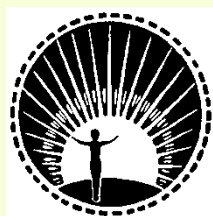


# **TOWARDS WHOLENESS**

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## FFH PUBLICATIONS

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**There have been some changes to the FFH committee in the last few months. Grateful thanks are due to Stephen Feltham, who has enthusiastically and efficiently been the membership secretary – and this post is now taken up by Jan Etchells, a long term FFH member, (details on back inside cover).**

**And Robin Goodman and Muriel Robertson, who have filled the post of Postal Groups Co-ordinators for the last few years, have felt it the right time to lay this down. Maureen Anderson will take over this role.**

**Our thanks go to all of them, for past and future work on our behalf.**

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 the Postal Co-ordinator, **Maureen Anderson**, (contact details on inside cover) with a few details about yourself. Your letter will be passed on to one of the group secretaries who will then contact you direct and give you the names of two or three people to uphold in prayer regularly.

## REASONS FOR BELIEVING IN GOD - Part 2 *James Sale*

*(Part 1 was published in the Spring issue of TW.)*

And so we come to the first truly compelling argument for the existence of God: namely, the twin arguments of design and purpose. The Biblical version of this argument is distributed throughout the Old and New Testaments: The Psalms most notably talk of 'being wonderfully made' and 'considering the heavens', and Paul speaks of 'the evidence of things that are made'. Design is one compelling aspect, but purpose is another. Everything seems to have a purpose and even for atheists it is difficult to escape teleological language as they flounder around trying to account for everything as a result of chance - which is 'blind' - but which somehow ends up producing life in the most astonishing, intricate, complex and purposeful patterns that seem unimaginably brilliant and inconceivable, except that they have been observed, experienced and actually exist.

It is important to say at this point that the argument from design and purpose is not an argument against evolution. There is increasing evidence that evolution is a sound and solid theory; it is also true to say that the early Christian theorists, like St Augustine, took an extremely open view on what Genesis chapters 1 and 2 – the Creation – might mean. Clearly, whatever chapters 1 and 2 are, they are not a scientific account of the creation of the world: they are myth, they are poetry and they are psychological insights into reality. Indeed, it was the rise of Protestantism, and the over-literalism – or fundamentalism – that it spawned that has created the unnecessary tension with science: both contain truths, but they operate in different domains of knowledge.

Therefore, we can happily believe in a God who uses evolution as the process to bring the world we know into existence. What I think, however, is the real issue here is what we mean by chance? We know that God initiated this process, or else why a Big Bang? We know that God sustains this process, and I think it almost inconceivable to consider all the complexities of life that have emerged, including

human beings, as being possible under the auspices of ‘pure chance’. This is like the old chestnut of would a million monkeys typing non-stop for a million years produce the complete works of Shakespeare? The answer is, they wouldn’t get close to producing one page or even one paragraph’s worth of text. Such are the odds against such an alignment. To be truly random is effectively to be chaotic, or patternless. But what we find is, patterns emerging in everything. My view would be that even in evolution the creative Spirit of God works its mystery to ends we only partially see or grasp.

But a further problem emerges with the reliance of atheism on science and evolution: and that is the simple amorality of evolution and science itself. The second compelling argument for the existence of God is the widespread testimony to human conscience and morality (A. N. Wilson cites a Muslim source to sum up both arguments: “Two things fill the mind with ever-increasing wonder and awe, the more often and the more intensely the mind of thought is drawn to them: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me”). Ultimately, without a transcendent reality to define right and wrong (and notice, incidentally, how in our increasingly secular - that is, atheistic - society, how the words right and wrong are disappearing, and being replaced by 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable', which completely attenuates the force of the judgement, and renders it also almost entirely subjective) all values become a matter of personal opinion, of endless debate, of factional interest. Where, in fact, do our ideas of right and wrong come from? And, despite cultural differences, why is there such a strong commonality of agreement on some principle issues: that murder is wrong? Yes, the law in any given country might have its own peculiarities, but on the big things all decent people agree - they know - what is right and wrong. The fact that people, for example, still commit murder, knowing it is wrong (and they do know, for they attempt to hide the crime), only further establishes the point. The source of human morality is not accounted for easily by any evolutionary or alternative theory, but it is accounted for by a transcendent being. Thus, the prevalence of morality across all societies is a strong indicator of God’s existence. Justin Brierley in his wonderful book, *Unbelievable*,

observes: "...humans are intrinsically bound to that objective realm of right and wrong. Many people try to deny that premise, and theorise that we have been merely duped into an illusion of objective morality. But they never act like that in the real world."

A third strong strand of theistic argument is history itself. I alluded this in talking about the general sense of a golden age. But here, specifically, I am now referring to the history of the Jews and the Christian documents that were produced after the Ascension of Christ. There are many aspects of this which I would like to discuss, but which space prohibits. But three points do merit comment. One, the actual existence of the Jews, given the fact that all the tribes and nations they interacted with have disappeared into a general melting pot of humanity. The story of being a 'chosen people' whether one likes it or not, and whether or not one approves of the return to Palestine and its concomitant problems, is simply breath-taking: where else is there a race or history like it? (And for purposes of full disclosure, I am not Jewish.)

Secondly, and related to this point, is the fact that Judaism from the very beginning has been an 'historical' religion; it has been consistently about genealogies, dates, kings, territories, events in the wider schemes of things, and stuff you can almost 'touch' and 'taste'. Certainly, the Jewish religion has been fully physical rather than philosophical (Buddhism, by way of contrast, is extremely philosophical.) This means of course that its propositions are less to do with reason and more to do with facts: the facts of history. As FF Bruce, the famous biblical scholar wrote: "The historicity of Christ is as axiomatic for an unbiased historian as the historicity of Julius Caesar". Of course, believing that Caesar crossed the Rubicon is one thing; believing that Christ rose from the dead is another, since the burden of proof needs to be higher. But here we come to my third point: The Christian documents themselves.

