

THE JULIAN MEETINGS



Magazine
December
2010

The Julian Meetings

- *Foster the teaching and practice of contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition*
- *Encourage people to practise contemplative prayer in their daily lives, and explore ways of doing this which are appropriate for them*
- *Support the individual ecumenical Julian Meetings — groups whose members meet regularly to practise Christian contemplative prayer together*

The Julian Meetings Magazine December 2010

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Part 2 of David Self's short course introducing people to silence and contemplative prayer.

Approaching Silence - Words and the Word

Hindu India has a magnificent image to describe God's relationship with Creation. God 'dances' creation. He is the Dancer, Creation is his dance. The dance is different from the the dancer, yet it has no existence apart from him. You cannot take it home in a box if it pleases you. The moment the dancers stops, the dance ceases to be.

In our quest for God we think too much, reflect too much, talk too much. Even when we look at this dance we call creation we are the whole time thinking, talking (to ourselves or others) reflecting, analysing, philosophising. Words. Noise.

Be silent, and contemplate the Dance. Just look: a star, a flower, a fading leaf, a bird, a stone Any fragment of the Dance will do. Look. Listen. Smell. Touch. Taste. And, hopefully, it won't be too long before you see Him, hear Him - the Dancer himself!

"The disciple was always complaining to his Master, "You are hiding the final secret of Zen from me."

He would not accept the Master's denials. One day they were walking in the hills when they heard a bird sing.

"Did you hear that bird sing?" said the Master.

"Yes," said the disciple.



Common Blue on oxeye daisy.

"Well, now you know that I have hidden nothing from you."

"Yes."

If you really heard a bird sing, if you really saw a tree ... you would know.

Beyond words and concepts.

What was that you said? You have heard dozens of birds sing and seen hundreds of trees? Ah, was it the tree you saw or the label? If you look at a tree and see a tree, you have really not seen the tree. When you look at the tree and see a miracle – then, at last, you have seen! Did your heart never fill with wordless wonder when you heard a bird in song?"

Anthony De Mello: Did you hear the bird sing? (from The Song of the Bird p.16)

That is true for the use of all our senses. Our senses are bombarded and polluted with overload. Our minds filter out the familiar - often so that we retain our sanity. When I lived in the inner city I learned to filter out the street noise as best I could and ignore the atmospheric pollution. Only when I visited a place where the air was clean could I remember its sweetness and enjoy it. We also filter out what we don't want to receive (selective listening, selective seeing ..) because we are preoccupied with the noise in our minds and hearts; past feelings and memories; what we are in the middle of doing; worries about the future. These fill the mind and clog the heart. To look at a tree, to listen to birdsong, to feel texture, to smell or taste – to receive these gifts deeply requires a sense of stillness and awareness surrounding them.

Real listening happens within the silence of the heart.
God speaks to us in many ways:

A wondrous aspect of creation
Through another person
A word or glimpse that releases
A nudge in the heart
A phrase from the Bible

Jesus, God's Word, given to us. Jesus brings us the word of life in many creative ways, always direct and particular. Jesus came that we might have life, overflowing and generous. What he brings us is so that we might live, even if it feels sharp. His gift is powerful, alive, active, surprising, fresh, cleansing, releasing, forgiving, creative. He invites us to turn away from our fears and distraction, lay them aside and drink the good news that God has drawn near to us. To open our hearts in the stillness to receive his gift without expectations or pre-conditions is a challenge of trust.

God can use a phrase, or a single word from Scripture, to work creatively with us as He continues to create us. We can use them as a focus for our prayer within silence. We do not think about the phrase but let it sink quietly into the heart through many layers. Let it form us without asking how or why. Let it sink gently, silently, as God cleanses and moulds us secretly. God will hide our eyes so that we do not get in the way. We must trust our Lord as much as possible so that he can get on with creating the person we are meant to be.

How to use a phrase or word? If it is a phrase, it is often in two parts, especially from the psalms:

The Lord is my shepherd, I'll not want.

On God alone, my soul in stillness waits.

