

THE JULIAN MEETINGS



Magazine
December
2009

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 2009

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We conclude the address given by Wanda Nash at the University of Winchester on

SHARED SILENCE AS MEETING PLACE

The further one goes into Stillness, the ultimate definition of the Primal Creator seems the less important. This is nothing new: even in the 3rd century Dionysius the Areopogite wrote: *'Though beyond touch and light, the still space more than fills our unseeing minds with splendours of Transcendence: through not seeing and not knowing, we find Him who is beyond vision and knowledge'*.

The sacred writings of the great Faiths say that God is indescribable and unknowable – which can be a problem for those who like everything in black and white; explainable; boxed and labelled with precision. But that malign power we have been thinking of likes to make people think in black and white, and then argue about it. Our God Himself has given us a world full of rainbows and infinite, exquisite, subtleties of colour, and made us overseers of it.

Rowan Williams encourages us to give each other, and God, *ATTENTION and ENGAGEMENT*. Even while we are aware of the spiritual battle in high places, such attention and *engagement* enables us to take a hold of the tools of *Tenderness, Kindliness, Hospitality, and Generosity*. This makes us capable of becoming channels, conduits, for the very Breath of God, to our modern breathless world.

So why don't we share stillness together?

What stops us? Thoughts like these:

'If my 'spiritual neighbours' don't want to come too, why should I make the effort?'

'When I meet my friends, my colleagues, I *talk* to them. It makes little sense to say "I am going to meet my friends in order to be silent with them!" '

'If I can only just fit in the worship that my religion demands, how can I fit in an 'extra'?'

'Do I really want to step out of the seen, accepted norms of my own religious group? It's much more comforting to stay within my own, known, comfort-zone.'

There are also deeper, more cogent apprehensions:

Social insecurity

Will I be 'shown up', 'got at' or accepted?

If I belong to a minority group inevitably there will be personal, social or political fears, quite apart from any spiritual doubts.

Expected intimacy with strangers can be a deeply unconscious threat.

Noise

'Western' culture takes this for granted: constant TV, piped musack, personal head-phones and ubiquitous mobiles. We often turn to noise outside ourselves for contact, information, sorting our problems, answers to questions; for 'Normalcy'. Noise from outside protects me; being unprotected can be terrifying. Some other cultures are familiar with silence as a safe, reflective, resting space: it's not the frightening bogey or unfamiliar hole that ours seems to expect.

Knowledge and being 'right'.

We are surrounded by information and access to knowledge. Having knowledge is admired and rewarded. The concept of Unknowing is seldom addressed - we even have to be trained how to say 'I don't know'! The child within each of us needs to have secure borders; to know exactly where they are; and to have the 'right' answers. Perhaps we can allow that child to mature into the vast infinity of our Divine Creator, acknowledging the limitation and hindrance of words.

Is anything there?

The biggest fear, possibly sub-conscious, may be "If I 'go

inside' will I find *there is nothing there at all?*" This is where we need to belong to an established faith whose School of Silence has long believed that the Divine nature actually lives INSIDE each one of us. This makes all the difference.

My categorical disclaimers:

- * 'Stillness as Meeting Place' does *NOT* imperil personal exposure in any of the ways we have touched on;
- * since there is no voicing of what is met in the Stillness, there is no threat of 'right' or 'wrong';
- * any bonding, insights, mutuality or support that arises from being still together is not to be analysed or defined - it is mostly beyond words;
- * 'Stillness as Meeting Place' does not endanger any beliefs that a person may already hold and treasure.

This simple practice - of letting go of our usual thinking, feeling, doing, petitioning; laying aside obsessive activities of mind, heart, body and soul that usually occupy us - is done temporarily and for a stated length of time. Staying in that Nothingness together is only for a short while, perhaps 10-40 minutes. Whether an individual uses texts or mantras or zikkas with their breath, or enters the place of no words, is not an issue. The practice of simple STILLNESS is universally applicable. In the Silence, through the grace of the Spirit [however this Spirit is named] affinities, allegiances, loyalties are opened and broadened; they become more generous and hospitable than in any other way I know.

We CAN get together in silence

Following 9/11, in my local area all the Abrahamic Faiths came together three times, not to discuss, refute, compare, but simply to hold silence together. A leader of each faith spoke a few verses from their holy scripture; everyone else kept deep silence between each presentation. No comment, no argument, simply delighting in the insight each extract carried.

In London St. Ethelburga's in the city, The Quaker Meeting House in Baker St., and The Christian Mediation Trust in Myddelton Sq. [EC1R 1XX], have hosted times when the World Faiths have met in Silent Prayer together. Some Cathedrals have held silent vigils following a public disaster, or notable death.

GETTING TOGETHER IN SILENCE IS POSSIBLE.

