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What Canst Thou Say?

Friends • Mystical Experience • Contemplative Practice

*You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this: but what canst thou say?
Art thou a child of Light and hast thou walked in the Light, and what thou speakest,
is it inwardly from God? —George Fox*

Body Prayer

Run, Fat Girl, Run

Brenda Rodeheffer

I was at war with myself. From the earliest times that I can remember I was a fat kid, with all the pain that brings: the last chosen at games, finding clothes that fit, being ignored by others, and hating myself for not being like everyone else. I was not morbidly obese, but heavy enough that my body was my enemy. Like many overweight people, I had times that I lost weight and I was usually on a diet, but most of the time I remained heavy.

Two things happened which converged to change my feelings about my body. The first was that I took a routine life insurance physical, and was turned down for the standard rate as being at risk. The fact that an unknown actuary determined that I would probably die young made me determined to lose weight for the sake of my children. The second was that my oldest son became a cross country runner. I loved watching him run. I loved watching all the young runners. They ran like angels in a spiritual battle against the limits of earth's gravity. The young competitors so put their hearts into their running that they came crashing through the finish line, collapsing one on top of the other.

The life insurance exam caused me to go on a crash diet and a new exercise regime. As a world-class non-

athlete, group sports were out. Walking and biking were my best options for exercise to lose weight. I started walking. Seeing those young cross-country runners was so inspiring that I kept remembering the encouragement from 1 Corinthians 9:24: *Know ye not that which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.*

I started adding a few running steps to my walks. Wonder of wonders, I found it easier to run than to walk. Not that it didn't take a long time to

build up my muscles in both my legs and lungs, but the way my body felt made running seem more natural than walking fast. For the very first time, I felt that I was experiencing the glory of the human body that God had created for each one of us.

I worked on building up my ability to run without walk breaks until I could run four miles. Then I entered my first road race with great trepidation. The day of the race it was pouring rain. I ran as hard as I ever had, finishing at a pace of about 10 minutes per mile. After the

From the Editors:

How powerful the body is! What a wondrous instrument of communication with God, and from God! When the theme of body prayer first came to us, we thought the articles would be about individuals and the activity would be worship, whether alone or in a group. But after working with these stories, we have learned that body prayer is not so limited. It can take many other forms—fortunately for us humans. We are grateful to all those who submitted articles and shared this intimate aspect of their spiritual life. We have gained a new commitment to take good care of and respect our bodies as gifts from God. We hope this issue helps others to do the same, as well as pay attention to, enjoy, and celebrate this gift from God.

Amy Perry and Mariellen Gilpin
Editors for this Issue

race, I sat on the bleachers inside the Butler University gym, shivering from the wet cold, as I didn't know enough to bring clothes to change into afterwards. Remarkably, I won first prize in my age group of 40- to 45-year-olds. That was fifteen years ago, more than ten half-marathons ago, and five marathons ago. I am still heavy but I am still running. I am healthy and I am not at war with my body. I celebrate God's gift to me as I never could before.

I know now that it was highly unusual that I won my age group in my first race at my slow pace. Logically, it happened because the pouring rain kept most runners away, and there was another large community race held the same day. But I know it was God who found a race for me that I could win, that would cause me in middle-age to become an athlete at heart, to become fully blessed rather than rejecting a

I was experiencing the glory of the human body that God had created. ... I am not at war with my body.

large part of what God had given me. When I die, I don't want angel wings. I want to be able to run like I've never run on earth, with lungs that breathe deep and legs that run light.

Brenda Rodeheffer is a member of First Friends Meeting, Indianapolis. She is on a journey to learn what is clearly true to her, what she honestly believes, and what she has accepted merely because of the culture surrounding her. It is unsettling, but she is happy to be where she is.