You could breathe in with the first phrase and out with the second – usually on alternate breaths. As it begins to sink

into your being you may find you become more still. Let the phrase go. When distractions return, use the phrase again to restore the focus. (I say a phrase, but it could be a single word such as Jesus, come, mercy, holy) Think no thoughts about God, or about the phrase, or about yourself.

God is God, and you are you. As you both are, that is how you meet. I have given some suggestions about words or phrases, but you may find another from Scripture emerging from within you. If so, pay attention gently to that one, for it may be our Lord is speaking to you through it.

To be continued in the April issue

Christmas PRESENT

Last Advent the first passage I read was the start of John's gospel. As I lay in bed next morning, I 'heard' it in my head, *but in the present tense*. It had a huge impact, making everything NOW rather than then. Perhaps it will for you too:

In the beginning is the Word, and the Word is with God, and the Word is God. He is with God in the beginning. Through him all things are being made; without him nothing is being created. In him is life, and that life is the light of men. The light is shining in the darkness and the darkness does not understand it.

Here is a man sent from God whose name is John. He comes as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men may believe. He himself is not the light; he comes only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man is coming into the world. He is in the world, and though the world is ever being made through him, the world does not recognise him. He comes to that which is his own, yet his own do not receive him. Yet to all who do receive him, to those who believe in his name, he gives the right to become children of God

The Word is becoming flesh and is making his dwelling among us. We see his Glory, the glory of the one and only, who comes from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Pattern of Prayer

**no choirs of angels
no round of applause
no hip – hip – hallelujahs
no song and no dance**

be still

in secret

**draw with words and silence
the shape of your heart**

this is prayer

**within this framework lay down
the fragile pieces of your life's tapestry**

**some beautifully made
some tattered
torn
frayed**

**some precious beyond measure
some worthless rags**

**the intricate designs
the random scraps
they are the patchwork of who you are**

**every piece sewn together
by the unbreakable golden thread**

of forgiveness

mercy

grace

woven from the love of God

**put aside the shadows of the future
unseen, uncertain, unknown and unknowable**

**live in the shining light of the present
and find peace in eternity**

**be still
in secret**

**draw with words and silence
the shape of your heart**

**touch the power and the glory
for ever and ever**

now

this is prayer

The words were taken from a textile-art display in the
Lady Chapel of Rochester Cathedral, Kent

The words are © Paul Field www.paulfield.com
and used with permission

The ideas and enthusiasm for the display were provided
by pupils from Pilton Bluecoat School in Barnstaple

The Road to Emmaus

Report of the JM Quiet Day in Devon, 3 July 2010

On a perfect summers day 30 of us gathered to be quiet together and listen to that still small voice within us. Canon Tom Honey's subject was the story, in Luke's gospel, of the seven-mile journey two disciples took from Jerusalem to Emmaus soon after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

In four 30 minute sessions Tom led us through this wonderful story, encouraging us to consider what it was like for the travellers, and the stranger who joined them, and what it is like today for us. Tom shared his thoughts quietly and sensitively, emphasising that the day was our own, and that we should feel free to stop listening to him at any time if his words interrupted our own conversation with God.

Only one traveller is named – Cleopas. Was his companion a man or a woman? Were they man and wife? In one sense they may represent all of us when we are foolish and slow to believe. The gentle questioning of the stranger who joins them encourages them to tell their story, and they are as faltering as all the other disciples in the gospels. They come to faith not by having the truth forced upon them but by the way the stranger helps them to understand their own past, and what is happening to them in the present. His explanation went from Adam to Jesus, and through his ministry to his final journey to the cross.

If we are unfamiliar with the Old Testament this exposition may mean little to us. But if we allow the Spirit of God, and the other disciples we meet on the road, to teach and inspire us we too may come to understand our own histories and what is happening in our spiritual lives today. 'Where have we been?', 'where are we now?', and 'where are we going?' are the deep questions of any age. The associated yearning is perhaps stronger and more persistent in old age. As the

travellers neared Emmaus they urged the stranger to stop with them for 'The day is almost over'.

