

What is a Meeting for Healing?

Buffy Curtis, West Falmouth (MA) Preparative Meeting, Sandwich Monthly Meeting

THREE FRIENDS SIT HOLDING HANDS IN PRAYER WITH INTENT FOR healing and comfort of a meeting member. As twenty men and women sit in healing worship, each enters the circle, one by one, to be held in the energetic presence. Beside a hospital bed in the emergency room, a Friend stands in deep presence, holding the hand of a patient who may be dying. At a weekly designated time, one Friend holds another in thought and prayer as she sits in waiting in another part of the world. Several Friends agree to pause in their meeting, join hands, and send loving energy to other Friends who are struggling with a complex issue. After a few minutes they resume their own work, more firmly grounded in their purpose. For nearly two hours on September 12th, more than forty Friends and community members gather in the meetinghouse to give prayerful space and worship sharing. Peaceful grieving and comfort are found there. "Wherever two or more are gathered..."

These are but a few examples of experiences I have had among Friends being lead into the ministry of healing. Many Quaker publications are responding to this call by providing a forum for the topic of healing, prayer, and ministry. I, too, feel the awareness and urgency of the work both past and present. For me, it is exciting to experience the willingness of Friends to speak of their leadings, to give a name to what they are doing. Bringing this ministry openly to meetings and Quaker gatherings affirms the increasing need to bring a conscious healing presence and prayer into this present time. I watch as years, indeed centuries, of fear and misunderstanding begin to fall away. More of us are connecting out of our diverse backgrounds, searching each other out, defining what healing is and what this leading is asking of us. The meetings and Friends that are recipients of these gifts—the energies of love, warmth, and divinity—give witness to its values. The rewards for both the giver and receiver are immense.

My journey into this healing has been similar to my path into membership with Friends—by conviction! The deep similarity between Quaker worship and service, and healing work remarkably affirms my Quaker experience of direct connection to Spirit and faithfulness to the opening path. Increasingly, I have been asked to incorporate my background and experience to assist with the nurturing of healing ministry within the local, yearly, and regional meetings. Each event has easily become what I have come to call an "Oh Wow! Oh No!" moment of consciousness; out of the rapture comes the responsibility. At times, "way would open," at other times it would slam shut, usually at the very point I thought I knew what to do! When least expected, I encountered the greatest results and experiences. The ongoing miracle of getting one's self out of the way in order to let Spirit work is truly a humbling experience. Showing up and being fully present is sometimes the greater challenge, as is remembering that this is not the work of curing or the "power" to

heal; it is not my work, but, "thy will be done." The joy of sharing what I have learned with others and acknowledging that this work is accessible to all is a wonderful extension of the foundation of Friends testimony to "that of God" in all of us.

Where has this path taken me thus far? Most recently I helped in establishing local monthly meetings for healing, three gatherings of Quaker Healers (Friends Involved in the Practice of Spiritual

Healing) at Powell House, NY, and the first annual meeting of New England Friends in the Healing Arts at Woolman Hill. A group of Friends from several yearly meetings are exploring the possibilities of establishing a program of nurture and teaching within the context of healing as a spiritual ministry in the northeast. Local meetings are requesting meetings for healing to hold Friends who are sick or dying in the Light. We have also been asked to hold monthly meetings that have been wounded by conflict or struggle. Healing worship and prayer has been indispensable in helping us all with our

grief and pain surrounding the events of September 11. Like the ripple effect from a pebble dropped in water, the influence of the strength and community building that has occurred from these gatherings is becoming more apparent as each meeting leads to another and to another.

I struggle to describe the many miracles surrounding these gatherings. It is difficult to place words into the sacred space of these profound spiritual experiences. The opportunity to reclaim our long, deep history of the ministry of healing as a part of our heritage is fulfilled with each gathering. My experiences are not unique among Friends who have felt and answered this call into healing. There are Friends who have been doing this work for years. We honor the memory of the late Hobart Mitchell whose name was synonymous with meetings for healing among New England Friends for many years. He leaves us with remarkable memories of his ministry. Many individual Friends and meetings continue this corporate work. The support of our meetings at all levels is essential to its continued growth and development. It benefits everyone in our Religious Society, for indeed, it is all of us who gain from this healing ministry. There must be companionship, oversight, and mentoring—supported by loving understanding and education—to nurture these leadings in the manner that Friends know so well. Friends need to honor the faith and practice of this leading. It is my prayer that all will prosper from this work, be affirmed and cautioned by our history, be tender in this place, and by grace, find nurture in the effort.

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit... For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another faith...; to another gifts of healing...; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another the discerning of spirits... But all these worketh that one and self-same Spirit.

—1 Corinthians 12:4-11

To have in each monthly meeting one or two or more members meeting together, prepared and ready to carry on a healing ministry, ready to hold anyone sick into God's healing light, would be most helpful for the health of the Meeting

—Hobart Mitchell, *Prayer for Healing*

“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.” -- Jack Robb, quoted in: *Quaker Faith and Practice: The Book of Discipline of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain*.

MEETING FOR HEALING

Our desire is to bring peace and wholeness to those who are suffering. We believe that by focusing our spiritual energy in corporate worship, and holding those in need in the Light, that we can open ourselves to God's healing power. All are welcome to join us. All that is necessary is to hold the person in question in the compassion of God's love and have your intention be for their highest good.

We gather for Meeting for Worship for Healing monthly at Homewood Friends Meeting on the last 5th day (Thursday) of each month at 7:30 PM for about one hour.

We hold Meeting for Healing in accord with traditions of Friends. We gather in silence. A person to oversee the meeting has been chosen ahead of time from those on the Ministry and Worship Committee. Names of those needing healing can be given to the overseer before the meeting. The person giving the name chooses whether to give only the name, or the name and the specific need for healing.

After a time of centering (usually 10-15 minutes), the group will hold hands at the sign from the overseer. Additional names may be given to the overseer at that time. We enter silent worship again, the overseer speaks each name and there are about 4-6 minutes taken to hold that person in the Light.

When a person whose name is read is present, and if s/he feels so moved, s/he may sit in the center of the circle and announce that s/he is open to healing touch. Worshipers who feel led to participate in healing touch may then do so. The person in the center rejoins the circle at his/her leading.

The overseer then announces that worshipers may offer into the silence names of others needing healing. A shorter time is given for holding these petitions in the Light. Afterwards, the overseer will close meeting, again with the holding of hands.

Announcements, introductions and testimonies of those attending follow. Friends may then enjoy fellowship, with refreshments provided if anyone has felt led to bring something to share.

“...that they might see and inquire into the necessity of all poor Friends, who were sick and weak and were in wants, or widows and fatherless in the city and suburbs.. .and that they in visiting the sick in the Lord's power and work, through which they would have the wisdom of the Lord, and of his creation and how to administer his creatures and by the same power to heal and strengthen with the outward things and without them; which they have felt prosperous to this day. And great things have been done in their meetings by the Lord's power. -- George Fox, *Book of Miracles*