At the first meeting of the Three Faiths Forum in the South many ordinary people from each of the Abrahamic Faiths turned up, in roughly equal numbers. The three speakers were superb. There was an atmosphere of hope, belonging and friendship. Then one person after another spoke of an experience of affront, complaint, hurt. So I stood up and asked, *"If it was offered, how many would come to pray together in Silence?"* About 40% raised their hands. So our local inter-faith Silent prayer group began. We meet in each others homes, and read portions from the Torah, the New Testament, and the Qur'an which all relate to the theme hosen by the host of the day. We have silence between each faith-portion, without discussion of it or contention about it.

Our opening Prayer is:

Lord of all Creation, we stand before you impelled by visions of the harmony of humanity.

We are children of many traditions - inheritors of shared wisdom and tragic misunderstanding; of proud hopes, and humble successes.

*In that which we share, let us see the common exchange;
In that which we differ, let us wonder at the freedom You have given us;*

In our unity and our differences, let us know the uniqueness that is God.

May there be an end to boasting and vainglory, and may arrogance dwindle in our time.

Help each one of us to bring our own offering of understanding: then in tranquillity may we go forward to build

Your Kingdom in the world, until earth shall be filled with your knowledge as the waters cover the sea.

(Derived from the Movement for Reform Jewish Prayer Book 1977)

Future Possibilities

My object has been to spur us towards sharing simple silent prayer in each others' company - basking in the awe of God, whatever name we use.

I imagine a day when every three or four streets everywhere in our country, will have a group of 6-8 people of various creeds who so value time spent together in the Presence of God, that they do it regularly. Perhaps they share a cup of tea too. Perhaps they talk together afterwards or not. These social inter-actions would be add-ons, not essential. Out of these gatherings in silent prayer would grow a respect, a mutuality, a spirituality: a trust that would spread almost subliminally through the streets around them. They would be conduits for the spirit of God, without rules, constraints, forms and dogmas. Religious communities need boundaries to develop their identities: we always look for definitions. But there is a running-together that is highly desirable: a focus on what cannot be contained by words alone. The beneficence of God is far beyond words. Given the chance it will unknot the deep defences and barriers, affronts and challenges, that words themselves construct.

There is no mind of man who can encompass the whole immensity and infinity of God. God cannot be kept within edges. Yet this God yearns to drench us with His wisdom, purposes and grace while we remain laggards. We are laggardly, obdurate in not reaching out to RECEIVE God. It's OK to demand of God, to petition God, but to stay still and emptied in order to wait for God, to wait upon God - that is another matter!

It may be time we proactively get together to meet socially,

learn each others' ways, and talk.

But perhaps even more urgent is that we get together in Stillness. It would initiate habits of bonding and mutuality between us that could not only transform our society but generate the moral, religious and spiritual energy - all combined - to rout out the energies that are destroying us.

Religious fundamentalists tend to say spending time with God in Stillness is a 'waste of time'.

Do we really want that mistrust to prosper?

Or can we expose ourselves to the binding Godly energies within Stillness?

To conclude

The practice of Stillness is not merely a way to secure my own serenity and balance.

For me, the focus is triple, each more significant than the previous one.

i] Most who regularly practice Stillness may do so for the betterment of their own soul; this, of course, is right and proper. However, beyond that personal and subjective comfort are two further priorities:

ii] Sharing Stillness with other Faiths creates trust and sanctity for those in the group. Could this be a glue - perhaps the strongest available - to bind today's fractured society together?

iii] If we meet in the Presence of God, in Stillness, emptied of demand or label or expectation of reward, simply Being with God, totally loyal and on His side and altogether, then the powers set against God will wither and shrink.

**THIS LAST IS THE MOST URGENT TASK
WE HAVE IN THE ENTIRE WORLD.**

May I quote from a letter from Deepak in Kerala, S.India -

'Yes, there have been a number of occasions in my life where I have attended silent prayer with other Faiths. One of the very few - perhaps the ONLY way to pray together, is in Silence.

My first experience of silent prayer was when I first went to school. My teacher said that as we were from different Faiths, we should all be silent for sometime. When I grew up, I realised that this is the normal Indian way of praying in a multi-faith congregation; it is still followed. Of course, there will also be separate vocal prayers held also.'

The final word goes to Colin Davis, at a Prom of the World Youth Orchestra, with all its differences. He said – and you can take it as a joke or with its own significance:

'Anyone who thinks they're RIGHT, is a menace; they need to be dragged off stage.'

Gatherings today

The following are places where people of all faiths [or none] can gather in Stillness:

- * The Ammerdown Centre in Dorset;*
- * St. Ethelburga's in the City of London;*
- * the Three Faith Forum in the South;*
- * the Christian Meditation Trust;*
- * the Southampton Peace Walk to places of Faith;*
- * a few Chapels of Unity on university sites;*
- * Winchester inter-faith silent prayer group.*

Do you know of other places where, or occasions when, people of all faiths, or none, can gather together to share silence and stillness? Have you taken part in any such shared occasions? Do any Julian Meetings include non-Christians?

