

Keckland

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# FRIENDS FELLOWSHIP OF HEALING

## Prayer for Healing

in the experience of the

Friends Fellowship of Healing

## INTRODUCTION

### PRAAYER - FOR HEALING

by Bernice Joachim

How many words have been written about prayer, I wonder, and in how many languages are prayers created and recited, sung or chanted or even waited. To live more abundantly, as Christ promised, we surely need to make prayer part of the fabric of our lives, to transform life into prayer and prayer into life.

Here are more words, and these give some insights and experiences of friends helping friends towards life-giving prayer for all humanity and for individuals with special needs and anxieties. We too maybe are in need of help in order to cope with the increased sensitivity we may well experience on our spiritual journey.

"Prayer for Healing" was published in pamphlet form anonymously some years ago by the Friends Fellowship of Healing. Now it is printed with the author's name Bernice Joachim, a founder member of the Fellowship whose wisdom and enthusiasm continue to help people to understand more about healing. Here she eloquently describes the ways of Friends' worship and communion with the source of all healing power.

There is an extract from "The Way Out is the Way In" by Damaris Parker-Rhodes, another founder member. She was a pioneer in New Age thinking and a free spirit. To quote her "A holistic approach to health is an approach which provides an atmosphere which is life-enhancing. There is a network of relationship which binds all things together for the planet's unseen purpose - this is the purpose of loving which will draw the human race and its environment into closer unity."

Three articles have been culled from backnumbers of "Towards Wholeness", the journal published three times a year by the F.F.H. Dorothy Webb describes the work of prayer groups and their potential life-giving power, with some practical advice. Mary Stearer's "Praying for Results", tells of an early encounter when she asked to pray for people she didn't know, and how over the years she has reached a deeper understanding of "Let go and let God." These ideas are further developed by Kara M. Pollitt, seeking first the Kingdom of Heaven - describing how two or three Friends could hold themselves in silence, in stillness and in wonder ... to increase the effectiveness of the group.

Louie Horne in her anthology "A Shining Place" shall have the last words on "Prayer for Friends" -

I've gathered them, name by name  
Into this holy place,  
And with them, kneeling wait  
Your healing grace.

Anne Smith

Prayer is as natural - and I believe, as necessary - an activity of the human life, as breathing, yet so many of us seem to find it difficult. Just as the athlete, the singer, or the wind-player needs to learn and practise a technique of breathing in order that it may serve his body or his instrument to the highest degree, so we need to learn to understand ourselves and the working of prayer if it is to be more than a spontaneous cry of the heart in a moment of fear or despair or ecstasy, fleeting and unbidden.

There are many definitions of prayer stemming from many differing experiences, but I think they may all be summed up as "communion" - communion - union with the Divine, the eternal and creative spark of life, the heart-beat of the Universe, the Alpha and the Omega - or to those who can accept the concept, the Father.

In this communion we know ourselves to be linked with All Life, All Creation, inextricably and indissolubly. There are many ways of reaching this point of "knowing" and upholding, and one of the simplest and most direct is that of Friends' "Waiting upon God" individually or in a group. From this point of gathered stillness we may find ourselves overcome with awe, or shame and penitence, or suffused with a sense of love and of being loved - all aspects of worship. This in turn may lead us through a sense of unworthiness to humility and rededication, a sense of dependence as well as new responsibility, and so to petition for renewal and upholding and strength and inspiration. Hopefully, the sense of blessing which follows, will lead us back into the daily round challenged, renewed, and ready to share the love which surrounds us.

All these are aspects of prayer, and may or may not be experienced in our quiet waiting, in succession, or individually, according to our state of stillness and openness and our present human need; and all are to be found in the stages of Jesus' "pattern prayer" shared with his disciples when they asked him to teach them how to pray.

All, I believe, are implicit in the Prayer for Healing - or Wholenmaking. Some find it helpful to pour out their sense of need (for themselves or others), in words of petition and invocation, but in the centred stillness of our quiet waiting on God all needs are met, all anxieties hushed, and in an upsurge of thanksgiving we know that "He knows our needs before we ask."

