

At a very early stage in the discussion on the possible development of a Quaker Healers' Group, the Fellowship's committee decided to begin work on the draft of a Quaker Healing Testimony and agreed that the development of the two ideas should proceed in parallel. It was felt not only that they were closely linked but also that a Healing Testimony could be of value to both the Fellowship and the Society as a whole. The concept of healing in its broadest sense has always been a central strand in the spiritual philosophy of Friends and, as healing becomes more fully understood and accepted in the wider community, it was considered that the contribution that Friends in general and the Fellowship in particular have made and continue to make in this field could well be presented in the form of a Healing Testimony.

After much thought, drafting and re-drafting the committee has agreed on the text set out below, which is intended for consideration by the members of the Fellowship. The content has been divided into two parts, following the style found in *Quaker Faith and Practice*. There is an initial preamble, explaining the background to the Testimony, and then the main body of the Testimony itself. It is hoped that a final text will be agreed at the committee meeting on July 19th, ready for presentation at the annual general meeting. If it is accepted by the AGM then wider consultation within the Society will be undertaken.

Any comments regarding the general concept of the testimony or on specific parts of the text should be sent to me at: 14 Eythorne Close, Kennington, Ashford, Kent, TN24 9LP, by the end of May.

Towards a Quaker Healing Testimony

Preamble

Since 1935 the Friends Fellowship of Healing has sought to uphold the cause of a healing ministry within the Society of Friends and to practise healing for the benefit of those in need. For many years this was done through the practice of prayer for healing (distant healing) by individuals and the Fellowship's many prayer groups. More recently, it has been widened by the inclusion of counselling, the laying-on-of-hands and other complementary therapies.

Healing was a major aspect of the ministry of Jesus and it continued to be practised widely in the early church. It was also practised initially by Friends, particularly George Fox, as part of their recapturing of the spirit of early Christianity. Although healing has been marginalised by mainstream Christianity for centuries, and although science and medicine have long ignored it as a phenomenon, recent scientific research has clearly validated the laying-on-of-hands and prayer for healing. We are also seeing the recovery of a healing ministry in many churches and of the practice of healing on a much wider scale outside a direct religious context.

Healing is a spiritual practice and discipline which is closely related to Friends ways of worship and to our wider approach to life; it is also an important strand in our

Christian and Quaker heritage, and a valuable service which can become part of an individual's spiritual pilgrimage. The Fellowship is therefore offering the following text for a 'Quaker Healing Testimony,' feeling strongly that what it describes is an important part of the Quaker way of life.

The Testimony

Quakers have always sought to introduce a healing dimension into human relationships; between nations and communities, within families and between individuals. For all of us there is also a need for the healing of our bodies, minds and spirits so that we may move towards that state of perfection which all spiritual traditions suggest is the true human condition. All healing comes from God - the source of love, light and power. Spiritual healing is the process by which we in the Fellowship and many others throughout the world, in compassionate service, seek to channel Divine Love through to heal others.

Following our understanding of the teachings of Jesus and of the early Christian church, and the testimonies and practices of George Fox and other early Friends, we believe that spiritual healing is a divine gift available to all. We feel that it is in right ordering for Friends to affirm, and to learn the best ways to practise, this gift.

Spiritual healing means healing of the whole person; it does not necessarily mean curing, but some benefit normally results. Frequently there is an easing of the condition and sometimes a complete cure. The ministry of healing extends throughout the whole of life; from the infant in the womb through to the transition called death.

As in a Quaker meeting for worship, where we seek in silence to know the presence of God and his will for us, so we are guided in our ministry of healing. We offer ourselves as channels - however imperfect - through which divine love may manifest in the world. In this we witness to our testimony that there is 'that of God' in everyone.

Our experience tells us that the Spirit of God is unconditional love and is working for our good at all times. We seek through prayer, meditation and worship to find ways in which we can co-operate with, and harness, this Divine Love-energy to help those in pain, sickness, sorrow or other adversity. We do this in groups, and individually, by prayer and meditation and, where appropriate, through the practice of the laying-on-of-hands in its various forms. Healing may also come through everyday contacts and relationships. A smile, a handshake, sympathetic listening, a phone call or a hug are all opportunities to give and receive healing.

The inner stillness which allows the flow of spiritual energies is also present in Friends who heal through massage, counselling or other complementary therapies. While they will have professional qualifications from their own organisations, we acknowledge that the spiritual basis of their work is the same in essence as that of spiritual healing.

We recognise that all who care for and minister to suffering humanity also need our support. The Fellowship seeks to do this through local Quaker Meetings, Fellowship prayer groups, conferences, retreats and other appropriate ways.