It would be good to hear about these opportunities.

Responses to Wanda's address

From Marian Kennedy in Leicester

As a lady in 'Churches Together', 'Inter-Faith' and 'Other Faiths' for shared 'get-togethers or doings' I was very interested in 'Shared Silence as Meeting Place'. The idea of a shared silence of Christian and the main faiths (or others!); knowing a Faith of other cultures or language is to be commended. Wanda's address has now got my little grey cells working overtime.

From Ruth Newman in Exmouth

Reading Wanda's address made me recall something that happened when I was teaching Religious Studies in a multi-faith school in Southall, Middlesex, in the 1970s.

Father Michael Hollings was the local RC priest. He came to take assembly one day. The school was predominantly Sikh, with some Muslim and some Hindu students. There were few Christians. Father Michael gave a little talk, told a few stories Nothing out of the ordinary. He then asked everyone to close their eyes and put their hands in their laps. There was silence ... not an embarrassed silence ... just peace. After a few minutes he asked the students to open their eyes. He told them they had been praying by listening. No one questioned this. His spiritual strength and authority had held the whole group so that each could listen to their heart. It was a memory many of the students came back to in class.

*In the depth of silence
no words are needed
no language required.
In the depth of silence
I am called to listen*

Seasonal Inspiration

Messiaen's music, with its deep sonorous tone interspersed by periods of quiet reflection, or even silence, inspires many people, and reflects our awe of God, and the created order. *La Nativité du Seigneur* (the Birth of Our Lord) is Messiaen's nine musical meditations on the birth of Jesus.

Francis Ballinger reviews a new book inspired by this music:
ICONS of the INCARNATION

Sophie Hacker, with meditations by **Roland Reim**

Canterbury Press 2008 14.99

ISBN 978-1-85311-926-2

Nine poems by Roland Reim, and high-quality photos of nine pictures by Sophie Hacker, parallel the musical meditations to draw out and amplify the Nativity themes. This coming together of music, art and poetry helps each to complement and enhance the other. The combination can evoke in us deep feelings about, and enhanced understanding of, the incarnation. The awe, wonder and mystery at the exposure of Christ among us, can be overwhelming, and bring a new sense of God being with us.

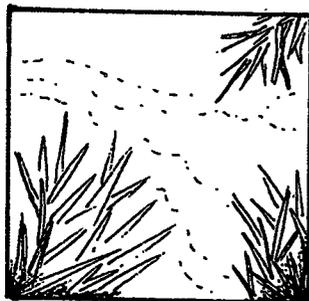
In November the Advisory Group arranged a meeting for the people whose volunteer work keeps JM operating. This meeting was to be an opportunity for us all to meet together and get to know each other better; to share our information and ideas; to look back at how JM has developed so far; and to discuss how we might carry JM forward as it comes towards the end of its fourth decade.

Unfortunately the Meeting had to be held later than the date by which our printer needed this Magazine, so a full report of it will be in the April issue. JM belongs to its membership - as well as to God. We are always happy to receive your ideas or suggestions about how JM should be run, or things we should / should not be doing, so do feel free to send them to us.

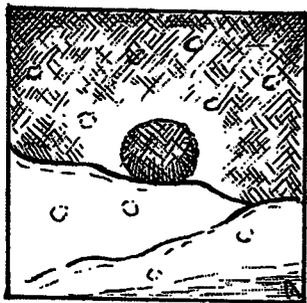


Advent Calendar

He will come like last leaf's fall.
One night when the November wind
has flayed the trees to bone, and earth
wakes choking on the mould,
the soft shroud's folding.



He will come like the frost.
One morning when the shrinking earth
opens on mist, to find itself
arrested in the net
of alien, sword-set beauty.



He will come like dark.
One evening when the bursting red
December sun draws up the sheet
and penny-masks its eye to yield
the star-snowed fields of sky.

He will come, will come
will come like crying in the night,
like blood, like breaking,
as the earth writhes to toss him free.
He will come like child.