Spirit Poured on Flesh

Deborah L. Shaw

This is one of the sweetest and most precious experiences I have ever known of Spirit poured on flesh. I had been wrestling with God about a behavior that I knew was not in harmony with God's will. I was at the

I felt each one of my cells shift and realign—like so many iridescent fish scales adjusting to the movement of the fish.

place where I wasn't even yet willing to be willing to be willing to take it into prayer. As I walked and prayed one morning I finally said, "OK, I admit I might not be right." The minute I said that, I felt as if I had been oh-so-gently lifted by the top of my head and oh-so-gently shaken—like a piece of silk in the gentlest of breezes—so that the ripple went from the top of the piece to the bottom—and in that ripple I felt each one of my cells shift

and realign—like so many iridescent fish scales adjusting to the movement of the fish. As I write this I can feel it again, and it moves me to tears. It expresses such gentle and particular care of me that it is beyond belief—and yet I believe.

Deborah L. Shaw is a recorded minister and a member of Friendship Friends Meeting, North Carolina Yearly Meeting (Conservative). Spiritual expression in art, music, and literature is of particular interest to her. She is Worship and Discernment Coordinator/Assistant Director of Friends Center at Guilford College.

From the Editors: Deborah L. Shaw shared with WCTS her essay, "In My Body," written for School of the Spirit in 2003. We are including here only a taste of her experiences of Body Prayer. The editors strongly encourage our readers to read Deborah's entire inspiring and thought-provoking essay, which is at our website <whatcanstthousay.org>.

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With Feet and Breath: Connecting to Spirit through Walking Meditation

Lisa Rand

When I spend time focusing on my breath, I receive a multi-layered sense of wonder: that my body was created with many intricate systems that somehow manage to work together; that, similarly, all creatures in Creation have amazing physical beings; that by feeling my breath, I can feel a connection to my Creator.

I first became aware of this as a yoga student. Then, during my pregnancy, I could not sit still in meeting for worship. Instead, I began a practice of walking meditation. As I walked I focused on the breath coming in and out of my nose. My hands fell into a comfortable resting place atop my belly. As I breathed in and out I had a sense of connection with my growing baby, feeling as if I were rocking her gently with the expansion of my lungs. Through this practice I prayed for my growing child and expressed my gratitude to the Creative Spirit that brought me to motherhood.

Walking meditation in pregnancy erased the usual dualities that surround us. As I moved, I found stillness. As I focused inward on my breath, I noticed the world around me more acutely. As I nourished my body with exercise, I fed my spirit with prayer. Through this practice, I was brought into a more holistic experience of myself even as I was brought deeper into devotion.

Much of my walking was along the creek on our farm. The opening

line of Psalm 42 often came to mind: *As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God* (NRSV). I set an intention to be present and open. I prayed that I would be a good mother, and that I would always have an awareness of Spirit informing my mothering. I prayed that I would feel myself nourished by Light even as sunlight fed the plants, as my body nourished my growing baby.

The ordinary miracle of new life growing inside me heightened my

... breath is what brings me to a settled place.

awareness of other, smaller miracles all around. The intense inwardness of pregnancy actually gave me a window through which I could deepen my connection with the rest of Creation. One day I became aware that the trees, bare of leaves, contained the ability to produce new life when the time was right. I felt overwhelmed by the thought that I was born with the egg that would become my daughter, and my daughter had inside her, already, the eggs that were her potential children. As I walked, the continuous rhythm of the creek struck me dumb. Each drop of water in that creek could have originated in the clouds. The scope of nature's fantastic rhythms humbled me. These thoughts would come through

my mind, and afterward I would return to the breath, the simplest of rhythms.

After my daughter's birth I walked with her wrapped close to my chest. I rested my hands around her bottom, just as I had rested them upon my swollen belly. Until my daughter was eight months old, I did not attend meeting for worship, and then only once before she turned a year. Instead, my worship was in walking. While I did not have a community of Friends on these walks, I had an intense sense of connection to mothers across time. This surprised and humbled me. As I held my daughter close, felt her breath and mine falling into sync, I had an awareness that the same *prana*, the same life energy in us, has been in life forms for countless years. The same Source that gave us life also gave us, and mothers and daughters before us, love for one another.

Yoga gave me the initial gift of breath awareness. Walking meditation presented an opportunity to work with and cultivate this awareness. When I arrive in the meetinghouse, breath is what brings me to a settled place. Wherever I am, if I feel a need to reconnect with a sense of something larger than myself, I turn first to my breath. It has become my vehicle for connecting with gratitude, with wonder, with my sense of myself as a part of Creation.

