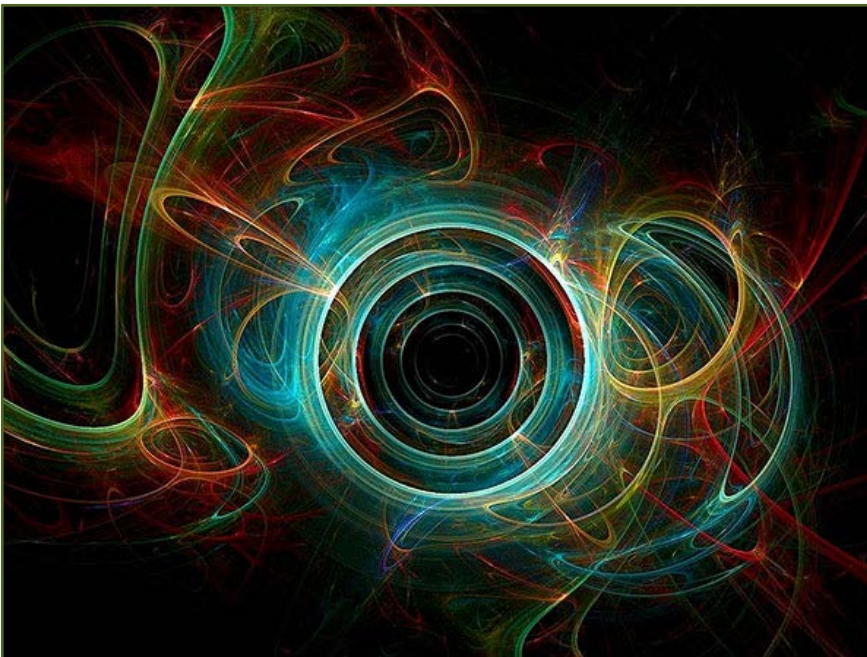


“PRECARIOUS PEACE, ENDANGERED EARTH AND HOLDING LOVE”.

We sit to contemplate – a small group believing in the power of prayer to effect change in the world around us. To begin, we strike the gong three times, slowly. The sound of each note echoes and dies into the silence just beginning. Each sounding draws us deeper into the silence. Each person’s heart opens to that which dwells within them – the Presence that connects us to everyone and everything around us. It is that Presence that is the communion we share.



During our time together, we ‘go inside’ gently, travelling deep into the heart’s core where we know well our desire for wholeness, healing and wellbeing. This desire is not just for ourselves, it is for all those we know or of whom we have heard who are in need of healing and wholeness – those close to us as well as the multitudes throughout the world. It is a desire for relief for all that is crying out in unbearable suffering around us, for all those who, right now need reassurance that there will be a future for them, and who seek safety in their danger-ridden existence.



As each of the gong tones ripples out into the surrounding air and travels further into the larger cosmos, reaching into timeless silence, we settle further into this time of holding, loving and healing presence to one another. We sink into our deeper Core where all is one and growing in oneness through our contemplation together. The atmosphere gradually becomes “thick” with presence – a presence to one another but also to the space between us that holds all presences in one Love

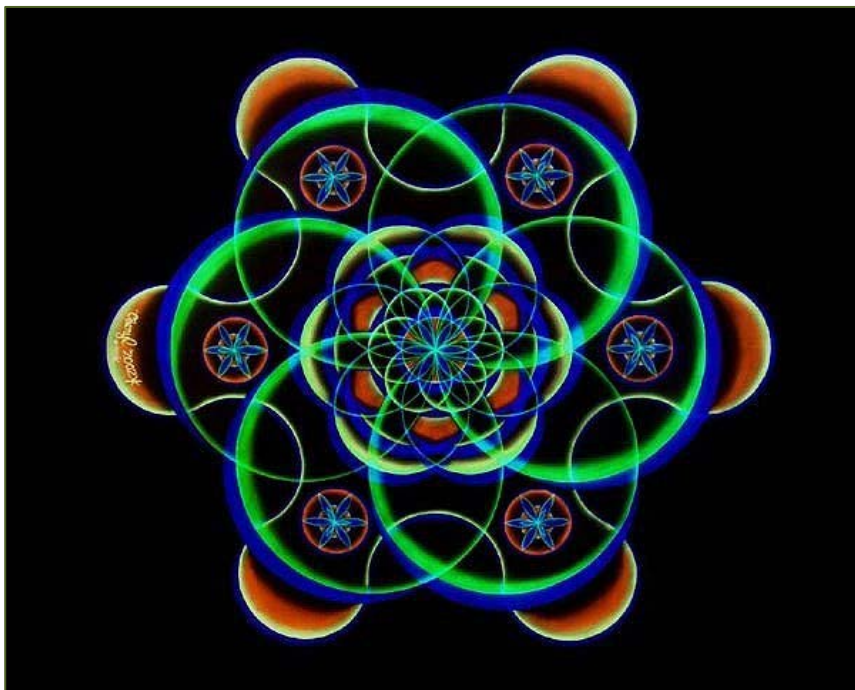
at its Centre. We reach into this Centre where Love itself dwells and we remain there.



