



*It's your
turn to lead
into the
silence*

The Julian Meetings

*Foster the teaching and practice of
contemplative prayer and in the
Christian tradition*

*Encourage people to practise
contemplative prayer in their daily lives,
and to 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*



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So it's your turn to lead the next meeting

Where do you start?

The purpose of the lead-in, whether words or music, is to form a bridge between the activity of the day and the shared silence of the meeting.

It can be as simple as you like, and depends on what YOU feel is right.

We don't want to dictate how you ought to lead a Julian Meeting – we just wish to offer you some ideas and some practical suggestions which you may find helpful.

Preparation

It can help if you start well before the meeting you will be leading. This will allow you plenty of time to prepare.

For many of us, the first step is to pray.

We bring any fears, insecurity and uncertainty to God, and own our total dependence on Him.

We ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit that we may choose wisely, and that the meeting we lead may help people to rest in the presence of God.

Think back over the last few meetings you have attended.

What type of lead-in have you found most helpful?

Have others said what they have found helpful?

Look at the general suggestions in the JM Pamphlet *Going Into Silence .. and Coming out*

Be open to the prompting of the Spirit.

Finding something to read.

- You might look at the Bible readings related to the date of the meeting: or there may be a link to a Christian season or festival - Advent, Pentecost, the Ascension etc.
- The JM Pamphlet *Going Into Silence ... and Coming Out* has suggestions for both words and music which may be appropriate
- The JM Magazine often reviews books with suitable material, as do the Christian newspapers
- Are you currently reading something which might have a relevant passage in it?
- Do you have any spiritual classics which might be a resource? Or does your public library have any?

Some people like to collect passages, poems and prayers in a simple exercise book. This can prove a valuable resource for both group and private prayer.

If you have already started such a collection, why not look through it?

How do you choose?

One passage may suggest itself strongly to you.

If nothing seems to be just right, perhaps you might choose two or three pieces to meditate on. Then use your God-given common sense to decide which one feels right.

Do remember that you are helping people to be more aware of the presence of God, not showing off great erudition or theological insights. Keep the passage short and simple.

Providing a visual or sensory focus

For some people a visual focus can be very helpful, and some lead-ins may be enhanced by symbols. If you feel a visual focus is appropriate, why not look around your home and garden to see if you have a relevant symbol to hand?

Our sense of touch can also be a powerful focus. To handle a stone, or leaf, or Julian's hazelnut, can literally keep us in touch during the silence. You might like to provide some appropriate objects for people to hold if they wish

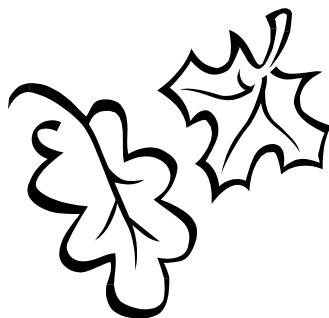
Scent can also enhance our awareness of ourselves and our surroundings, and may bring other associations with it. You might offer cuttings from scented herbs or flowers.

If you use perfumed candles, or incense, or essential oils in a room scenter be careful. The scent could become too intense or overpowering for some people. It might also cause problems for a person with asthma or some allergies.

Possible symbols and focus points

A CANDLE - light in the darkness; the light of the world; dying as it gives light; tongues of fire at Pentecost; the Holy Spirit; colours of red, yellow, orange, gold; the feeling of warmth.

FLOWER(S) - LEAVES - FRUITS -
WOOD - the glory and richness of life and creation; the cycle of the turning year; birth, growth, harvest, death; colours of green, brown and the rainbow hues of the flowers; textures.



BOWL OF WATER - springs of living water; raindrop, stream, waterfall, river, ocean; baptism; walking on water; calming the storm; washing the disciples feet; sensations of wetness, quenching thirst, refreshment, floating, cleansing.

STONES - FOSSILS - SAND - creation; time and eternity; dust thou art; awareness of colour, form, weight, texture.

A CROSS - crucifixion, sacrifice, resurrection.

CRUSTY BREAD - the bread of life broken for me; feeding the five thousand; take and eat; transformation of wheat grains to flour to bread; the smell and taste of newly baked bread.

BUNCH OF GRAPES - CHALICE - I am the true vine; the blood of Christ shed for me; the open bowl of the chalice standing on a firm base; fruit of the Spirit; vines flourish with pruning; the cup of blessing; empty cup waiting to be filled by God.

Be open to what God may suggest to you - God is full of surprises!

If you decide to use a visual or sensory focus, do check that there is a suitable surface to put it on, and that everyone at the meeting can see it easily.

Using music, or a recorded poem or meditation

Playing a recording can be very effective as part of a lead in or lead out. We offer various suggestions in our booklet 'Going Into Silence and Coming Out', and there are many resources available on the internet.

There is advice on pages 5,6 and 7 for using recorded material

Do remember that there are legal restrictions on using / downloading / recording material which is copyright and make sure you fall within the permitted terms of use, or get permission.

