



TOWARDS WHOLENESS

No. 162 Spring 2022 £2.50

The **Friends Fellowship of Healing** is a Quaker Recognised Body in the Religious Society of Friends. (*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 either at a residential centre (*Claridge House, Dormans Road, Dormansland, Lingfield, Surrey RH7 6QH*) or elsewhere. All members annually receive three issues of **TOWARDS WHOLENESS**, the journal of the Fellowship, published in March, July and November.

ANNUAL FEES

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

UK FFH Member	£15
Overseas FFH Member	£21
QSH - Full Healer	£35 (inc FFH Membership)
QSH- Probationer	£35 (inc FFH Membership)
QSH - Full Healer/Probationer insured elsewhere	£21 (inc FFH Membership)

Cheques, payable to Friends Fellowship of Healing, should be sent to The FFH Membership Secretary, 52 Ridge Road, Middlestown, Wakefield, W Yorks. WF4 4QP

Letters, articles, news items and other contributions for ***Towards Wholeness*** should be sent to the editor, Gervais Frykman, 52 Ridge Road, Middlestown, Wakefield, W.Yorks. WF4 4QP, 01924 264180. gervais153@talktalk.net
Deadlines: February 1st, June 1st and October 1st.

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Donations for the work of the Fellowship are most welcome.

Cover picture: Pauline Frykman

FFH/QSH Web-site: www.quaker-healing.org.uk

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Talking Friends holds recordings of Towards Wholeness.

Anne Brewer records them and sends to Talking Friends for distribution to Friends with visual impairment. The subscription for one year is £3 for TW publications.

www.talkingfriends.org.uk

Alan Johnson is the convener of Talking Friends.

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Farewell: The Postal and Phone Link Groups gave prayer support to people seeking reassurance and healing, but have now been laid down. We thank them, and especially the Postal Co-ordinator, **Maureen Anderson**, for their faithful service over many years.

HEALING AND UPHOLDING GROUPS – 23 January 2022

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Distant Healing From Home

Elizabeth Angas suggested that we have one Need we pray for each month by *Holding in the Light*, doing this alone, but joining all together on the first Friday of the month at 12 noon.

- April The sustainability of our planet.
- May The prevention of famine and disease. Education for good nutrition and organic agriculture.
- June The upholding of democratic and peaceful governments.
- July The maintenance of music and art in our world

Please see <http://www.quaker-healing.org.uk> and choose “An Extra Way of Distant Healing” for more information.

QSH TRAINING COURSES

The next training courses will take place 4th to 8th April 2022 and 29th August to 2nd September at Claridge House. **NB** the change in the April dates from those advertised in TW 161. Please book direct with Claridge House. Please contact Cherry Simpkin regarding bursaries.

Below are some guidelines which will help before you apply –

You need to be a Member of Friends Fellowship of Healing – if you are not, there are details in Towards Wholeness about how you can apply.

You need to be a Quaker or Attender

You will have to complete the Training Course – dates, costs and venues of Courses will be in Towards Wholeness – There are also bursaries available if you need one.

Once completing the Course you become a Probationer. This is usually for two years – occasionally there are exceptional circumstances – such as somebody who has been a healer for some time can be fast tracked. Also, some people need more time and this will be considered if there are personal or professional reasons for this.

When you become a Probationer you will be assigned a Mentor who can advise, support and encourage you. They will also discuss the right time for Assessment. Your Mentor will discuss what you need to do for this.

After passing you Assessment you will become a full QSH Healer- you need to be fully insured. You are covered through your Annual Subscriptions – if you have proof of your own insurance there will be a reduction of your fees.

You will receive a certificate saying you are a qualified QSH Healer. Also you will receive a 'Membership Card' annually on request – in case you have to produce it for practising healing. These will be sent electronically.

Continuing Professional Development. There are Healer Support Weekends and opportunities to become Mentors. Ideas currently being developed are mini course focusing on particular topics, informal gatherings locally and regionally – either in person or via Zoom. We welcome considering any ideas you may have.

Any questions you may have please contact Kay Horsfield horsfield.k@gmail.com or phone 01923 266163. Any financial queries please contact Cherry Simpkin cherry.simpkin@btinternet.com or phone 0208 8852 6735.

FFH Monthly Gathering, 2:30 pm fourth Saturday

We have now held several of these. The format is flexible, but normally includes a short talk, a meditation, a distant healing session, and time for meeting together and sharing experiences. If you would like to give a short talk, not longer than 15 minutes, please let Gervais Frykman know. The zoom link is given below. If you want a live link, please e-mail David Mason.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84653330655?pwd=ODVhdUNvMDVxNUFiREhFT1ByN1hFdz09>

Meeting ID: 846 5333 0655

Passcode: 545707

New FFH Distant Healing Group

Further to the success of the Monthly Gathering we propose to start a dedicated healing meditation on the second Saturday at 2:30, starting on April 10th. The zoom link is given below. If you want a live link, please e-mail David Mason.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88502686206?pwd=UjF2U2NnN1R4dnlWYWpjbVzRQUm90QT09>

Meeting ID: 885 0268 6206

Passcode: 268830

HEALER SUPPORT WEEKEND

There will be a Healer Support weekend at Claridge House, Friday 8th - 10th July for QSH healers and Probationers. The cost of the weekend will be £260. Bursaries are available for those who need them.