The fact that the Resurrection and, critically, His divinity were not late developments in Christian thinking, but rather were core and integral to the very first documents written within 20 years of the Crucifixion

speaks volumes. That devout Jews could even consider a human being the divine Lord of all as a first response to the incredible events they witnessed is astonishing. And of course the multiplicity of viewpoints as represented by the gospels, Acts and epistles rather than weakening the case because of contradictions or conflicting views that atheists like to vaunt, actually is a major strength. Because the model for assessing the truth of Christianity cannot be scientific, as it is beyond the domain of science; it can only be legal: what happens in a court of law when we try to decide what actually happened? We call in witnesses who testify, and when witnesses completely agree on every detail of their evidence we call it collusion! Thus, the idea that the gospels as the divine word of God should completely agree on every detail is absurd. So, to take one famous example, it may be that Mark, Matthew and Luke disagree with John on which night the Last Supper occurred – there may be a day in it – but is that important compared with the fact that they all agree they saw the Risen Lord? What do the records point us towards? What is the essential truth that they are seeking to convey? How credible is the witness? So, finally, on this last question, I find the gospels extremely convincing: the narratives are compelling, and the small details which litter the pages create what J B Phillips once called the ‘ring of truth’ about them, because why would anyone invent them if they weren’t true? Again, to quote GK Chesterton, “The difference between reality and fiction is that fiction has to be credible”.

We come, then, to my last reason for believing in God. And this reason links back to part 1 of this article and the aspect which is very dear to Quakers: namely, personal experience. If at the end of the day, religion or God does not speak to us in our hearts and souls, then really, what is the point? All the tradition and all the scriptures in the world seem weak and unavailing if God does not actually enter our lives. How God does this litters the pages of history: there are any number of people, and not just Christians or Quakers, who have experienced God directly and in varying ways. If we go back to the Old Testament, perhaps one of the most moving moments of God speaking to us directly occurs in the story of Elijah: the ‘still, small voice’ of God appearing after earthquake and fire, and which causes Elijah to wrap his face in his mantle. Why

did he do that? This is one of those small details, again, which lends veracity to the story, for one of the frequently observed qualities of God being present is the need for humans to cover or veil themselves. But that ‘still, small voice’ we too can notice; only we sometimes call it our conscience: and when we listen to it, it empowers us to act.

But I would like now to refer to one other, and lesser commented on, feature of personal experience that seems to me to corroborate the whole notion and reality of the existence of God: to wit, NDEs or Near Death Experiences. What is important is the number of people who have had these experiences and their consistency. For a good overview I strongly recommend Patricia Pearson’s book, *Opening Heaven’s Door*, but for one specific case I love, please read *Proof of Heaven* by Dr Eben Alexander.

What is remarkable about this latter case is that: Dr Alexander was a top neuro-surgeon, that as a man of science he was generally atheistic, that he suffered from a rare form of bacterial meningitis in his brain, which is invariably fatal, that he went into a coma for 7 days in which his brain scans revealed absolutely no activity (so, the argument that he hallucinated can hardly apply here), and whilst in that coma he experienced surprising facts about his own life, as well as entering heaven. To be clear, this was not some proof for Christianity *per se*, but it was for God or as he calls it ‘the infinitely loving Deity’. And the whole experience changed his life: he came out of his coma, gave up his neuro-surgery in order to focus on telling the world about his experience; he was changed at a profound level. He was also extremely grateful for what had happened to him – gratitude being another defining characteristic of those who have been touched by God (indeed, one sadness of atheism is its inability to be grateful for life to anyone! Does being grateful to Evolution or Nature or Chance mean anything?).

But finally, let us end arguments, for as Justin Brierley notes: “In the end, nobody gets argued into the kingdom of heaven”. We know that, as Os Guinness remarked: “The Christian faith is not true because it works; it works because it is true”. And this reverses the favourite



atheist challenge to theists: the problem of pain. As Brierley notes: “Within Christian belief, suffering is at least a mystery we can hope to make sense of. In atheism, it is simply meaningless.” That – that – is perfectly put. It’s all very well atheists going on about ‘How can a loving God allow ...’ but what do they offer by way of exchange? Absolutely nothing at all, except we die, we rot. A more hopeless and useless position, it seems to me, cannot be imagined. If the situation of human life is bad with Christianity, then, Brierley is suggesting, atheism only makes it far worse.

So, dear Friends, always be ready to share the hope that is within you, for it is glorious, and comes from God, the Spirit, who moves all things according to that perfect Will.

### **The Echo...**

What more do you want of me, God, what more? - *more...*  
How much more? - *much more...*

But what can I give?- *give...*

Not less than everything? - *everything...*

How then should I live? - *live...*

In turmoil and confusion, how can I know how to be? - *be...*

Is it enough? - *it is enough...*  
And still say yes? *Yes...*

***Kit Welchman***

## REPORTS ON 2nd NATIONAL QUAKER DAY OF HEALING 2018

The preparation for this day included an initial mailing (of sorts) to Area meetings the previous year followed by an article in *The Friend* at the beginning of this year, and then half page adverts on two occasions. We received a number of responses prior to the 3rd March requesting further information and guidance on organising the event. We also sent guidance leaflets on 'Simple Healing' by e-mail.

There were indications of a considerable number of planned gatherings for the day, but due to the widespread effects of severe weather conditions (snow and ice), many of these events had to be cancelled at short notice, including the combined Area Meeting happening (at Bournemouth Meeting House) for the Bournemouth Coastal Area. Some groups however did manage to meet, including a group from the Channel Islands. So, at one level, some might say the NQDH was a bit of a disaster, but my sense of the occasion is that the Spirit was very active in response to our intentions. I received messages from a number of Friends indicating that despite the weather, they spent time within the allocated time frame on the day to focus on their healing concerns and engage in a process of distance healing, knowing that others were doing the same within their own homes.

