

# Community Building in Britain Newsletter

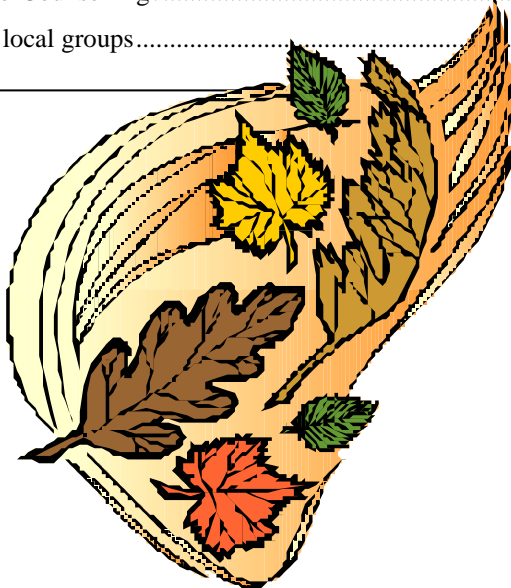
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*The newsletter is issued by a growing network of people in Britain who are committed to developing community building beyond that originally described in Dr. M. Scott Peck's book, 'The Different Drum', and as further developed by the Foundation for Community Encouragement in the USA (FCE).*

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# From the Editor

## Confluence

The Confluence is over, and I have recovered! I certainly found it very stimulating and also strangely healing in a number of areas.

None of us could be a part of everything that went on during the three days, because there were alternative sessions on each day, but there was some circle time together. However some sessions were repeated so I could catch up on things I missed, and there seemed to be plenty of time to spend together - over meals and in the breaks.

I went to two 'sharing' sessions - one on being part of an on-going group, and the other on sponsoring an event. It was good to hear of different people's experiences and thoughts, and I am mulling over my responses to both possibilities.

## Q'ero Indians

I also went to a session with Chris Cooke on the Q'ero Indians in Peru. He told us of their origins, on why they decided to make contact with the West in 1955, and something about the principles and practices they live by.

I cannot do justice, even in a lot of words, to what was said or what we experienced together in the exercises with 'power'. Perhaps someone else will share their responses? Chris, I also hope that you will feel able to share something with the newsletter in due course.? You obviously felt privileged to have met the Q'ero, and found their practices congruent with your experiences in community building.

## Open space technology

Then there was a taster session on 'Open Space Technology' with Chris Cooke and Jean Brasseur. This is a 'technology' for enabling a group of up to 1000 people to productively address issues around a theme. Some of it has a commonality with community building, but there are aspects specifically aimed at helping issues to get addressed.

If my memory serves me right there are five principles:

- 'the law of two feet' - if you are not learning in any particular situation, then leave it
- whoever comes are the right people
- a session starts when it is ready
- it is over when it is over
- whatever happens is the only thing that could have happened

## CBiB / FCE

A few of us had a discussion around the topic 'CBiB - how is it doing?'. One particular thought I took away from this was the challenge to recognise that far from having no structure, CBiB does have a 'structure', and norms and acceptable practices etc. The structure is unusual, and possibly unique, but it is definitely a structure.

Then there was a very interesting evening session during which Bill Thatcher told us everything we wanted to know about FCE. He said that he wanted everything about FCE to be open, and it seemed to me that he really was willing to answer every single question or issue we raised. I was most encouraged and informed through this session.

## Other sessions

There were also sessions on voice improvisation, on CB and the body, on community theatre and CB, on CB in business, a video on CB in prisons, and some games sessions. Forgive me for those I have missed out, but there was so much on offer and we were each only able to attend a few.

For me it was good to be there (even though I often feel these days that I do not want to be with anybody!), and I felt that it was somehow good for CBiB. I hope that others who were there will share some of their experiences and feelings through the newsletter.

*(Editorial is continued at the foot of page 3)*

# Community Building in Britain Events

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Fee</u>	<u>Notes</u>
5-8 Nov	Othona, Dorset	01308 897130	£150 (residential)	CBW
1999 15-17 Jan	Grt Massingham Norfolk	Sue Hirst 01328 862940	£120 (residential)	CBE
27-28 Mar	Edinburgh	Ian Davidson 0131 445 3381	TBA	CBE

Note: - **CBE** stands for “Community Building Experience”, which provides an opportunity to build community in a large group over two days. In a “Community Building Workshop”, or **CBW**, a third day is added so that not only can participants experience the building of community but they can also learn about the process through discussion and reflection.

There are two other sets of initials you might hear about (although neither types of event has been arranged in the UK for a while). **CBSS** stands for Community Building Skills Seminar, which deepens understanding of community principles and behaviour; it focuses on the skills of facilitation and leadership and teaches how to evaluate and monitor the processes of community building in ongoing groups. **LEP** stands for the Leadership Education Programme.

*(Editorial continued)*

## Thanks

Thanks are due to everyone who helped to organise the Confluence, and to everyone who contributed to it.

Once again the food was delicious - and remember I am someone who is not a natural vegetarian! So a special thanks to Roger Green and his helpers. Unstone Grange provided a good place to be, and we were able to make the place our own for the weekend.

During the circle times there were things shared which were precious - thank you for those. It was unusual in that we had all being doing different things between the times we were together - thanks to the facilitators for holding us in this new situation.

Thanks to Gerri, Teän and Cliff for their part in bringing the Confluence about. By the way I still love that name - I think 'Confluence'

very picturesquely describes what happened, at least for me, so thanks to whoever came up with the name!

And lastly thanks in advance to those of you who are feeling moved, even now, to contribute something to the newsletter so that others can share in your experiences!

## Anonymous post

I have received one or two packages from someone in Essex with articles that I am not sure what to do with. I am quite happy to publish things anonymously if you ask me to, but I am afraid I am not willing to publish things that are sent to me anonymously.

If you would like let me know who you are, and what you are suggesting I do with your contributions, I am happy to consider them.

*Peter Cooper*

*(See also my advert later in this edition!)*

# On-going Groups Page

## Leamington Spa group

Debbie Collins has told me that this group is now going to be open to anyone interested in community building, and that people do not have to have done an event first. The times of meeting have also changed to the first Wednesday of each month.