Tom graciously pointed out that most of us had reached the evening of our lives. Once work and child-rearing are past we may have more time for prayer, for reflection and for deepening our search for God. This resonated with me: this may be the greatest gift of old age.

Tom reminded us that some seek God and find spiritual nourishment outside formal church settings. For many it is in gardens. Tom, in a new parish, shared his joy at once again having a garden. Many of us, between our formal sessions together, explored the lovely gardens at Brunel Manor. I strolled the Woodland Walk, first concentrating on holding my meditation: breathe in – one, two, three, four – breathe out – one, two, three, four. Once I had reached an easy rhythm I could focus on the beauty around me, smell damp moss and rotting greenery, hear the birdsong. I gazed in all directions, allowing myself to become absorbed in my senses.

Small daisies [weeds in garden lawns!] and large jostled together, and hiding beneath them were tiny strawberries – I succumbed to temptation and ate some. There were mauve vetch, feathery travellers joy, pink hydrangea, red and white fuschia and blackberry bushes whose small fruits were too early to eat. At the Prayer Garden, green and serene, its conifers and laurel were covered in white convolvulus – welcome here, but destroyed as an invading strangler in smaller gardens. Delicate blue ceanothus grew by a pink and cream acer, while a yellow nodding rose of Sharon seemed to wave farewell as I left for the house and formal garden.

What flowers would be familiar to the travellers to Emmaus? Pink plumbago, blue asters, pink convolvulus, yellow mallow and, of course, the rose of Sharon. But no doubt our travellers would have been oblivious to the flowers as they walked the road, engrossed in all that had happened and trying, in grief and disillusionment, to work out what it might

mean. When the stranger started explaining matters it must have been hard to concentrate and understand the complicated lesson. They were in no state to admire the scenery, as we would today. Returning to Jerusalem they were in a hurry to tell their friends the good news. Whatever our human bustle, bewilderment and emotion, the beauty of the universe continues its witness to the love of our creator God, who continues to recreate us all towards becoming our true selves as we work together for his kingdom.

Reaching Emmaus, the disciples pleaded with the stranger to stay with them, and he did. They were generous, and concerned for his safety and welfare. May we also be hospitable, and welcoming to strangers. I recalled how Jesus never pushed himself onto others, or went uninvited to places he was not wanted. If the disciples had not begged him to stay, he would have continued on his way. A prayer from the Lutheran Manual expresses our need for Jesus:

Abide with us, O Lord,
for it's toward evening and the day is far spent;
abide with us, and with your whole church.
Abide with us in the evening of the day,
in the evening of life,
in the evening of the world.
Abide with us and with all your faithful ones,
O Lord, in time and in eternity.

Amen

Throughout Luke's gospel run the themes of hospitality, eating and drinking, giving and receiving. So, as the disciples eat and drink with Jesus at the table in Emmaus their eyes are opened when he breaks bread, and they recognise him as Jesus. For most Christians the Eucharist is at the heart of worship, and it is there, however we interpret it, that many of us experience the risen Christ. It anticipates the great banquet at the end of time, and

proclaims the victory of the resurrection for today and tomorrow.

So the day we have spent quietly together not only offers calm assurance and comfort, but also challenges us. We closed the day by sharing some of our thoughts, first in small groups and then all together. A day for which we thank God; we thank Tom for his quiet inspiration; and we thank each other for creating a warm supportive atmosphere where holiness could be recognised and touched. One of our number wrote this:

Kept from recognising him by my slow and foolish heart
He comes and asks a question.

Can I respond and tell him who or what or where I am?
As my feet touch the earth do I not feel some special
spark of life,

Is there not some strangeness in his questioning?
So having walked and talked I ask him in
And in his actions the veil of secrecy is torn away
And I am ready to receive his word.

This says it all! There is nothing to add.

The work of Christ consisted in his obedience to, his understanding trust in, the Silence he called Father. The world in which we live is a world in which God is silent. But it is filled with the Word of God and it is for us who live by that Word to learn in silence to listen to it.