Lisa Rand is a member of Unami Meeting, Pennsylvania. She spends her time writing, practicing yoga, walking in the woods, learning African dance, studying Buddhism, and reading Sufi poetry. Lisa aspires to be conscious of Spirit at all times, and gives top priority to cloud watching with her young daughter.

To experience the full fruits of the Spirit, we need to pray with all of our body. We need to sit when the Spirit says sit, pray when the Spirit says pray, and move when the Spirit says move. Mark Judkins Helpsmeet (Friends Journal, February 2000, page 19) Reprinted in What Canst Thou Say, May 2000: Traditions That Feed My Soul.

Dancing with God

Jennifer Elam

*Dear God, you lead;
I don't know how.
I am better at following;
Sometimes I don't know
how to do that either.*

*God says, "Write."
I don't know how.
I write. And it is good.*

*God says, "Pray."
I don't know how.
I pray. And it is good.*

*God says, "Paint."
I don't know how.
I paint. And it is good.*

*God says, "Teach."
I don't know how.
I teach. And it is good.*

*God says, "Call."
I don't know how.
I call. And it is good.*

*God says, "Move to a different place."
I don't know how.
I re-locate. And it is good.*

*God says, "Speak in vocal ministry."
I don't know how.
I speak. And it is good.*

*God says, "Advocate for the children."
I don't know how.
I advocate. And it is good.*

*God says, "Dance."
I don't know how.
I dance. And it is good.*

*God says, "Dance as Worship."
I don't know how.
I dance as worship. And it is good.*

*God says, "Dance with Me in Quaker
Meeting for Worship."
I don't know how.
I struggle. I try. I dance a few times. I
falter. My dance becomes more rigid.
My life no longer dances. I pray, "God,
give me the strength." Strength and
possibility do not come. "God, where
are you?" The dance stops flowing. I
falter further.*

*Dear God, you lead;
I don't know how.
I am better at following;
Sometimes I don't know
how to do that either.*

Jennifer Elam is psychologist, painter, writer, and dancer, the author of *Dancing with God through the Storm: Mysticism and Mental Illness*.

My Body's Prayer

Rhonda Ashurst

Please be kind, gentle and compassionate with me and with yourself. Please nurture me with healthy food and moderate exercise, leisurely walks in nature, fragrant baths, loving hugs, gentle stretches, comfortable clothing, good sleep, rest, dancing, smiling, laughing, loving, playing, and rolling on the floor with your dog. Please restrain my excessive appetites. Please accept my decline with age, allowing the vigorous activities of youth to soften and mellow. Please love, honor and care for me when I have wrinkles, grey hair, moles, varicose veins, more body fat, less strength, and when I suffer from chronic pain and illness. And, when I can no longer carry you in the world, I pray that you will have the courage and faith to lovingly release yourself from me. May we both look back on this life and know we have served each other well.

My body is one of my greatest spiritual teachers, helping me to learn balance, humility, patience, discipline, vulnerability, open-heartedness, compassion, and loving-kindness. My body prays to me through illness and accidents. When I've gone beyond my limits, I end up in bed with a nasty cold or flu. In the last twelve years, my body has used my left hand or arm to get my attention.

In 1996, I moved to Colorado to take a job in a rural mental health center. One week I worked ninety hours to stabilize a client in the hospital. After getting home late at night, I was stumbling around in my trailer, looking for something to eat. I found a potato, but couldn't find a clean cutting board. I grabbed a knife and had the idea that I could just cut it open in my hand and pop it in the microwave. This was not a

logical thought, but the kind of thought generated by a brain that has not had enough rest.

I ended up pushing the knife through the potato and into my left, middle finger. It was a small cut just below the knuckle on the ring finger side. I severed a tendon, nerve and artery. A hand surgeon labored for over two hours to reconstruct my finger. For a month I was in a cast and was not allowed to use the hand at all, so I wouldn't tear the delicate stitching inside my finger. During this time, I could not dress myself, drive my car, wash my hair, go shopping, prepare a meal, or wash dishes. I was suddenly helpless in a new community where I knew few people.

Why must my left arm be debilitated in order to get my attention?