I have changed the details on the back page, so if you live in the midlands and might be interested why not give Debbie or Armando a call on 01926 337 409?

## South London group

I have heard from the south London group that they continue to meet, and value the commitment they are developing. I understand that they are not open to new members at present, but if anyone wants to talk about the possibility of joining at some time in the future they are happy to discuss it.

I also hear that they would be happy to share the experiences they have been through, and possible lessons they have learnt, in the process. So if you are interested, eg because you are thinking of starting a group, or about the situation in your current group, I can put you in contact.

## North London group

You will have noticed that there was a meeting recently for people interested in re-forming a group in north London. I know there are a few people with a passion for a group, and hope that it can get established.

I have put the details on the back page - if you are interested in being part of a group in north London please contact Margaret C. Walsh on 0171 794 9158 or Tom Deevy on 0181 444 9764. The format they used before was to meet from 1-2 for lunch, and from 2-6 for community building. There is a date for the first meeting (Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November) but please call Margaret or Tom first.

## Inclusive or exclusive?

Something every group has to tackle, it seems to me, is whether to be inclusive or exclusive.

We often start from the assumption that we 'ought' to be inclusive, and accept everyone who wants to come along.

This inclusivity is something mentioned at many Community Building events, and it somehow feels 'wrong' if we exclude people. Surely if community building means anything it means including everyone there?

On the other hand it seems to me (and please bear in mind that the only on-going community building group I have belonged to is the holding group, so I can claim no authority in these matters!) that when a group is open to anyone to come along, it makes it very difficult for the group to develop a life of its own. Every time the group meets it is likely to feel like the first time, and to have to cope with being the last time.

It is all very well for a one-off group meeting over two or three days to have a starting up and a closing down period, but I can imagine this being very difficult for a group that meets for just 3 or 4 hours. And it is probably just as difficult if a group is 'closed' but never knows from one meeting to the next which of its 'members' will be there. Even if the same people are there, perhaps the very possibility of people coming or not coming causes uncertainty?

## Need for boundaries?

It seems to me that it is important for a group to be willing to be inclusive to everyone present, and that if someone is excluded or excludes themselves this is something the group needs to address. However it also seems to me that for a group to maintain itself it needs some boundaries, some measure of 'exclusion', so that the group can actually develop a life of its own. Coupled with this perhaps a group needs to be open to new members from time to time - to allow in new life and new challenges?

Perhaps also for the best chance of continuing, a group needs to be 'committed', in that everyone comes every time? What do you think? What lessons have you learnt? Am I way off beam?  
*Peter Cooper.*

# Facilitator Training Group (FTG) Meeting

## Friday evening

The FTG gathered at Heronbrook House for their September Meeting on Friday 4th (evening) through Sunday 6th (tea time).

Heronbrook is a welcoming, palatial venue with lots of space, lovely gardens and helpful staff. The group was welcomed on Friday evening by a posh 3-course, candlelit dinner with all the trimmings, including flowers and smoochy music, laid on by their 3 chosen gracious facilitators - Erica, Suzy and myself.

After scoffing the lot, the group joined in an evening session entitled "Arrival" (to further aid their, erm, arrival) at the start of which the group were welcomed by the facilitator team, reminded of the first time nature of the occasion, and invited to, during walks, look for items to go on to the FTG Nature Table - a prize for which would be judged by the facilitating trio during Sunday lunch and announced during closure. (Judges decision to be final and NO correspondence entered into!!)

## Circle time

Saturday am was (increasingly) devoted to circle time, during which the group tackled issues in the area of sexuality. After (mostly) gentle exploration of issues around language; power; self image, powerlessness and relationship in this area, the group moved into task to tackle agenda items as follows:

## Withington hospital

The group had been requested by the Holding Group (HG) to decide whether it would be able to (a) support in principle the discernment of facilitators who would be able to offer skills

during an intervention by CBiB at a (mental health) hospital dept. that is possibly in need of the services of CBiB. (in whatever form deemed appropriate by the team discerned) and (b) carry out the discernment.

After considering at length the carefully prepared and well detailed and researched brief (from Gerri Moriarty) the FTG decided that it could do both. A team was discerned as follows: Debbie and Gerri and Michael if he is interested, with administrative support from Suzy and Teän, and "at the scene" support from Erica "on the day".

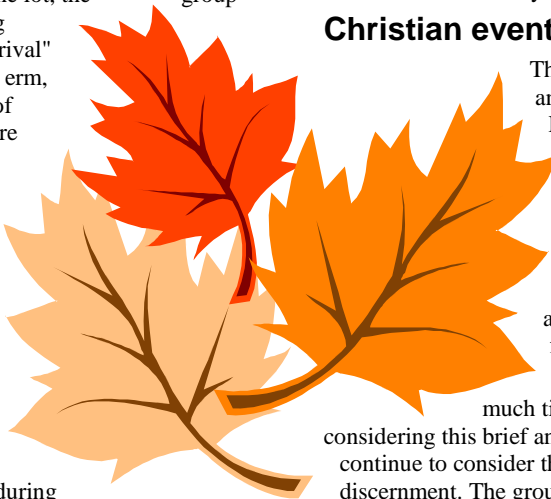
## Christian event

The FTG had been sent an "Event Brief" (by the HG) - a document proposing an event for Christians to be held in Oct 1999, and asked to consider whether the group would be willing to (at a later date) discern facilitators for it.

The group spent much time over the weekend considering this brief and was willing to continue to consider the event for discernment. The group requested of the sponsor, (via the Event support person and the HG) some clarification of a number of details including

- Budget and minimum numbers details
- Whether the term "believers in Jesus/Yeshua" applied to participants and facilitators
- A withdrawal of the phrase that suggests that the sponsor expects the facilitators to "have an expectation of reaching community"

The group was pleased that the sponsor is being so carefully supported by the Event Support Person and the HG.



## Training

Johnny introduced this issue. It was suggested that the group develop further their thinking of this process. To aid this Johnny made a space within which the group could brainstorm their training needs, a description of what they might be able to offer and any other ideas.