To book, contact Cherry Simpkin cherry.simpkin@btinternet.com
phone number 0208 852 6735.

ARCHIVE FFH PUBLICATIONS

The FFH has some valuable publications that are out of print. We have PDF copies of most of these, and we will send PDFs free of charge to anybody who would like them. Please e-mail Gervais Frykman.

The titles concerned are:

Friends Find Words – an anthology largely drawn from earlier issues
of Towards Wholeness

In a Strange Land – Experience of Dementia: Jill Stow

Lift up the Stone – Reflections on the Gospel of Thomas: Mavis Timms

An Ordinary Woman's Journey on the Mystical Path: Monica Stafford

Nourishment for our Journey: Jack Dobbs

In addition there are single paper copies of

A Singing Murmur: Louie Horne

Mourn us Not: Ed Joanna Harris

Seeking to Heal? David Hodges.

A MEDITATION

Hazel Barker

When the COP 26 talks began, all I could think about at that time was the importance of these talks. I wanted to do more to uphold the delegates and the activists in Glasgow, however I couldn't join with other Quakers and friends who were planning to travel to Glasgow for the demonstrations.

It was in this frame of mind that I joined for Meeting on the opening day of the talks. My thoughts were 'what can I do to uphold in love and peace the delegates at the COP 26 Conference, that their negotiations might bring about the Highest Good?'

Towards the end of Meeting as I felt the Stillness within deepen and expand I was given this Meditation.

I sat cross-legged on a pebbly beach at sunset. I felt the warmth of the day's sun that the pebbles were now releasing, and the gentle flow of warm air around me. The sea was calm and the sky a pale blue. The sun was setting before me, lighting up the wisps of clouds in yellow and orange streaks across the sky, mixing with deep blue on the horizon.

The sun made a glowing yellow pathway towards me across the sea. I was aware of my breathing slowing down and the intensity of my feelings melting away as I repeated my meditation mantra, the mantra sounds melding with the sounds of ebb and flow of the waves on the shingle beach at the water's edge.

I filled myself with the warmth and light and colours.

I felt a dazzling yellow light suddenly beam out from my solar plexus chakra. It shone back across the pathway towards the sun.

I then saw the Conference Centre in Glasgow as I'd seen it in news broadcasts, with the delegates gathering there, the stage with the speakers waiting, and the yellow light bathed the space and all the people.

I then asked by dowsing whether this fulfilled my intention, which was to uphold the delegates and the Conference to achieve the Highest Good.

I was surprised to receive the answer Neutral - neither Yes nor No.

I repeated my intention to myself and the answer came to me that my intention could be fulfilled by calling up the delegates as individuals identified by name and face.

I had seen some of the delegates on the news programmes, and knew some of their faces. So I visualised Boris Johnson in the bright yellow light, which I saw swirling and changing with hints of the orange and blue which I see in the sunset.

I then asked by dowsing whether this fulfilled my intention, receiving a strong Yes this time.

Before the end of Meeting, I held this Meditation, visualising and naming the delegates I had seen on TV from India, the United States, and one or two other countries, and visualising the light surrounding them.

I finished back on the beach with my mantra, counted myself back from 1 to 10 and into the final moments of the quiet Meeting.

It had been quite a journey!

Over the fortnight of the Conference I repeated this Meditation, noting names and faces from lists of delegates and envoys on the internet.

It was a harmless exercise, and may or may not have done any good, but it helped me to feel I wasn't powerless. I like to think it may have raised consciousness a little. Dowsing told me that daily repetition for each person helped to reinforce the intention - so I've chosen a few influential people and I'm concentrating on them, surrounding them in the light every day.

I find the basic meditation so relaxing and beneficial for myself that I have made it my daily meditation. My mantra, breathing and the ebb and flow of the waves blend together perfectly. Basking in the warmth, light and colours of the sunset beach every day in spite of the weather outside is a good start to the day.

We rejoice and give thanks for earthworms, bees, ladybirds and broody hens; for humans tending their gardens, talking to animals, cleaning their homes and singing to themselves; for the rising of the sap, the fragrance of growth, the invention of the wheelbarrow and the existence of the teapot we give thanks. We celebrate and give thanks.

Amen.



The weary gentleman looks up
and there, laid out before him:
the entire, elaborate and irrefutable
argument against war.



Images courtesy of Michael Leunig

A TRUE STORY OF FAITH

Ruth C Martin

When I was a little girl I heard my father relate the following story on many occasions. Because it was something that happened to my father, whom I loved and respected, it helped to reinforce my budding faith, so much so that I often asked myself, ‘when would God speak to me’ – not, ‘would God speak to me’?

As a young man at the beginning of the 20th century my father would travel abroad taking photographs with his big plate camera, and then, having developed them himself, would enter them in competitions. He was returning across the North Sea from one such excursion to Norway when the ship was caught in a terrible storm. It was a wooden ship and he and another passenger were the only two in the saloon. As the ship was tossed around like a cork the noise of creaking timbers was very loud and my father said he was sure it was going to sink. However, after a long time the sea suddenly became calmer and to his relief they docked safely.

