Meditation on Healing – Reflections by Rob

This reflection and meditation can be done without the Youtube video (recommend the use of Youtube if you can). For those who struggle with hearing, the text below can also be used to support the video. Our Youtube presentation is an invitation to spiritually join regular meditators at Wisdom Centre (presently isolated and meditating in their own homes). The tradition we meditate in is Centering Prayer which is fully inclusive of all traditions of Christian Meditation and welcoming of World Traditions.

The text is on the screen with narration. Music and a count down timer are part of the presentation. For technical reasons, the reflection has some disruption to the sound quality. To overcome this, a transcript is below.

Begins with usual opening prayers and introductions (Audio Visual or follow using text below)

Welcome to Christian Meditation in the Centering Prayer Tradition with Fi Jenvey (narrator).

Opening Prayer: Through Jesus Christ, by the Spirit, by whose breath our souls are raised to life. We, in meditation in this time of crisis pray with all others, as one community and one world to One God, we unite with our brothers and sisters of all world traditions

With God are Wisdom and understanding. May our ears be attentive, may the meditation of our hearts be for understanding. Through Christ, may we seek and find you, acting only according to Your will. May we follow His teaching, also seeking, the wisdom of the Holy Fathers and Mothers. May we commit to love of earth, faithfulness, community, stability, peace and justice making.

Letting go of all else, in contemplation we surrender in love to you. Let our sacred word be a symbol of our consent to your loving presence and healing. May we be faithful to this word so that it rises in our hearts, awakening that sense of Your presence. **Amen**

Introduction: One of the consequences of experiencing coronavirus and the measures taken to deal with it is that it has thrown up divisions and dissatisfactions in society and differences in how different people are treated. There has been a lot of talk about changing our relations with one another and with the environment and creating a "new normal". However the dissatisfactions and response to them often have the effect of emphasising differences, and polarising communities. We sometimes end up substituting one grievance or injustice for another, when what we really need is a coming together and a caring for all people no matter what their circumstances or outlook. Rather than correction, we need healing, which is a real change. But real change is not easy, and does not lend itself to simple slick solutions.

A New Social Model: His Holiness, the Dalai Lama wrote long before the present difficulties: "We must attempt the impossible. I am convinced that if we continue to follow a social model that is entirely conditioned by money and power, and that takes so little account of true values such as love and altruism, future generations may have to face far worse problems and endure even more terrible forms of suffering.

I have been told that young people in the United States, and even in Europe, are behaving in increasingly selfish and cruel ways. I have heard that suburbs are like jungles, that there are gangsters who take drugs, that young people throw stones from bridges causing fatal car accidents, and even that crimes are committed by children. Is this the result of general moral decadence, or of an economic crisis, or is it because seeing violence on television every day incites our own violent streak?

Each one of us lacks one thing or another. I am not exactly sure what we lack, but I can feel we lack something. In the West, even at the moment you are going through a crisis, you actually have everything, or at least you think you do; all kinds of material goods are there, and are no doubt distributed better than they were in the past. But it seems to me that you are living in a constant state of tension, in an

atmosphere of never-ending competitiveness and fear. And those who are brought up in such an atmosphere will find themselves lacking all their lives: they will not know that wonderful quality of depth and intimacy that is the richness of life. They will stay on the surface of the troubled sea, without ever knowing the calm that lies beneath."

Meaning: In last week's reflections for the Wisdom Centre on grief and Grieving, Hazel quoted D. Kessler as adding 'meaning' as a final stage to the process of grieving and as saying that it is at that stage that healing often takes place. In the context of personal healing I would like to read some passages from the Diary of a Zen Nun by the American nun Nan Shin (Nancy Amphoux), a very moving account of her struggle with understanding and personal healing after being diagnosed with cancer and which is truly written from the heart. These may also resonate with some of our own experiences during lockdown: "In addition to naming, there is meaning. Mid-March; the ground has unfrozen all the way down, and is the consistency of fresh art-school clay for what seems like a depth of six feet but is probably more like eight inches. All squish and goo and sludge, pulling at the horse's hooves, clutching and at the same time slippery, treacherous and horrible but also rather beautiful, if your face is not being pushed into it. A tan with silver in it, and black, and sand, rather like some kinds of chocolate when melted and worked with butter.