Much was voiced as being valid training experience, including:

- Listening to older members stories in a fish bowl exercise
- Interning workshops and ftg meetings
- Skill sharing exercises
- Dressing up
- Attendance at ftg meetings

along with many, many other ideas.

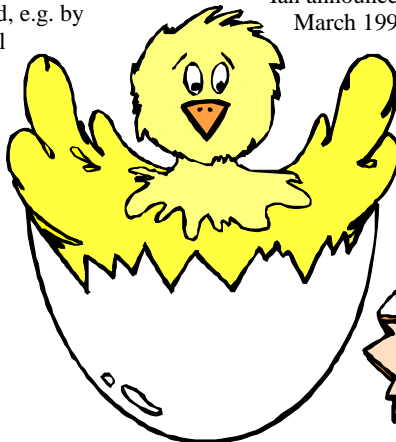
NB Tracy & Johnny (as well as others) had particular energy in this area. Tracy contacted me on Monday to say that she is willing to continue to hold ideas and receive communications for the group until the next meeting (in January).

The group spent some time considering further the development of it's training programme, and there was much energy for an extended & separate training / skill sharing session possibly consisting of several days together in either Spring or Summer 1999.

## Draft statement

The FTG were asked by the HG to consider a draft document which states what CBiB can do/offer when approached, e.g. by other countries or unusual circumstances such as the Withington Hospital situation.

The group was generally pleased to offer its support to the document, asking only that one or two words or sentence structures might be reconsidered/tweaked.



## Draft process

The FTG were asked by the HG to consider a draft document that sets out the CBiB procedure for making decisions in the process of supporting the sponsoring of an event.

Again, the group were happy to consider the document, to offer its general support, and to start the consideration process. One of the main points is the requirement that one of the FTG members be appointed as Event Facilitation Co-ordinator (EFC), a person who would hold particular information (e.g. an overview list of all CB activities) and responsibilities (e.g. to either personally, or via a delegate, monitor progress of an event).

## Discernment of Facilitators

Facilitators were discerned as follows:

- Othona (Nov 5th-8th) - Erica, Debbie & Chrissie
- Norfolk (Jan 15th-17th) - Erica, Chrissie and Paul (Paul would be acting as an intern in the mode of intern that includes the intern as a member of the primary facilitation team).
- FTG Meeting (Jan 22-24th) - Tracy, Anthony & Johnny. (NB Due to an oversight, the previously agreed Jan 15th-17th FTG meeting date clashed with the Norfolk event and it was decided by the group to shift the Jan FTG meeting).

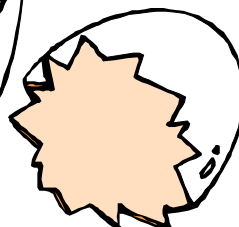
## Announcements

Ian announced the Edinburgh CB event for March 1999.

Anthony asked for any renewed interest in the development of a CBSS to be voiced to him.

## Nature table

Jonathan announced the results of the Nature Table prize giving as judged by the



facilitator trio during Sunday lunch.

It was a tough decision, with many outstanding offerings including many amazing feathers (several peacock - the Heronbrook resident peacock looked strangely more bald toward the end of the weekend!), along with conkers, flowers, apples, shells, egg shells, leaves, petals, origami blooms, twigs, cones, squirrel poo, nuts, nature art, blackberries in lovely arrangements and stones in spirals.

The judges found the final decision to be extremely difficult - many commendations were give, particularly to the nature art (well done Suzy) and to the paper blossoms (nice work Johnny).

The judges finally awarded the prize (a large bar of plain chocolate) to God. Unfortunately, God wasn't able to be with us this weekend, but had been

able to send 14 representatives to collect his/her prize on her/his behalf. Sadly, the prize had been eaten by several naughty people (mostly women) just after the Saturday morning session and so God had to make do with a bunch of flowers which the group accepted on his/her behalf.

## Remarkable healing

The care, skill and gentleness of the meeting's facilitator team was commended by the group - and quite right too- we were fab. It was voiced amongst the facilitator team that it was the GROUP that had done some remarkable healing work, including a deepening in respect, gentleness and care. We ALL deserve (dare I say it) a pat on the back (at the (God forbid) risk of being self congratulatory). Thank you.

*Jonathan Melville-Brown.*



## community building publicity

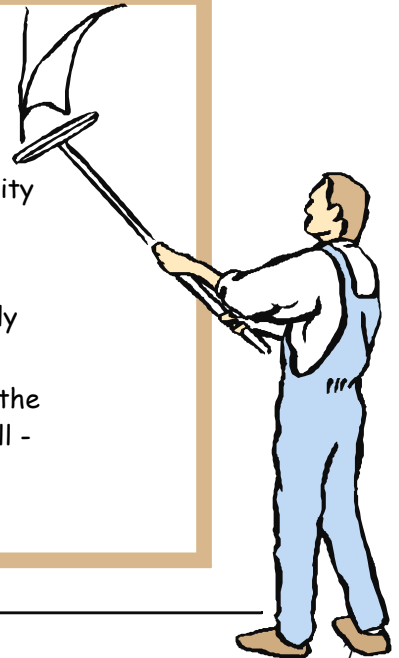
The Publicity Group needs new members.

Do you have an interest in publicising community building?

Can you spare some time?

Have you got any ideas, or energy, or possibly even relevant experience?

If you would like to consider playing a part in the network's publicity group please give me a call - Peter (on 01438 813765)



# FCE and CBiB?



It seems important to me that FCE and CBiB understand each other's structure and working practices so that we can each feel confident that we are addressing the group or individual empowered to act on an issue.

## Facilitator training

I feel that one issue already apparent is the need for



FCE and CBiB to be

## Working together

At the Confluence I had a conversation with Bill Thatcher of FCE (Foundation for Community Encouragement in the USA), during which he made a suggestion that would hopefully bring FCE and CBiB closer and facilitate our working together.

The suggestion was that CBiB and FCE should each list the issues that we feel need to be addressed between us.

