

Journal of the Experiment with Light Network

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Letting the Light deal plainly with us



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Editorial

Susie Tombs

In December, the Experiment with Light Network became a Quaker Recognised Body. This 'QRB' designation means that we have a designated contact at Friends House though we remain an autonomous body. Over the last few years the practice has both been tested in and adapted to many contexts and as a result more and more Friends have come to use and value this Quaker discipline, within Britain and beyond.

I hope this issue will give you a sense of that wide variety of experience. At the start is a moment of ministry which it seemed right to share anonymously; then a reflection on the joyful spiritual challenge that the experiment practice has offered over time from Sylvia Clare, a long-time practitioner; and next a personal account of the practice bringing healing in a time of deep distress, from Angie Dunhill, one of the Steering Group.

Our last article comes from Sweden, from Sue Glover Frykman of EMES, and reminds us movingly that of course the depth of sharing in the stillness can be the same in any language, and how valuable it is to give a longer space of time to going deeper..

One new enterprise is coming up in September – a 24 hour Quiet Day at Woodbrooke. We hope this will meet the needs of those who need time in stillness, but cannot take long away from responsibilities, or those who know the practice, but do not have a Light group to attend regularly, - but it's open to all, of course! More details are given via the link on page 5.



Light Energy Power

The contributor wishes to be anonymous. The words arose while in a group doing Experiment with Light, but seemed to be different from the usual process: a message given to be shared like ministry, rather than a personal insight only.

Shafts of brilliant, vibrant, warming sun shining intermittently: penetrating, concentrating and retreating throughout the shared silence on a cold very windy winter's day, commanding total absorption, acceptance and gratitude, deep, deep well-being. Surfacing memories and contrasts with the inner radiance gifted to me fifty years ago.

The power of that has faded but always the validity of the experience and the sense of absence as it withdrew, that welcomes any echoes of the total lifechanging certainties that remain.

Comparing this to the power which moves one to speak in Meeting - less personal, imperative, far from comfort or well-being - more

out from the self, pushing and pulling, and the words too. Is this still light? Is it energy, power? Coming from an outer source, forcing action, making us an agent and leaving a shaking emptiness.

The sunshine gives a dangerous attraction, like moth to a flame, gets too hot, too dazzling. But the loving, gentle, personal, gathering in of that possession which is given exceeds words and combines light, energy and power and fills and spills over.

Thank you for the sharing within the group.

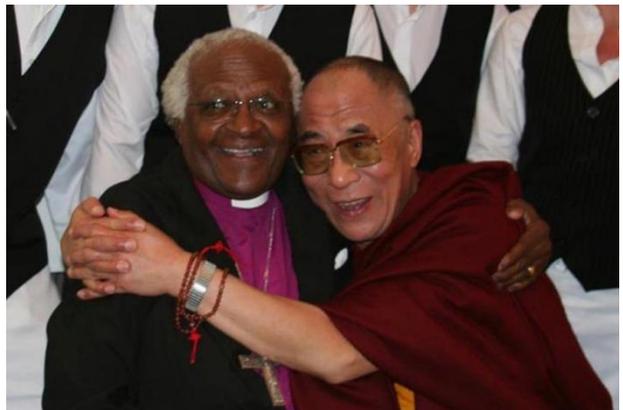


Being a Light Experimenter

Sylvia Clare

I attended an Experiment with Light course at Woodbrooke a few years ago now but the experience has never left me and I am now part of an online group who started off with Experiment with Light meditations and sharing only. But now we have diversified into looking at light from many different directions, poetry, e.g. by Rumi and Thich Nhat Hanh, currently conversations between the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu, and many other inspirational pieces of writing, thought and interpretation of the many faces of a spiritual journey.

This richness, this bounty of beautiful words, insights and shared understandings is now an essential part of my weekly routine, meeting every Wednesday. Sometimes others pop in for a while but the core of us remain committed to our weekly meetings, on ZOOM now, as skype quality faded.



For me the beauty of Quakerism is also that it allows you to explore spiritual teachings from diverse sources. It encourages us to open heart and mind to the wonderful tapestry that is the human spirit journey towards understanding, and how much that varies for each of us and yet remains the same destination, the Light.

These precious hours spent in communion with others from all over the planet has become a touchstone for me, a reminder that we are all connected, we are all part of the whole, we share this home planet equally and we are all holding that of the light within each of us, no matter how it may appear externally.