A few months later my father was at a luncheon in Manchester and he found himself in conversation with a man who turned out to be a Director of the Shipping Company that owned the ship. When he heard that my father had sailed on it he told him that that morning he was taking the service in his local church in place of the absent vicar. He had just started his sermon when he began to get an uncomfortable feeling. The feeling grew until he couldn’t continue with what he was saying and he stopped abruptly and explained to the congregation that he felt that one of his ships was in danger on the seas and he asked them to pray with him for its safety, which they did. After about five minutes he felt easier and continued with the service.

Later, he asked to inspect the Captain’s log. Just at the time they had started praying the Captain had written that the ship would sink – five minutes later he had written that the storm had suddenly abated and the ship was safe.

A DAY IN LOCKDOWN

John Alban-Davis

Reflections on a saying by the Buddha.

" No one can save us but ourselves.

No one can and no one may.

We ourselves must walk the path."

Draw breath and walk silently into the mysteries of a silvered dawn's lighting sky. The joys and small warmths all rested. The wounds and lesions of a long journey no longer trouble. For friendship, for touch, for love, for kindness, for compassion, there is longing, but they are made to wait. The ugly colours of life's hurts diminish but not yet quite vanish in the glow. The far distances of perception tease and flirt with real time. Soon all will be transitory in the thickening haze. Time stutters, step by step.

Draw breath and march confidently into the reach of a coppered midday's azure light. Efforts and energies yet to be summoned. Surface wins and deep losses to be enjoyed and endured. For dread distemper, for selfish fitfulness, for fickle fortune, for inconstant chance, for malicious caprice are not to be held back; despair ever prodding to prevail. Optimism, hope, fortitude, forbearance are the ethereal seals to contain such fearsome ways. Time stutters, step by step.

Draw breath and crawl timidly into the ebony dust of a bright moon's dappled dusk. The silenced lace wings of approaching darkness beat seductively gentle. Now is all opaque, form overtaken by shadow. For sight, for light, for colour, for time, for certainty, all slowly shallow and dim. Patience, mercy, charity, renunciation, forgiveness are presently burdened but never vanquished. Balance must steady, and reason give way to belief, as rationality to spirituality, as non-enlightenment to wisdom. For some, time will forever still. For some, time stutters, step by step.

ANGELS

Sue Glover Frykman, Sweden

Stephen Feltham, in his article headed “We all need angels” (TW No.161), states that angels “are essential for each of us; we need them for ourselves and for those around us” and ends by asking “what is your angel?” I agree that they are essential and, in this article, would like to tell you a little about my own encounters with angels.

My awareness of angels became a reality on a bus ride in Finland in November 2019. I was met at the airport by a Friend who, as we travelled together to a conference centre for Finland Yearly Meeting’s autumn gathering, animatedly told me about the angel workshop that had recently been held at her home. As she spoke, I realised that I must have had encounters with angels in my life. Two experiences came to mind that I had rarely spoken about. She asked me about them and when I had finished speaking, wondered if I had been afraid at the time. “Not at all, I rather felt comforted,” I replied. Her response was that she was sure that I had encountered angels on those occasions.

The angel workshop had been led by Laura Newbury, a Quaker from Scotland who does angel channellings and holds online angel prayer gatherings and who had been guided by the angels to write the book entitled “An Angels’ Guide to Working with the Power of Light”. God-incidentally, on arrival at the conference centre, a copy of Laura’s book lay on the table in the entrance hall. My friend thrust it into my hands and encouraged me to read it over the weekend, with the promise that if I found it helpful, she would arrange for a copy to be sent to me by post.

When the book arrived in the post, I read it slowly from cover to cover. It is a collection of Laura’s questions and her channelling of the angels’ responses. The content has helped me to come to an understanding of past and present experiences and the different situations in which I had been, or still was, involved.

I started to attend Laura's weekly online angel prayer gatherings. At the time I was struggling with the idea of forgiveness and of speaking our own truth, and at first found the angels' channelled messages about these aspects difficult to hear. As the same messages came again and again in the gatherings, I felt obliged to listen and reflect. Eventually, I found the courage to speak my truth in a difficult situation, and the courage to then walk away from it, surprisingly with a sense of forgiveness and peace. When I later asked Laura for a personal channelling, the messages from the angels were clear that I had trusted my heart, had spoken my Truth, that I had not been mistaken in my discernment, and that it was safe to walk away.

Another message in the same channelling was that I had the ability to communicate with and send healing to animals. I was asked to practise spiritual healing with my hands and to send Light in response to requests – and that this was joyous work. I was also asked to write. Since the channelling, I have become a certified Animal Reiki practitioner, as well as an Angel Reiki practitioner, both of which I offer remotely in response to requests. I would not have thought about these possibilities myself without such prompts.

Before I related such experiences to angels, I thought of them as thin, or sacred, moments - times and experiences when we feel that we are part of something much larger than ourselves. Thin moments can be rare and are often unforgettable. The following certainly fall into that category.