## Apparent invisibility

It seemed to me during the conversation that FCE has some difficulty knowing who to speak to in CBiB due to our network structure so I feel that we need to address our apparent invisibility or obscurity.

I would like to suggest that anyone wishing to raise an issue, be involved in a discussion on the issues, or be kept informed of that discussion writes to the holding group by of myself or Peter Cooper so that we can begin to get a picture of the issues.

mutually informed and confident in each other's facilitator training and selection/discernment of facilitators. Also that we would need to establish a protocol for working with each other's facilitators in relation to selection/discernment and fee/expenses payments.

I personally value all past and existing connections between CBiB and FCE and am in hope of stimulating increased connection and community between us.

*Suzy Adderley  
1 Park Cottages  
Reading Road  
Goring, Oxon RG8 0LS  
(01491 875986)*

*(Editor's note: The next holding group is December 4<sup>th</sup> 1998 so it might be a good idea to contact us about issues and ideas before then.)*

# Foundation for Community Encouragement (FCE) Conference in Seattle, USA

## Feelings of protectiveness

Firstly I need to acknowledge that I arrived in Seattle not only feeling a bit lost, alone, small and feeble - but also carrying some feelings of protectiveness and defensiveness about CBiB (Community Building in Britain).

I knew I was in for a culture shock - the FCE conference being so different from our own -but there was more to it than that - after all, I had chosen to spend a much needed break in Seattle, not anywhere else, and absolutely did not wish to be any kind of ambassador for either the FTG (Facilitator Training Group) or CBiB. I think it had more to do with various undercurrents between FCE and CBiB which felt uncomfortable mainly because they were not fully named or acknowledged.

## Melted away

And then - the magic of circle time. Slowly and imperceptibly my judgement and prejudice and defensiveness melted away within the freedom of being a participant in a circle. I also had a brief chat with Bill Thatcher whom I had not met before. Although I was still feeling somewhat rebellious, awkward and clumsy, I think we started something positive and forward moving. Thank you Bill, for listening!

For me the conference had 3 different "feelings". Firstly the circle time, secondly "report" time and thirdly "open space time".

## Bosnia

Anne Howing had just returned from working for two weeks in Bosnia and was still affected by this experience. She helped me by naming the way out of the vicious cycle of aggression, revenge and further aggression. She named each stage of a new cycle.

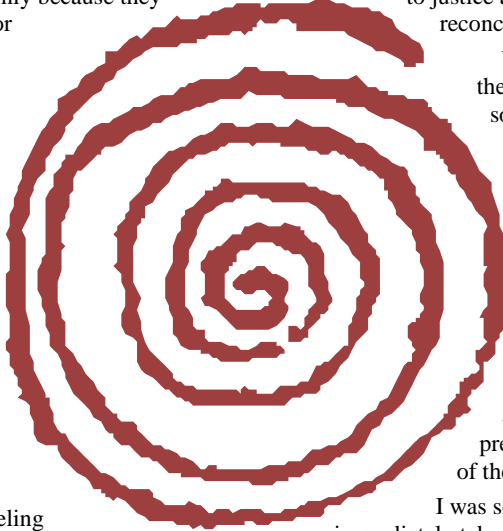
After the act of aggression is recognition of the shock and grief, the realisation of loss, healing not from blame but from grief by honouring the loss, rituals of mourning public and private, rebuilding bridges of relationships and community, re-humanisation, joint projects, writing new histories together with acknowledgement and apology, commitment to justice and thereby, reconciliation.

We were invited to walk these stages and as we did so to remember also other conflicts world-wide. So this felt not like a presentation but a way I could feel myself in the shoes of others and be emotionally connected.

## Rape centres

The most shocking aspect for me of Ann's presentation was being told of the Rape Centres.

I was so stunned that I did not immediately take this in - but yes, it is true - women were held in a particular place for the express purpose of being raped by their captors. When I hear something like this I find it very difficult to move out of the profoundest despair and rage - to think that there is any kind of hope for humanity. The only thing that helped at that moment was being in a room with others who were also in deep shock ...



## Community building in prison

Another deeply moving presentation came from Bob Roberts who had brought community building into the prison system. He showed us a video from one circle and when it finished a stunned silence followed.



Nobody in the audience spoke or moved. Never before had the prison inmates "had a voice", spoken their brokenness, allowed the full measure of their grief and rage and pain and despair. Their anguish hit me in the stomach with great force and all around me I could feel the same intensity of experience.

Finally, after what seemed endless time, Bob himself broke the silence, by saying, with a deep trembling "they don't even know that anybody out there cares".

### CB in a business

On a different level we were also presented with information about how community building is being used in a business context with a company in Holland.

I need to acknowledge my resistance to the world of business in general so did not focus in the same way - but I recognise that

community building works on different levels in different contexts and all is part of the whole. I may not feel connected to some of those parts - eg the business world - but I still value and appreciate that work being done in all areas outside my own interest.

### How it felt 'growing up'

Finally Open Space Technology offered me the opportunity to spend the day with individual passions on the theme of leadership. Pat Callair spoke about how it felt growing up a young black girl in the Civil Rights Movement - of the terror and the community spirit.

A small group of us chose to re-enact part of her experience - sitting in a church hall, frightened for our lives - holding onto the only thing we had, each other - loving caring, supporting each other in this life-threatening situation.

Again for me, understanding this at an emotional level, actually reliving albeit just a tiny part, the experience of those courageous people, once again connected me to my fellow human beings bringing tiny droplets of hope amid the devastations.

### Many learnings

These words cannot of course do any real justice to the event but some of my many learnings are these:

- 1) Celebrating diversity is only 2 words - but is profoundly hard for me to truly live.
- 2) The power of naming the unnamed is my way into feeling and therefore understanding and dealing with confusion.
- 3) The value of participating - as a facilitator this is especially important for me.
- 4) The cultural difference between England and America. My understanding of the hugeness of those differences is slowly expanding as I look deeper at my own assumptions.