I learned the great spiritual lesson of how to ask for and receive help: "Would you wash my hair? Could you help me get out of these pants?" It is incredibly humbling to suddenly not be able to do these things for yourself. And I was met by a generosity that stunned me. A woman I'd only met once at a business lunch invited me to come and live with her. She did it with warmhearted compassion and showed me it was safe to receive, to be cared for.

It was a gift that opened my heart. I realized I had been independent to a fault, determined not to need any help and to take care of everyone else, oftentimes at my own expense. That is what good Christians do, isn't it?

Shortly after my hand injury, I met my soul mate. I don't think I would have allowed him into my heart had it not been opened by this experience of helplessness. Recently he

has fallen ill. An old part of me has risen up to take on many of the tasks we once shared. I have driven myself mercilessly again, and the tendons in my left arm have been praying to me.

I have developed such a serious case of tendonitis, that I can barely use my left arm and hand. I must ask for help again. I must honor that I cannot fix everything by over-functioning. It seems an easy place to go, so much easier than admitting what I can't do, asking for help, receiving help. Why is that so hard?

Why must my left hand/arm be debilitated in order to get my attention? In energy medicine, it is believed that the left side of the body receives energy and the right gives it. My energy blockage is in receiving, so that is where my body reminds me of my own needs. I realize I like giving and helping more than receiving, because I feel more powerful when giving. I don't like feeling vulnerable, which is part of asking for and receiving help.

In considering the care of the body, I often think of Christ's injunction, *Love thy neighbor as thyself*. When I'm abusing myself, my precious body, then how do I treat others? How do others feel when they know I am hurting myself to help them? Is it really selfish to put one's own care first, and then to give out of an overflowing bucket? Wouldn't that be more loving?

Rhonda Ashurst is a life coach in Alamosa, Colorado. She is a spiritual universalist and feels closest to God when in nature.

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?

(1 Corinthians 3:16)

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

(1 Corinthians 6:19-20.)

—Contributed by Rhonda Ashurst

Green and White Energies Flowing

Sally Campbell

Many years ago I was told about a meditation practice in which you allow green energy to flow upwards out of the earth and through your body and out the crown of your head, then allow white energy from above to flow downwards and out your feet into the earth.

Recently I've begun doing this in many different places and postures, sitting in Quaker meeting, lying down during my horizontal prayer, walking in the park or standing on a crowded subway car. It has become a great way to center and cleanse as well as being a lovely comfort.

The green energy coming through my body is part tree sap rising in the spring, part ocean waves lapping on a beach; as I breathe the tide takes the emerald fluid higher and higher. The white energy is part sunshine, part waterfall cascading down through my

body, thoroughly soaking and shining on each part.

During this time I breathe out dead leftovers, dross and clutter so I can welcome in healing life, courage and energy. The green energy as it surges up through my body dislodges any old brown leaves or other detritus and sweeps them up and out. Fear and tiredness are close partners, but I let the green force lift them both out of each cell of my body and sweep them up and away into the sky. The white energy blesses all, then takes any remaining grime or hardened castoffs with it to join the earth and nurture the land.

When I come to the stuck spots in my body I breathe into them; I focus light into them. One time in the silence of our spiritual nurturance group, I felt an old gunk-covered boulder or barnacled anchor of fear in my heart, as I had many times before. I prayed over it and spoke about it, and then I sent both green and white energy to zap it or at least illuminate it. As I looked at the boulder/anchor I realized it was not a

solid mass but more like a rat's nest, a tangle, something that can be carefully taken apart with patient attention.

Other times I feel like a tree standing tall accepting the rain and sunshine as gifts. I am a plant receiving what I need to grow fully into what I am meant to be, root, stalk, leaf, flower and fruit, with water from below and light from above. I see the green energy as God's life and strength and the white energy as God's love and wisdom.

I experience this process as a way to come to restful readiness. I see these as two forms the Friendly Force can take. The green life/light, sometimes mixed with blue, as it flows upwards helps me become still, straight and strong. The white transparent light, often suffused with gold, as it flows downwards, counsels me as to when, where and how to move.

Sally Campbell is a Quaker singer/songwriter, member of Morningside Meeting, New York City, and does decluttering work as a retirement job.