What was missing of course was the sense of occasion and social comfort that arises whenever we meet for a common purpose. However, this was a truly wonderful example illustrating that the healing work of the Spirit is not constrained by the human boundaries of space and time. Many people were engaged as channels for healing on the day, and I therefore conclude that the day was successful.

We should move forward in faith and repeat the event next year. I believe a provisional date of Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup>. March has already been designated on our web-site. We hope to allocate a budget to cover the costs of advertising and printing.

*Peter Wilson*

**Jersey Meeting** again joined the FFH Quaker National Day of Healing on Saturday 3 March 2018. This year 18 people (not all Quakers) took part at various times in the day, as we gathered for a Meeting for Worship for Healing between 11am and 3pm. Some of us wrote names and situations and placed them on the central table, some gave ministry and at times we used appropriate readings. Everyone present felt the strength and power of the energy generated. It was felt as love, warmth, care, hugs, peace and healing. One described it as “a feeling of love that covered you like a blanket”. Another described it as one of the most gathered Meetings he had attended. He said “the spiritual power in that meeting room was intense.” We started the session by reading 21.73 QF&P Jack Dobbs, 1984 “As we open ourselves to become the channel of God’s healing grace we shall find that healing is given to those who pray as well as to those for whom we are praying”.

There was a vigil that morning in the Town for Palestinian children in jail, so while some members were at the vigil, we read an Amnesty piece about 17 year old Ahed Tamini who is currently held in an Israeli jail, and about Hanan Badr el-Din held in an Egyptian jail for her human rights activism for the Families of the Forcibly Disappeared Association. We also remembered the homeless and their plight in the recent cold spell. Friends who joined us during the day felt the strong energy of healing as they entered the room, two were so moved by it that it became ministry in Meeting for worship on Sunday. We knew that other Meetings were holding healing days so we felt connected to the energy flowing round the country. It was a very inspiring, enriching and satisfying day for all those who took part. We collected donations for Claridge House and will be sending a cheque to them for £20.

*Alison Taylor*

*Start by doing what’s necessary, then what’s possible and suddenly you are doing the impossible.*

*Francis of Assisi*

## Time the Coachman

Father Time, just hurry up!  
Clippety-clop, come on!  
The track leads down the hill.  
When you delay, my head spins.  
Let's keep jolting along  
And trot over sticks and stones  
Fast into life.

Now going up again, panting away,  
Painfully up the hill.  
Don't ease up, keep at it.  
Pushing away, full of hope!

From this high place  
A wide open view  
Of life all around!  
Hovers the spirit of life everlasting.

Here you are drawn aside  
To the shade of a shelter  
And the glance of a girl on the threshold  
Who offers refreshment.  
Take it! Yes, my dear,  
This foaming drink,  
This glimpse of radiant life.

Down now, faster down!  
See, the sun is sinking.  
Before it sets – before, an old man.  
I am lost in the fog of the marsh - my toothless jaws  
rattle  
My limbs start to fail.  
So pull me,  
Drunk from the last ray

That swirls in my eyes,  
Blinded and reeling  
Into hell, into the door of night!

Father Time, blow your horn  
As we rattle and gallop along,  
So Orcus below will know we are coming  
And the host at the door  
Will give us a friendly welcome.

**A.R.***After Goethe*

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## **SUPER-COOLING**

**Patricia Wright**

I was once at a tea-party with Indian friends, and a senior officer in the Indian Army Medical Service, Western-trained and qualified, described an experience he had when in charge of an army hospital in India. A man was brought in unconscious – our narrator was used to patients being brought into A & E as a last resort after traditional methods had failed. The patient was examined and resuscitation tried, but to no avail, and our narrator was about to certify the man as dead, when news was brought that a local healer or hakim was nearby and the patients' relatives begged for him to be permitted to try to revive the patient. Our narrator was sceptical, but considered it would do no harm to agree, whereas a refusal might encourage the view that Western doctors were afraid the hakim might succeed where they had failed. The hakim came in and prayed over the man, who to everyone's astonishment started breathing and revived.

I remember how a member of my Local meeting, a veteran cancer specialist, came up with the suggestion that Jesus never died, and had been actually helped by the spear-thrust, which relieved water-pressure in his lungs, and that he revived from the coolness of the tomb. I believe supercooling is a recognised medical technique for healing severe trauma, but I don't want to start any arguments!

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR -

**Dear Friends,**

At the time of writing I have received no interest from anyone to my letter in the Spring issue, in which I appealed for someone to work towards taking over the position of editor of *Towards Wholeness*. As I said before, it has proved to be a very rewarding and enjoyable job. Through it I have made many friends, amongst Friends and others, and it has never been a problem to find enough material to fill the journal's pages – in fact sometimes there is too much to include and a decision has to be made to leave some items until a later date.

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

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

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

With thanks

***Rosalind Smith***

## FACING ADVERSITY: POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH

*Michael Lewin*

*“That which does not kill us makes us stronger.” Nietzsche*

Nietzsche's words might seem quite fierce and aggressive, especially in times of great personal suffering but nevertheless there is, I feel, a basic truth contained within them.

In the 90s American psychologists Richard G. Tedeschi and Lawrence G. Calhoun highlighted what they called Post Traumatic Growth ( PTG ). Their research found that as many as 90 percent of participants reported, after suffering a personal trauma, a“....renewed appreciation of life”. This finding might not come as too much of a surprise for we may have all felt pain entering our lives at one time yet felt, instinctively, that there existed the possibility that we could go deeper. A feeling of reflective hope that we could be more proactive to somehow improve our situation - moving forward into a better space that affords us with a feeling of deep gratitude.