Rowan Williams



© Rowan Williams 2001
Reproduced by kind permission of the
Archbishop of Canterbury and Perpetua
Press, Oxford.
Dr Williams has published four collections
of poems – the first three collected in *The
Poems of Rowan Williams* (Oxford and
New York 2002) and the fourth
'Headwaters' (Oxford 2008)

God's Gifts

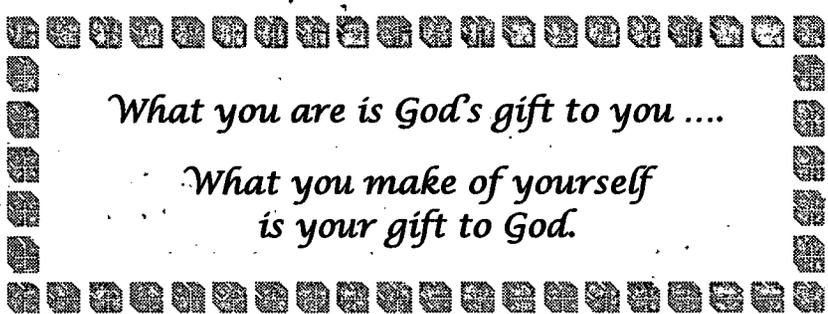
God gives us many gifts, providing for our physical, mental and spiritual needs. He gives us everything. There is nothing that does not have its source in Him. Anything that comes from God has to be regarded as special. Each of us is special too, and we each have a unique personal relationship with God.

Many of God's gifts to me came through other people. My parents and teachers taught me as I grew up. A remark by a friend opened my eyes to something I'd previously been unable to see, and it healed a long-standing pain. I gain helpful insights from reading books, even though I never meet the authors.

All these gifts God has given me – how does he want me to use them? He gifts me His love. As my circumstances change, so the answers to my questions change. How am I to show God's love to others? How reflect my relationship to Him in my daily actions? How much of my time should I share, and how? My talents? My possessions? To many people in the world, what we call poverty would be luxury.

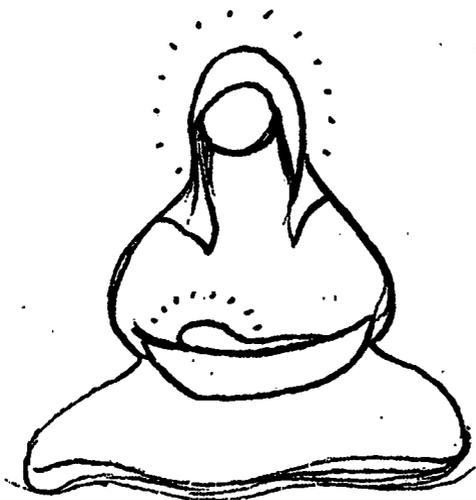
Thank you, God, for all that you have given to us; all the skills you have given to others that they have used to help us. Thank you for every way in which we hear and learn more of you. Please help our relationships with You to keep on growing as we seek to serve in this world.

Barbara Durkan.



What you are is God's gift to you

*What you make of yourself
is your gift to God.*



*Be still, the
whole earth,
for God has be-
stirred himself
from his holy
dwelling place*

*Amal
09*

O Clavis David

This is the Key which God the locksmith cut,
his Key of David, setting prisoners free
from prison, darkness, death; his Sceptre Key
which, shutting, none may open, opening, shut;
his Keyboard Key, means of communication;
his Winding Key, empowering us like clocks;
his Code-of-life Key, which alone unlocks
the mystery and music of creation;

his Crossword Key — but there's a thought for sure:
the Cross of Death and Word of Life-to-Be
require a humble, living, dying Key,
like this down-fluttering one of Sycamore —
the one solution to this Cross Word clue,
which Key of David, God the gardener grew.

Denis Parry

(A Poet's Advent ISBN 10904169-47-3)

Is This Really a Julian Meeting?

We were on holiday for our usual Julian Meeting, but on the Sunday morning our holiday church pew sheet listed 'Tuesday 7.30pm Julian Meeting'.

So we duly arrived, and were welcomed by another couple heading into the church. There was a lovely meeting room under the tower, so I'd assumed we would be there, as the church had serried ranks of pews. But no. We were in the church, scattered across the pews. The minister led from the front pew, so was constantly turning round. She handed out copies of *A Service for the Lady Julian*, plus a sheet of prayers. We then had prayers, readings, a psalm, a homily about St Benedict — and, to be fair, 30 minutes of silence.

There was no sharing time afterwards — we just went our separate ways. In a village community, who meet often in other situations, this is quite common for a Julian Meeting. If there had been a time of sharing, I would have said that it was like no Julian Meeting I've ever attended, and I have been to 7 different ones, plus JM quiet days and retreats.

Cheated

I felt I'd been cheated. Cheated of the feeling of community that comes with being gathered in a circle. Cheated of the sense of gathered, shared silence contained within that circle. Cheated of simplicity: of having *nothing except* a lead-in (by word, music, or both), a focus (usually a candle in the centre of the circle), the silence with God, and the lead out of the silence. Those are the essence of a Julian Meeting for me, and for most people I know. A time of sharing after the silence is an optional extra.