Alan Ecclestone

A Time to Saunter

St Hywyn's church, Aberdaron, is at the end of the Lleyn peninsular in north Wales. It is very special: a place of prayer for 1,500 years. The low stone church is built right by the beach; indeed a third of the churchyard has been lost to the sea over the centuries. The church was enlarged in 1500 to meet the needs of the many pilgrims who were en route to Ynys Enlli – Bardsey Island just off the coast.

Pilgrims still come to the church today, as I did on a day in July this year. There are leaflets to welcome you.

'Sauntering round St Hywyn's', written by Jim Cotter the priest in charge, explains that to 'saunter' comes from the French 'ante terr' or 'holy land'. He describes how pilgrims walked across Europe towards Jerusalem in the middle ages. I accepted this invitation to saunter and found, in one of the aisles, a circle of chairs set round a candle and I immediately felt at home in a Julian sort of way. Sitting there I could hear the wind and the waves on the beach outside but all inside was peace.

I followed the guidance on the leaflet:

Take time...

A time to sit and be...

A time to look at water and be touched by it...

A time to look at flames and light a candle...

A time to hold a stone and place it on the cairn...

A time to bring others into mind's eye and heart's care...

A time to listen to the wind and the waves...

A time to be silent...

A time to tune in to rumours of the divine...

A time to receive a blessing...

A time to be thankful...

A time to saunter...

Also in the church was another leaflet written Jim Cotter : 'A Way into Silence'.

On both these leaflets was written:

Please take this leaflet with you if you can make use of it.

Make copies as you wish.

There is no copyright fee

*A donation towards the expenses of pilgrim ministry
of St Hywyn's church would be appreciated*

I left a donation and took the leaflets. Since returning home I have sent some of our 'Waiting on God' leaflets for Jim Cotter to use in his ministry and now I have shared some of his words with you.

Anne Stamper





Dame Julian - from carvings in Norwich Cathedral

A Pattern of Prayer from Julian of Norwich

*Report of a JM Quiet
Day in Sussex,
Wednesday 16 May*

On a perfect English spring day 16 of us met at Park Cottage for an day of inspiration and reflection to celebrate 25 years of Boxgrove & Tangmere JM. Also 20 years since the Church of England included

Julian of Norwich in their commemoration calendar.

Canon Bryan Marshall, a founder member of our Julian Meeting, gave three addresses, using a different word from Mother Julian for each: Yearning, Beseeching, Beholding. He said these were not stages in building up a pattern of prayer, but three elements of 'being' in the presence of God.

Yearning

Julian always yearned for the presence of God in her innermost being, and Bryan led us towards that yearning for God in our own lives. He explained how we may use her experience to help us on our pilgrimage. God, in Christ, yearns for us to recognise His presence – as Julian says 'I am he who makes you love. I am he who makes you to long. I am the endless fulfilling of all true desires.'

We need to open a window into the love of God: he depends on our co-operation to enter into this love. Regular time set aside for prayer develops a pattern which leads us deeper into an awareness of God's presence.

Beseeching

Beseeching is a humble, respectful approach to a higher authority. Here we are needy creatures wanting passionately, asking, to enter an ever deepening relationship with God. Perhaps all mystics desire this, until finally enjoying union with Him. Julian calls this being 'joined and fastened to God'.

Beholding

This is the culmination of our earthly pilgrimage, when we recognise the presence of God and enter this profound relationship with Him. We are all striving towards this 'Beholding moment'. We surrender to the awe, wonder and adoration of God himself. Bryan urges us to 'Let all men see in us the beauty of Christ' and quotes Bishop Bell's hymn:

Christ is the King, O friends rejoice!
Brothers and sisters with one voice
Make all men know he is your choice:
Alleluia.

Time to BE with God

Between the addresses we enjoyed silent companionship in the garden and cottage, walking, reading, meditating or just enjoying God's creation. It was an inspirational time to spend with God. Many thanks to Merle, Peter, Ros and Canon Bryan for making it possible.

**There is not enough darkness in all the world to
put out the light of one small candle**

Contemplation? Meditation?

Some further thoughts on this topic.