One aspect that strikes me clearly now is the whole basis of American and English culture that seem to be so hugely different. I feel that in Americas there is a strong acceptance that

"business (work) is life" and sense that at best there is a grudging acknowledgement of that in Britain. What I sense here is more like "work is something I have to do to have the life I really want". Forgive the massive generalisation please, there is just something so different about "cultural norms" that I would really like to understand better.

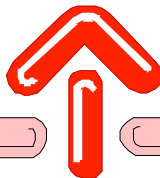
It was a joy to meet with old friends, establish new links and to be with community building people. My commitment to this work is re-affirmed despite the anguish and the obstacles. I felt inspired, refreshed (and exhausted!) and have just realised that my long interest in the facilitator training has been given a real boost by being at the conference. Wow!

*Tracy Barr*

# LOOK!

There is a **vacancy for a newsletter editor**, or someone to coordinate an editorial team. Full support given. Bring your ideas, passions and creativity, and contribute to the community building network in the UK and wider.

Contact Peter Cooper on 01438 813765  
for more details.



# 'Meeting for (Quaker) Worship'

This is the second of three talks given by Rachel Britton at a weekend for Norwich & Lynn Monthly Meeting elders. All three talks were printed in Quaker Monthly during 1998, and are reprinted with permission.

*I thought that this talk, would be of interest to people involved with community building, whether or not they believe in God, and whether or not they are comfortable with the 'language of worship'. The comparison between group counselling and the meeting for worship seem particularly relevant. The third talk, which is specifically on 'Community', seems equally relevant and I hope to reprint it in the next edition. Editor.*

## Doing nothing

How strange meeting for worship is - how strange and how precious. Which of us would invent such a form of renewal, if it were not there waiting for us? All these busy people stopping everything for an hour, to do what? To do nothing. People often say 'but if I want to sit in silence, I can do it at home. Why do you need to do it together?' What are we actually doing?

## Group counselling

Another part of my life is spent in the world of group counselling. In a counselling group, too, we sit round in a circle, waiting for something to come out of the deep places of our real concerns. We have no agenda. People speak if they have something that seems to need saying. People in such a group get to feel very close to each other.

It becomes obvious that each person, in their totally different ways, plays an important part in the group, and is needed. People are expected to listen sympathetically, rather than to argue. The response of the group is, however, a pretty good test of the genuineness or falsity of what is said. In all these ways, there is a similarity with a meeting for worship - and yet it is a totally different experience, for me. Why is that?

## Why different

One way of pointing the difference is to say that I cannot imagine a counselling group coming up with a

'testimony'. In the counselling group, we draw on the pool of our common humanity. We share insights about productive ways of going about our human lives. We aim at becoming integrated and competent members of society, capable of enjoying ourselves in socially acceptable ways. People are there to get what they want, not to change what they want. The counselling group would not come up with a testimony about pushing forward the frontiers of social life, because they would have no basis for judgement about the direction of such radical change.

## Reaching beyond the group

The meeting for worship is not a counselling group. If people start using it to air and get help with their personal problems, that is a

sign that it is not going deep enough. A meeting for worship is not a group of people pooling their resources and learning from each other. Rather it has to be reaching beyond the group, into a silence so profound that what speaks out of it relates not just to this group, not just to people in their little time span on this tiny earth, but somehow relates to the nature of reality as a whole.

Out of that silence we understand something of the "why" of life, and therefore something however inarticulate

about the calling always leading us on from where we are. Testimonies are a group recognition of the direction of God's intention



for the world. Or to put it another way, they are a partial discernment of how things really are.

## We have only silence

As Quakers, we ask so much of ourselves. Other churches have music and liturgy, readings and icons to lift them out of their ordinary preoccupations and distractions and into a sacred space. We have only silence. We should never forget, as elders and overseers, that many people need help to use the silence. It is surely presumptuous enough of us to think we can do without all the aids that worshippers in all faiths have found useful over the centuries, without thinking that everyone will find it easy.

## Difficulties we each have

I spoke yesterday about the difficulty we Quakers have with acting as authorities. Part of our diffidence about authority is a tremendous difficulty with thinking that we can say anything useful to others about silence. I have heard many Friends talking about the need to share verbally about what we do in meeting for worship. What is it they think of sharing? Always it is the difficulties we each have, the amount of time we spend with minds wandering, our trivial preoccupations, our wasting of time.

We find it so comforting and reassuring to discover that all those still faces sitting round us are not really in some peaceful haven we have not got access to, but are wondering where they left a favourite jacket or running over an inward conversation. No-one is any better at it than me! What a relief! Yes, but is it? Is it not also profoundly disappointing? Is there, then, nowhere to get to? Is meeting for worship no more than a nice quiet place where I can drowse and dream without thinking of jobs I should be doing? Is that what early Friends suffered so for? Is that what we need?

## What is the silence for?

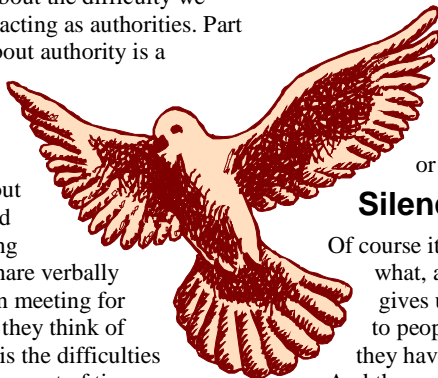
Those of you who, like me, would answer "no" to these last questions, must then share more than our difficulties. We need to answer for people the questions "What is the silence for?" and "How do I get there?" Silence is not an end in itself. Outward silence is just an aid to inward silence. Inward silence is just an aid to receiving something - let's call it, the power of God.

What do we see and understand when our inward world opens out into the wider reality? At the least, we get a better sense of priorities, we realise it is not worth making such a fuss over the little inconveniences of life, we see that we are not the Centre of the universe, and what happens to us is not crucial. We gain discernment. We feel again the call of what is centrally important to us, the hunger and thirst after righteousness which will always be blessed. At best, we join the great company of praise and wonder, and in our own way reach or are reached by joy.

## Silences

Of course it is difficult to set out in words what, at its best, meeting for worship gives us. Certainly it makes sense to say to people 'try it, and see for yourself'. But they have to have some reason for trying. And they need to know how to try. Silences in meeting can have such different qualities, can't they?