I wandered about for a long time in different districts, having for my fellow traveler the Prayer of Jesus [Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner] which heartened and consoled me in all my journeys, in all my meetings with other people and in all the happenings of travel.

But I came to feel at last that it would be better for me to stay in some one place in order to be alone more often, so as to be able to keep by myself and study. ...

However in spite of all my wishes I could nowhere find any work that I was able to do, for I had lost the use of my left arm when quite a child. Seeing that because of this I would not be able to get myself a fixed abode, I made up my mind to go into Siberia to the tomb of St. Innocent of Irkutsk. My idea was that in the forests and steppes of Siberia I would travel in greater silence and therefore in a way that was better for prayer and reading. And this journey I undertook, all the while saying my oral Prayer without stopping.

After no great lapse of time I had the feeling that the Prayer had, so to speak, by its own action passed from my lips to my heart. That is to say, it seemed as though my heart in its ordinary beating began to say the words of the Prayer within at each beat. Thus for example, one, "Lord," two, "Jesus," three, "Christ," and

so on. I gave up saying the Prayer with my lips. I simply listened carefully to what my heart was saying. It seemed as though my eyes looked right down into it; and I dwelt upon the words of my departed staret when he was telling me about this joy.

Then I felt something like a slight pain in my heart, and in my thoughts so great a love for Jesus Christ that I pictured myself, if only I could see him, throwing myself at his feet and not letting them go from my embrace, kissing them tenderly and thanking him with tears for having his love and grace allowed me to find so great a consolation in his name, me, his unworthy and sinful creature! Further there came into my heart a gracious warmth which spread through my whole breast. This moved me ... to test my feelings and to make a thorough study of the business of secret prayer in the heart. For without such testing I was afraid of falling a victim to the mere charm of it, or of taking natural effects for the effects of grace and giving way to pride at my quick learning of the Prayer.

from *The Way of a Pilgrim* <books.google.com/books> by Anonymous Pilgrim, Faith Annette Sand and translated by R. M. French, published by Hope Publishing House, 1993, pp 18-19.

Living in My Hands

James Baker

Massage seems to be a kind of prayer—a physical prayer. For me, there’s something about touch that is critically important to life. Let me describe how I began to do massage.

I was feeling lonely. I was longing for something. I thought to myself, “What do I want? I want to touch someone who wants to be touched, and I want to be touched.” I had always lived through my hands. I thought of being a photographer or a sculptor. But for once in my life I did something straightforward. I got some oil and a roll of paper towels, and I started rubbing anyone who would hold still. I started with my family, then my church and other friends. I took a couple of early, really helpful massage courses.

When I started massage, I loved the feel of touching a body, any part of it, with oil on my hands. I was *in* my hands. I don’t know any other way

of describing it. Once I have touched someone I never forget it. Working with clay was something like massage for me. It was creating something new. Except that a living person was more satisfying to me. When I did massage it felt as if I was re-creating whoever I was massaging.

When I was massaging, I needed to be a rigorously safe place for that person.

Very early on I realized that, when I was massaging, I needed to be a rigorously safe place for that person. If my intentions changed during the massage I was betraying my own inner ideal. That helped purify, for want of a better word, my hand-prayer for that person’s well-being. At retreats I became the massage person—instead of going to lectures I massaged people.

After long seeking I was led to my true life, understanding the laws of

healing. Later I was fortunate to be able to work with Dora Kunz. With her I experienced Therapeutic Touch as energy sensing and transference, rather than direct touch. I have learned to send love and healing by the combination of the highest intention and purpose I can manage. I try to allow my deepest self to be a conduit for the highest I know of Divine Love to flow through my hands. I think whatever healing is possible is a result.

Once, I saw a forlorn little newborn baby, whom I could not touch because I saw it through a nursery window. I let the Presence within me well up and flow to that child. The baby responded, looked at me, and went to sleep. On another occasion, a young woman artist talked incessantly during her massage, then suddenly said, “I feel like you are my psychiatrist,” because she hadn’t noticed my hands but was releasing her inner tensions. Most frequently, someone will be silent during a massage, but early on will heave a great, deep sigh. Often such a person will go into a deep sleep.