Wounds can potentially expose us to feelings of dread and fear of losing our health and perhaps even our lives. But nevertheless if we look deeply enough the suffering we absorb always contains seeds of further understanding that can expand us beyond our existing self. As I often try to remind myself: suffering builds character like nothing else and anyone familiar with the life of Helen Keller will immediately understand this.

A few years ago I suffered hearing loss as a result of a street attack in east London. Fairly soon after tinnitus entered my life along with very bad bouts of vertigo and nausea. This lasted for a number of years and I struggled badly with it. At its worse I felt suicidal, a feeling I have never experienced before. I had always been healthy and took pride in this gift but when I was forced into ill health it came as a complete shock and it started to dominate my life. However, the body has a

supreme healing mechanism with its own in-built adjustments and regulations and eventually I recovered ground in a process of what the doctors told me was: habituation – a neutralizing acceptance, both mentally and physically of my condition and ways of working with it rather than against it.

I have learnt a lot about myself since this all started and I now feel a profound appreciation and commitment to life. My suffering has made me think more deeply, more philosophically about life. To use Nietzsche's word – stronger....

Saint Augustine once said; "We are great deeps", and I'm not really convinced that we ever really plummet these depths unless suffering takes us there. In full, good health it's all too easy to remain on the 'surface' of life, which I undoubtedly did, unaware of what could happen at any time, in any place.

Suffering offers us an invitation to attend, a call to awareness to go ever deeper within ourselves, to find the very best we are capable of achieving - to realize and develop our untapped, inner potential. As Helen Keller once said: "All the world is full of suffering. It is also full of overcoming." And surely we must believe this, absorb its truth deeply within us and importantly act upon it especially in the hour of our need....

*"Life is truly known only to those who suffer, lose, endure adversity and stumble from defeat to defeat."***Anais Nin**

*God does not die when we cease to believe in a personal deity, but we die on the day when our lives cease to be illuminated by the steady radiance, renewed daily, of a wonder, the source of which is beyond all reason.*

**Dag Hammarskjöld**



## CLARIDGE HOUSE NEWS AND PROGRAMME

*Bursary assistance available, depending on individual personal circumstances. Please enquire when booking.*

*For booking details – , and other tariff, including daily rates and special breaks – please contact The Manager, Claridge House, Dormans Road, Lingfield, Surrey, RH7 6QH. Tel: 01342 832150. E-mail: [welcome@claridgehousequaker.org.uk](mailto:welcome@claridgehousequaker.org.uk) website [www.claridgehousequaker.org.uk](http://www.claridgehousequaker.org.uk)*

### **July 13<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup>      VAJRASATI YOGA and MEDITATION £265**

#### **Depart 4pm Sunday**

Gentle traditional yoga suitable for all levels, focusing on using the breath to deepen and extend the body, mind and spirit. Working meditatively, listening to our bodies and breath, using our inner resources to develop postures only as the body allows. This style of yoga is suitable everyone whatever their age or previous experience, including complete beginners.

***Rosie Waters**, a teacher for ten years, holds a 500-hour Yoga Alliance accredited teaching qualification and also leads meditation groups in Sussex and yoga holidays abroad.*

### **July 17<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup>    TAI CHI    - Meditation in Motion    £245**

#### **Depart 2pm Thursday**

Most diseases are triggered by high stress, poor nutrition, lifestyle choices, a lack of exercise and are largely preventable. Take responsibility for your health and wellbeing with Tai Chi, improving your chronic problems through gentle exercise. Your health is worth it! All ages and physical abilities welcome. Please bring comfortable clothes.

***Andrei Illes**, teaches Chen style Tai Chi in his local community and is a member of the Tai Chi Union of Great Britain.*

### **July 20<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup>                      CHANGE                      £230**

#### **Depart 2pm Sunday**

A reflective retreat for those currently experiencing Change in their lives, or the need for Change, and for those interested in how they deal with this. How much is Change a natural process? Does it have a cultural dimension too? “Change is loss.” Is it also gain? Does change contain light and shadow?

*Francis Standish, has been involved in many change programmes as a facilitator. He holds an ongoing curiosity for the interface between personal change and social transition.*

**July 27<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup>ALEXANDER TECHNIQUEfor beginners and refreshers -  
Depart 2pm Sunday £250**

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, teaches the Alexander Technique in Beckenham.*

**August 13<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup>KNITTING SOOTHES THE SOUL £345  
Depart 10am Thursday**

Are you looking for time away in the calm and safe environment that Claridge House offers, with knitting as a bonus, meeting up with fellow knitters? You may have mastered many techniques, but has anyone truly appreciated your skill? To take your skills to the next level, this is the course for you. Suitable for all abilities. *Hilary Grundy,a Quaker who promotes knitting as therapy.*

**September 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> MASSAGE RETREAT £275**

Experience the aura of energy that enfolds you after every massage. You'll leave feeling balanced, pampered and body educated. Mind and body interlink, so optimising one will address the other. Healing massages allow you to live life with prosperity, calm and happiness. The retreat runs from Tuesday 10am to Thursday 4pm and includes two full-body massages. Please bring a dressing gown / bathrobe and slippers.

*Andrei Illes, a professional massage therapist and teacher with many years' experience.*

**September 10<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup>    QUAKER SPIRITUAL HEALERS    TRAINING    £395**

**Depart 10am Friday**

Training in practical healing for those interested in becoming a Quaker Spiritual Healer, enabling exploration of healing potential in a safe, supportive atmosphere. Experience is unnecessary, only a desire to help. Applicants should be sympathetic to Quaker values and attending a Quaker meeting regularly. Completion of the course is the first step towards a healing qualification and does not itself lead to full membership.