There is no such thing as unanswered prayer. We may not immediately (or even ever!) recognise the answer when it comes, and it may well be not the answer we expect; but answer there will be. Too often we limit the acceptance of the answer by our own concept of time, forgetting that God is Spirit and dwells in the realms of eternity. The answer to a prayer for healing may not be seen fully in this life, or necessarily recognised "in the flesh", but there will be evidence of healing at work in the spirit. We must remember, too, that we can block or hinder the healing spirit.

by clinging to resentment or fear, jealousy, or any manifestation of lack of love. That is the price of the gift of free-will to human-kind, and we can choose to promote or hinder healing wherever we find ourselves, by the spirit which we cherish and by which we live. In this context I would like to underline the importance of the teaching of St. Paul - "Rejoice! In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

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When we pray for healing - for ourselves or others - whether of physical infirmity or dis-ease of mind, or broken relationships or intolerable circumstances - we try to cast away anxiety and fear, replacing it with trust in the Father who is the Creator and Source of all goodness, and who "knows our need before we ask."

In silent waiting, in the manner of Friends, we seek the Still Centre, letting go of strain and stress and all negative thoughts, to rest in the flow of New Life which is constantly recreating, cleansing, forgiving, reviving, "to make all things new."

When, as individuals or in a group, we feel ourselves "centred" and at peace, we give thanks, and then bring to that Centre - whether we visualise it as Love or Light, or in personal terms as the Father, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, according to what we find vital and acceptable - the folk or situations that are on our heart and mind in need of healing, and leave them there, offering our gift of love, however small, as a link with the Source of Life and Power. We can think of our contribution in terms of a channel, a pipe-line, a switch to a circuit where a current of energy may flow, a receiver and transmitter, or simply as a concerned and loving friend like the four of whom we read in the Gospel, who with great determination lowered their friend through the root to present him at Jesus' feet.

Having held them for a time, according to how long our concentration holds, at this Centre, visualising them as well and full of life and joy and renewed vitality, we give thanks that the work of recreation in them has begun, and leave them, trustingly, in the love of God. Subsequent prayer for them, or the situation, should take up this theme of thanksgiving, (and if the situation seems unchanged, one can dwell on the dormant period in the growth of a bulb or tree, which is, in fact, a time of active preparation, or if the situation seems more painful, even, than before, one may helpfully remember the pain of numb or anaesthetised limbs returning to life), and renewed offering of oneself, the intercessor, to be a tool ready for use (like the surgeon's instrument, or even a humble splint!) as and when may be necessary, or opportunity may arise. When love, trust and thanksgiving replace anxiety and fear, miracles can happen.

Have you ever been at the receiving end of a Prayer Group? No? Then you have no idea of the strength that comes flowing through to you in a crisis, or a time of prolonged strain, nor do you realise the immense comfort it is to know that a group of loving, caring people are praying for you.

Just before Christmas our Group received a letter from two of its former members, who have moved away to undertake a very difficult consignment. "To you all - our dearest love and greetings for Christmas. We have the unforgettable picture of each of you sitting as a Group together, and we join with you in prayer and thought.

It is impossible for us adequately to express our thanks to each of you for your prayers, they uphold and help us over many, many dark patches and also help us to go forward with added strength.

God abundantly bless each one of you, and in blessing you, we too are blessed."

We can take it for granted that all those who belong to the Friends Fellowship of Healing long to help their fellow men and women. To practice intercessory prayer is to place ourselves in the very life of God where all things intermingling, to place ourselves at the matrix of responsibility for our fellows. "Here then is a way of helping whatever our circumstances.

You may say, "Yes, of course, but we can all pray on our own. So we can, but those of us who belong to a Group find there is added strength in praying together. Our individual prayer becomes caught up in the prayer of the Group. We cease to be separate individuals and find ourselves part of a loving, integrated whole; and what an astonishing amount we learn as with those for whom we pray, we walk the road towards wholeness.