When we got home, I looked in *The Ideal Julian Meeting* and read (page 2) "It stays simple. No liturgy, no healing session, no prayers for peace — no matter how valid these things are in their own right, nor how much of a common

mind the participants may have about them. These things can be done as a separate group because someone may come along who is being drawn into contemplative prayer but who thinks healing sessions are for cranks, or that prayers for peace are political, or who is not of the same denomination as the liturgy; and she/he may be put off. ... by linking contemplative prayer with ... other prayers. ... we are implying that prayer has to be for something. So we may lose this tremendous opportunity of showing that the best prayer of all is that which revels in God's very existence, delighting that God is, wanting whatever God wants, saying 'Yes'."

In *Starting a Julian Meeting* I read (page 6)
" ... a joy of contemplative prayer — denominational barriers need not be evident. Often members of a Julian Meeting are unaware of the denominational leanings of their fellow participants. This is why it is important that a Julian Meeting centres only on Christian contemplation, avoiding anything with a denominational flavour. This is a very sensitive area. To include ... Bible study, prayer for healing, any liturgy, the rosary or Hail Mary, or speaking in tongues could alienate ... some ... who are not at ease with them, so they should be avoided. These may all be commended in their rightful place, but that place is not a Julian Meeting."

Perhaps there are lots of Julian Meetings who do use a liturgy, or other practices, and I have not come across them. Or perhaps this was a very untypical Meeting. So I repeat the title of this article — is the Julian Meeting I went to on holiday really a Julian Meeting?

To avoid identification of the Meeting referred to above, and therefore any possible embarrassment, we have removed all names and place references.

Editor

We would be interested to know what you think of the issues raised in the article on page 14. How prescriptive should we be? Is there a point at which a Meeting is so far from our 'Ideal' that it is no longer a Julian Meeting? Please send any comments to the Magazine Editor, details on page 29. We will assume they may be printed in the Magazine (though they may be edited) unless you specify not. You may ask to be quoted anonymously, but must include your name and contact details with your request.

Exploring Labyrinths

I love walking labyrinths whether outside in gardens or inside a church such as Chartres Cathedral, which has provided the model layout for many labyrinths. Do not confuse labyrinths and mazes. You can easily get lost in a maze, whose many 'dead ends' make you turn back until you find the right route leading from the outside to the centre - unless you give up and turn back! Labyrinths also start from the outer edge but only have one route to the centre. Its many twists and turns on the way mean that you walk all the paths of the labyrinth before you arrive at the centre.

A labyrinth has been described as an ancient tool for spiritual growth. The journey to the centre can be seen as an analogy of our life journey. Walking the labyrinth is a body prayer or meditation enabling us to connect with our inner being. As we walk, awareness or insights often arise and we may find we begin to release old patterns or attitudes, to let go and to be more fully present in the moment.

Finding a labyrinth

In West London Ealing Abbey's garden labyrinth is walked for an hour or so from 11am on the first Saturday of the month. St Mary's Church Ealing has a Chartres-type labyrinth,

painted on a large canvas, which can be rolled out onto the floor once the new pews are stacked aside.

St James' Church, Piccadilly in central London has a similar labyrinth. This is rolled out in the chancel, church hall or church courtyard 1.30-2.30pm the 2nd Sunday in the month. Gloucester Cathedral's canvas labyrinth is usually rolled out in the centre of the cathedral floor for part of August.

Handy sized

I have a beautiful pewter pocket-sized portable labyrinth which is ideal for 'walking' or following the labyrinth with your hands instead of your legs while at home or travelling or anywhere else. I've even used it standing in a crowded tube train and the people around me assumed that I was using an unusual I-phone! It comes with a metal stylus (I prefer to use a short pencil as I find it is easier to hold) to enable you to trace the 'walk' while holding the 3 inch diameter labyrinth in the palm of your hand.

I bought mine from The Forward Movement, a part of the Anglican Church in the USA. Using their website facility at www.forwardmovement.org it only cost me the dollar equivalent of about £10. I paid by credit card and it arrived within a week, with a velveteen pouch and 12 page booklet 'Walking the Labyrinth'. This explains the ancient roots and Christian meaning of this popular spiritual tool and the often experienced three stages of the labyrinth journey, which are :1.Releasing 2.Receiving 3.Returning.

'Enjoy' as they often say in North America to visitors about to start a meal or other new experience !

Michael Tiley

For internet users, putting 'pocket labyrinth' into a search engine will bring up a number of sites where hand-held labyrinths may be purchased, some made of metal, some of pottery. A pocket labyrinth might make an unusual Christmas present for someone!

Exploring Contemplative Living

Notes from a day event organised by the West Malling Meeting

Speaker Seamus Cullen is a spiritual director & retreat giver, his teaching and practice based on *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

Seamus said contemplative prayer surfaces at different times in people. The important thing is the Desire and Intention to pray: desire for the divine indwelling, an awareness of God.