*Cherry Simpkin and Kay Horsfield, QSH Tutors.*

**September 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup>    TAI CHI WEEKEND - Regain your Balance**

**2pm Sunday**

**£250**

With age comes loss of balance, particularly among the frail. Reverse this with training and practice in tranquil spaces (indoors and outdoors) and healthy detoxing meals. Increase your strength with the gentle art of Tai Chi, transferring this to your daily life. All ages and physical abilities welcome.

Please bring comfortable clothes. *Andrei Illes, teaches Chen style Tai Chi in his local community and is a member of the Tai Chi Union of Great Britain.*

**September 21<sup>st</sup> - 23<sup>rd</sup>    CREATIVE WRITING - The Wonder of Seed**

**Depart Sunday**

**£260**

Oak trees tucked up inside acorns - these and other seeds provide wonder and inspiration for this weekend, provoking new creative, written work. We will observe different seeds and explore how they offer a way of talking about our inner potential and growth aided by myths, our imaginations and memories.

*Rebecca Hubbard, an experienced writing tutor with a deep connection to gardens and nature, author of The Garden of Shadow and Delight.*

**September 25<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup>    CHINESE BRUSH PAINTING - autumn colour    £245**

**Depart 2pm Thursday**

Follow in the footsteps of China's ancient 'scholar painters' and be enchanted by 'Autumn Colours', learn to paint beautiful subjects with joy and

peace in your heart. Suitable for all, beginners are especially welcome, and if you have more experience come and share this with us.

**Julia Martin**, *Chinese Brush Painting artist and tutor.*

**September 28<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> WELL-BEING RETREAT £285**

**Depart 2pm Sunday**

Experience activities that will boost your immune system and your endorphins! Yoga, meditation, deep relaxation, sound and more!

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

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In September Worcester and Shropshire Area meeting is having an area meeting gathering over the weekend of 28-30 September at the Pioneer Centre [www.acuk.net/pioneer-centre](http://www.acuk.net/pioneer-centre) which is set in glorious countryside near to Cleobury Mortimer. Activities include Tai Chi, creative writing, embroidery, and singing. It seems such an ideal opportunity to have a FFH presence there. We could offer healing sessions for anyone with a need and also meditation sessions. As Shrewsbury Meeting doesn't have a healing meeting I am looking for healers from other parts of the country to come and help out.

If anyone is interested in offering support Please get in touch with me by telephone 01743 344408 or email [jan.etchells@outlook.com](mailto:jan.etchells@outlook.com)

**Jan Etchells**

### **QUAKER SPIRITUAL HEALERS' NEWS and EVENTS**

**NEXT QSH TRAINING COURSE**-Monday-Friday 10-14 September at Claridge House. 01342 832150

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

If healing is a reconnection with the spiritual, could we take both out into the wider community rather than waiting for the mentally and physically ill to find us? Some of you will be familiar with Death Cafes ([deathcafe.com](http://deathcafe.com)) where anyone can join a group at a designated hour and café, to talk about 'the last taboo'. Quaker Meetings have hosted these and I've helped facilitate a few myself. They are opening up discussions on death, dying, bereavement, funerals. People who dropped in at my Death Cafes included terminal care nurses who had nowhere to take their experiences; people with end-stage diagnoses; bereavement counsellors; people who were struggling with loss, sometimes for a lifetime; hospice nurses; an alternative funeral facilitator, two of us Quaker funeral co-ordinators and the plain curious who wanted to discuss one of life's inevitabilities.

Talking to a fellow Friend and mystic recently, we both felt spiritual encounters were even more taboo than death. So, I am wondering whether we could use the successful Death Cafe model (6,322 death cafes in 56 countries!) to bring mystical occurrences out of the closet?

Firstly, let me give some examples of the need. I think an unknown proportion of folk experiencing fairly main-stream, documented spiritual events are mis-diagnosed as mentally or physically ill by an uninformed medical profession (in the past, might these have been picked up by a compassionate clergy open to manifestations of the Spirit? I'm not sure). I knew a seventeen-year-old who was sectioned under the mental health act after talking to concerned parents about a kundalini experience. Another young adult, with a divorced Quaker father, was sectioned to a mental hospital after talking to his non-Quaker mother about satori, an awakening experience. A woman comes to the shop where a spiritual friend serves her and listens to the operations and medications she has had because, since her trip to

India, she has felt a detachment from the world (something some of us strive to cultivate!).

There is an organisation set up to address this sort of thing, with a few local groups and also available online – [spiritualcrisisnetwork.uk](http://spiritualcrisisnetwork.uk), inspired by the work of Cristine and Stanislav Grof in USA. Their book 'Spiritual Emergency: When Personal Transformation Becomes a Crisis' was published in the 1990s. The website states: "Spiritual crisis is a turbulent period of psychological opening and transformation. Psychological or mental health difficulties may be experienced: if understood and supported appropriately, these experiences can be deeply transformative, offering the possibility of breakthrough rather than breakdown."

I believe many westerners, especially young people, are aware that there is another state of consciousness and are searching for a way to it. I come across them at Buddhist retreats, hippy festivals, my local advaita (non-duality) group. Most of them have tried drugs as a route, and moved on from that. I have met two young men from different universities who have set up meditation groups, with the sole guidance of a book. We have all had to search for our spiritual path and sooner or later those who hear the knocking on the door, open it so the divine can come in and commune with them (Revelations 3.20), but is it harder or even actively discouraged these days? Is it just vulnerable people from secular backgrounds who get ill (homesick for godde?). I don't think so. I think the identification of spiritual experience as mental illness is more purposefully pushed in our society. And *lack* of spiritual experience can also lead to dis-ease. As healers our function is surely to put people (back) in touch with the divine and give them a loving and Real context to live in.

