality of an after-life. Richard believes that death, not caused by accident, occurs when our body wears out and is not preordained by God. Taken to its extreme, this thesis suggests that people are born, live and die in random fashion and to no purpose. Richard acknowledges that God has a 'big picture' for His world.

Individuals can, if they so wish, seek guidance to find expression for His gifts of faith, hope and love, but Richard feels that God is not concerned in the detail of their lives. He fails to realise that 'big pictures' rely solely on the detail.

My experience of life does not concur with Richard's thesis.

Maureen Anderson

The Human Body: an Illustrated Guide to its Structure, Function and Disorders by **Steve Parker**. Dorling, Kindersley 2007 ISBN: 978-18561-3007-3. £25 (but approx £6.99 from Bookpeople 0845 602 3030).

Do healers need to learn anatomy and physiology? It is on the syllabus on healing courses. But perhaps, not seen as being very important. Quite rightly? The depth taught probably depends on the background of the tutor! Nurses and other health professional healers may enjoy teaching it, and be able to link it to various treatments. But other tutors may feel somewhat inadequate. Likewise, some probationer healers may have a thorough grounding in human biology or biochemistry – others may be relatively ignorant about their own bodies and bits! As Quaker Spiritual Healers we would probably wish to keep any 'A and P' in a course as brief and simple as possible, in keeping with our Testimony of Simplicity, and the whole ethos of spiritual healing.

However, it is good to know what patients/clients are talking about when asking for healing for a particular part. Or when they are describing symptoms or diagnostic tests which they have had. It makes the 'ums' and 'ahs' of listening a little better based in true understanding. Being able to link the energy centres

(chakras to some) with the endocrine glands may feel important for some healers? Those healers who “see” what is wrong with an organ, or “feel” the thinness of the aura in a particular area, may wish to back up this intuitive knowledge with actual, sound facts? Other healers may have a background in acupuncture/Chinese medicine or in homeopathic medicine but wish to relate it to orthodox, allopathic medicine?

So it is useful to have a book with good, clear accurate diagrams and pictures available on a healing course. And *The Human Body* is one such book for this purpose, and comes with a useful accompanying CD/Rom.

Elizabeth Angas

The Art of Happiness by HH Dalai Lama and Howard Cutler

Coronet Books 1999 269 pp. ISBN: 978-0-340-75015-5 £8.99

The back cover of this book announces: ‘In this unique and important book, one of the world’s great spiritual leaders offers his practical wisdom and advice on how we can overcome everyday human problems and achieve lasting happiness.’ For me, that is a wonderful summary of this book.

Howard Cutler, an American psychiatrist, spent much time with the Dalai Lama and they explored the subject of happiness from their respective backgrounds and understandings. The book contains many of their dialogues, linked by Howard Cutler’s reflections. The conversations he and the Dalai Lama have are searching and always with the deep intent of finding common ground. In some ways it is a challenging book, raising many questions; but all the time it left me feeling that I was sharing in an atmosphere of love.

The Dalai Lama, whilst being extraordinarily advanced spiritually and also very learned, comes across as a man of great humility, always open to thinking again and with his well-known humour and lightness of touch.

It really is a joy of a book to read.

It is also a remarkably hopeful book. It starts with the opening words spoken by the Dalai Lama to a large audience in Arizona: ‘I believe that the very purpose of our life is to seek happiness. That is clear. Whether one believes in religion or not, whether one believes in this religion or that religion, we are all seeking something better in life. So, I think, the very motion of our life is towards happiness..’

The book goes on to explore the nature of happiness (the deepest kind of which humans are capable): what stands in its way; the practices which we can employ to access and maintain it; and the way it all plays out in day-to-day life. The subject is examined in such an open and jargon-free way that I feel sure those who are secular of outlook could benefit from it equally as much as those who are on a spiritual path. That, I feel, is a great achievement.

Judy Clinton

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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.