There is the somnolent silence, almost impossible to resist, where one is constantly on the edge of nodding off, and two or three Friends are snoring gently. There is the anxious silence, when people are feeling too responsible for the meeting, and willing someone to stand up or not to stand up. And there is the energising silence when together we wait on God in alert and receptive passivity. Each one coming in can feed on such a silence, can use it to lift themselves into the same state.



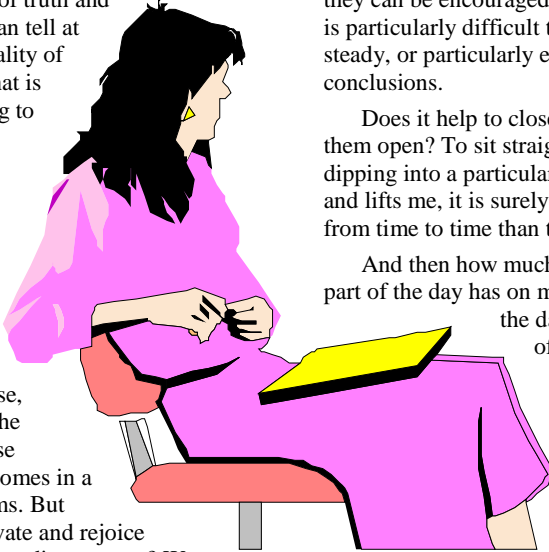
## Discernment

I have used the word discernment to name one of the things we get from opening ourselves to meeting for worship. In the deep silence, our antennae become quiveringly alive. No longer poisoned by noise and fumes of daily life, they learn the pure taste of truth and quality. Everyone can tell at once what is the quality of spoken ministry. That is why it is so daunting to stand up and speak.

I think we do a disservice to press too much the need to listen to all ministry without judging it. The judgement of authenticity is immediate. Of course, we need not judge the person, and of course authentic ministry comes in a great variety of forms. But should we not cultivate and rejoice in the power of loving discernment? We need to know when a meeting is gathered, when a thought is for sharing, when something spoken is the living truth. And we do know, when we allow ourselves to. We all have a taste for quality, and know its taste when we get it.

## Truth can look after itself

A sure recognition of authenticity can exist alongside a huge patience with the inauthentic. I like von Hugel's recognition that even when I am right, or at least more right than the other, God loves that other, and may love the word of that other even in its wrongness. An impulse to spring up and immediately contradict something that has been said in ministry, is a certain indication that the impulse comes from my own unregenerate sensitivities and opinions, not from the truth. The truth can look after itself. It is always fitting to give any words spoken plenty of time to resonate in the silence, before standing up to add anything to them, even if, in good time, that seems right.



## How to prepare

If we are to help newcomers to meeting to use the silence, it is by encouraging them to use their own powers of discernment. No-one can tell another person how they will best use the silence, or how to prepare themselves. But they can be encouraged to notice times when it is particularly difficult to keep attention steady, or particularly easy, and to draw conclusions.

Does it help to close your eyes or keep them open? To sit straight or to slump? If dipping into a particular book calls me back and lifts me, it is surely much better that I dip from time to time than that I sit and drowse.

And then how much influence the earlier part of the day has on my time in meeting. If the day started with a lifting of the heart to God, and calm preparation, is my time in meeting not different from a rushed and crowded morning and a hurrying in late? The latter can't always be helped, but we can at least notice its effect.

## Love of authenticity

Finding what helps me to centre down and maintain the sort of alert, expectant waiting which our meetings for worship should be, is of course only worth doing if I want something badly which such waiting is likely to give me. We have to tell people how important their feelings are, their desire for meaning, their love of authenticity, their longing for God. If we have ever had experiences of that which we love from our hearts, with the assent of our whole being, we have to remember such experiences and cherish them.

That is what we are after in meeting for worship. If we have only imagined such states, from reading the experiences of others, yet such imagining itself can awaken our longing, and the longing itself is lovely. Love collects the attention effortlessly.

## Three tests

The Catholics set out three tests by which one can tell whether a period of worship has been authentic. First, that during worship I was not bored and longing for it to be over. Second, that on going out, I feel better in every sense of the word - 'I felt the evil in me weakening and the good raised up'. And thirdly, that I find it easier to know what to do next. To set out such maxims does, I find, help to educate the powers of discernment, on which the whole of the spiritual life rests.

## Daily bread

Evelyn Underhill comments somewhere on the phrase in the Lord's prayer that is usually

translated as "give us this day our daily bread". The word translated as 'daily' is a most unusual word, in the Greek, and rarely used outside this prayer. It has nothing to do with the everyday. Scholars are not sure what it means, but it has the flavour of "coming from above".

She says that an old Irish liturgy translates the phrase as "give us today for bread the Word of God from Heaven". Such is the food we look for in meeting for worship. And the communion we feel with each other when we find such food together is the basis for the meeting as community.

## Community Building in Ireland.

A few people have expressed interest in workshops in Ireland.

I am willing to be a contact person for this purpose.

To assess the level of interest would those interested in participating in such an event in 1999 let me know, mentioning if you have already attended an event.

*Donal O'Callaghan*

*Coolgreen, Whites Cross*

*Co. Cork, Irish Republic*

*Email: djocallaghan@moorepark.teagasc.ie*

# Stable, Trans-generational Community

## Balance

In the August/September newsletter you may have read something about 'Balance'. The mention began:

*Balance was founded by Mark and Elisabeth Josepfs-Serra in the Totnes area of Devon, England, at the end of 1994. They had been studying and teaching Buddhism, Hinduism, Yoga, Dance and Psychotherapy for over 20 years – but still felt isolated and somehow overly individualistic. They and their friends were all committed to their individual paths – which was great – but there was little sense of a shared community path. The collective idealism of the 60's had become the very private pursuit of inner-growth. The question behind Balance was whether this deep inner-work could be used to shape a new kind of community.*

*For the first three years Balance focused on the Totnes area, convening Men's, Women's and Couples' groups, organising conferences, rituals, camps and social events to network the groups, facilitating seasonal celebrations at the solstices and equinoxes – and exploring issues of power, decision-making, dogmatism, hierarchy and form. Balance now offers workshops nationally and internationally, sharing the vision and experience of holistic community.*

## Relationship with Community building

In this short article my intention is to relate our work to the Community Building work inspired by Scott Peck. I have participated in two Community Building Experiences in the last few years ~ one at Sharpham, near Totnes, and another in Taunton. I found both nourishing. And in a sense, it was then that this article began ~ it was then that I began comparing Community Building and our Holistic Community development work.

