



## Workshop on Christian Science Nursing Saturday, 27 October, 2012

The workshop opened in the light, open space of the Sunday School inside the Christian Science church located in Moores Road, Dorking. Francesca Simpson, a member of the church, started the day with a welcome to Audrey Sentinella, a Christian Science Nurse, based near Oxted in Surrey. She explained how this meeting came about... members and visitors to the church were interested in knowing more about what Christian Science nursing is all about. Audrey had been approached to talk on the subject because she has been a Christian Science Nurse since 1990, right after leaving university. She was also the Administrator for Beechfield, a Christian Science residential care home in Weybridge, Surrey, for several years.

Audrey then gave a brief history of Christian Science nursing and explained how it had been developing during the lifetime of Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science. In the 1930s the church requested a small group of former doctors and medical nurses, who had become Christian Scientists, to develop a professional training programme for the nursing activity. They designed a programme which was based on a medical nursing training programme with a correspondingly strong emphasis on process and procedure. The church asked for this to be re-examined in the early 1990s and from that a training programme was devised which was based more around the individual needs of the patient, from a spiritual point of view, than around set procedures.

Audrey shared some articles from The Christian Science Journal (July 2012 and October 2008) which help to explain how this change came about. It was a change which was seen in the same light as the important changes which came about in the training of medical nurses at about the same time.

Discussion followed about the role of the Christian Science Nurse as described in the Manual of the Mother Church.

### *Section 8: Guidance of Members:*

"Christian Science Nurse. Section 31. A member of The Mother Church who represents himself or herself as a Christian Science nurse shall be one who has a demonstrable knowledge of Christian Science practice, who thoroughly understands the practical wisdom necessary in a sick room, and who can take proper care of the sick.

The cards of such persons may be inserted in The Christian Science Journal under rules established by the publishers."

After a lunch break, Audrey gave some practical advice on how to provide everyday help to individuals facing physical challenges. For example, how to help a blind person to walk through a room without bumping in to furniture or obstacles; also, how to help a frail individual to get up from a

chair (nurses from both a medical background and a Christian Science background used to see it as something you would need to put much physical strength to lift the person; now it is seen generally as a matter of describing to the individual what to do and, if necessary, gently supporting them from the base of their back). Exercises followed in how to listen carefully to an individual as this is crucial to truly understanding a person's needs. Underlying these practical tips was the principle that the Christian Science nurse's job is to see not a frail, sick person, but the true creation of God, the man who is "upright, whole and free". The Christian Science Nurse is supporting the work of the Christian Science Practitioner who is praying for the patient, praying to see him or her as God's own child. This support expresses wisdom and practical care to help the patient focus on praying rather than on concern for their own physical care.

The workshop closed with all participants agreeing that it had been both a highly informative and inspiring day. We each understood so much more about this vital work.

