



# AWPS Study Booklet

In preparation for the AWPS Section Gathering Bhopal, 6-12 Nov 2008.



## Gathering in clear light and fresh hope

**Matthew 5:14-16<sup>1</sup>** *You are the light for the whole world. A city built on top of a hill cannot be hidden and no one would light a lamp and put it under a clay pot. A lamp is placed on a lamp stand, where it can give light to everyone in the house. Make your light shine, so that others will see the good work that you do and will praise your Father in heaven.*

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<sup>1</sup> Contemporary English Version

## **Introduction:**

On a recent visit to Palestine, many Bible passages came back to me, including those of our theme. In the southern desert at Tuwani, I walked a distance from this village at night, so I could look back at the twinkling lights on the hill, many of which would have been kerosene lamps and above me the stars shone brightly. I thought how clearly Rabbi Jesus of Nazareth used daily references to every day examples to help us lead the sorts of lives that our Creator desires. The light on a hill spells out safety, the warmth of family life, gives guidance to a stranger and thus enriches our lives as community. Hiding that light is wasteful and can lead to loss of all the things we care for. George Fox in his searching through his own personal darkness, knew the healing and enriching power of light. Since then, Quakers of all disciplines have found that focusing on the light within, brought real clarity into their lives, gave courage and strength to walk that little bit further into new challenges, or it brought answer to prayer.

At our 2005 Gathering in Seoul, Elizabeth Duke encouraged us to face both present and more distant challenges with hope. This hope works for us as individuals, but also collectively, when Friends struggle to discern the path ahead, using the clear light of the Spirit. A hymn from my childhood, which I sing to myself when covered in doubt as to direction is:

*Lead kindly light, amidst the encircling gloom, lead thou me on.*

*The night is dark and I am far from home, lead thou me on.*

*Keep thou my feet, I do not ask to see, the distant scene,*

*One step enough for me.*

As we prepare for the 2008 Gathering, this study booklet plays an important role in preparing our hearts and minds in our meetings/churches at home. You are asked to establish groups of interested people who will use this booklet for regular reflection and prayer during 2008, up to September.

It will be helpful if the group appoints Friends to play a variety of roles in this group process: a recording clerk, a venue arranger, and a worship co-ordinator (to suggest a few). Comments and any outcomes, where the Spirit has lightened the way of individuals going through struggles, or given hope to those who had lost it, can be recorded and a summary sent to me by 30 September. These will be shared amongst the participants at Bhopal, providing a prayer-filled link between the Gathering and our Friends back home.

We have much to learn from our children, so you might ask your Children's Meeting

convenor, if stories, art, drama or songs on the themes of light and hope, can be included in your 2008 curriculum. These could be brought for display at Bhopal, affording a further link. Thus we will overcome the barriers of language, distance and generation gaps, by actively participating in the lead up to the Bhopal Gathering. Thanks for your participation. *Valerie Joy*

**Contributions for study and reflection:**

No	Author	Yearly Meeting
1	Sachiko Yamamoto	Japan YM
2	Naomi Kamimura	Japan YM
3	Mamoru Hitomi	Japan YM
4	Archana Gour	General Conference of Friends in India (GCFI)
5.	Mallika Aiyub	GCFI
6.	Jamie Tabingo	Philippines Friends Church
7.	Barbara Mountier	Aotearoa/NZ YM
8	Dayal Gour	GCFI
9	Gerard Guiton	AYM
10	Emily Chapman-Searle	AYM and Young Friend

**No 1 “Are we gathering in the light and fresh hope?”**

I take this query as essentially pertinent for us to reflect on the state of the .Japan Yearly Meeting. When I reflect on our meeting today, I wonder whether we have not built the walls around each of us to close ourselves in and leave out others. I wonder if we are not making other members let alone, the newcomers feel alienated.

I think we need to open ourselves to see the light within everyone. Those who come to join us in the meeting for worship or in our activities are searching for something true and certain. They may be disappointed if they are not reached out to. If we could share the experience of waiting together in the light and fresh hope, then they may stay with us.

The same Spirit inspires us all, but I sometimes feel we are without our knowing building high walls even among us. I feel that the manifestation of the Spirit is each one of us, then I can see the light shining through the holes on the wall and

am filled with fresh hope again. I realize how precious is the presence of each person, who is already a member or someone who tries to seek the true light with us.