## In denial

I myself am a recovering 'spiritaholic'. I was Hindu monk, in Europe and India, for 10

beautiful, tortuous years. I was addicted to the transcendence, to sweetness and light and beauty and peace. I was in denial of my sexuality, my sensuality, of my own intelligence, my own feelings, and my own will ~ of everything, in fact, that made me human.

But in my self-denial I experienced the sweetness of collective consciousness. We all thought, felt and did the same. We moved as one ~ as one being. And inadequate and dangerous as I now understand this to have been, it also gave me a direct experience of total community. When I de-robbed and began my recovery, I felt isolated and raw in the kind of individualism we take to be the norm ~ even among people involved in healing and green issues and everything 'alternative'.

## Soulful social structure

It wasn't that community wasn't happening. It was happening at gigs, at festivals, on weekends ~ in all sorts of places. But even where the techniques and group skills were present, there was a sad lack of soulful social structure to ground it and give it continuity.

Looking back to my Hindu days, looking back further to my Jewish childhood, and enquiring into many other traditions, I asked: what are the fundamental structures that hold the feeling of community in place? They seemed to be: the rites of passage around birth, initiation, partnership and death, and the ceremonies and celebrations around the seasons of the year.

And I asked: how can we re-create these structures holistically (I didn't want to become a spiritaholic again), co-creatively (without the disempowerment of the past), and in ways that are authentic and truly our own (allowing ourselves to be influenced, but without sentimental imitation).

## Initiation group

Well, the experiments are still continuing. Insights are still evolving and transforming. The concept of the long-term Initiation Group (as against the Support Group) has emerged, as

have Couples Groups of couples supporting each other in developing new models of partnership.

## Heart-felt sharing

At the summer solstice, which is also father's day, we had our third annual camp for men and boys. There was craziness and heart-felt sharing and the most exquisite, sacred ritual.

Political work is rooted in something very deep and beautiful. Something's beginning..... It's no longer only about self-development and personal healing ~ it's becoming about collective-development and the support of a community learning about wholeness. Now, after Balance's first haphazard years in the Totnes area, we're beginning to help others set up their own projects in their own local areas.

## Community structures

How does this relate to Community Building? I would say that, unlike Balance, Community Building is not concerned with community structures. The Community Building Experience, as I understand it, can offer an opportunity to enter the feeling of

community. It can offer a glimpse of sacred, collective consciousness.

And local ongoing Community Building Groups can perhaps extend that glimpse. Extend it, deepen it..... And it becomes very beautiful if we are able to extend our sense of sacred collectivity into our everyday lives.

## Wonderful it would be

But how wonderful it would be if we could integrate these feelings into the very social structures that shape our lives! How wonderful if our young men and women, having learnt the techniques and imbibed the mood of

Community Building, were then guided in exploring, healing and nurturing their masculinity and femininity. How wonderful if groups of couples learnt to sit together in honesty and open-heartedness ~ both in preparation for commitment, and once embarked upon the long-term journey of relationship.

What a difference when, at their rituals of commitment, the other couples in their group would come forward and say "Yes, we have seen this couple together for several years. We stand as witnesses to their integrity, and to their devotion to each other." This would be the resurrection of marriage ~ with enormous social consequences.

## A possible application

I am not trying to suggest that Community Building is somehow lacking. In setting it against the backdrop of Balance's work, I am suggesting a possible application ~ just as its application in business and management was mentioned in the last newsletter.

We might say that Community Building becomes the methodology, the way of travelling. What we are discussing is its application in particular situations ~ but what is exciting and important here

is that the situations I am referring to are the very building blocks of stable, trans-generational community.

And the pessimist might suggest that unless we root the feeling of community in such structures then all of our very good intentions will be dispersed on winds such as economic change and the shifting job market.

## Applied community building

Personally, I believe that the techniques of Community Building are excellent, and that the underpinning ideology is deep and complete. Complete in the sense of holistic ~ it



isn't about spiritual escapism. Nor is it about endless process work without any spiritual context. I believe in Community Building.

What I am advocating here is a specific social form of Applied Community Building. Within Balance we are already engaged, albeit without the specific techniques of Community Building, in this kind of application. I could see there might be advantages in introducing the specifics into our work ~ in as much as it would give our participants a very clear, unified language. We would certainly be interested in taking this discussion further, and

perhaps in experimenting with some sort of collaboration.

*Mark Josepchs-Serra*

## Information

For more information on Balance, including a list of upcoming workshops and available articles, please contact: Balance, Palston Park, S. Brent, Devon TQ10 9JR. Tel (01364) 73248. e-mail: [balance@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:balance@globalnet.co.uk). website: <http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~balance>



## Training for facilitators

I have a lot of energy and enthusiasm to be part of a team who will design a training for the new members of the FTG (Facilitators Training Group). I will be bringing ideas as an agenda item to our next meeting in January so I am inviting comments/ideas from current and trainee facilitators, also from previous facilitators no longer within the FTG.

Personally my interest lies purely with designing the training - other areas such as fund-raising are not for me - but I welcome all suggestions and offers of help etc to be collated ready for our meeting.

*Tracy Barr  
Heathcote  
Blackboy Lane  
Fishbourne  
Chichester  
Sussex PO18 8BL  
Tel 01243 775 745*

# What is Co-Counselling?

I know that one or two people involved with Community Building are also involved with Co-Counselling. I have been trying to find out more about it, and have been sent the following by email. When I get more details I will put them in the newsletter.