- * Just be, acknowledge our being – God is our Being.
- * 'Be still and know that I am God'.
- * We don't have to go anywhere to be in God's Presence.
- * God is present now and ever shall be.
- * Be aware of the NOW – this is eternity.
- * No one can fully comprehend through *knowing* God – only through *love* – the joy of eternal life.

Centering Prayer – prayer without words - is one of the many ways into Contemplative Prayer. When going apart for this prayer, we forget what we've been doing: reject thoughts and reach out to God. The soul can seek communion in our brokenness. Whatever comes to us in meditation can lead to contemplation. It can lead to:

- * something without words/images/prayer
- * a sense of presence
- * SILENCE
- * STILLNESS
- * openness to the Work of God in our souls
- * with or without distraction – being!

In the early church contemplative prayer was the *Lectio Divina* of the monastic communities. *Lectio* = reading the Scripture slowly: *meditatio* = 'chewing' on what was read: *oratio* = praying on what God had brought out of the reading: *contemplatio* = the stillness of God indwelling.

Seamus suggested we be familiar with John's Gospel and letters, and read *Open Mind, Open Heart* by Thomas Keating. On *Lectio Divina* he told us to read the Scripture and then put it aside, and do this three times. Whatever remains with us,

use for meditation. He gave us Isaiah 54 v.10 on which to meditate and bring us to contemplation.

A short stillness exercise helped us practice how to relax into stillness and silence: sit, feet flat on the floor, back against the chair, hands in lap. Breathe deeply and slowly. Be at peace, and comfortable. Relaxation helps us to be receptive to the divine within (the Presence which is God).

Contemplation can bring an inner beauty – the practice of inner silence. Living the Fruits of the Spirit we become more patient, less condemning, we can forgive as Christ forgives.

Cloud of Forgetting

When we come to contemplation, identify any concerns, name them and put them to one side. This is **our** time with God. The concerns can be picked up again afterwards.

Cloud of Unknowing

We cannot know God but we can intuit God. The mystery of God in whom we live and have our being. Presence – no words can describe it.

Don't mix different types of prayer. If you have intercessions on your mind do this first, then settle for your time with God.

Distractions

To continue with contemplation you may choose a sacred word (pray about this). Don't resist the distractions. If they dominate, use the sacred word and return to your stillness.

Contemplation is for anyone. Set aside a time and place for it, rather than trying to 'fit it in'. Give up something else to find the time. We will, if the desire is there. We will protect the time and space, because we want to, we choose it freely. Hold on to the Desire and the Intention.

It is impossible NOT to pray if we have the desire.

When we review our day, to what degree were we aware of the Presence of God?

Angela Pain
Contact for the West Malling Julian Meeting

In the August Magazine we said it was important to take opportunities to promote Julian Meetings. As it went to press Beth Rowlands wrote to me:

"Dear Déidre,

'The Friend', the Quaker weekly journal, carried an article on Julian of Norwich in its 5 June issue. I thought I should pick up on this, and write to the Editor about the Julian Meetings. After three weeks 'The Friend' decided to print my piece as an article rather than a letter, in the 26 June issue. I felt I must let you know, as I added your contact details for enquiries — I do hope this is all right."

Beth included a copy of her article, and the one that sparked her to write to 'The Friend'. I felt she gave such a clear explanation of JM that we should share it with our readership as an example of what can be written when the chance arises and is recognized. Thank you, Beth, for being pro-active - I had an enquiry within a week as a result of your article.

Editor

Here is Beth's article:

The Julian Meetings

I am grateful to Paul Millward (5 June) for writing of his discovery of Julian of Norwich. 36 years ago the Julian Meetings (JM) began in this country in answer to a felt need in various churches for groups to step back from busyness and to share silence. The purpose of JM is defined as fostering the practice and teaching of contemplative prayer within the Christian tradition.

Several of those first members greatly valued mother Julian's book 'Revelations of Divine Love' (issued as a Penguin classic in 1966) and decided to call their new movement after her. Julian wrote movingly in words that still speak to us vividly today. 'I saw that all the kind compassion and love a man may have for his fellow Christian is due to the fact that Christ is in him ... He did not

say, "you shall not be tempest-tossed, you shall not be work-weary, you shall not be discomforted". But he said: "you shall not be overcome".

I belong to one of the groups. We are always open to welcoming new members. Contemplative prayer is seen as a way of making ourselves more and more available to God. In the shared silence we experience God's love and power in a new way. Fellowship and self-discovery come to us as a consequence but are not our primary motive. People take it in turns to host the meetings and to find a reading to lead us into the silence. Sometimes the readings come from Mother Julian, some are biblical and others from writings of different denominations.