Our whole attitude to life, our whole outlook changes, slowly perhaps and almost imperceptibly, but it does change as we grow in faith, and our thinking changes from negative to positive, from positive to creative.

Perhaps in the beginning physical healing is in the forefront of our minds, but soon we begin to realise that suffering is on so many levels,

physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and all of them interrelated. It is easy to be swamped by all this suffering, but in a Group we can help one another to stay our minds on the loving, healing power of God and not on the illness itself. Jesus was very aware of people's suffering but He was also intensely aware of His Father's power to heal and make whole. We too must always be conscious, first and foremost, of His power to heal all suffering of whatever kind, then through His grace we shall be able to lift those in need into the light of the Divine Presence.

Another Christmas letter says - "My gratitude to the members of the Group for the spiritual help I have received during these past few months. I am very much aware of the Divine Presence. My heartfelt thanks to you all." To receive such a letter is very heartening, so are the ones which

## PRAYER GROUPS

by Dorothy Webb

tell of physical healing, of the healing of relationships, of the healing of marital difficulties, and of everything that militates against people becoming whole.

Many healing miracles happened through the prayers and ministrations of George Fox and in recommending them he always ended by saying "Give God the thanks" and so we do for everything. We thank Him for His healing power, for His love continually poured on us, for calling us to this work for Him, for the unity of the Group. "Bless the Lord O my soul, let everything within me bless His holy name." "In everything give thanks." "If I would tell you the shortest surest way to all happiness [and wholeness] it is this: make it a rule to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you. This thankful spirit - turns all that it touches into happiness."

To keep in close contact with those for whom we pray is an important part of our work and we need to take that spirit of inward happiness with us. We must be prepared to be part of the answer to our prayers, and this answering may entail a greater selfgiving than we had envisaged, but God does not ask us to do things for Him without giving us the strength to do them. "Lawd, help me to know dat dere ain't nuthin dat You and I can't do together, Lawd."

Ecumenical is a much used word today, and in my experience it is the ecumenical groups which are the most likely to grow and flourish. We, who are Friends, may think we shall lose some of the distinctive atmosphere of the Quaker group. So we may, but we shall gain in other ways. Each of the denominations has its own contribution to make to the whole, and after a while as we work and pray together denominations are forgotten. It seems that the Groups which are most alive are the ones in which each member takes it in turn to lead. This not only makes the members feel they have a responsibility to the Group, but the actual preparation for leading which is involved is in itself invaluable. Nevertheless no one should be persuaded to lead until he or she feels quite ready to do so.

If there is not a Group attached to our Meeting or one in the

neighbourhood we may find that the Divine Spirit is calling to us to take the initiative in forming a Group. Corporate prayer for those in need is the extension of the work of Elders and Overseers, an integral part of the life of the Meeting. Though we probably start with prayer for individuals we soon find our prayer moving out into ever widening circles until it embraces all God's children everywhere, especially those in areas of greatest suffering. Thy Kingdom come, Thy Kingdom of love and justice and peace for all men.

Guard Thou in each the flame of Thine own life  
Till all the nations rise in search of Thee,  
Seeking, shall find Thee in each others need  
So shall thy Kingdom come and man be free.  
Thanks be to God.

(from Towards Wholeness No. 5, Spring 1973)

