

Journal of the Experiment with Light Network

Issue 29 2019

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Stirrings of life



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Editorial

Susie Tombs

Maybe I was overcome with optimism by seeing my crocuses in full bloom, but this issue seems to me have a theme of new beginnings. We start with a reflection on how the practice is being now embraced by people in a variety of contexts, as an anchor or encouragement to shared spiritual life. The final piece shows a good example of how this is simple and effective in practice, where the Experiment with Light process added a shared depth to our concern for sustainability. Between we have a deep meditation from a friend in the US on healing. The Steering Group have written to introduce themselves – and their work - which is being refreshed by two new members of the group this year. I will take this chance to thank you again for donations which make the Steering Group meetings possible. Written contributions from any of you are also very welcome.

The Regional Gathering in March will take place in Cambridge – it is an Eastern Region centre, but don't be restricted by geography if you want to attend. It promises to be a friendly and informal way to meet with others who value this practice. Meeting face-to-face and doing the meditation together is a wonderful way to support each other and be encouraged in whatever work we are led to do.

In these times of confusion and fear, I hope this issue will bring you reasons for hope!



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Deepening the Spiritual Life:

Light groups in Meetings

Helen Meads

It is very rare these days for Friends to express wariness of Experiment with Light. There was some initial suspicion and opposition in the 1990s, but this seems to have all but disappeared. The last time I heard any reservation about Light groups was in conversation at the Annual Business Meeting at Friends House during Yearly Meeting in May last year. The Friend (who had no experience of the Experiment and whose Meeting did not have a Light group) suggested that having a Light group could be divisive in a Meeting, so I was able to explain how this is no longer the case, as I describe below.

Whilst I was researching the Experiment back in 2005, I observed three Meetings[↓] where conflict arose around the Light group's existence.[∇] In two of the three Meetings, it was clear that one or two Friends had misconceptions about the Experiment and taking the matter through business process dispelled or quelled these. In the third, one Friend in the Light group was persistent in his attempts to subvert the process from the Experiment to a form of meditation of his own devising and he also persistently commented on others' sharing, to their distress, despite his repeatedly being asked not to do so. In this third case the Meeting Elders eventually stepped in. I found that not only did business meeting process and Elders' intervention help enormously, but also that the process of the Experiment itself helped Friends in the Light group to see the situation very clearly, so that they were guided as to what action to take.

I discussed my observations and thinking with Rex and Catherine King Ambler and together we devised advice on how to avoid the pitfalls into which these three Meetings had fallen. The initial advice (2009) is still on the website[⊃] and it has since been refined into a form of Guidance, Questions and Counsel (2014), also on the website.[⊄] When we get emails about establishing a Light group or having a workshop we refer our Friends to the advice on the website as part of our response. The 2014 advice is also available as a handout at workshops



[↓] I wrote in my thesis about only two of them, as the position in the third was so similar to one of the others.

[∇] The full details are dealt with from an academic perspective in Chapter 7 of my thesis: <http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/3076/1/Meads11PhD.pdf>, from p248, but especially from p262.

[⊃] <http://www.experiment-with-light.org.uk/guidance.pdf>.

[⊄] <http://www.experiment-with-light.org.uk/whatislg.pdf>.



and now we also have a document setting out the Light group review process, not least because reporting back to the LM or AM regularly provides further opportunity for Friends who are not in the Light group to ask questions and have any misgivings allayed.↔

So, my answer to the Friend at Yearly Meeting was that we advise that the establishment of a Light group (or the request for a Meeting workshop) be taken through the Meeting's business process, so that everyone has an opportunity to air their questions and so that misunderstandings and division do not arise. One aspect Friends particularly dislike is closed groups, so we recommend Light groups be open to all. Further, recent experience in my own Meeting and Light group has been that the last four newcomers to Meeting have joined the Light group and this has helped to settle and integrate them into Meeting very quickly and deeply, whether they have remained in the Light group or not. Over the years it has been Light group practice which has prompted some Friends to apply for membership.