Some months after scattering Dad's ashes in accordance with his wishes (he died on 23rd December 1989 and we scatted them in January 1990), I had a thin moment in that thin place. It was a Saturday morning and on my way to town I stopped at the thin place, as usual, to be for a while with Dad. As I stood there silently, a man appeared with a black dog. I'd never seen him before but noted that he looked remarkably like my father. He came to stand beside me. The dog sat some distance from us (at that time I was afraid of dogs). I wasn't afraid of the man though, and we stood together, side by side, in

silence. After a while I told him that I had to go and said goodbye. I walked away feeling very light, as if I'd finally said goodbye to my Dad and could move on in my life.

Some years later, another thin moment that I later understood to be an angel experience was when I scattered Mum's ashes in the same place as Dad's. As I approached the place early on a Sunday morning, I was astonished to see a triangle of light shining over the scattering place. It was as if holy ground was being prepared. I could only stand and watch in wonder and awe. The triangle of light disappeared as soon as I sighted my cousin in the distance, who was to accompany me in the act of scattering.

Many years later I told a friend (the Quaker in Finland) about these experiences. She thought that angels must have been involved, as they appear in ways that we can accept, without fear.

I can think of yet another tangible angel experience. I was warden of Manchester Mount Street Meeting House in 1988 and, as a country lass, found living in the city centre with all the noise, pollution and bustle very difficult. One evening when I was on duty a young man came into the MH. He said that he'd been to a conference and that as this was the last evening his colleagues were on a pub crawl, but that wasn't his scene. He just wanted to be somewhere quiet. I made him a cup of tea and we chatted in the foyer. Somehow, he sensed that I was unhappy in the city environment and pulled out a little bible from his pocket. He turned to a passage and read it out. It spoke exactly to my condition and helped me enormously. When he left, I had a sense that I had been given a gift of peace.

I still have much to learn and reflect on, but with the angels now tangibly in my life, the path is clearer and illuminated by the Light. I also now know the answer to Stephen's final question in his article – what is your angel? In my case, the 'what' is 'who'. The name of my guardian angel was revealed to me in the channelling, and it is comforting to know that she is my constant and loving companion.

For information about Laura Newbury's work with angels, see <https://www.lauranewbury.co.uk/>

CONFESSIONS OF A RELUCTANT HEALER

Jason Evans

Some of them were won over and joined ranks with Paul and Silas, among them a great many God-fearing Greeks and a considerable number of women from the aristocracy. But the hard-line Jews became furious over the conversions. Mad with jealousy, they rounded up a bunch of brawlers off the streets and soon had an ugly mob terrorizing the city as they hunted down Paul and Silas. They broke into Jason's house, thinking that Paul and Silas were there. When they couldn't find them, they collared Jason and his friends instead and dragged them before the city fathers, yelling hysterically, "These people are out to destroy the world, and now they've shown up on our doorstep, attacking everything we hold dear! And Jason is hiding them, these traitors and turncoats who say Jesus is king and Caesar is nothing!"

– Acts 17:4-7 (The Message)

As a fan of the old films featuring stop-motion effects by Ray Harryhausen, which could often in my childhood be seen on TV, usually I seem to remember on a Saturday afternoon, I had for a long time at the back of my mind the association between my first name, Jason and the power of healing as conveyed by the magical properties of the legendary Golden Fleece. For whatever reason, perhaps simply not being bright enough, and certainly not assertive enough, this did not extend to hearing the call or vocation to a healing profession. When the time came I studied physics, not medicine or nursing. My mum always maintained that I had been named after the biblical Jason, a troublemaker, when I looked it up, and not the Jason of Greek legend, a healer, despite the inevitable response of "Oh, like Jason and the Argonauts!" seemingly whenever I introduced myself to someone.

Through a series of unfortunate circumstances, I found myself in the Meeting Room of the Friends Meeting House in Brighton around the year 2000 having recently had a mental breakdown resulting in hospitalisation. It had been precipitated by a crisis of conscience whilst working in the defence industry as a software engineer, which led to a long period of deep depression. The final straw was a street attack in which my teeth were broken. I stood my ground but I chose not to fight back. When I arrived at Quaker Meeting, I read the book of Job and was comforted. Thus began my slow clamber out of the deep hole of psychosis, much helped by the support of Friends at Brighton Quaker Meeting.

After a time, I was nominated for several Quaker roles: Overseer, Elder, even for a time clerking Meeting for Worship for Business. I gained something very precious from all of this that I now wouldn't trade for anything and for the sake of these experiences I would gladly go through the whole breakdown again, were I only certain to cause less hurt and worry to those around me.

Eventually the role of university chaplain came up at Meeting for Worship for Business and mindful of the advice (27) to "live adventurously" crucially, in the *"way that offers the fullest opportunity for the use of your gifts in the service of God and the community"*, I put myself forward. There was another Area Meeting applicant who already had a teaching job at the university in question, and arguably therefore was better qualified, but for whatever reason I got it. Perhaps there was some good Quaker nominations "triage" in choosing me as the person who would most benefit from the role, rather than just the most qualified. I did what I could, and I will continue to do what I can.

My circumstances as a person in recovery from schizophrenia allowed me to devote a significant proportion of my time to the role, with a brief to be a credible Quaker presence on-campus, and the members of the Chaplaincy made me feel valued and welcome from day one. By then I had been a Quaker for around thirteen years. Maybe I thrive

best on the margins of things and chaplaincy can certainly feel like that at times. But at various key points in my life, I have been able to comfort people in distress. Maybe I have a natural gift for it, however troublesome I can be the rest of the time. It's taken me a long time to properly value this.