This afternoon, in light, fine rain with golden fans of sunrays behind it and the blue line of the Vosges very blue on the horizon, suddenly the air was full of insects flying in circles, going nowhere, incongruous when there are still crusts of ice along the edges of ditches and at the bottom of furrows where the sun doesn't strike. Insects, already! Was my response. A little later, a brace of partridge squirted up underneath the horse's feet and whirred away. Then, at the bottom of the same loaf of hill that was all cabbage knobs last autumn, I looked up and suddenly there were eight deer profiled against the sky. They bounded quickly out of sight. Eight at once. I thought, it's as many years since I've seen so large a group. And then: what does it mean?

I invented explanations, some of which I liked and others I disliked, and soon found myself worrying. And then I thought, The thing about meaning is that it is so tied up with wanting. If you do not care whether the deer flourish and multiply or become extinct then you do not worry about the meaning of eight of them at once, as being a good sign or possibly a bad one. Does anything mean anything, when there is no desire attached to it?" After considering the Buddhist insights encouraging the ending of desire, she continues: "But like all words those are incomplete……I can complete the words a little. Take 'care': you can care enormously whether the deer flourish or become extinct and devote a lot of energy to forwarding one or other of those finalities or some third one, and in that case things have meaning, yes; but you do not 'worry' about their meaning. Things can mean, all right, with or without desire. What matters is the 'attached to it'. If you are not attached to the desire, then the meaning can be clear, and you can be clear. It is the same attachment that makes worry, and the worry that makes muddle.

So the end should read,…..'If you abandon attachment to desire, what do you have? Paragraphs two, three and four above [her description of the landscape and nature] enriched with meaning and endless possibility for action."

Personal Healing: Later she wrote more specifically about her own illness: "I don't know what else to say about how I experienced sickness. I go to meetings of the cancer group that has started up here in town but don't have time to be more active. What I care about is changing the minds of medical practitioners, changing their training, changing the minds of people who have cancer, opening things up. I am baffled by the evasive tactics of everybody, doctors and patients alike. I don't know what they're being evasive about. I don't want to be sick and die any more than the next person, but I am so certain that knowing that there are sickness and death – my own sickness and death – is the place to start from. Start from it in the right way. It is not minor and to be smoothed away. It is not a planetary tragedy, it is not a matter of course, and it is not untrue and to be kept hidden.

Sometimes in Europe, sometimes in America even where the whole thing has been opened up so much more but then somehow trivialised again, I think that's where the trouble is, in a wrong or incomplete

dealing with 'my own sickness and death'. What Buddha did was 'solve the problem of life and death'. What the Zen masters exhort you to do is, 'Here and now, solve the problem of life and death.' That does not mean, 'Be serious, don't laugh, assume a solemn air, speak in grave tones'; nor yet, 'Have another drink and forget it.' It means, 'Find out now, at once, what is the problem of life and death, your own life and death, and solve it."

Healing Peoples and Nations: Tibetans have suffered much at the hands of the Chinese. The Dalai Lama wrote: "I always think of the thousands of Tibetans who took refuge in India after my exile. They had lost everything, even their country, and most had no money, no shelter and no health care. They had to rebuild their life from nothing in very difficult circumstances, with only tents to protect them from the heat and the monsoons. They had to clear the patches of jungle that were allocated to them, and they died in their hundreds of diseases that were unknown in Tibet. And yet very few lost hope, and with surprising speed they succeeded in overcoming these difficulties and rediscovering the joy of life. But, on the other hand, if we have no inner peace, we deceive ourselves into thinking that comfort and prosperity will bring happiness." Moreover, with regard to the Chinese he wrote:

"When Tibetans think about the Chinese who are committing atrocities such as genocide, rather than feeling angry we deliberately cultivate a strong feeling of compassion for them, because they are victims of delusion. Even if they do not suffer for this in an obvious way in the immediate term, sooner or later they will have to face the consequences of their actions."