Though the number of our meeting is small and declining, I am reminded that when two or three people are gathered in the light, we are sure to be given fresh hope. Such gathering is essential. We can be thoroughly refreshed in it.

### **Query**

“Are we gathering in the light and fresh hope?”

**Sachiko Yamamoto Japan YM**

### **No 2 "Our religion is in the light, which shines and bears fruit in the winter".**

It maybe the declining membership or it maybe the diversity and complex modern living, which can be seen as ‘winter’. For the past year or so, I have struggled to place myself in the light where I hoped I would find the spiritual strength which had been neglected while not actively participating in the yearly meeting responsibilities. The calling came when least expected, yet deep inside I knew my physical strength was derived from my faith in Christ and my faith would guide me to the light. While I was delighted to have the opportunities communicating with Friends in the wider network, I also found myself lost in the unfamiliar territory of administrative tasks. To what extent am I able to speak for the yearly meeting? How can I bridge the yearly meeting with the world of Friends? With the declining membership, the responsibility is not limited to the committee members, but to all Friends in the yearly meeting. The immediate attention should be paid to what seems to be trivial as language. As I write this, not only in English, but also in Japanese, in hopes of reaching wider audience, there are still others in the Section who require translation. I pray that more Friends will be able to benefit from the global network of Friends.

### **Query**

Are you aware of Friends activities outside your yearly meeting?

**Naomi Kamimura Japan YM**

### **No 3 “When a lamp is lit, it is not put under the meal-tub, but on the lamp-stand, where it gives light in the house.” (Matt,**

5:15) A lamp does not shine by itself, but it shines when it is lit. We might shine when we are lit by a spark big or small. Friends past and present couldn't have shone by themselves without being lit.

I had a chance to join a group sending urgent relief to Sri Lanka at the time of tsunami together with Sri Lankan people staying in our area. Soon resident reporters emailed us that food was still needed but there remained lots of used clothes and they would like more food and new clothes. They might have taken what they just need however in poverty. We know the passage "Always treat others as you would like them to do:" (Matt, 7:12.) But we were not aware of what they would like us to do. We need to "be wary as serpents." (Matt, 10:16)

Now the world faces so many difficult problems. That is the same in our surroundings too. It is needed to listen to the inner voice and to know what we are really asked to do.

**Query:**

Do you hear what you are asked to do at present?

**Mamoru Hitomi Japan YM**

**No 4: SEEKING TOGETHER WITH HOPE: WORKING TOGETHER WITH DELIGHT**

Seeking together is a unique way of coming together in our community. For me, our corporate worship is like a conference call, and a tele-conference. I/we experience a sacred divine presence of Jesus Christ when we gather. Together his living presence charges and recharges our divine batteries and we can make direct connection and have communication with him.

A divine charged battery enables us to listen through profound silence to understand vision, mission, Christian mysticism and messages for the individual and community. These messages lead us and teach us right living in this world.

We experience being a seeker. The seeker's life is living out the in-dwelling Christ. Silent worship prepares us to get ready to take up the work of God together and with delight. We obey his commands, We live in Him and He lives in us. We know this through the gift of the Spirit. We believe, "Let our lives speak", not in lip service alone.

## QUERIES

1. Have you ever experienced that your inner light is shining brighter or getting dimmer?
2. How do you prepare yourself to let God work through you?

Archana Gour GCFI

### **No 5 "SEEKING TOGETHER WITH HOPE: WORKING TOGETHER WITH DELIGHT"**

We must have an aim. Whatever we do we must have a feeling of one-ness and we have to be hopeful. Quakers believe in working together with love, with one mind and heart. When we work together we must have full faith in our co-workers. Division of labour brings that feeling of faith and with this attitude we know the importance and value of our co-workers that brings success. We have seen the Weaver-Bird which brings a very thin grass in its beak and weaves that to prepare its nest to lay eggs and then is quite safe with its little ones in that nest surrounded by thorny bushes. Its labour brings hope. Is a Quaker less than that sparrow which is being looked after by God and gets food without any efforts? We are human beings who have much value and the Divine Spirit works amongst us with hope.

And all the labour is to be done with delight. We should not have doubt, suspense or grudges. With free mind and soul we have to work together with a selfless, clean spirit. Being mindful of justice, truth and innocence, we will be successful, with pure clean hearts.

