

Seeking happiness

By Susan Eckles, Okehampton Quaker Meeting

A small group of Okehampton Quakers have been meeting to seek out the meaning of 'spirituality' and suggested that it is the deepest dimension of our lives, where we connect with one another and with something greater than ourselves. We are called to tap into this deep energy by affirming the sacred in whatever we do.

At the same time, our children have been meeting to explore what it is that makes us happy. The Beatles sang that "All we need is love" whilst Charles Handey in 'The Elephant and the Flea' wrote that "Happiness is ... having something to do; something to hope for and someone to love".

Indeed, the commitments of governments around the world to the singular goal of growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is being questioned as leaders learn that in countries where GDP has moved upwards it seems that the health and happiness of the population has fallen. Consequently, government quangos have been set up to study 'wellbeing' and to research Action for Happiness and to launch The Happy Planet Index.

In a world where we seem to fail to cope with the dangers of climate change, fail to regularise the global banking and economic system, fail to find peaceable ways of coming to terms with international terrorism it is little wonder that there is a longing throughout many faiths and denominations to seek a deeper spiritual experience, a kind of worship that transforms us and offers us meaning and purpose beyond the material. Satish Kumar claims that "wellbeing is as much a spiritual value as it is an economic necessity."

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