Comment and Meditation: So for healing we need first the honesty of really looking deeply and accepting how things are. We need to let go of attachment to our desires and sense of injustice. We need to develop caring and compassion including for ourselves, and to find meaning through our acts of caring. We need to develop a positive attitude and to develop inner peace. And we need to show, if not forgiveness, nevertheless an understanding of and compassion for the actions and motives of others. This may take time. It is a process rather than a single act, and it involves each one of us individually as well as the community as a whole.

So let us find and move into a comfortable position, relaxing the body, noticing its contact with the chair or cushion and with the floor. Letting go of the efforts, difficulties and worries of our day, and bringing ourselves into the peace of the present moment. Noticing our breathing as it slows and deepens. Giving attention to any points of tension or discomfort. If you use a sacred word you might notice its rhythm, perhaps co-ordinating it with the breathing, or simply focus on the candle or on the breathing, returning to the point of focus whenever you are aware of the mind wandering off, in a spirit of non-judgmental acceptance. The meditation will last for 25 minutes and will begin and end with the sound of the gong.

Bell Sounds…20-minute meditations begins…Count down timer starts…

Bell Sounds…Meditation ends

Post Meditation: I would like to end with a poem by the Vietnamese Zen teacher, Thich Nhat Hanh, which was written to help him to come to terms with his anger when he learnt that a young Vietnamese girl who had been raped by a pirate on a refugee boat had thrown herself into the sea because of the disgrace which she felt.

Please Call Me by My True Names

Don't say that I will depart tomorrow – even today I am still arriving. Look deeply: every second I am arriving to be a bud on a Spring branch, to be a tiny bird, with still-fragile wings, learning to sing in my new nest, to be a caterpillar in the heart of a flower, to be a jewel hiding itself in a stone.	I am the twelve-year old girl, refugee on a small boat, who throws herself into the ocean after being raped by a sea pirate. And I am the pirate, my heart not yet capable of seeing and loving. I am a member of the politburo,

I still arrive, in order to laugh and to cry, to fear and to hope. The rhythm of my heart is the birth and death of all that is alive. I am a mayfly metamorphosing on the surface of the river. And I am the bird That swoops down to swallow the mayfly. I am a frog swimming happily in the clear water of a pond. And I am the grass-snake that silently feeds itself on the frog. I am the child in Uganda, all skin and bones, my legs as thin as bamboo sticks. And I am the arms merchant, selling deadly weapons to Uganda. *Continues in righthand column/*	with plenty of power in my hands. And I am the man who has to pay his "debt of blood" to my people dying slowly in a forced-labour camp. My joy is like spring, so warm it makes flowers bloom all over the Earth. My pain is like a river of tears, so vast it fills the four oceans. Please call me by my true names, so I can hear all my cries and laughter at once, so that I can see that my joy and pain are one. Please call me by my true names, so I can wake up and the door of my heart could be left open, the door of compassion.

Notes:

1 The Dalai Lama's Little book of Inner Peace
2 Diary of a Zen Nun – Nan Shin (Nancy Amphoux)
3 Daily Advice from the Heart 96 – The Dalai Lama

Nan Shin (Nancy Amphoux) died of cancer on 29th February, 1992 at the age of 56,

Ends with usual closing prayers: Through Jesus Christ, by the Spirit, by whose breath our souls are raised to life, we in meditation in this time of crisis pray with all others, as one community and one world to One God, we unite with our brothers and sisters around the world. Moments of your personal prayer follow**…Amen**

Thank you for meditating with us, please join us again soon

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Our peaceful outdoor spaces promote wellbeing and are open to all, free of charge.