My spiritual journey has taken so many twists and turns over the years and nowadays I am less committed to the idea of one way. I am not a spiritual tourist however, cherry picking what works for me and what is easiest. In fact, I look for what challenges me most deeply, what takes me to task for the areas I still need to work on and what encourages me to take leaps instead of tiptoes. I have never settled in my life, never been happy for the easy way through, always on some mission or another. The Experiment was the start of even more journeys and experiments, but every so often it is good to go back to that root too, to work through one of the many versions of the Experiment and see what it brings up next for me. Deep gratitude springs to mind for me, for all these explorations have brought me, but especially the joy of the spiritual challenge. What else is there in life really?

Upholding and Upheld

Angie Dunhill

I said goodbye to my Dad to head off for our long awaited two-week adventure to the Orkney Islands. Pete and I were travelling by bike, trains and boats to some of the most remote islands of Britain. I was so excited but also worried. My Dad, 97 years old and with dementia, was living in a nursing home. He could become ill at any time.

Whilst away I phoned regularly to check on how he was getting on and all was well, thank goodness. Then two days before we were due to come home I had a call. My Dad was very frail and unlikely to live long. I was distraught. I had to be with him but due to weather conditions and boat/plane times I couldn't get off the island. All I could do was send my love and pray he would survive long enough for me to see him again and say goodbye.



I felt helpless and powerless and howled inside with pain. I sat in the hostel on Westray with the wind and rain raging outside and held my Dad and my despair in the Light. I went through the steps of the meditation and even though my thoughts were confused and turbulent (like the weather) slowly, slowly I became calmer. I rested in the warm

healing Light and I was enveloped in peace. I knew that I would return home as planned and I truly believed that I would see my Dad again.

We arrived in Nantwich at 5.30am and cycled to the home, and there he was, semi-conscious but able to smile at me and say my name. He died 10 days later, agonisingly slowly but apparently pain free. I was able to be with him every day.

I will not forget how the Light upheld me, comforted and calmed me. A true gift.

Journeys to the Light within:

Workshops and other delights already planned in Woodbrooke, Charney Manor Glenthorne, and Swarthmoor Hall.

Three opportunities for an introduction to the Experiment with Light practice:



Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre,

1046 Bristol Road, Birmingham B29 6LJ

Tel: +44 (0) 1214 725171

Friday 23 - Sunday 25 February 2018

With Angie Dunhill, Caroline Kennedy, Caroline Trutz

<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/learning/>

Charney Manor

Charney Bassett, Wantage, Oxon OX12 0EJ, UK

Tel: +44 (0)1235 868206

Wednesday May 30 – Friday June 1 2018

With Angela Greenwood, Peter Estall, Jenny Chantler

<http://www.charneymanor.com/events>



Glenthorne Quaker Centre

Easedale Road, Grasmere, Cumbria LA22 9QH,

Tel: +44 (0) 15394 35389

Wednesday 21 – Friday 23 September 2018

With Susie Tombs, Shantini Cawson, Hilary Painter

<http://www.glenthorne.org/events/>

Quiet Day at Woodbrooke

This is a mid-week 24 hour Quiet Day, involving a one-night stay at Woodbrooke. A chance to wait in the Light with others, using the Experiment with Light process. Led by Susie Tombs, an experienced leader in this Quaker practice. We will have a quiet area to ourselves. **3 to 4 September 2018.** Book with Woodbrooke:

www.woodbrooke.org.uk/item/24-hours-for-stillness-an-experiment-with-light-retreat/

Retreat with Experiment with Light: deepening the practice

Swarthmoor Hall, Cumbria LA12 0JQ

Tel: +44 (0) 1229 583 204

Friday 22 - Monday 25 June 2018

With Helen Meads, Andrea Freeman, Rae Moyise

<http://www.swarthmoorhall.co.uk/courses-events.php>



(The Experiment with Light and) Margaret Fell in Sweden*

Sue Glover Frykman

Very little is known about Margaret Fell's life, work and writings in Sweden – both in Quaker circles and beyond. Here, most of the early Friends that are spoken or written about are the menfolk. This term, at the Quaker Retreat Centre of Svartbäcken, near Rimbo, retreats are being offered on three Swedish Quaker women: Emelia Fogelklou, Jeanna Oterdahl and Elin Wägner. To highlight another influential Quaker women, Julia Ryberg and I were minded to offer a retreat on Margaret Fell, commonly known in the Quaker world as the Mother of Quakerism, and share with others what she has meant for and to us.