I agree with Dora Kunz, who once said, “When doing healing, people often say, ‘You reach out to the other person.’ That is not my way. My way is first to go inside, find your center, then, *from that*, reach out.” When doing healing massage, I experience what William James in *Varieties of Religious Experience* refers to as one’s center of personal energy. If the center has a place, it is somewhere in the upper center core of my body. But it flows through my hands in massage, and out from my body, as to that baby. For me there is also joy involved, a deep peace at my center when I massage. Perhaps that is the kind of peace Jesus promised—what Teilhard de Chardin meant when he said, “Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God.”

James Baker is retired and helping to care for his littlest grandchildren. He remembers fondly his beloved Downers Grove Meeting in Illinois.

*That wisdom was born with me in the womb
thanks be to you, O God.
That your ways have been written into
the human body and soul
there to be read and revered
thanks be to you.
Let me be attentive
to the truths of these living texts.
Let me learn
of the law etched into the whole of creation
that gave birth to the mystery of life
and feeds and renews it day by day.
Let me discern the laws of love in my own heart
and in knowing it
obey it.
Let me be set free by love, O God,
Let me be set free to love.*

(c) J. Philip Newell, *Celtic Benedictions*
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company
Grand Rapids/Cambridge
—Contributed by Sandra Bales

Leading Me to Wonder

Judith Favor

When—sitting in quiet prayer with my spiritual director

I notice—that familiar patterns of tension are missing from both jaws.

An image arises—My mind as a smooth beach, flotsam washed away on waves of peace.

An idea occurs—Hmmm... There may be a connection between two life-long patterns—chronic jaw pain and my old habit of remembering the past or preparing for the future whenever I seek to quiet my mind.

Physical sensations—Jaws throb when I test this hypothesis by shifting attention back and forth between past and future, between memory and imagination. Yep, it's true. My jaws start to hurt as soon as I begin to review something that has already happened or to envision something that has not yet happened.

Leading me to wonder—Can I really release facial pain by changing the focus of my mind from past or future to present tense?

But this precious treasure—this light and power that now shine within us—is held in nothing more than clay pots, that is, in our weak bodies. So everyone can see that our glorious power is from God and is not our own.

We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed and broken. We are perplexed, but we don't give up and quit. We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We get knocked down, but we get up again and keep going. Through suffering, these bodies of ours constantly share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies. (2 Corinthians 4:5-10)

—Contributed by Maurine Pyle

Inspiring me—To report this experience to my spiritual director, who says, “So that's it! Past tense and future tense make your jaws tense.”

Posing some new questions:

- 1) *What if* jaw pain is God trying to communicate in a language I've never learned?
- 2) *What if* this condition for which I have sought medical, dental, chiropractic and osteopathic help over many decades might actually be a spiritual friend instead of a physical enemy?

- 3) *What if* Creator designed my facial muscles as a kind of built-in mindfulness bell to call my attention back to Holy Presence?

Nudging me to respond—Yes, jaw tightness is a physical signal of mind-drift. What if I harness it, using pain to set a new intention? I will re-set attention to the *now* channel as soon as I notice myself drifting into past or future tense.

Savoring my vocation—This new *aha!* affirms for me the God-given link between body and spirit. It can strengthen my moment-by-moment attentiveness in service to ministry of spiritual direction and education.

Raising new questions—About writing as ministry—1) How can I write from my spiritual center instead of from the edges of memory or imagination? 2) Can I creatively play with language by using progressive tense (e.g., being, waiting, hearing, tasting, belonging) in describing ongoing actions of praying, guiding and writing?

Closing with prayer—Gratitude for Love's invitation to be present to Presence, and thanks for this wise and trusted spiritual guide who helps me tend the Holy.

Judith Favor is a spiritual director and member of Claremont Meeting, California.

Tell Us Your Stories!