When the covid-19 pandemic hit a couple of things happened. From a couple of weeks into the first lockdown, I decided that I could commit to a response in offering a meditation session every weekday, building on existing meditation sessions I had previously held in person at the Chaplaincy. Later having saved enough money from budgeting and living more frugally, I realised that I could afford to sign up for a year's study of hypnotherapy, with my GP's consent. I don't know why this had never occurred to me earlier, but I knew from previous training in Focusing (Eugene Gendlin's psychotherapeutic approach), that I really enjoyed offering therapy by listening. And I learnt ways of listening in Focusing that really seemed to help people in a powerful, immediate way.

I had always been something of a therapy sceptic before this and my experience of talking therapy for my schizophrenia was seldom and not very helpful. A psychologist appeared nice but passively listened to me recount my whole life story, which didn't seem to offer me much help at all. I also had CBT [cognitive behavioural therapy *ed*] which seemed to give me cognitive tools little better than common sense. The training in Focusing was nothing like that. I had got into it via Experiment with Light and Meeting had agreed to pay for some of it to support my chaplaincy work. When I could I completed this to gain a Basic Skills certificate, allowing me to swap Focusing with anyone who also had that training. I still do this whenever it seems useful via a WhatsApp group and a local Focusing circle.

So as the pandemic raged, I was finally equipping myself to extend what I had come to regard as a 'listening ministry' into a ministry of healing. The Focusing was great, but I realised I lacked the basic counselling background of many of the people I studied with. I looked

into FE college courses, but that seemed a very long-winded route into counselling, and I wasn't even sure I wanted to do counselling exactly... Then from something I heard from a fellow Focuser, I hit on the idea of doing hypnotherapy, which seemed to just fit. It would give me some background in counselling skills, but also be able to hypnotise people (how cool is that?) and help them using the power of their own subconscious mind to accept suggestions.

At the time of writing, I have scaled back my chaplaincy meditations. I have an email list of over one hundred people and offer two meditations online per week using zoom: one based on Rex Ambler's Experiment with Light and the other based on Eugene Gendlin's Focusing, delivered in a way that is safe and accessible, if somewhat diluted. The meditations are valued but usually attended by quite small groups. I am watching what happens next regarding the covid-19 situation, particularly regarding the omicron variant, and its implications for activities on-campus. I am also mulling over the possibility of setting up a private hypnotherapy practice, polishing my web development skills and gleaning what I can from wherever I can.

What happens next? Do I begin a belated second career hypnotising people to make positive changes to their life? Does the covid-19 situation worsen, fizzle out, or stay the same? Do I continue with my chaplaincy work and, very occasionally, help someone to a life-changing realisation by helping them to side-step their conscious mind by whatever means at my disposal seems appropriate? Only time will tell, with the leadings of the Light and *life-forward energy* to guide me. Am I a healer or a troublemaker or both? In some respects, every step forward is a leap in the dark, illuminated only by whatever light you can find.

January 2022.

A Winter Walk in the Woods... A meditation

Rosalind Smith

(short pauses in these places)

Sit comfortably on your chair, or bed, and take a couple of deep breaths, in then out, giving more time to the outbreath. As you do this, feel yourself begin to consciously relax, letting go of any worries or problems you have at present. There is nothing at this moment that you need to concern yourself with. You are safe, warm, comfortable and relaxed.

Now you are ready to go for a short walk. Look down at your feet and you will see that, although it is January (*or mid-winter*), you can see that you are well wrapped up with suitable clothing, boots, coat, scarf and gloves, so you are feeling quite warm.

So, in your mind's eye, see yourself entering a sunlit space between some winter trees. Winter is the time of quietness, and expectation – and also a time when we can see the shapes of trees. And because it is winter, they only have bare branches – but they are letting the winter sunshine stream through and dapple with light the ground beneath.

Look up and see the interlacing patterns of the bare branches. Follow where your eyes take you and notice that there are already gentle stirrings of life amongst the trees.

Listen with your inner ears and you might hear the insistent song of a blackbird, or the sweet chipping sounds of a robin – even the muted scuffling of myriads of little underground creatures, awaiting their time to surface.

When you're ready, look down at your feet as you walk slowly along, and notice the pattern of light and shade made by the shadows of the branches.

You may see a bench nearby, and you are invited to sit on it. Feel yourself gently enclosed by the soft light all around you. Underneath your feet are the invisible signs of new life – the first shoots of some woodland snowdrops, aconites and perhaps tiny daffodils.

Know in your heart that these are the outriders of Spring, the first signs that all is well, and all is as it should be.

At times like this we can become aware of the blessed continuation of life, both here on earth - and also in the next dimension. Let us hold this thought with an open mind, for a while.

When you are ready, stand up and slowly retrace your steps, leaving behind the beauty of a winter afternoon, and become aware of yourself in your room, on your chair, at peace with yourself and all around you. Open your eyes, and have a little stretch – wriggle your fingers. Feel that you have brought some of the quietness and beauty of winter back with you.

SHARED OUT OF BODY EXPERIENCE

Valerie Dearnley

I do appreciate this opportunity to share my experiences with others. As you see, it is not the kind of thing that can be easily slipped into ordinary conversation.