So, Friends, what is your opinion about 'pop-up' groups for talking about spiritual experiences? Somewhere neutral, with a few Friends (and other faiths?) willing to hold a safe space for people discussing their soulful, psychic, sacred, divine, ecstatic happenings. Supportive,

non-judgemental, with reassuring tea and cake to hand. Could this be an opportunity for supporting spiritual emergence and healing the disconnection our society fosters? We don't have to intervene, to fix, to advertise healing and raise expectation. But could it be an opportunity to quietly channel some healing, some (re)connection? 'Not from us, but through us'. I don't personally think this would be unethical – people will only receive healing if they are open to it.

Comments I have had so far include: 'Friends don't like talking about the spiritual in Meeting for Worship. Why would this change in a cafe?' My reply to that is, those Friends willing (wanting?) to talk would come forward, in the same way Friends who are happy to talk about death run Death Cafes. Would it be a magnet for the mentally ill and incurable? This would depend on how it was publicised – not as therapy, but for people responsible for themselves.

I've attended six or so Death Cafes and we never had an out-of-control 'weirdo' or anyone collapsing inconsolably. Their publicity says: "At a Death Cafe people, often strangers, gather to eat cake, drink tea and discuss death. Our objective is *'to increase awareness of death with a view to helping people make the most of their (finite) lives'*. A Death Cafe is a group-directed discussion of death with no agenda, objectives or themes. **It is a discussion group rather than a grief support or counselling session** [my emphasis]. Our Death Cafes are always offered: on a not-for-profit basis; in an accessible, respectful and confidential space; with no intention of leading people to any conclusion, product or course of action; alongside refreshing drinks and nourishing food – and cake!"

I would love a similar movement to open up discussions on spirituality. It would be a coup for Quaker outreach to start yet another useful cause. Finally, what to call it to attract the people who need it most? Spirituality Cafe doesn't roll off the tongue. Soul Cafe? Mystics Cafe is my favourite so far, but if distressed people don't

realise their experience is a mystical one that wouldn't be meaningful to them. Someone suggested 'Spirit Tearoom'. 'Re-connect Cafe; Inner World Cafe, Wisdom Cafe?' What canst thou suggest?

(Please feel free to reply either to the Editor for inclusion in TW – or/and to Jan herself [janet.shimmin@googlemail.com](mailto:janet.shimmin@googlemail.com); )

## **THINK IT POSSIBLE THAT YOU MAY BE MISTAKEN**

*Judy Clinton*

I was convinced that my friend was coming home on Saturday. This was important because it was my job to make sure that his heating was turned up before he returned to cold England from hot Lanzarote. I was so convinced that he was coming back on the Saturday that I tried to override a mutual friend – somewhat self-righteously I think on reflection – who said that she understood he was coming back on the Sunday. She forwarded me a text from our friend talking about his return on the Sunday. And still I held on tenaciously to my belief that he was returning on the Saturday. It wasn't until I texted our friend, saying I was confused about which day he was coming back and he assured me it was Sunday, that my belief began to waver. Even then, I wondered whether he'd got it wrong – and he was the one travelling, for goodness' sake!

I trawled back through my emails and saw that he had indeed told me his dates of travel very clearly, and the return was on the Sunday. I looked at my calendar and there, sure enough, were his dates: Sunday marked as his return.

I still don't know why it was that I had mis-stored this bit of information; I'm generally fairly efficient about such things. The only thing I can think is that he left on a Saturday and said he was away for six weeks and I'd somehow read a Saturday return from there. – and then stuck to it as a fact.



Standing back from this situation, I realised that it was a powerful lesson in how belief can be formed erroneously, and how possible it is to hold on to that belief despite all the evidence to the contrary. The implications of this are scary, even alarming. Isn't this the very thing that drives the human capacity to demonise certain members of our species; to justify the prejudicial attitudes towards those amongst us who are not considered normal (i.e. not fitting what we have been conditioned to believe is normal); to fight over who is right, and who is wrong, in any given situation?

Certain facts are indisputable: for example, the return date of my friend. But there are so very many hazy areas in which something is portrayed as being categorical fact which, if looked into further, are actually much more about firmly believed opinion (with so-called 'evidence' to support it) than anything else. Even firmly held scientific proofs have been shown to be in error on further investigation: how about the earth having gone from being thought to be flat to round, for starters?

I've always liked our *Advices and Queries* number 17: '...Think it possible that you may be mistaken.' My recent experience has shown me very clearly just how wise that can be and has made me reflect much more when I come into conflict with another person, or even within myself, whether it's over something as relatively minor as a date of return from a holiday, or something far more consequential.

**Be a good human being,  
a warm-hearted affectionate person.  
That is my fundamental belief.**

**Having a sense of caring, a feeling of compassion  
will bring happiness and peace of mind to oneself  
and automatically create a positive atmosphere.**

Dalai Lama

## **VOICES “Those who sing, pray twice” Michael Len**

I was in Kyoto in early March on a delightful fortnight’s tour, and had a new experience of healing discovery. Its precursors were long walks, chants, breathing arts, memory, acceptance, free choice, etc. It satisfied my desire to belatedly reach the top of 200 steps of a Zen meditation temple. It can be perceived, and practised as a useful and sentimental process, or so simple and so common-sensical as to be unworthy of the most basic acquiescence, much less consideration. What a conundrum!

Yet it helped me keep pace with the 14 other Americans on a trip which was a bit misleadingly rated as “Moderately Easy”. With my Disabled Veteran status exacerbated by multiple myeloma, and congestive heart failure, I needed enhanced breath control and amplified positive mental imagery. I found it with the basics of the following procedure., which I have called “Voices”.

It also came to mind in late March as I had another cardiac ablation procedure – just an outpatient one. What medical miracles these days. I was not fully *compos mentis*, but just enough to remember Voices and then go back to sedation.

As an addition to one's collection of therapeutic techniques for relaxation, calming, grounding, and mindfulness both those for yourself and those you teach to others, it may be valuable for projecting distant healing. See if it feels comfortable for you after trialling it.