The terms contemplation and meditation are often used inter-changeably. But to me they are different ways of being open to God.

Imagine being shown a picture.....

I think of meditation as being more participatory. When we meditate on the picture we actively engage our mind, our imagination, our perception. What is the subject of the picture? How did the artist paint it? How does it affect me? What might the artist be trying to convey? What is God saying to me through this image?

In contemplation we just sit in front of the picture and gaze at it - open to whatever / however the picture 'speaks' to us, any effect it has on us and our senses. We give it our full attention for that given time. (This is the exact opposite of our modern rapidly-changing-image culture).

So in contemplation we just 'are' before God with the four 'S's: Stillness, Silence, Simplicity, Surrender.

Stillness enables us to give all our attention to God. It is most important when a group contemplates, as movement or noise from one participant can distract others from focusing on God.

Silence allows for the 'still, small voice' of God to be heard, and helps to focus our attention on God — not easy in a society where noise is used as an escape.

Simplicity does not mean it is easy, but that it needs minimal external input.

Surrender. Much of our Christian life - when, where and how we pray, worship, and study - is decided by us. In contemplation we give all the initiative to God, letting God be in control, take action, not us.

Deidre Morris

"Enjoy Exploring Different Ways to God"

This was the Bishop of Guildford's message to the 115 people + 25 leaders who took took part in "A Day on Prayer" organized by the Diocese. Days of Prayer are relatively common. This day aimed to give participants a shopping basket of ideas, and chance to explore many different ways of praying – and it succeeded!

Lots on offer

There were nine workshops, plus a "Walk In" session with a Spiritual Director. As well as "Getting Started and Keeping Going", "Guided Imagery", "Contemplation the Ignation Way", "Praying Through Loss", "Lectio Divina", "Meditation for the Beginner", "Prayer & Healing" and "Introduction to Retreats" there was "Julian Meetings – just a taster".

Julian prayer

We began with a short description of Mother Julian and the period in which she lived – a time in England comparable with parts of Zimbabwe today. We considered the multi-layered meanings in many of Julian's thoughts, their time-less relevance, and moved into a Guided Relaxation with a deliberate slowing-down of breathing. The men were noticeably reluctant to join in!

Music led into 10 minutes of silence. At the end of this more music allowed anyone who wished to walk about and look at our books and leaflets before we had a second ten minute silence. Everyone managed twenty minutes and many said how quickly the time passed.

There were some interesting comments. A woman asked "Why can't we do this alone?" and was answered by one who said she needed a group to help her keep focused. A man asked why so few men were present, and he found it difficult being in a minority (he didn't count the Clergy who were trying to be incognito!) That was a difficult question to answer and it would be interesting to hear responses from male members of Meetings.

A Diocesan Music Group led mid-day worship, and the Bishop gave his Blessing and encouragement. We met on the day celebrating Bishop Lancelot Andrewes and our leader – the Rev'd Alan Elkins – used a prayer from the Bishop's Private Prayer book. It includes the phrase "Coming unto God, I believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him." What could have been more appropriate!

Lent reading

Yes, we do realise that this Magazine is coming out in Advent, and that Lent is many weeks away. But we thought it helpful to consider afresh some books which have, or might in future, encourage the contemplative in the weeks before Easter, so Gail suggests some below:

Lent with Luke, by David Thomson (Authentic Lifestyle 2005) Last Lent I discovered this book, which gives daily readings on a weekly theme. It focuses on looking at about 30 paintings and a few other images, each linked to a Bible reading, and then gives some reflection on both. The book includes small black and white reproductions, but also lists each painting, the gallery which houses it and the websites where each can be seen in full colour.

I explored it in a group whose members with internet access printed copies for non-users, and for us to use at our weekly meeting. I really looked forward to our meetings and our times of 'looking with Luke', finding them a great encouragement.

Another book based on looking is **Stations of the Cross: a devotion using the Revelations of Divine Love of Julian of Norwich** (The Friends of Julian of Norwich 01603 767380). It

is built around Irene Ogden's compelling Stations of the Cross in St Julian's Church, Norwich, which are reproduced in colour. · Alongside these are passages from scripture and from the Revelations of Divine Love, both chosen by Sheila Upjohn and followed by a prayer. Just 32 pages long, this is a simple aid to individual or group devotion.