*Would any of you like to share something of your experiences of co-counselling?  
Does it have any relevance for community building?. Editor.*

## What is it?

Two people arrange to meet. They divide their time together in half. One is in charge for the first half, the other for the second.

The one in charge is called the client. He or she does the talking, laughing, crying, smiling, cushion-beating, role-playing, thinking and decision making.

The other, the counsellor, gives attention. This means listening, watching, keeping time, prompting and giving what's asked of comfort, provocation or role-play as the client requires.

## What's it for?

It helps people overcome their fears and inhibitions, cheer themselves up, rehearse social situations, express held-in feelings, discover deeper feelings, explore habits of thought and feeling and take more responsibility for what they do in their lives.

As client you discover how the release of stored up feelings helps you to become more intelligent, creative and loving in life and

relationships. As counsellor you learn to give attention and support without taking over.

## How does it work?

The more you put in, the more rewarding it is. You have the other person's complete attention and a strict guarantee of confidentiality. You can contact anyone in the London, National or International networks to arrange a session. You are the one that knows what to do and the only one who can do it.

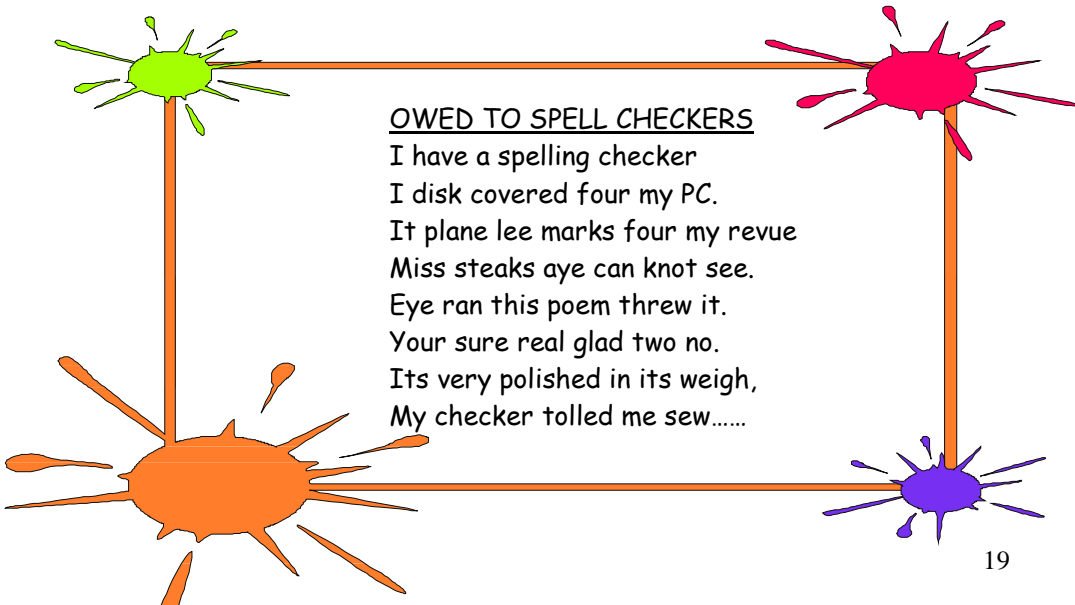
Since we take turns to work, no-one is better than anyone else, though naturally everyone has a different style. Anyone who can give attention and care to another for an hour can do it.

## How to learn

You can attend an introductory evening or afternoon to find out more, ask questions and try a few exercises. Then do a 40 hour 'Fundamentals' course, at weekends or on a series of evenings, practising the skills you need. Then you learn by experience.

### OWED TO SPELL CHECKERS

I have a spelling checker  
I disk covered four my PC.  
It plane lee marks four my revue  
Miss steaks aye can knot see.  
Eye ran this poem threw it.  
Your sure real glad two no.  
Its very polished in its weigh,  
My checker tolled me sew.....



# Local Ongoing Community Building Groups

*Some groups are open to anyone interested in experiencing Community Building, some are open to you only if you have already attended a CB event, some are open all the time to new members, some may not be open to newcomers just now; some build community as in the CB events, some are support groups based on The Road Less Travelled... Check with the local contact person.*

**Brighton:** Meets on the second Saturday of the month. Contact Tracy Barr on 01243 775745

**Central & North London:** First meeting of the new group is Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> November - if you are interested please contact Margaret C. Walsh on 0171 794 9158 or Tom Deevy on 0181 444 9764

**Leamington Spa:** First Wednesday of each month, 8pm. New members welcome. Prior attendance at a CB event is not necessary. Contact Debbie or Armando on 01926 337 409

**Malvern Hills:** Meets fortnightly on Thursday evenings. Contact Susie on 01684 540138

**Oxfordshire:** Currently not open to new members. Contact Sharon on 01235 848132

**Sheffield:** Meets monthly. Contact Alison 0114 263 0177

*Other groups exist but are not currently publicised. If you are interested in joining, or forming, a group please feel free to contact Peter Cooper (address below) for information and help.*



## General Enquiries

*.... about Community Building in Britain or Community Building events:*

*Anthony Kirke, 125 Greenham Road, Newbury, Berks, RG14 7JE Tel/Fax: 01635 47377*

## Newsletter

*Subscription rate [UK] to March 1999: (Apr-Jun) £8; (Jul-Sep) £6; (Oct-Dec) £4; (Jan-Mar) £2.*

*Please make cheques payable to "Community Building in Britain" and send to the newsletter editor:*

*Peter Cooper, 1 Evergreen Close, Woolmer Green, Herts SG3 6JN Tel: 01438 813765;  
Fax (telephone first); e-mail: PeterCBIB@aol.com; Web page: <http://members.aol.com/petercbib>.*

*Please send items for inclusion in the next issue to the same address by **28<sup>th</sup> November 1998**.*

*For convenience of personal contact, the address and telephone number of letter-writers will normally be published, unless other instructions are given. Contributions of any sort (articles, pictures, poems, letters etc.), and of any length, are welcome from all involved in any way with the CBiB network. While every effort will be made to reproduce items in full, please realise that the editor may have to shorten or alter them for publication.*