Start with a collection of chants and hymns and songs you like and can easily memorize. Yes, it will be a short List, small in volume, containing only the first verses. The value of this technique is in its variety, and retaining of the attention. Voicing all the verses of each piece would be a chore for you, and counter-productive. The ordering of the individual chants, hymns and songs in the List is your choice. I would advise that

one close to the mid-point be one which has proved to easily roll off your tongue already, making a smoother move to the next piece

So far, my description for the use and value of VOICES is to energize yourself. It gives immediate quantities of breath, affective movement in your center through sound, your choice of imagery, and a readily available healing tool for exigencies.

No Humming; Go Beyond: I feel there are good reasons for not humming. Not even to yourself. Rather, chant or sing the lyrics. When you use this technique to calm or settle another, even an animal – the fact that you are verbalizing words, with appropriate volume, and not just humming, i.e. simply making sounds – would attract, and retain the attention of an animal or child. Did you not consider the words to the pieces as you were making choices for your List? You did not just hum the tune to yourself, did you? You would be introducing variety – by verbalizing first verse to first verse on your List. Your words would hold attention and expectation. Humming would not demonstrate the deliberate, creative nature of the exercise.

Since Christmas I have been rehearsing – in the shower, in bed, or gym, while walking – a selection of chants and hymns to impress a particular choir. Now I have in memory these vocal pieces I can Voice at the drop of a hat, repetitively, as the mood strikes and as the occasion dictates – I can choose to use *sotto voce*, or be as loud as I wish, given the “right time, right place”. This practice works to soothe, or to jump start you. Mind, spirit, and body are touched. Mind, as I intentionally use all the words in the piece, and not just hum. And, of course, I would be listening to myself. Spirit is engaged, as I deliberately draw breath to recharge the hara, the tan tien, the Holy Spirit, the Buddha Nature, Shakti, the Great Spirit, and often gulps of it to give enriching quick handfuls – expelling the carbon dioxide in the diaphragm. The body benefits, as projection of the voice – unless in quiet surroundings – and intake of oxygens make for gentle internal muscular movement.

Occasions for use are plentiful. When in a public place, why not use this Voices method to attend to your mind and spiritual self, rather than a smart phone? No one need see your lips move; they will see you looking more pleasant and smiley, I bet. When in a gym, it is a productive challenge especially for your body doing its aerobics – while your mind and breathing and spirit level are in a slower, more soothing pace.

I love to teach what I simply call centering, which you might label mindfulness, deep breathing with imagery, etc. When with a difficult person, in a disparaging official meeting, when on foot on a crowded walkway, when in heavy or stop-and-go auto traffic – bring into play Voices as one your therapeutic modalities. It automatically induces deliberate, slower breaths – which are so refreshing and peaceful. When I do it in bed, several times between plopping into bed and finally arising, I recall times that I must have fallen asleep as I did not get to the last line of a verse. So this can help in sleeplessness. If you sleep in close proximity with another, just mouth your List. Can it be called quiet karaoke? Or your partner may enjoy hearing you, or may want to join in.

Remember to combine this with intentional breathing, whether fully awake and active, or at slower pace. I believe any music therapist would tell you this. And truly, I often read professionals advising: “Remember to breathe”, “remember to exhale” as we seem to need to do these much more often. Now’s our chance. When employing Voices, remember to consume lots of replenishing oxygen – in short and frequent gulps, or in your own comfortable manner once you have purged your system of the carbon dioxide that resides in you. A veteran singer in our community choir years ago taught me that songs require oxygen, so take in batches of it where appropriate. These will sustain you through the piece. So it is with Voices, and it fulfills one of our goals – to breathe and expel out inVoices.

If you are the sentimental type, cottoning onto this process gives you opportunity to preserve in your heart some tunes from long ago in your past, and provides a dedicated space for memories. That is the light shadow portion.

There is a dark shadow aspect. I do struggle to use this exercise under some preceding or existing circumstances. I do not choose to use it for redemption from uncharitable acts or hurtful memories. Quite the opposite – after negative thoughts, after a string of profanity, after actual rudeness to an acquaintance – I find it incongruous to chant civility and non-violence, and Shaker ideals. But I sometimes do it, forcing myself. I know the benefits, I relish in the fruits of Voices to overcome the preceding contrariness.

I repeat some beneficial conditions:

>compose your List with as many verses as you are comfortable with;

>ensure that you have one at the tip of your tongue. It is a given that at times you will draw a blank on a title, a line, or even the tune. I do it all the time – even in the shower!

>do not become enamoured with the exact wording of the verse[s] you choose to List, even though now you recall the childhood bedside memories when those exact words helped you go to sleep. When voicing even to yourself, deliberately, you will surely be stumped at times; if you were voicing for others, it may prove embarrassing. Voice intuitively, not verbatim... is the foremost advice I can give you.

Some obvious highlights: brevity. charity; joyfulness; connecting universally; different language; solace, and hope. Remember, this is not a method in which you are chanting or singing the entire choice. So it is a pleasure to recall the title and first line of the pieces, and go forward.

I am quite lucky that my first 5 years in the UK were lived in a retreat community where chanting was part and parcel of 4 daily orders of prayer. Brain-muscle memory accounts for 7 of my 9 choices; this was an opportunity for me to arrange and hold these pieces that were influential and that I cherish.

1. All Shall be Well [Julian of Norwich]
2. May All Beings be Well [Buddhist]
3. May God's Blessings be Upon You
4. Bless to Me, O God, the Earth [Christian]
5. To See the World in a Grain of Sand [William Blake]
6. God be in My Head [the 1558 Sarum Primer, British]
7. Ubi Caritas [early Christian, *Taizé* Community Tune]
8. In Our Darkness [Christian,: LA TÉNÈBRE]
9. 'Tis the Gift to be Simple [American Traditional Shaker]

After a time other favourites may be substituted.