Evelyn Underhill (1875 - 1941) was a pacifist and one of the great Anglican mystics of the 20th century. Her spiritual journey grew from a search for private religious experience, to an inclusive mysticism that emphasised community.

First published in 1964, ***Lent with Evelyn Underhill*** (Continuum, 2004, 2007) is a collection of short extracts, 1½ pages long, from her many writings. Arranged for daily reading throughout Lent, they were chosen to deepen the experience of Lenten observance. Drawing us into deeper levels of understanding, Evelyn Underhill's writings cultivate a contemplative approach to God and creation.

***Our Sound is our Wound* by Lucy Winkett** (Continuum 2009) was the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book for 2010. Subtitled *contemplative listening in a noisy world*, it is an attempt to come to terms with the sounds of our increasingly noisy daily life.

'Our lives are lived against the backdrop of an internal and external soundscape. The sounds, noises and music with which we are surrounded in modern life have spiritual implications. There is also a soundtrack within us that plays constantly through memory, dreams, anxiety or thought.' 'What are these 'soundscapes', and how do we listen for the voice of God within them.' How too do we find our own voice? Chapters include: the sound of scripture, the sound of lament, the sound of freedom, the sound of resurrection, the sound of angels. A professional musician before being ordained, the author was Canon Precentor of St Paul's Cathedral (London) until, earlier this year, she became

Rector of St James Piccadilly.

Love is the Meaning (Canterbury Press 2010, first published 2006 with the title *Growing in Love*) The author, Ann Lewin, has led many retreats and quiet days for Julian Meetings. In this book she draws on Julian of Norwich, inviting readers to explore what it means to be loved by God and to love others. In five chapters – Coping with troubled times; the Nature of God; Prayer; Sin; All shall be well – in prose and poetry she reflects on themes in Julian's *Showings of Love* and Bible passages which resonate with them. The book includes a good presentation of contemplative prayer and of Julian Meetings. Ann's aim is to help her readers fulfil Julian's hope that from thinking about her experience their love for God will grow.

Seeking Faith, Finding God (BRF 2007) grew out of John Rackley's weekly column in the Baptist Times. His aim in both the column and the book is to 'write something that will encourage the readers to look at the Bible with fresh eyes'. In his introduction he says 'The gospel, however, expects us to communicate what we believe with a view to convincing others of its authenticity. I believe this begins to happen when Christian people are ready to have seeking and searching faith themselves. If we are to communicate what we believe it must be as fellow travellers in these difficult and demanding times'.

The book has five sections on themes of: 'A yearning faith; A Gospel place; Gospel encounters; Faith companions; and Praying the Gospel'.

Lent grew out of an experience of resurrection and forgiveness, preceded by a period of self examination. It still offers us the chance to look deeply into ourselves and rediscover Christ within and around us.

Gail Ballinger

BOOK REVIEWS - BOOK REVIEWS

On my bookshelf are some well thumbed, slender booklets on prayer, silence and Julian of Norwich, produced by SLG press in the 70s and 80s and mostly costing less than 50p. They were an important part of my spiritual formation and it is a delight to review some recent publications from the same source of deep, prayerful wisdom.

LEARN TO BE AT PEACE: The practice of stillness **Andrew Norman**

SLG Press, Fairacres Publications 2010 £2.00
ISBN 978-0-7283-0178-8

This 28 page booklet came from reflections during a time of convalescence after a brain haemorrhage. Andrew Norman invites us to share his experience of learning to be still "to be fully present in the moment and finding there all that is good." He draws on the traditions of the desert fathers and mothers, Cassian and John Main to explore the use of the mantra but comments "Circumstance and our own disposition will guide us to the ... practice which is best for each day." This basic handbook on silent prayer would be helpful for those starting out and a useful reminder for those already on the journey.