Things have also moved on within Britain Yearly Meeting generally since the 1990s. The Experiment with Light Network is now a Quaker Recognised Body, for example, with a designated member of staff at Friends House as liaison.

In terms of recognised events and the life of BYM, the Network was asked to provide three sessions at Yearly Meeting Gathering in 2014 (a talk by Rex on Waiting in the Light; an afternoon introduction to the Experiment by Catherine and Susie; and a forum for sharing and airing experiences). At YMG 2017 the Network held 'waiting in the Light' Larks sessions at 8am and Owls at 10pm each day as well as two introductions and meditations on the middle day. There were also events at Yearly Meeting 2018 and an invitation has been extended for YM 2019. *[On the Sunday evening. Ed]* Many Friends are finding the Experiment for the first time at YM and those who attend them have found the Larks and Owls sessions integrated them into the large event that is YMG.

We also find we are getting requests for workshops in Meetings specifically to deepen their spiritual life. Elders of one Local Meeting felt that as older weighty Friends had passed on there was a lacuna in Meeting, so they asked for an introductory day with a view to establishing a Light group in order to help anchor the Meeting's spiritual life. Another Meeting was given money 'to assist the spiritual life of the meeting' and Elders took soundings amongst Friends as to what was needed. They

↔ <http://www.experiment-with-light.org.uk/lgreview.pdf>.

had already been trying to work on aspects of Meeting for Worship as there was a feeling that it had a sense of lack and, after much thought and prayer, they discerned the Experiment would be a very positive way to bring the Meeting back to the basic meaning of Meeting for Worship. Another Meeting's spiritual review resulted in a request for a workshop which led to the establishment of an Area Meeting Light group.

All this is a far cry from 1990s misunderstandings and misapprehensions. It is not a surprise that the Experiment is receiving such a warm welcome now: it is based on early Friends' practice and early Friends are the foundation of our Religious Society and its Meetings. It seems we can provide something which is being lost from some of our Meetings.



Shadow

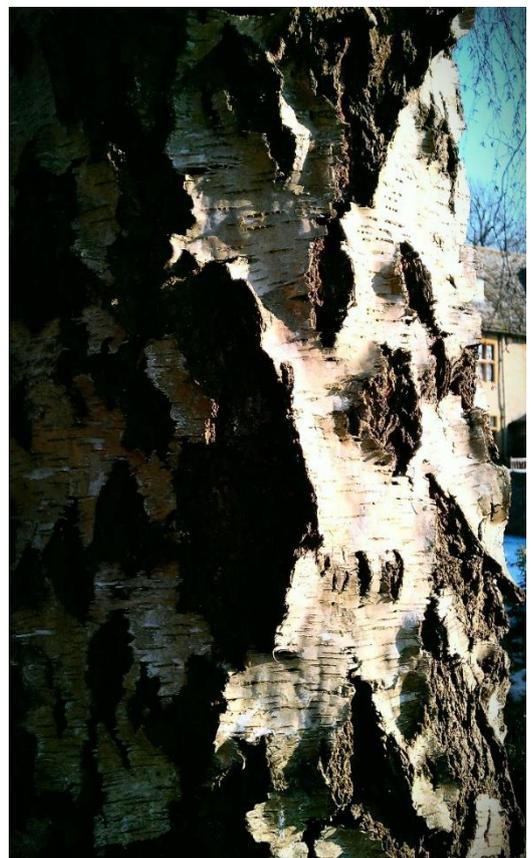
Arlpal

The following meditation arose in an Experiment with Light meeting. Ed.

Being part of silent worship and at the same time watching the group from a distance up above, I felt and saw a change as we sat together in silence. At first we sat with bowed heads in full sunlight; warmth. Slowly as sun moves, a cooling shadow grew to cover the congregation. I both saw the shadow, and felt its cooling.

The meditation ended with half the people in sunshine, half in shadow, with a curved limit between the light and dark; warm/light and cool/shadow.