Out, well beyond our small group of intentional and attentive pray-ers, the world is oblivious to what this small group is doing towards its welfare and fuller life. The larger world continues to teeter on the edge of a most precarious peace as the ‘big players’ speak their threats of larger weapons, each to outsmart and out-maneuver the other. Other ‘players’ fall into position around them to take sides or to make their different views known. Waves of apprehension can be felt growing in the larger population. The apprehension begins firstly within our own hearts and we feel it now. But there is a profound sadness there as well. It is a sadness in hearts that know there is another way. Such hearts are firm in an inner knowing that, as Einstein once said: *“Problems cannot be solved with the same mindset that created them”*. They know that this old way of posturing, of threat and retaliation and all that goes with its mode of thinking and speaking cannot solve the underlying problems facing us today. It is an old mindset that has contributed to the very problems we face now. A new way is necessary. Perhaps we can see it rising in our midst if we **choose** to see it. For if we look hard enough we can notice something appearing hazily at the edges, as well as from the deep centre of the destructive forces at work around us. It is emerging slowly from the rubble we have brought about by how we live and interact.

We know that the destructive forces that have been unleashed by our way of being are affecting everything around us – human and non-human. The whole earth community (and even beyond the earth community) is at risk if we do not *see* what is before us now. Mother Earth is currently letting us know loudly and clearly that she will not lie down and passively accept what is being meted out as the elements and creatures within her are seriously affected, eroded and destroyed, not just by natural processes of death and regeneration, but also by human behaviour. There are consequences for every action, and for non-action that closes a blind eye to where we are responsible for earth’s current state of endangered being. The natural disasters we are experiencing in our times are perhaps testimony to these consequences. Our blindness to the effects of what we do and how we live must be healed in hearts not just in eyes. It is the eye of the heart that must open to *see* – to really SEE – that we are in need of a different mindset even here. It is a new mindset that will lead to changed action and a whole new way of operating. As the places and people who are poorest cry out for relief, can we allow our

hearts to open wide and send us deep into the Centre where we are one, the place that knows that all pain and degradation is our pain and degradation too? Teilhard de Chardin is said to have used the following words which put beautifully the mindset needed for this time if we are to survive and flourish: ***“We are ONE, after all, you and I. Together we suffer, together exist and forever will recreate each other.”***



The contemplating group knows this in some unclear, unarticulated way. As we sit in the silence together and are mindful of numerous others who join us at this time – both as individuals and as other small groups - we sense within us the pain of those close to us who are suffering. We know too that those suffering ones close to us in life are but a microcosm of a much larger and more prolific suffering and pain and fear of imminent destruction in the broader world. We know that all pain is our pain too. And we hold it gently and trustingly at the core

place of holding Love...as if knowing that the ripple effect of our closeness and unity of purpose will be felt in wider and wider circles beyond our own meagre circle gathered here.

Such circles, of which there are many and growing in number, are part of the new mindset needed to change our way of operating in the larger world. They are part of a new consciousness that is rising from the rubble of what we are doing to one another and to the earth community at large. This consciousness is of a hidden ONENESS that connects and binds us to one another in one Love at our centre – a ONENESS not seen but sensed and known when we are still as well as when we work together to relieve suffering and change the world for the good of all, not just the few. This new consciousness is a way of thinking that begins from seeing from the perspective of the whole first, before focusing on the particular that is “my” small world or need. It leads to a ONE way of being and acting. This consciousness is rising through us as we contemplate and/or act together for the good of the whole. It is rising not just through us but through countless others as well whose selfless reaching out to others draws them to courageous and tireless action for relief of pain.

This consciousness, this mindset is slowly rising like a phoenix from the debris and ashes of destruction and dashed ideals for a better world. It rises even now in us as we believe in the power of its existence and work towards bringing its transformative effects into daily living. As Margaret Mead once said some time ago but it still rings true today ***“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has”***. We can...we must...we will...together!

Madeline Duckett