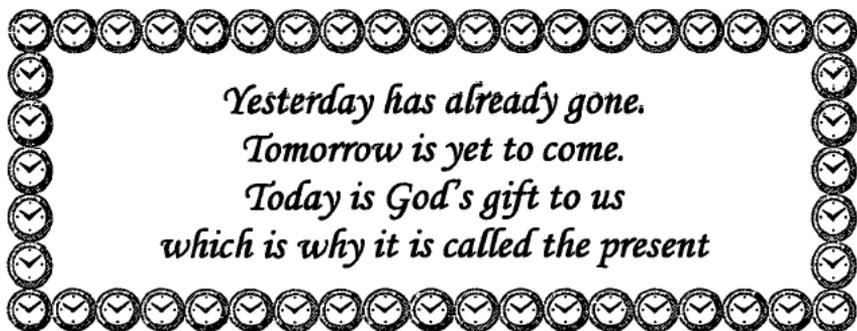
It needs to be ecumenical so that we share a wider experience, getting to know people with varied backgrounds different from those we meet on Sundays.

After a half hour of silence we share a cup of tea or coffee and talk together about almost anything. Sometimes our discussion arises out of the reading we have heard and can go very deep. Often we bring our particular problem or sadness to the group. We are coming to know each other in the things which are eternal.

Beth Rowlands

Oxford & Swindon AM, Northleach JM

Further information from: [REDACTED]



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THE COMPLETE JULIAN OF NORWICH

Fr. John-Julian OJN

Paraclete Press USA \$29.99, £21.60 2009

ISBN 9781557256393

When I first held this book in my hand I was struck by the beautiful presentation, clear type and ease of handling - unusual in many paperbacks today.

This book is what it purports to be: a complete Julian volume. It has the full text of her Revelations with the annotations and explanations on the opposite page - so no turning backwards or forwards to numerous footnotes.

There is a section on the major themes of Julian's writings, an 'All About Julian' section and a full Appendix with some fascinating insights into such things as how the blood from Christ's wounds would be as raindrops from thatch rather than from tiles, and the kind of crucifix Julian might have contemplated as she lay on her presumed deathbed.

I was 'hooked' from the moment the book arrived and I could not put it down all morning. Fr. John-Julian has spent years studying and meditating on the Revelations of Divine Love and the section 'All About Julian' has some genuinely new research. He even gives an educated guess as to Julian's possible identity, a woman twice widowed and a native of Norwich who appears in several documents of the time.

Fr John-Julian's scholarship sits lightly on him and the style is very easy to read. He shares insights into Julian and her times that I have found nowhere else.

If you love Julian then get this book. The full text of the Revelations is here, but much, much more. An enthralling portrayal of one of our greatest English mystics.

Elizabeth Obbard

Book Reviews - Book Reviews - Book Reviews

WAITING

Chris Leonard
SPCK 2008 £8.99

ISBN 978-0-281-05891-4

Waiting, it says on this book, is one of the most difficult things to do. This is certainly my experience! It can be that strange, unsettling and often painful "in-between" one part of your life and the next. So can anything help with these situations, that most of us go through at some time? Is there any comfort to be had, or given, in these times of waiting?

Yes, says Chris Leonard, a writer and a teacher of creative writing. Her book is very accessible, short and clearly laid out, and can be dipped into at any time to find something of use.

The writer uses real life stories (with permission) from people she knows, to illustrate different types of waiting. "Waiting for...." and "Waiting on...." are two chapter headings. Each chapter has a bible passage followed by a commentary from Chris. Then there is a real life story, and finally a prayer, or saying, for reflection or meditation. Chris also contributes her own prose and poetry. I was moved to tears many times.

Now (big confession!) – I don't much like studying the Bible. Yet all the Bible extracts in this book meant something, and made sense. They had a purpose, and beautifully reflected the point being made. This was a revelation, and something that makes the book so accessible.

The writer also uses humorous extracts: a poem entitled "My God is a Dry-Stone Waller" or the poem "Mirror" written by an 80 year old man about a woman's life span.

This could be a good resource for leaders of church services or for lead-in to Julian Meetings. I'd even take it to a hospital bed – there is material here we can use for those of us who support others as part of our lives.

Zena Cumberpatch

MAKING A PILGRIMAGE

Sally Welch

Lion 2009 £5.99

ISBN 9780745953564

PILGRIMAGE: A SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL JOURNEY

Ian Bradley

Lion 2009 £20

ISBN 978 074 59 52703

When I was asked to review these two very different books I was preparing to walk the Camino Portugués to Santiago de Compostela.

Sally Welch writes about the practicalities, with good down to earth advice about spiritual and physical preparation for a pilgrimage. Each chapter has a quotation on the theme, an anecdote from the author's experience as a pilgrim followed by a discussion. It concludes with a useful reflection or an exercise that can be used on or before a pilgrimage. I do wish I'd given myself enough time to do all the reflections. Nevertheless the book really helped me move from planning for a "special holiday" towards making it a true pilgrimage experience. I'd recommend this as a readable pocket guide.