Coming Out

People like to come out of silence gradually. A few words which guide the group back to their original focus may be helpful, or a quiet passage of music. Take your time. Allow a few moments for people to become aware of each other before leading into a

final prayer or grace together, followed by a last few moments of silence.

Each meeting is a unique experience.

All the leader and the members can do is wait.

The initiative is with God.

Practicalities & Reducing Distractions

Whatever focus you use, do consider the practicalities. Ideally nothing should distract from the seamless progression of the lead in, the silence and the lead out.

Check if the lighting is dimmed or switched off for the prayer time - you need enough light to read your lead-in and lead-out, and also your watch (or a clock) as you will be keeping track of the time. Check that you know how long the silence lasts. At an evening meeting, it may become too dark to read the lead-out without a small torch or mobile phone.

Today some people put everything on their mobile phone. If you do, remember to set it to silent, and to shade the screen during the silence.

If using a book, and you're worried about keeping your place, you could copy the passage onto a postcard or sheet of paper, perhaps with the lead-in on one side and the lead-out on the other.

If you are unused to reading out loud you may like to practise beforehand, at home. Don't rush through the reading. Take your time and try to speak softly yet clearly: a simple, relaxed tone of voice can help people prepare for the silence.

If you practise reading the passage aloud, you will find out where you need to pause for breath. You can mark the pauses

for breathing, if you are likely to be nervous.

If any members have hearing difficulties perhaps copies of the lead-in and lead-out could be provided for anyone who would like them, on paper or electronically.

Noise and movement can distract people. Whether a book or paper needs to be put down and picked up, or is just held in the hand, try to avoid it rustling.

To avoid having to clock watch, most mobile phones and many watches have timers. Ensure the timer noise is appropriately gentle, or use a vibration option. Also ensure your gadget will not interrupt the silence with any other notifications!

The more prepared you are, the more confident and relaxed you will be. This will convey itself to the group, who in turn will feel relaxed and settled before the silence starts.

The golden rules are: 'keep it simple' and 'less is more'

Music

Music can be an excellent lead-in or close to contemplation, but the need to switch on and off can be a distraction.

If you decide to use recorded music or words, do check the timings and volume required before you use it in the Meeting.

If using your own equipment away from home, and it needs mains power, check beforehand that you can access a socket easily or if you need an extension lead.

It is important to avoid intrusive noise or movement when using a recording: clicks or hums from equipment; getting up and down to reach a switch; adjacent tracks intruding at the start and end of a recording. Use the pause button to have the right track in place before you start. Use successive tracks, or the same track repeated, to avoid searching for the lead-out after the silence. Practise these things in advance.

Recording the Silence

One solution, which allows the leader to join in the silence with no worries about timekeeping or distractions, is to record everything, including a silence, in advance.

It does require preparation, practice and the appropriate equipment.

When recording your own silence, make sure the microphone is not picking up external noises, of which you are unaware.



Personal Silence

You can record silence for personal contemplation, as well as for a meeting. It can be very helpful, as you can choose how long a silence to have, and can record any relaxation or centering exercises that you find helpful. Or, without recording a silence, you can use a timer on your phone or other device to time your chosen length of silence.

For personal silence you are free to use any lead-in that you personally wish - a short piece of music, or prose, or verse. Or a description of a place of peace, silence, tranquility - a beautiful garden, a lakeside, the seashore, the rolling hills.

It can be worth experimenting, and recording sessions for both personal and group use. You can always re-record any which haven't come out quite right first time.

Having such recordings on a mobile phone, laptop, i-pad, or MP3 player would enable you to use them anywhere.

**If you wish to know more about the Julian Meetings,
and / or details of your nearest Meeting(s) either
Go to our website: www.thejulianmeetings.net**

or write to (sae please)

The Julian Meetings
28 Old Hospital Lawn, Cashes Green
Stroud, GL5 4GA

We have members and Meetings in many counties

Julian Meetings Publications

- * Waiting on God in the Silence
(*free introductory leaflet*)
- * A5 leaflet on contemplative prayer
- * Try Stillness
- * Some Basics of Contemplative Prayer
- * Going Into Silence ... and Coming Out
- * Approaching Silence
- * It's Your Turn To Lead
- * The Ideal Julian Meeting
- * Starting a Julian Meeting
- * The Healthy Julian Meeting
- * Resources List
- * The Julian Meetings Magazine (*three issues a year*)
- * A bookmark (*with helpful suggestions for using silence*)
- * A pew / handbag / wallet card (*with meditation suggestion*)
- * Promotional A4 posters (*two*) and A5 poster (*two*)
- * An A6 noticeboard card

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At our website:
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You can:

- * find out more about Christian Meditation & Contemplative Prayer
- * find information about the Julian Meetings
- * view our worldwide Meetings directory
- * contact our administrators
- * find our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts
- * view an events diary
- * download our free leaflets and listen to audio versions
- * buy our publications by post or online
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Other resources for JM Meetings include:

- * advice and information on how to start a Julian Meeting
- * publicity for JM events
- * registration of a new Julian Meeting
- * publicising your Meeting on the Meeting Directory

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