PRAYER AS SELF-OFFERING **Alexander Ryrie**

SLG Press Fairacres Publications 2007
ISBN 978-0-7283-0171-9

This is a 22 page gem on offering ourselves to God in silent prayer. "To hand over our whole being to God so that we belong to God... We are in fact giving ourselves back to him, restoring to God what is already his. By doing this we are drawn into God where we belong". Alexander Ryrie goes on to explore the invitation to belong and to participate and to share in God's work in the world. This booklet can be read in a few minutes, but the deep wisdom should be pondered for much longer, with passages to use as a lead-in to prayer. A

good booklet for a Julian Meeting to keep and to share.

LOVING GOD WHATEVER: Through the year with S. Jane
edited by Jim Cotter

SLG Press Fairacres Publications 2nd edition 2008 £9.00
ISBN978 0 7283 0174 0

The limited first edition of this collection of Sister Jane's writings was published in 2006 to mark the centenary of the Community of the Sisters of the Love of God and was so popular it sold out quickly. This second edition follows from many requests, and brings us 366 brief daily readings, (some only a line or two long), from Sister Jane's private letters and other writings, providing a treasury of deep spiritual wisdom. I was originally going to follow the passages on a sequential daily basis when I started using it. However, certain excerpts beckoned me, so I found that it can be used random fashion as it does not closely follow the liturgical seasons. Just as Sister Jane was an experienced spiritual companion to many during her life, so now her writings provide a companionship for reflection and prayer to be mulled over slowly.

There are passages to lead into silent prayer. I used the following at our Julian Meeting:

'The heart of the life of prayer is *stillness*, and that comes from a genuine acceptance of the present moment *as it is*, even though it might go against the grain. If you can build on this, you will find tranquillity and room for growth in prayer even in the hubbub, whereas it is possible to wreck the stillness of outwardly "ideal" conditions by inner anxieties and revolts.'

Yvonne Walker

FINDING YOUR HIDDEN TREASURE: the way of silent prayer
Benignus O'Rourke

DLT 2010 £10.99

'Come back to your heart. In your inner self Christ has made his home. In your inner self you will be renewed in God's

image. And in his image you will recognise your creator.'

This book takes us beyond words and images into silence. It is good for personal use or for 'lead-ins' for a Julian meeting. The chapters (just over a page long) are in seven sections.

The author, an Augustinian friar, has brought many people into silent prayer for over 40 years. He draws heavily on St Augustine of Hippo but also on 20th century spiritual writers, English novelists, Russian saints, the Cloud of Unknowing... If your Julian Meeting needs something new, do try this.

Gail Ballinger

THE CIRCLE OF LOVE, praying with Rublev's icon

Ann Persson

Bible Reading Fellowship 2010 £5.99

ISBN 978 84101 750 1

This book is about the familiar Orthodox icon by Andrei Rublev of *The Holy Trinity*, which is illustrated on the cover. The book's origins are arresting. After an eye operation Ann Persson had to spend many hours lying face down on a modified garden bed with a hole cut in to it for her face. Rather than just stare at the carpet she asked for this, her favourite icon, to be put on the floor where she could see it.

Two weeks with *The Holy Trinity* as her companion took her deep into the picture, a source of meditative prayer. Later she went to Russia to see the icon, now in a Moscow gallery, and also the church it was painted for. This book is the result.

Ann recounts her journey, and then considers the history and artist traditions of icon painting. Finally she helps the reader use the icon to meditate on the Trinity, as a focus for prayer.

I found this book gentle and helpful. I kept closing the book to look again at the icon on the cover. The eight chapters each end with suggestions for reflection and prayer.

Anne Stamper

A THEOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

Samuel M. Powell

Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005, £19.99, \$26.10

ISBN 978-0687493333

Although this book has an American background we can easily recognize, in Australia, some behaviours described by the author in the early chapters. Examples are people's consumerist mentality in roaming around various churches until they find one that suits; the way many people try to find a spiritual pathway outside the church; and the self-help guides – the realities of the society we live in.