Dr Ian Bradley's lavishly illustrated volume, with photos of the pilgrim routes, may well be described as a "coffee table book". The first part discusses all aspects of pilgrimage; its history up to today; and explores undertaking pilgrimage closer to home. Part two describes the major and interesting pilgrimage destinations of Europe, with practical guidance on travel, accommodation, and website information for each destination. There are many quotes, from various authors, of their pilgrimage experiences.

Although these two books are very different in style (and cost) I found them both excellent resources to prepare me and inspire me for pilgrimage. I undertook a specific journey this year, and that experience plus the guidance offered by the books has encouraged me to explore the theme further. I've visited additional centres of pilgrimage and increased my awareness of the pilgrimage aspect of everyday life.

Diane Harrison

CELTIC TREASURE:

unearthing the riches of Celtic spirituality

Liz Babbs

Lion 2009 £6.99

ISBN 978 0 7459 5355 7

Once again Lion Publishing and Liz Babbs have produced a beautiful book to treasure or give as a gift. Interspersed with stunning photographs and Celtic designs, the text is in eight sections covering Celtic treasures, the lives of Celtic saints, prayer and solitude, creation, creativity, community, hospitality and celebrating life. Each chapter has a Bible passage, prayers and commentary which invite the reader to dig deeper into the riches of this ancient tradition.

This is a good resource for personal devotion or for leading into silence. A delightful little hard-back book - do put it on your Christmas gift list!

Yvonne Walker

FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY: following Saint Francis today

Brother Ramon SSF

SPCK 1994 re-issued 2008

ISBN 978 - 0 - 281 - 06032 - 0

This book has many nuggets to help Christians on their journey. It is easy to read, with many examples from the life of St Francis or his early followers.

We see 'a spirituality of experience rather than scholastic dogmatism. The typical Franciscan is ... in love and people in love feel and do extraordinary things.' There is practical help about posture, breathing, repetition, visualisation and contemplation in relation to prayer, and about the three steps of faith; purgation, illumination and unity with God.

A Third Order member says 'Possessions are our own lack of faith - God will let me die if I don't have food, clothes, a job, money in the bank.' Francis trusted that God would care for him - not give him a long life, comfort, life assurance.

Without possessions which are burdens, we are free to live

fully exposed to all life's extremes of joy and sorrow, and ... free to do God's will rather than our own.'

This book challenges us to look hard at our modern way of life; to see 'Spirituality' as less about how we pray, and more like a stream of living water in every part of our lives, in our meetings with people and with the whole of creation. To see how the pattern of the incarnation in our life may integrate the gospel with social values.

Francis Ballinger

WORDS FOR SILENCE:

a year of contemplative meditations

Gregory Fruehwirth

SPCK 2008 £10.99;

Paraclete Press, USA \$21.95

The Order of Julian of Norwich is an American Anglican order of contemplative monks and nuns. To help provide them with consistent, long term spiritual formation their Superior, in the Benedictine tradition, gives a weekly Chapter talk. *Words for Silence* is a collection of these given by Fr Gregory, Guardian of the Order, and rewritten for a general audience.

I read a talk daily as part of my morning quiet time. They go from Advent to Ordinary Time in the church's year, and then there are talks For Every Season. Subjects covered include transfiguration, greed, putting prayer to work at work, and listening to God through our bodies.

In his preface Archbishop Desmond Tutu, an oblate of the Order, says 'the exhortation that people pray without ceasing is meant not just for an elite but is addressed to all of us who claim to be followers of ... Jesus Christ. We are meant to emulate him, who was so conscious of the divine presence and his unity with the divine source of all, that he could in the fourth gospel declare 'the Father and I are one'. We too should know we are always in the presence of God...'

I think it was towards this constant recollection that I found the talks most helpful.

Gail Ballinger

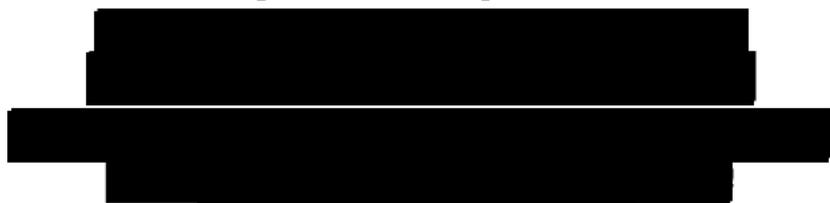
The views expressed in this Magazine are those of each writer and are not necessarily held by the Editor or by the Julian Meetings Advisory Group.

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 should include the book's title, author, ISBN, publisher, year published, hardback or paperback, and price.

**Please send contributions for the April Magazine
by 25 January 2010**



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*Please note that, as all JM work is done by volunteers,
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