Ten participants signed up for the retreat at the beginning of November. In total we were twelve: six men and six women. Four of us were Quakers, but only the two of us had any prior knowledge of Margaret Fell. There were reasons for the

participants coming to the retreat – to find peace in a busy and demanding career, to find clarity, to dwell in the silence, to take time out from a busy life, to learn how to cope with a difficult diagnosis, because they were curious.

We began the retreat on the Friday evening with a potted history of Margaret's life in order to put her into an historical context. The retreat as a whole was silent, apart from the joint scheduled gatherings, where we were free to speak if we wished. We began the joint gathering on Saturday morning by reading the following quote (in both English and Swedish, as we had an English-speaking participant):

* Sue has also written about the Margaret Fell retreat in *The Friend* (Vol 175, No 51, 22&29 Dec 2017). The pictures for this article are of Svartbacken, from Swedish Quaker website: kvakare.se.

Friends, deal plainly with yourselves, and let the eternal light search you, and try you, for the good of your souls; for this will deal plainly with you; it will rip you up, lay you open, and make all manifest that lodgeth in you; the secret subtlety of the enemy of your souls, this searcher and tryer will make manifest. ... consider one another, and provoke one another to love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of yourselves, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as you see the day approaching. And dwell in love and unity, in the pure eternal light; there is your fellowship, there is your cleansing and washing... And the everlasting God, of light, life and power, keep you all faithful to your own measure; that so the resurrection and the life ye may witness, and the living bread ye may feed on, which, whosoever eateth of, shall never die. (Epistle to convinced Friends, 1656)

We began with this because it was good preparation for an Experiment with Light on the individual, both as a starting point for what we had planned later and as an insight into what the Light means in a Quaker context. As Julia knew most of the participants and had used the Experiment with many them on previous occasions, it felt appropriate. It also offered an insight into what Margaret Fell was writing about. After a brief introduction to the experiment, we surrendered ourselves to the process.

Following a short break for liquid refreshments – still in silence – we regathered as a group to share any insights that had emerged. There was no compulsion to share, but many did. One participant told the group that the Light had shown him that he had been focusing on the wrong things at work and that was why he had become so frustrated – he was trying to change the things he had no control over, not the things he had. He was amazed that he had not grasped this before. Another participant shared that she had been urged to leave any sense of bitterness and to love more instead. One person shared the clarity that had come about over a course of action. Another expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to go deeper into the silence. One told us that she had got lost in the experiment, but had nevertheless been glad to have entered into the Light.

The Experiment seemed to help people to go deeper into themselves – something that became apparent in the two other joint gatherings of the day. Later that evening, at supper – eaten silently – we experienced something quite special. People ate their meals mindfully, but this time did not return to the serving table for seconds, as had previously been the case at mealtimes. There seemed to be a reluctance to break what was a very tangible, deep, gathered,



worship. After a while, Julia rose to move the dessert and the dishes from one table to another. A participant rose to help her. The silence – the worship – did not break, but continued, as people went to fill their dishes with fruit and ice-cream and returned to their places with them. After everyone had eaten we sat still in worship. I have seldom experienced anything like it. We were in a thin place, together.

In the week following the retreat I read Paul Parker's Cary Lecture entitled: *Special Offer! What do we Quakers have to offer the world in these turbulent times?* In Paul's final paragraph he emboldens Friends to talk about the Quaker special offer with all seekers, publicly, put it at their disposal, open our doors and our community to all seekers and make them welcome. A safe space, an opportunity to stand and rest in the Light and be searched by it, silence, simplicity, the sharing of experiences and depth of worship were our special offers that retreat weekend, which were lapped up and acknowledged as meaning so much.

We like to hear from you! You can **email** us anytime on experimentwithlight@gmail.com with news, comments, enquiries, articles (short or long), pictures, poems and contributions for the next or future editions of the Journal, whether on-theme or off-theme. We're always delighted to hear from you. **The editors are Helen Meads, Susie Tombs and Audrey Vaughan.**

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Experiment with Light at Your Meeting? If your Meeting would like a speaker or a workshop to explore the Experiment with Light practice together, or a day retreat using the practice, contact us on the email address

The **Experiment with Light website** has lots of information and resources about the Experiment. Here's a link: <http://www.experiment-with-light.org.uk/>

We are also on **facebook**: <https://www.facebook.com/ExperimentwithLight> and **twitter**: [@ExperimentLight](https://twitter.com/ExperimentLight).

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