Every place of silent worship and of Christ's Testament of the Good News for all, is of cosmic importance. The nature of worship and of Godly Spirit is important far beyond its physical/cultural identity. A church resonates in the solar system, the galaxy and throughout the universe of universes



- all of God's creation! God's love is no joke; nor is "church business," and each person's relationship in regards to corporate worship. However, as has happened before, a house of worship was subverted to use as a "den of robbers." If the disciples' joyful praise of Jesus did not happen - ". . . Peace in heaven and glory in the highest. . ." multi-billions' years old "stones will cry out" God's praise - ! A caring worshipping congregation throughout human history and today and future is important in the eternal celestial system. [re. Luke 19:38-40] Each and every soul is as well. The big picture is lost sight of when Jesus' cause becomes an agenda to make a winning score—for a person or a dollar.

Luke 19: 37 – 40 the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen:

'Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!'

'Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!'

Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, 'Teacher, rebuke your disciples!'

'I tell you,' he replied, 'if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.'

I continue praying in faith for repentance and healing of all people who pray. Not for victory or survival in a carnal sense; but for spiritual repentance and healing at the deepest and highest level. I pray in faith.

Silent worship is when and where "eyes to see and ears to hear" come handy (for non-verbal insights and understanding given). When "discernment" becomes a byword, without Light as its guide and Friend, then proverbial problems arise. These problems feel Biblical, because they are proverbs of the bad actors and failed examples that come to Light in the Bible. All humanity is vulnerable to this sad, misbegotten trend. "Go, and sin no more," Christ says to *all* of us. That is how repentance heals; how our eyes and ears start working—even in spite of a serious lapse.

Desire for repentance and actual repentance flow from the *same* spring—the heart. It can't be understood or forced, imitated or used; only through the Light can this occur—a true miracle! It is a miracle of humility before Christ, who lifts up and remonstrates, "Go, and sin no more." Healed. [re. Psalm 41:4]

Psalm 41:4 I said, Lord, be merciful and gracious to me; heal my inner self, for I have sinned against You.

With steady repentance/healing, Light leads towards the fulfilment of God's holy will. Only in Light the joy/love of a blessed church community arise for all to participate in and experience. Great ongoing blessings come for mindfully penitent, active, wise members of a caring worshipping congregation. Mutual love among all, and the blessed sharing of God's special, personal gift as each freely, humbly, offers themselves, invites and receives God's unlimited signature guidance and healing!

Thrive, and see loving, joyful, peaceful lives as they re-enter the greater community with God's true Light of faith. Be humble and inspired by God instead of impressed by each

other. There can be rest and peace, energy and triumph of faith over darkness and error. Humility, repentance and Light are essential to faith, and vice versa.

This meditation insight is in response to prayer, but I did not pray *for* it. Rather, sitting in receptive silence I was open to it - a gift. I share this gift with others in hopes God's Light and love make a new difference in various lives at many levels of spirit.

'the inward is the basis for the outward'

Experiment with Light Eastern Regional Gathering

Saturday 9 March 10 for 10.30 till 3.30-4.00

Hartington Grove Meeting House, 91-93 Hartington Grove Cambridge CB1 7UB

Bring a packed lunch, and your journal if you wish

Please let me know if you are coming – Hilary at paintermarden@ntlworld.com

There is no charge but it is helpful to know numbers

This is a Gathering for all those who attend Light groups or have some experience of the Experiment. Our theme will be 'the inward is the basis for the outward' and our subject our Light groups themselves and the Eastern Region as a whole. We leave it up to you to decide if you are in the 'Eastern Region' of the UK.

Journeys to the Light within

Opportunities in 2019 for residential Experiment with Light practice: Workshops and other delights at Woodbrooke, Glenthorne, Charney Manor and Swarthmoor Hall.

Introductory Courses:

Exploring the Quaker practice of Waiting in the Light at:

Charney Manor
Charney Bassett, Wantage, Oxon OX12 OEJ, UK
Tel: +44 (0)1235 868206

Wednesday 12 – Friday 14 June 2019
with Susie Tombs, Katrin Klosa.