You asked about my first “out of body” experience. That occurred in 2014.

My husband had been in a Hospice for 35 days. That in itself was rather unusual as was manner of his going in.

His condition was rather complex and he was in the care of several different consultants in more than one hospital. This led to a lot of confusion and harrowing journeys. In desperation I turned to God and asked for clarity and someone to help us understand what was really going on, what was important and what was not.

My husband knew he was going long before the consultants knew. He sat me down with a cup of tea one day and calmly explained that he was being called home. He reminded me that I knew where he was going and that he would see that I was well looked after till he came for me.

While all this to-ing and fro-ing was going on, I was surprised by a call from the Hospice offering the kind of service I had prayed for.

Someone to take in the guidance from these various sources and put it together into something manageable. The only Being I had approached with this request was God for in truth I just did not know where to go. We had a few months together with his staying at home and only visiting the Hospice for adjustments to be made. We even managed a little weekend break to visit the Harrogate Flower show. Oh we did treasure that time together.

The Hospice had arranged for some things like tests and even blood transfusions to be done there and I could go too. It became more or less a home from home.

Then one day he went in for a blood transfusion. He collapsed on the way in. That was the start of his 35 days.

Normally he would have been having that done in the hospital and things would have been very different. As it was I was able to spend every day with him. We read, chatted, walked round the grounds; we even went out for Afternoon tea once! For the last fortnight I stayed with him all the time. I even slept in the same room.

The night when my "Out of Body" experience occurred was the one before our 48th wedding anniversary. We had arranged to have a very simple ceremony the next day to give thanks for our life together.

Sadly that never took place for he died at half past one in the morning. However the minister still came and the family gathered round. I was rather traumatised because I had had an experience that I could not tell to anyone.

I was awakened just after midnight. My husband was in distress. I held him and he seemed to calm down. But it soon became clear things were far from right. I rang for the nurses, they came almost instantly but there was nothing that could be done. He was indeed being called home.

And with that thought I, or I should say we, for Dennis was standing beside me, were transported into another dimension. We were still in the hospice room but no one else was there. We walked towards a door that was not there, opened it and walked into the back of a cave like area. There was an opening ahead into what I thought of as the world. Dennis was exhausted. He sat on a boulder. We did not speak. We did not touch. It seemed a long time before he recovered and stood up. I turned to the large opening to the 'outside' but he turned to the side of the cave. There before my eyes the side of the cave opened and a blinding, warm white light filled the whole entrance. We moved towards this. I knew what was going to happen and I cried. We looked at each other. I knew, I don't know how, that I must not reach out to him. He went through. The light faded and the cave side closed. I turned. Walked back to the door that was not there and back into the Hospice room. I saw me holding his lifeless body and slipped inside myself. No time had passed.

I have cried all the way through writing this. This place, that does not exist is so clear in my head. I have tried to paint it but cannot get it right. Perhaps I shall now after writing it down.

It reminds me of Mary Magdalene knowing she must not touch Jesus in the resurrection appearance. Ed

MEN BEHAVING SADLY-THE NEED FOR GUYnecologists WITH FLOWER ESSENCES.

Bernie Draper

Introduction-Yin and Yang

As a young man growing up in Liverpool I was great observer of people in pubs. The men stood in the noisy smoke filled bars talking about football, boxing, politics and sharing stories and sexual jokes. I was fascinated how animated they become using hands and arms in the rapidly changing mood from humour to aggression fuelled by the chemical soup of testosterone, nicotine and alcohol. Their wives and girlfriends sat in the lounge expressing their feelings about disillusioned dreams, romance and personal relationships.

I remember pondering then why this was. Was it the cultural norm of Liverpool and learned conditioned behaviour? Or perhaps it was something deeper in the basic genetic history of left and right dominant brains, yin and yang developed from our evolutionary Stone Age expectations of men as self-sacrificing, providers and protectors whose behaviour had to be competitive, reckless, aggressive and controlling in order to continue the species.

On qualifying as a pharmacist, I wondered why men did not live as long as women and had a higher rate of suicide, alcohol and drug dependency and had a reluctance to see their GP or ask advice from their local pharmacist. I decided it must be a mixture of nature and nurture as sometimes yin and yang can transcend gender in that you can have nurturing, expressive and reflective men and competitive and controlling women. Surely, it can't all be down to hormones and stereotypes.

When I did qualify as a therapist and herbalist, I was curious and saddened by the fact that few men became clients. Why did they, in the main, have this pride, fear, embarrassment and reluctance to share feelings, intimacy and expose vulnerability? Jan De Vries, the well known Dutch naturopath (who is my hero being an ex-pharmacist like me who was converted to holistic ways to health) developed many

flower essences to deal with modern living including his “Male Essence” which he developed for the male yang attributes of “responsibility, pressure, dominance, intolerance, feelings of inadequacy and replace by confidence warmth, humour and patience”.

Suppression of Feelings

To me, it all came down to one word at least when it comes to health issues: “Suppression”- Suppression of feeling leading to suppression of the immune system and ultimately suppression of the body’s innate healing mechanisms combined with addictive habits to suppress emotional pain.