## HEALING GIFTS

by Damaris Parker-Rhodes

The healing gift appears to be common to us all, and I personally know from experience that 'where two or three are gathered together seeking spiritual help, healing begins to flow. Even those without much natural healing ability (like myself) find that sometimes we heal, and our power to do so increases tremendously in a spiritually centred group. There has been a great deal of recent study on the subject of healing and it is now possible scientifically to observe vibrations issuing from healers' hands. I have been fortunate in my healing experience to have had connection as a Quaker with the Friends' Fellowship of Healing for over twenty years. This has provided a solid foundation for exploration of many types of healing, while at the same time attending a regular prayer group based on silence, in which the names are spoken of those for whom a blessing is asked. The practice does not dwell on the sickness or distress of the person, but rather on the idea of their wholeness. Those who attend the group open themselves as channels for the Holy Spirit. This in no way intrudes upon the one prayed for, but rather should act as a catalyst to help the inner capacities for healing and wholeness. Many Quaker meetings have such Friends' Fellowship of Healing groups alongside the meeting for worship, and these provide a centre for those in need to ask for help - as well as a school of quiet prayer for those who attend it. The healing gift increases with use and those setting out along the path of prayer for others, of hand healing and absent healing, are helped by working with those further along the way. The central lesson to be learnt is that the blessing and healing has nothing to do with us, but rather flows in from beyond. For this reason there is no need to feel particularly special oneself when it happens. Inflation is so very easy if this is not clearly known to be the case. For this reason to have prayer partners is in many ways salutary.

For beginners, I think to heal at a distance is much more difficult than to give it to someone directly in the room with the laying-on of hands. It is becoming more common in the groups I know, for members to take hands at the end and then quietly to give healing to anyone present who needs it - several together giving the laying-on of hands. This both deepens the atmosphere of love and also gives practice in healing to the group members. It is simply an extension of what has gone before (sending out healing) and conveys the blessing of the living silence of communion with the divine in a special way to someone.

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Personally I always start with deep breathing, asking the Holy Spirit to breathe within my breath, and after a short while I picture (and usually see) the Light of the divine. This centres on the third eye and travels to the heart, which I picture as a flower of light opening for the light

to flow forth from it to those in need. I usually spend almost half the time in the introductory period in entering the Light, and some minutes at the end in consciously closing the heart centre and returning to my ordinary state. However, there are as many ways in as there are those who heal and pray.

I have been very fortunate over the years in my prayer companions. During the past few years I have visited a vicar's wife in a neighbouring village, and once a week at nine in the morning we meet for an hour. This weekly occasion has turned into a precious prayer partnership in which we remember the needs of the village, our friends and our families. I am particularly blessed in this friendship because while I am a Light-centred type of soul, my friend is a very Jesus-centred one. Together we enter into one another's experience, and while she sometimes sees Light when with me, several times I have very directly known the presence of Jesus of Galilee. On one of these occasions, Jesus seemed to both of us to be sitting on the third chair in the room, and on another we felt his holy hands laid on our heads in blessing. This for me is a very different experience from that of the Cosmic Christ - much more intimate, personal and human, and teaches me something about the truth known by the evangelicals.

Another group to which I belonged, which ran for about six years, I myself started as an experimental meditation group, and during the last three years this became largely a healing group, drawing to it a number of people with a special healing vocation. Others of us then found our own gifts strengthened there and we knew very close and intimate shared communion of spirit. Such groups as these are very precious, perhaps one's most precious possession of all, and they provide support in a marvellous way in times of suffering and adversity. These webs of relationship are the very stuff of the Kingdom of Heaven and their closeness provides a means of sending out healing far beyond their confines.

Such groups are not easy to establish, but one way to begin is to open oneself inwardly in desire. I certainly did this when originally I founded the experimental meditation group, praying for something of the kind to come about for a year or more before the hope was realized. Then those who formed the group were people just around me whom previously I would not have thought of asking. Where one has a need oneself, often others in fact have it too, and the Spirit may draw us together when one begins to be aware enough to ask. Healing arises from sharing. Love and the ministry of healing is based upon that.

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Power of the inner kind increases with use. It is not unusual for telepathy to develop between those who are close to each other in love. Again, prayer groups increase prayer power, and as the bonds of friendship and trust develop, charismatic healing gifts arise. This type of spiritual study and prayer fellowship has been the most precious part of my life for many

years. Such groups sustain and bind people together so that when one falls ill, feels depressed or suffers a bereavement, he or she may count upon the friendship of the others. It is this kind of relationship where there is both giving and receiving at an inner level, which sometimes extends beyond the grave.