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





Glenthorne Quaker Centre
Easedale Road, Grasmere, Cumbria
LA22 9QH,
Tel: +44 (0) 15394 35389

Friday 30 August - Sunday 1 September 2019
Angela Greenwood, Diana Lampen & Lesley McCourt

www.glenthorne.org/events/

Other events:

Introductory workshops are also being held at Sutton Coldfield, Jordans, and Golders Green Meeting Houses. Please contact these Local Meetings to find out details.

Retreat with Experiment with Light: deepening the practice

The first Experiment with Light retreat was held at Swarthmoor Hall in 2009 and has run every year since 2013. To read more, see the special retreats edition of the Journal: <http://www.experiment-with-light.org.uk/ewlnlret.pdf>.



Swarthmoor Hall, Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 0JQ
Tel: +44 (0) 1229 583 204

Friday 21 - Monday 24 June 2019
with Helen Meads, Andrea Freeman & Maggie Owen

<http://www.swarthmoorhall.co.uk/courses-events/2019-courses---overview.php>

Quiet Day at Woodbrooke

Saturday 21 – Sunday 22 September 2019.

with Susie Tombs

This is a weekend 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.

We undertake the practice in the afternoon and again next morning using longer timings than usual, and with time alone for quiet, meditation or reading between sessions. We shall have a quiet area to ourselves.

This is our second such event. We have been invited to continue to offer these at Woodbrooke.



<https://www.woodbrooke.org.uk/item/a-quiet-day-with-experiment-with-light/>

What and Who is the Steering Group?

We, on the Steering Group of the Experiment with Light Network, were asked to write a little bit about the group and ourselves for the journal, so here goes.

There are six of us on the Steering Group, appointed for a triennium, and then for a second one if we are lucky. We have three meetings a year and our task is to enable the Network to continue and to reach as many people as possible with the Experiment, without diluting its strength and depth. We arrange the teams to run workshops, both at Quaker Centres (Woodbrooke, Glenthorne, Charney Manor) and for LMs and AMs when requested. We answer queries via our gmail address, organise publicity, keep the website going and are investigating what other technology may be useful. We offer Experiment with Light sessions at YMG and BYM, in a shorter format due to the constraints of the gatherings, and are looking at how we can widen the scope of the Experiment. The Journal is produced by a separate team (thank you Susie, Helen and Audrey).

Each of our meetings takes place over twenty-four hours, to allow time for full discernment, and during each meeting we do the Experiment to illuminate whatever it is we most need to discern at the time. To give you a flavour of this, here is the minute on our meditation from our last meeting, when three new members joined the group.

5/19 Meditation: our focus for the meditation was 'finding our feet, living adventurously, and treading lightly'. A theme emerged of tending our garden, the garden of the Experiment, which may involve some weeding and cutting back, but moving forward together into a new season, looking after each other, and creating a new pattern. We are confirmed in our joy in this work and feel warmth and optimism for ourselves as a group working together.

This meditation showed us very clearly how complementary to each other we are in the Steering Group, and how our relationships with each other are fundamental; good work will flow from good relationships.



And here is a little bit from each of us:



Klaus Huber - I've been involved with Experiment with Light since the very beginning, set up the website in 2004 and recently wrote the book *Mind the Light - the story of a Quaker discipline* (available from the Quaker Centre Bookshop). I'm not presently in a Light group. I joined the Steering Group four years ago and, having served as Clerk until the end of last year, have now mutated to Treasurer. I'm particularly interested in seeing the Experiment used more by Meetings, for example in spiritual preparation for Yearly Meeting or help with discernment.

Jane Holmes - I joined the steering group in October 2018. I began experimenting about ten years ago. My husband Allan Holmes was already very involved and had begun a West Cumbrian group. We both were inspired by a presentation by Rex in Penrith in the very early days. I began a second group in Cockermouth local meeting after the Cockermouth floods in 2009. The two groups merged about a year before Allan's death in 2017. The group meets every month, in each other's houses, with six or seven members.