The reasons I think are partly physical but mainly stem from the inculturation of “macho” values embedded in our society. The lack of degree and complexity of anatomical structure in the male reproductive system can be compared to females who manifest in the monthly cycle internal processes and changes which in turn leads to a collective concern about personal healthcare.

In our society, there is little support, communication and intimacy passed down from fathers to sons. There is no rite of passage from adolescence to manhood in Western societies. There are few healthy and safe channels for men to express wisdom, community, personal identity and self-worth.

Conclusions

As stated earlier, yin and yang qualities can transcend gender so it would be erroneous to stereotype all men as thinking, communicating and behaving in the same way. From my own experience, there are lots of cultural differences in the way men relate to each other in different parts of this country and the world and also vast differences in the attitude of men in different age groups and sexualities. I am 70 years of age and my father, uncles and grandfathers believed that we shouldn’t show our feelings and “just get on with things” whereas my nephews are more open and touchy-feely.

The healing energy of plants and the plant consciousness embodied in flower essences I believe can link in to the energy in men transforming it to an empowering balance of yin and yang which helps with their expression of feelings, suicidal thoughts and protection similar to cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) in a bottle where how we behave depends upon our feelings and how we feel depends upon how we think. When I take flower essences, I notice good things happen because I think, feel and behave in a positive way.

I believe the most valuable medium for the healing powers of listening is in the “heart circle” where men can open up and share their feelings. I think from my own experience men are more open in the group culture rather than one to one meetings and can compare their thoughts and feelings. Flower essences are not the only way of improving mental health and therefore physical health in an integrative health philosophy but I believe they can act as a catalyst in healing bringing about long lasting change if used on a regular basis.

Information on specific remedies was included in this article, and can be supplied on request. Ed

A SMALL INFORMAL HEALING GROUP USING WHATSAPP

Ann Fuller (Reading Meeting)

I am in a small group with five other people. Four have psychic abilities and would identify as Spiritualists or spirit lead. One identifies as Quaker and I am a ChristianQuaker. What we have in common is a shared belief that there is power in healing thoughts, prayer and a universal power. This might be named as spirit. I would name it as God.

We have joined as a group via connection. My husband, myself, his sister, and her friends. My late and inspirational mother-in-law was a healer within the Spiritualist church, so we as a family have those roots, my roots are in various Christian settings.

We would normally meet together physically when we could about once a month. During this time of covid we connect via WhatsApp, but we have been able to meet physically twice over the last 18 months or so, when the tier system was in place and there was that brief “window of opportunity” and more recently when lockdown was lifted. We took our chairs to a large park, ate delicious homemade cake and caught up on each other’s news generally. Then sat in stillness with spirit for nourishment until we all went on our ways.

Whilst we have been unable to meet in person, we have also joined together separately in our own homes, at a set time, sitting in the stillness and holding our small group and others named and unnamed and concerns locally, nationally and internationally in our hearts and thoughts.

We use WhatsApp to keep in touch, sending uplifting messages, photographs of nature, inspirational writing we may have come across, all things that will support us individually and as a group.

The other aspect of our WhatsApp messages to each other is for healing. We will share the names of those we wish the group to send healing to, first names only. We may say how we know this person. They may be friends, neighbours, family, work colleagues or names of those that we have heard of through other means.

They may be people that have been in the news and whose stories we have read about. We reply in our own way. Someone might say I will add (name) to my list for when I sit this evening, someone might say healing thoughts are being sent now, or they are in my prayers. They may be added into someone’s healing book. I may say holding (name) in the light, which is the Quaker way, but I will also include them in my daily prayers.

In our responses we may also expand on other difficulties the named person and those around them might be experiencing, opening up other areas to include for healing.

I have always found for myself, that, if possible, I like to ask the person if they would like their name given for healing. Often, I find that when in

conversation with someone they mention a difficulty they are having, either physically or emotionally, I say that I am in a little healing group and would they like their name mentioned, as yet no one has declined. It seems to me that there is already some healing taking place for that person, just knowing that others are thinking of them.

Sometimes of course that is not possible or may not be appropriate.

I may choose different words to tell them about the healing group. If I know they have a faith, then I may use the term prayer, Quakers are comfortable with holding someone in the light of course, or I might just say would you like us to uphold you.

I know from personal experience that when I have needed healing, knowing that others are praying for me, holding me in the light or whatever term they might use or whatever method they practice has been uplifting.

Sometimes in the group one of us might remember ourselves and post a message that we need to think of ourselves. It is easy to overlook our own needs.

Whatever our faith or beliefs are, whatever name we give to the power of connection, it does not matter. What matters is that we care enough about others' suffering to try our best. It is also important to send healing thoughts to those connected to the named person: family, friends, colleagues and those who might be in a caring capacity like nurses to ask for strength for them in their difficult situation, to uphold all involved.

For those in a hospital or an institutional setting I ask that they will get the care they need, that those caring for them will be kind and compassionate. That they will be treated with dignity.

I think everything we do should be guided by love. We do not profess to have any healing powers ourselves but what we have is faith, that individually and combined we can make a difference.

And they call some of these people “retarded?”

A few years ago, at the Seattle Special Olympics, nine contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100 yard dash.

At the gun, they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with a relish to run the race to the finish and win.