#### SUMMARY:

Yes, I have long held to the belief that “to sing is to pray twice”. Here in my advanced years, and in need of healing myself, I have happily devised this for myself. I am calling attention to it as I feel some engagement in a “little bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing”, or egocentrism – so enthused am I with this package for my purpose, and contentment. I may not be aware that this concept could be simply old school, old stuff that has been already around for some time – that I have missed in my training and practice.

I would be delighted to hear from others.

*(Michael Len is a Quaker Spiritual Healer. He co-resides in Seattle and Bristol.)*

## **IF I GET DEMENTIA**

*If I get dementia I want my friends and family to embrace my reality. If I think my spouse is still alive, or if I think we're visiting my parents for dinner, let me believe those things. I'll be much happier for it.*

*If I get dementia I don't want to be treated like a child. Talk to me like the adult that I am.*

*If I get dementia I still want to enjoy the things that I've always enjoyed. Help me find a way to exercise, read and visit with friends.*

*If I get dementia ask me to tell you a story from my past.*

*If I get dementia and I become agitated, take the time to figure out what is bothering me.*

*If I get dementia treat me the way that you would want to be treated.*

*If I get dementia make sure that there are plenty of snacks for me in the house. Even now, if I don't eat I get angry, and if I have dementia I may have trouble explaining what I need.*

*If I get dementia don't talk about me as if I'm not in the room.*

*If I get dementia, don't feel guilty if you cannot care for me 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It's not your fault and you've done your best. Find someone who can help you, or choose a great new place for me to live.*

*If I get dementia and I live in a dementia care community, please visit me often.*

*If I get dementia, please don't act frustrated if I mix up names, events or places. Take a deep breath. It's not my fault.*

*If I get dementia, make sure I always have my favourite music playing within earshot.*

*If I get dementia, and I like to pick up items and I carry them around, help me return those items to their original places.*

*If I get dementia, don't exclude me from parties and family gatherings.*

*If I get dementia, know that I still like receiving hugs or handshakes.*

*If I get dementia, remember that I am still the person you know and love.*

***Rachael Wonderlin***(found on the Internet)

## **BOOK REVIEWS**



**The Collage of God** by **Mark Oakley** Canterbury Press 2012 110 pp. ISBN 978-1-84825-238-7 £9.99

This book, written by Mark Oakley, the Canon Treasurer of St Paul's Cathedral, is a slim one; this belies the great wealth of material it contains.

Mark writes very openly about his journey of faith. As a young man he quit his theological training with the succinct words, 'Sod God' after taking on a work-placement as a chaplain with young people dying of AIDS. He found this experience deeply painful, and challenging to his previously held firm beliefs. He then went to India for six weeks, during which time he was able to process what had happened to him in a quite different environment. He came back home wanting after all to complete his training to join the church, whilst simultaneously seeing that the Christian Church does not have a monopoly on God. He has remained within it ever since.



Mark sees God as largely hidden, way beyond our limited comprehension; and that we discover Him in patches which in time can build up for us a personal collage of our experience of God. He sees it not as a neat jig-saw puzzle, but an ever-evolving picture. Poetry, for Mark, is *the* language of the spiritual, and he also makes much of the importance of myth, pointing out how much difficulty arises when our rational modern minds try to make literal sense out of what is poetic language, which needs to be understood quite differently.

Whilst being candid about his fluctuating faith (including his doubts about both God and the church), Mark clearly feels that the God he intuitively is to be trusted; and that this is what carries him forward, and contributes to making him the powerful churchman that he is.

I find this book enormously freeing, thought-provoking and, above everything, deeply human. Mark stresses the importance of honesty and humour and he manifests them both, in the book, and as he did when I had the privilege of hearing him speak in person on this subject.

***Judy Clinton***

**The Way of Silence – *Engaging the Sacred in Daily Life* by Brother David Steindl-Rast**, Darton Longman and Todd. £12.99 ISBN: 9 780232 533576

This book, by an author who has long been recognised as a master of meditation and contemplative prayer (particularly in the USA) might well be called “Ways of Silence”, (plural) for it offers us a number of gateways to the Garden of Inner Peace and Inspiration. It also opens some that had been there all the time, yet have been hidden from our gaze.

Brother David is one of the most beloved and influential of those who were inspired by Thomas Merton to recognise the influences that Buddhism and other eastern traditions might have on those

westerners seeking to deepen their contemplative life. All that he reveals and uncovers for the aspiring reader is readily accessible, well meriting the description of his writings by one of his friends and admirers as “common-sense spirituality”.

Along with its universality, Bro. David’s message is unashamedly personal, Trinitarian and Catholic. Some Friends (particularly those who have left a Catholic background) may find this difficult, as I did at first. Yet the resulting insights are beyond the tyranny of words. As I got deeper into the book, I found myself enjoying - yes, that is the word I want - his clarity and insight in revealing the hidden depths of Christian mystical thought, exploring for example with the reader the various strands of formal Christian prayer, such as the *Jesus Prayer*, the *Angelus* and the *Rosary*.

However, this is a mixed blessing. Because of this, I nearly rejected the book after a couple of chapters. I am so glad I didn’t! In the light of his experience and explanation, they begin to make new sense even to a hardened old ex-Catholic like me. Inner Listening and contemplative prayer, (a practice similar to our “holding in the Light”) also find a place, and thus while Quaker Meeting for Worship is not specifically mentioned, it is obliquely present on every page.

Though this may be a difficult read for some people, my experience is that it will also be a highly rewarding one, well worth persevering with, and bearing rich fruit. It has left me with a clear vision of the degree of understanding and insight needed to bring harmony to this chaotic world where people - particularly religious people - do not really listen to each other. To this end I have read it, enjoyed it, and am reading it again v-e-r-y s-l-o-w-l-y.

It is that sort of book!!

***Jim Pym***