Angie Dunhill - I live in Shrewsbury and started our Light group about five years ago following an introductory workshop led by Susie Tombs. I became involved with the network because I expressed an interest in helping with introductory workshops. I find the practice powerful and I want to spread the word. This is my third year on the steering group and currently I am responsible for finding experienced meditation practitioners to facilitate workshops and courses around the country. I also help to answer emails that come into the network account. I find that being on the steering group is pretty challenging but enjoyable too. It's so great to work as a team and help to make the Experiment with Light meditation more widely known and practised.

Carol Foussat - I've just joined the Steering Group. I've run a Light group for many years having been inspired by the International Experiment with Light Gathering in Woodbrooke in 2013. I'm looking forwards to working with the rest of the steering group to find ways to help more people have access to working with the practice.

Hilary Painter - I read about the Experiment (Rex Ambler's book *Light to Live By*) years ago and immediately wanted to take it up, but didn't know where to turn at the time. Eventually, about ten years ago, I

went to Charney Manor for the most fabulous midsummer Experiment with Light workshop, and then we had a workshop in our area and I've been involved in our local group ever since. I've also been an accompanying Friend acting as elder at workshops around the country. I'd like to see the Experiment more widely used for discernment.

And our sixth member is **Kim Noy-Man Jackson**, who joined the Steering Group this time and is a man full of energy and ideas.

Sustainability in Wales: 'challenging, and open to spiritual depth'

Angela Greenwood

In January I had the opportunity to facilitate a focused Experiment with Light at an Area Meeting Sustainability Day in Mid Wales.

My Quaker friend Gwen Prince has been active in Sustainability awareness in the area, and in Quakers as a whole for many years now and was asked to organise the day. They are fortunate to have international Climate Change Expert, George Marshall living locally and he agreed to give the main address, which attracted quite a number of sympathetic non-Quakers. I very much appreciated the tone of his talk, which emphasised tuning into each audience and each listener with interest and appreciation of their situation and background, which may be very different from our own; then listening to their concerns and passions, before wondering if there might be a link with the current changes in our climate. For example he talked about meeting with Mid-West farmers in the US, who were concerned about recent weather patterns and whose crops had been affected by drought; and conservative evangelicals who had a very literal interpretation of the bible including stewardship of the earth. He said that in his experience if you just give people a load of statistics and doom scenarios they will just switch off or become defensive. This chimed in with my own experience with vulnerable children.

We then had some participatory activities and after lunch a young couple shared their experience of becoming members of **Extinction Rebellion**, focusing on their story including the challenging approach of this movement, and on feelings in relation to the future, to which we all contributed.

I had been in touch with Gwen as she was planning the day and as she wondered about incorporating an Experiment. She wanted the day to be both informative and challenging, and open to spiritual depth and guidance in the Quaker way. She has always had her own spiritual practice including daily meditation, and is long term a Light group member and facilitator, and so it felt right to include a spiritual dimension, even though the day would be open to interested non-Quakers. John Senior is a member of Llanidloes Meeting and was encouraging and willing to act as elder for the Experiment. I also told her that the Experiment with Light Network is planning to offer an Experiment on Sustainability at BYM this year.

In the end Gwen decided to invite me to introduce and lead the mediation, so she could stay focused on holding and leading the whole day.

It went well I think. Nearly fifty participants settled into the still silence and engaged with the process, including the time alone. We finished with the whole group worship sharing their meditation experiences, which was very powerful. People shared variably including images, feelings, and things they felt they needed to do. I was very struck by some of the images that arose in the sharing which I will need to think about some more.

Gwen said as we journeyed home together, that it had been a wonderful opportunity for people who have never tried the Experiment before to experience it - in a meaningful setting they were sympathetic to. Probably the vast majority of the participants had never tried it before, including one lady who had shared a surprising and powerful image with me.