(From *The way out is the way in*, by Damaris Parker-Rhodes, QHS, 1985)

## PRAYING FOR RESULTS

by Mary Shearer

Many years ago in my first enthusiasm for Friends and being a Member, I met one dear soul who asked me to join the spiritual healing group at our meeting. I didn't manage to get to the weekly meetings but I was given a prayer list every month: a list on a scrap of paper and the suggestion that I should pray for my six people every morning.

I wondered how it could possibly help them since I did not even know them, or what their trouble was. Surely it was important to know what help they needed and whether our prayers were answered or not ...?

Dorothea explained. "We lift each one up into God's presence each morning and we leave them in his care. What happens after that is not our concern."

This did not seem to make much sense to me at the time. I have thought a lot about it over the years. Now, another view has come along. Imagine you are worried about a young person who has gone off the rails, and is drifting, taking drugs, thieving, in jail ... you can pray for him that he may reform, learn from being in prison, turn over a new leaf, and find fulfilment and happiness in a new life ... is this what we should do?

When I was in a difficulty myself a letter arrived for me from a friend who had found an odd card in a shop and she felt it was for me. It started, "Let go. Let God." - a saying we may have heard before, and I suddenly remembered Dorothea's advice to lift our people up into his care and leave them there. Perhaps we do not know what is best after all, and we should not interfere or try to pray for someone else's needs ... what we think are his needs. Perhaps it is only necessary to put them into God's care. He will find a way and it will be a much better way than anything we could have thought of, fitting into the whole of that person's life.

Perhaps it is arrogance that makes us pray for certain things, for certain people? for healing? for comfort? Perhaps it is only necessary to be quiet and lift them into God's presence knowing that there is a far wiser hand to guide and comfort them in their greatest need ...? . . . But I cannot get away from my childhood training of personal prayer for those I know, and know about, and I shall continue to think

prayerfully about Geoff, that he may be able to cope with the blow that has fallen on him, that he will be given strength, and guidance about how to act, and greater faith, knowing that as far as possible it is up to me to answer my own prayer for him, by being loving, by writing to him, by upholding him personally, and giving him not what I want to give him - but what he wants: my prayers, my presence, my help, my sitting with him, my reading to him, my listening to him - my sharing with him, my advice, my compassion, my silence. . .

(From Towards Wholeness No. 20, Winter 1976/7)

## FIRST THE KINGDOM

by Kara M. Pollitt

Doubt of the effectiveness of our own or of our group intercession must assail most of us from time to time. May I therefore share with you the results of my own experience.

To begin with, I would recommend that details of the disorders of those on our lists should never be given. I have heard it said, "But if I don't know what is wrong, I cannot concentrate". I would like to try to show how this misunderstanding could obstruct and even nullify the work of the group.

In the first place, such knowledge brings negative thoughts into our minds and places the accent on the particular weakness of distress. To dwell on the negative can even exacerbate the very symptoms which it is our hope to dispel. Our thought should always be positive, dwelling on light, harmony and wholeness.

Secondly, we should not specifically concern ourselves with the outward symptoms at all. They are probably irrelevant and more often than not may be effects of some usually unrecognised stress or strain on a level of consciousness other than the physical, so even if they are mitigated they, or some other outward demonstration, may recur until the inner cause is overcome. We should think of nothing less than the whole person in full health.

Thirdly, we do well to remember that we do not know what is best for ourselves and certainly not for another person. To ask for the healing of some specific disorder may not meet the basic, inner need of the person concerned; there may not have been time for recovery from some subjective shock, for instance, or some long-term negative or emotional attitude. This is one reason why ideally teaching should precede healing, so that those asking for help may co-operate in fuller knowledge of themselves. The healing has to come from within and will demonstrate outwardly in due time. "To everything there is a season and a time for every purpose under the heaven". It is not for us to try to force an issue or to impose our will on what may be some unresolved inner conflict. The result could be an apparent healing which is only temporary.