I have been working together with the staff of Reformatory school- Juvenile Justice Court amongst the delinquent and neglected children. It took years together to reform these children. Molly Slothower from Chicago, USA, a Research Scholar visited the Seoni Reformatory the other day to make a comparative study of such children in Eastern Countries. Her remarks show how she was impressed by these children and the work done amongst them.

"Meeting the children at the Reformatory was an especially wonderful experience and I was blessed to have the opportunity to see how important you are to the children. You are wonderful influence on them and it is clear that you have

touched many, many children in very important ways through out your life. It seems that Seoni Reformatory treats boys better and with more nurturing care than the average. In turn boys seemed far happier and more engaged in their studies than I have seen elsewhere". "They looked very healthy and very respectful, well mannered and eager to ask and answer questions."

No doubt we have to continue to reform these children for the benefit of future generations and men may see our good works and glorify our Father which is in Heaven. We seek together with hope and we work together with delight.

**Query:** Are we ready to offer our services to work for children and Young Friends?

**Query:-** Are our Young Friends willing to work together with hope and delight ?

Mallika Aiyub<sup>2</sup> GCFI

## **No 6: GATHERING IN CLEAR LIGHT AND FRESH HOPE**

The whole world today is in spiritual darkness. Military atrocities continue to escalate everywhere especially in the Middle and Far East. Political battles continue to rage in most superpower countries that are supposed to set good examples for peace for developing countries that are longing to have better living conditions. But alas, the world is not in total darkness! Why? Because there are genuine Christians everywhere that are endeavoring to give light and offering it in bigger proportions through this gathering in 2008. If everyone of us who has that Light contributes toward a greater light, there would be fresh hope, too! That's something that we look forward to - greater light of harmonious and fruitful living and fresh hope of lasting peace!

The gathering of Friends in 2008 signifies a two-fold message: To make an impact to the world as clear lights by finding practical, tangible ways and means of doing it and to recommend biblical, practical ways and means of realizing fresh hope for lasting peace today and in the future. Attaining that clear light and fresh hope which our world is in desperately in need, it would surely make a much,

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<sup>2</sup> In September 2007, Mallika Aiyub was called to be with the Lord

much better place to live in.

Two Queries for Discussion:

1. Let's qualify what we mean by "The Light" and "light". How can we have "The Light" so that we are able to give light to the world?
2. Can the world attain peace without recognizing the "Prince of Peace" i.e., is Jesus Christ? How can we help them recognize and commit themselves to Jesus Christ into their lives?

Jaime Tabingo The Philippines Friends Church

## **No 7 "Seeking together with hope: Working together with delight"**

We seek the Light within. We seek the presence of God. We seek the empowering of the Holy Spirit to enable us to follow the leadings we are given.

In Meeting for Worship I wait for the presence of God. I try to be present in that presence, attentive, expectant, reverent, loving God and listening for what God is saying to me and to the Meeting.

What we experience in Meeting for Worship, or in other worshipful contexts, is our primary experience. When we wish to speak with others of our experience we may choose from among many different words. We use metaphors a lot in talking of our faith. They are pictures that remind us of the reality of our primary experience. Like Christ the Seed, the Shepherd, the Rock, the Bread of life.

We come from varied experience and traditions. The words my Friend chooses may be very meaningful to her/him, yet distant or difficult for me. We need to listen with respect to one another as we try to express our faith. Sometimes we can find a fresh way to tell of our experience of God and connect with others.

Then we will come to deepen our friendship as we work together with delight and share in the joy of our faith.

Questions: In what ways do we maintain and express love for Friends in our Meeting who are different or in disagreement with us?

In what ways will we develop and grow our love for Friends of other traditions whose faith words are very different from our own?

Barbara Mountier, Aotearoa/New Zealand YM

## **No 8 Seeking together with hope**

Seeking is as old as Earth. Seekers can be an individual, family, group, community and society. Seeking of light, truth and guidance and the experience of the Spirit of God is best done through Quaker worship. There are four elements of such worship, ie silence, communion, ministry and fellowship. Earnest spirits settle down-watching and waiting on the living presence of God and his power is felt. Individual souls are melted and fused in one spirit of the group and together experience communion with the spirit of God and have communication and conversation with him. Then they listen to his voice, seek his will and command, direction and guidance . We experience deep unity with one another. If one or two feel led to minister to the group, the group will receive guidance. Ministry is not a detailed exposition.