Dr. Powell then examines the theological and scriptural foundations of distinctive Christian spiritual practices: faith, baptism, worship, discipline (both formative and corrective), Christian virtues, and the works of love demonstrated in generosity, justice, and caring for creation.

In the chapter on each practice, he looks at the impulses both to transcend the world, and to participate in the world. These are part of the tension of our every day lives.

While individual salvation is important, he reminds us that the redemption of all creation is God's ultimate plan. Our task is to join in God's redemptive work and the expansion of his kingdom, demonstrating his righteousness and grace, and using our environment with care and responsibility. In other words, to live an authentic Christian life.

We are also reminded of our human limitations, so each of the Christian practices is tempered by our humanness (which he calls the condition of finitude). It takes into account the pervasive and devastating effects of sin in our fallen world. Dr. Powell takes an individual view of these spiritual practices but emphasizes their essential corporate expression through the Church, and then applies them to the wider community.

Each chapter concludes with a brief meditation and prayer.

The author does not aim to give an exhaustive treatment of all Christian spiritual practices, but this practical volume would be an asset to any thinking Christian.

John Ryall

John Ryall is a member at Moolap Baptist Church, and was President of the B.U. of Tasmania in 1988-89. He and his wife attend the monthly Julian Meetings in Geelong, Australia.

INSIDE, OUTSIDE: cards for contemplation
photographs by Ged Barrow

Conversare in assoc. with Rockpool Publishing 2008 £6.99
www.conversare.org.uk 0151 3484004
www.rockpoolpublishing.com

Conversare describes itself as 'The spiritual conversation place' whose aim is to encourage and equip people to speak gracefully to one another about the spiritual dimension to life.

This is a collection of 20 postcard sized images intended for use by both individuals and groups. It is designed to 'provide vibrant stimulus material for personal reflection, meditation and meaningful conversation.'

Each card has a photograph on one side and, on the other, a smaller version of the image with a short reflection of a few words. Quotations come from mystics, poets and artists and include Carlo Carretto, John O'Donahue, George Herbert Eckhart, Gauguin, and Michel Quoist.

Rain on a leaf, seed heads, barbed wire and sunsets are among the beautiful images. The photography is excellent.

Each card provides a good 'lead-in' to silence and focus and the little pack is very portable for use on a journey.

It would make an attractive gift.

Gail Ballinger

SILENCE AS MEETING PLACE

Wanda Nash

the author/Christians Aware 2010 £5.50

ISBN 978 1 873372 34 0

The simplicity of this book is stunning, and is based on years of practice. The author sets out her thesis clearly and with authority: Meeting with other faiths in the presence of God, in silence, not only creates trust and sanctity, bringing today's fractured society together, but crucially being so united, will cause the powers of darkness to be eliminated.

In 12 short chapters, Wanda quotes from different religious texts to show how 'stillness' is common to all world faiths, and how the desire for meditation is growing, (shown by web sites being hit by over 3,000,000 individuals daily.)

It is a practical book, offering explanations for why we don't meet in silence and expelling common fears. Chapter 9 tells us 'The How's': – simply, quietly, bring a few people together: no fanfare, no fuss, no media.

The appendix has extracts from the sacred writings of the major world faiths, with space to add one's own comments. This is followed by a useful comparison of the aims used in group sharing with those used in debate.

This 52 page book should be bought by every church of every Christian denomination in the UK. Indeed it should also be on the shelves of all 'other faith' libraries. It is essential reading for all Interfaith Groups / Multifaith Forums

Judith Hammond

Judith Hammond is a Quaker and a member of West Wilts Multifaith Forum

This book is available from the author. Please send a cheque, made out to Wanda Nash, to 50b Hyde Street, Winchester SO23 7DY

The views expressed in this Magazine are those of each writer and are not necessarily held by the Editor or by the Julian Meetings Council.

Magazine Contributions

The Editor is always pleased to receive original articles, short meditations, stories, poems or artwork for the Magazine, but cannot guarantee that they will be included, and they may be edited before inclusion.

Book reviews (300 words max) should include title, author, ISBN, publisher, year published, hard- or paper-back, price.

**Please send contributions for the April Magazine
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