All, that is, except one little boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times, and began to cry.

The other eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and looked back. Then they all turned around and went back. Every one of them.

One girl with Down’s Syndrome bent down and kissed him and said: “This will make it better”. Then all nine linked arms and walked together to the finish line.

Everyone in the stadium stood, and the cheering went on for several minutes. People who were there are still telling the story.

THE SEARCH

Anon (7th century)

Pilgrim remember

For all your pain

The Master you seek abroad

You will find at home

Or walk in vain.

EXTENDED BOOK REVIEW



THE GOSPEL OF THE BELOVED COMPANION

**Translated by Jehanne de Quillan. Éditions Athara 2010, 2011. 265 pp
ISBN 10:1452810729: Amazon Kindle Edition £7.46, paperback £14.08**

This book comprises an introduction, the text of the gospel and a commentary, showing concordances with the canonical gospels and the gnostic gospels such as the Gospel of Thomas.

The Gospel of the Beloved Companion is an early version of the Gospel of John, but “early” means “blissfully free of editing and accretions”, not “preliminary version”. It is a beautiful work of art, also very interesting because it shows just what those accretions were.

The Cathars of the 12th and 13th Century Languedoc treasured a version of the Gospel of John, and from clues given in the introduction, I have little doubt that this is it.

It purports to be written by Mary Magdalene. I recall that the Sherlock Holmes stories purport to be written by Doctor Watson. Nevertheless, clear pictures emerge of the Rabbi Jesus and his favourite disciple, Mary Magdalene. The love between them is unmistakeable and very moving. The translator argues for an early date on the grounds that the conflicts are entirely within the Jewish community, that is, before the movement spread to the Gentile world.

The gospel is remarkably free of mind-boggling miracles, for example Jesus’ father was Joseph. In the stilling of the storm, it is the disciples’ fear that he calms, not the elements. Even the resurrection is an experience of one person, that is, Mary Magdalene, though there are inconclusive references to the nature of that experience. Lazarus had been as dead for four days, and there is no reference to a burial, nor that “he stinketh”. The feeding of the 5000 is there, though Jesus collects everybody’s food, not just one boy’s loaves and fishes. In the wedding at Hyrcana it was the last measures of wine that were

multiplied, not water. An explanation is given, that one in the Spirit sees only abundance, and what he sees is. There is also a strong hint that the bridegroom was Jesus.

There is no reference to any intention or purpose in the death of Jesus, rather it is clearly attributed to the fear of those in power that they would be overthrown. Jesus going into Judea knowing that they wanted to kill him has a clear parallel in Mary Dyer going into Boston. We will not have any no-go areas, and if we are killed, others will come after us.

The disciple leaning on Jesus' breast at the last supper was Mary Magdalene, which makes more sense than that it was the apostle John. The sop given to Judas makes more sense as a secret sign to Mary Magdalene than a general declaration in the context of "Lord, is it I, is it I?"

The race to the empty tomb is shown to be political posturing. Who was the first witness to the resurrection? Here it is Mary Magdalene alone. She later calls a meeting of the disciples and tells them of the resurrection, and encourages them, clearly demonstrating leadership. Obviously this had to be edited out.

Jesus never claims any special status for himself. It is not "I am the bread of life" but "My words are the bread of life." He is not called the only begotten Son of God, rather "we saw his glory, such glory as of a true son of humanity, full of grace and truth...As many as received him, to them he gave the power to become the children of the living Spirit, for those who believed in his teachings were born into life not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of the Spirit." This is in fact the theme of the Gospel. Also while the author is familiar with the eating of flesh and the drinking of blood, she decisively rejects them, for Jesus says his flesh is his teaching and his blood is his words.

The gospel lacks the splendid opening of the canonical Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God", but the Essene Gospel of Peace part 4 contains "In the

beginning was the Sound, and the Sound was with God, and the Sound was God", thus giving another source for the Gospel of John.

So this is all very interesting. If Jesus was born like the rest, was a highly developed Essene teacher who fell foul of the authorities, was married to Mary Magdalene, who experienced his resurrection, and herself became a great teacher, taking ship from Alexandria to the South of France, where much later the Cathars flourished for a while, then both Jesus and Mary Magdalene are potentially historical characters.

All very interesting, as I said. But what turns the Gospel of the Beloved Companion from an informative window on the generation and disfigurement of the Gospel of John into one of the finest scriptures ever written is the conclusion, where Mary Magdalene shares with the disciples the secret teaching that Jesus gave her, being specially receptive. It is a beautiful description under the form of a tree of the ascent of the individual soul to Gnosis or Mystical Union. This is so fine, clear and accurate that it proves that the author was a great master. The Gospel is thus self-validating, and renders questions of historicity irrelevant. If in the earlier part religion is shown to be largely non-miraculous, non-sacrificial, not to do with salvation from sin, not requiring submission to any authority, here the essence, the whole of it, is the searching for, and obtaining of, individual Spiritual enlightenment. Fancy having this great teaching and throwing it away! It is just as Jesus said to the authorities: "You have stolen the keys to the temple and locked and barred the door. You have not entered yourselves, nor have you permitted others who wish to enter to do so. Instead you have become as dishonest merchants, selling that which does not belong to you and over which you have no power."

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