Seeking is done with hope as suggested by George Fox “O live in the pure hope which purifies you as he is pure, which hope, which hope is Christ , who was before us. The hypocrites hope is impure.. so, feel Christ your hope, which anchors your immortal souls in all waves, storms, tempests—sure and safe in all weathers. See also *Matt 6:33 and 7:7*

### Working together with delight

*Eph 4:12 (New English Bible) John 6:8—9*

Sometimes concerns arise during the Meeting for Worship for Business. Quakers have a well tried process for clearness and confirmation. There is no voting- members find their unity by seeking the mind and will of God in the meeting. Friends have held that if all are seeking the light of Christ within. then they can be brought into common unity, or the sense of the meeting. The concerns may be related to many specific and general fields- because of the Quaker general approach- walking cheerfully, answering that of God in every person. Quaker outreach in the time of the missionaries in India was usually in the name of Christ, to win people to the Christian way of life. On the other hand, service work meets human needs, without reference to any personal commitment of faith. We need both aspects when working together --- a community of committed people, to the inner life and to service of Christ and others. There love is translated into visible work, which glorifies our Father, devoid of self-praise or boasting. ”In prayer we may open ourselves to God’s loving, teaching healing-

re-creating us, so that we become people who worship in spirit and in truth and do God's work with joy (delight) on Earth" Philadelphia YM.

Queries: What do the words *Seeker* and *Seeking* mean amongst Quakers? Why is seeking *together* emphasized? In whom should we anchor our hope whilst seeking? How do Friends in programmed and pastoral meetings seek to do God's work? Do we really feel the presence of the living Christ in our worship/business meetings today? If we don't succeed in achieving that sense, can we discuss why not? If we do achieve this, why does it sometimes not change our whole way of life?

Do you delight in winning people to the Christian way of life? Do you think Friends should take delight in works only, related to meet human needs without reference to personal commitment to faith? Do we see self-satisfaction and is this dangerous?

### **Dayal Gour GCFI**

## **No 9 Gathering in 'clear light and fresh hope'.**

I love seeing snow fall in great feathery flakes amid a momentary hushed world. I marvel at how the milky rays of the winter sun give way to gladdening warmth when all life springs into a joyous, riotous conspiracy of Love, when the daffodils, squirrels and Easter hope compose the Light-filled lyric of Micah's compassion. Here is a time, in Fox's words, 'to sing and rejoice as children of the day', a time for 'truth to flourish as the rose', for 'lilies to grow among the thorns', and for 'lambs to skip and play'. Yet autumn is my favourite, watching the sycamore seeds helicopter-ing to the ground. And winter again: the time of gestation and 'thick nights of darkness that may be felt.'

Living among this cycle of seasonal wonderment is worship, too. Here we gather in 'clear Light and fresh hope' to be nocturnes of God's stillness and peace, angels of Light to our fellow creatures, to our planet home that oh-so-needs our cherishing. Here we are set upon the mountain top, planting seeds of resurrection. And in this grace-filled capacity we can transcend our limitations to experience the time-less One. With this assurance, then, no need to heed the 'tempests or the storms, floods or rains, for the seed Christ is over all, and doth reign'.

1. What are the experiences of God's Light (Love) in your life?
2. How have you overcome moments of inner winter?

Gerard Guiton, Australia YM

## **No 10 “Letting go”**

Clear light and fresh hope bring new ways of being, new ways of seeing, new understandings and new insight that may help explain or overcome or diminish old obstacles.

To be a truly gathered people, each person must bring their whole self, be fully present and offer their own piece of truth to the gathered body. At the same time we must be willing to let go. To let go of the distinction between *mine* and *yours* and find *ours*. To let go of that which no longer serves me, that which no longer serves us and that which no longer serves God.

One of my greatest challenges is to let go. I resist the call and try to hold on tightly, because I am afraid of what might happen if I let go, afraid of where I might be lead and what I might be asked to do.

Eventually I remember, or I find myself in a place where I have no choice but to let go. It is in this letting go that I know God; that I find my inner strength and can hear clearly my inner guide. It is in the letting go that I know I am loved and held as a child of the Light. It is in these hard, scary and uncomfortable times, when I am raw and vulnerable that I know that I am not in control, and that it's all okay.

God calls me over and over to find the strength and humility to let go and it is through this Spiritual Discipline that I am fed and renewed.

Queries:

Am I willing to put aside, or look beyond the ‘dust’ that hinders the clarity of the Light?

What am I being called to let go of? Am I willing to do this?

**Emily Chapman-Searle, Australia Yearly Meeting**