*Do Not Ask*

If healing appears to us to be unduly delayed, we should not feel discouraged. For one thing, it is an ancient law that we should not look for results. Moreover, we cannot know what may have been effected on other levels. For instance, it may be more important for someone to be led to the transition to a new state of consciousness, which we call death, in serenity than for their life here to be prolonged. We are not all-knowing and so should never pray for any specific relief or outcome, but rather for protection and blessing.

To sum up, we should stay ourselves on positive thoughts - light, harmony, wholeness, protection and blessing, interwoven with love or compassion.

A further implication in the claim that we need to know details in order to work is the assumption that we do anything at all! In fact, the most effective work is done when we realise that we do nothing. No amount of concentrated effort or mental straining will help in spiritual healing; rather is it a hindrance, because it is an attempt to accumulate power on a level lower than that where lies the source of all true healing.

What is required of us is humility, in the fullest sense, and the realisation that we of ourselves do nothing. We are merely agents or channels for healing. What we can do is to try to live and think in such ways as will make us suitable channels. Then in intercession we offer ourselves as such, trying to still our feelings and thoughts and become empty of self. Ernst Toller wrote, "I am only the vessel in which the powers of life work and create and I dare not but be humble at the little I can manage to let come through".

This idea of "letting" is also stressed by Joel Goldsmith, who speaks of "letting the Spirit of God be upon us". The secret of the real practice of Subud is, I suggest, letting go and letting come and this is the basis of the deepest form of prayer. This condition of neutrality, for it is not negative, is more difficult for some of us than for others; without it we are not clear channels.

If we do nothing, by whom or what is the work done? Some may say God, some may use terms such as Divine Spirit or Spiritual Consciousness, some may say "that of God in us", or our Higher Consciousness, drawing on the Infinite Consciousness that pervades the Cosmos. Whatever words we use, the need is to subdue temporarily our own personalities, with their feelings, thoughts and aspirations, to free ourselves of strain and tension, to be aware in wonder of something beyond our conscious selves and to "let" this flow through us. When these conditions of prayer pertain, healing can take place. In our active Western world, where we assume that everything is achieved by our own strenuous efforts, this "letting" can be difficult, but its results can indeed be miraculous.

This is, surely, seeking first the Kingdom of Heaven. Perhaps we tend to forget that this instruction is not just a collection of words, which have become too familiar, but is an injunction arising from deep knowledge and wisdom. It is to be taken literally. In modern parlance, we might

to flow forth from it to those in need. I usually spend almost half the time in the introductory period in entering the Light, and some minutes at the end in consciously closing the heart centre and returning to my ordinary state. However, there are as many ways in as there are those who heal and pray.

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years. Such groups sustain and bind people together so that when one falls ill, feels depressed or suffers a bereavement, he or she may count upon the friendship of the others. It is this kind of relationship, where there is both giving and receiving at an inner level, which sometimes extends beyond the grave.

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Perhaps it is arrogance that makes us pray for certain things, for certain people? for healing? for comfort? Perhaps it is only necessary to be quiet and lift them into God's presence knowing that there is a far wiser hand to guide and comfort them in their greatest need ...? . . . But I cannot get away from my childhood training of personal prayer for those I know, and know about, and I shall continue to think

speak of that point of rest in the depths beyond our normal consciousness. To seek anything less than this, whether it be healing for ourselves or others, or any aspiration of the personality, works no miracle. If, however, we can be humble, open ourselves to the divine flow and seek first the Kingdom of Heaven for its own sake, with no lesser consideration, then we are assured that all else will be added. I have proved this to be true.

If only two or three Friends in a group could achieve this and hold themselves steady in silence, in stillness and in wonder, while one member goes quietly through the list of names, the effectiveness of the group would be increased a hundredfold. Of course it is not easy!

(From *Towards Wholeness* No. 7, Autumn 1973)

**The Friends Fellowship of Healing** is a recognised interest group of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers).

The Fellowship 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 has 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, publishes a magazine 'Towards Wholeness' and has two residential centres. Further information may be obtained from the Membership Secretary, Donald Coles, 8 Norwood Avenue, Exeter, Devon EX2 4RT.