What Canst Thou Say is a worship-sharing group in print. We welcome submissions of articles of 350-1500 words and artwork—line drawings or artwork suitable for black and white reproduction—that illustrate the theme of an issue, or that we might retain for use in future issues. Please send your text submissions in Word or generic text format and artwork in high resolution jpeg files. Photocopied art and typed submissions are also accepted. Send via email to <mariellen.gilpin@gmail.com> or diskette, or hard copy to **WCTS, 818 W. Columbia, Champaign, IL 61820.**

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Body Prayer Blessings

Alicia Adams

When I was twelve, I attended a session with a trance channeler that my parents had met at the A.R.E. (the Edgar Cayce foundation in Virginia Beach). This was my first experience with ones who call themselves our Teachers. As soon as I heard their voices, through the psychic, joy exploded in me. They were ones from my Home! I went out of my body into golden Light, seeking them. I returned to my body three hours later, forever changed. From that time on, Light energy and the Teachers became my Guides.

The Light taught me how best to receive its flow through my body. Ecstasy! I sat with a straight back, head balanced over my spine; my hands were cupped, relaxed, on my knees. Light energy entered the palms of my hands, coursed through my body and flowed out through my forehead. When this became easy and natural for me, the Light showed me another way to body-pray with it. My palms became hot; my arms rose to chest level, hands open with palms out. The Light then flowed from the top of my head, throughout my body and out my hands. It was effortless to hold my arms in this position: they were held in place by the Light energy coursing through them. It was clear to me that I was to direct this energy to those in need of it. People and situations would come to me; I directed the Light to them.

It was natural for me to join Quakers. The Silence, and the practice of holding someone in the Light, were ways I'd already been living.

Twelve years ago, I drove into my rural property in my small pick-up truck and found that I couldn't leave its seat. For five hours, Light energy poured through me, out my upraised hands. I was conscious; I was more than my personality; I was one with a

Greater Power that held me and used me for Its healing purpose. I directed the Light to two of my Beloveds: there was great need.

I leave the results of such to God. One unexpected result was the effect on me. Shortly afterward, I discovered that I was completely healed of a large, life-threatening growth that I'd been told would require surgery. My Teachers told me that I was healed while I acted as a conduit of healing to my loved ones. Body prayer blesses us as well as those for whom we pray, sometimes in unexpected ways.

Alicia Adams is a member of Berkeley Meeting, California. Chemically sensitive, she sent us this from a library, where the pollution chases her away shortly after she enters the building.



*The longest way to God,
the indirect;
lies through the intellect.
The shortest way lies through
the heart:
Here is my journey's end
and here its start.*

from *The Book of Angelus Silesius*, translated by Frederick Franck.

—Contributed by John Surr

Letter to the Editor

For three months, I've been exploring the relationship between our bodies and prayer. It has become a catalyst for changing Dan's and my approach to prayer—and to Life. Thank you, WCTS editors, for opening this focus. Thank you, Body Self, for showing us a clear way back into awareness of our unity with our physicality, our Earth and with all of Life.

—Alicia Adams

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November 2009

Bread and Roses

**Editors: Michael Resman
and Judy Lumb**

Man does not live by bread alone; he lives on every word that God utters. (Matthew 4:4) To those who came to help, it appeared the people in this very poor village needed bread to eat, but one villager planted roses. Soon everyone else planted flowers. They may have been poor, but what their souls craved was beauty. What do people really need? How have you been led to service, to meet needs? How have those experiences changed your life?

Deadline: August 15, 2009

February 2010

A Covenant with Creation

Editor: Patricia McBee

Everywhere we turn we are hearing about our planet in peril, global warming, degradation of air and water, extinction of species. How do these changes in the world affect your soul? Do you feel a special longing or drawing toward a new relationship with the natural world? What practices do you have to help you move toward right relationship with all of creation? How does the environmental crisis affect your relationship with the Divine and how does your relationship with the Divine guide your response to the environmental crisis?

Deadline: November 15, 2009

May 2010

Addiction and Grace

Guest Editor: Jacqueline

Hannah with Mariellen Gilpin

Sometimes addiction is part of our Spirit work. Do you live in addiction—with God? Did Spirit reveal your addiction to you? How does God help you live one day at a time? Has God shown you what triggers the addiction? Has God helped you when you've blown it—yet again? What spiritual gifts come from your addiction? Tell us your stories of addiction and grace. (Authors wishing anonymity are welcome in this issue on Addictions.)

Deadline: February 15, 2010

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