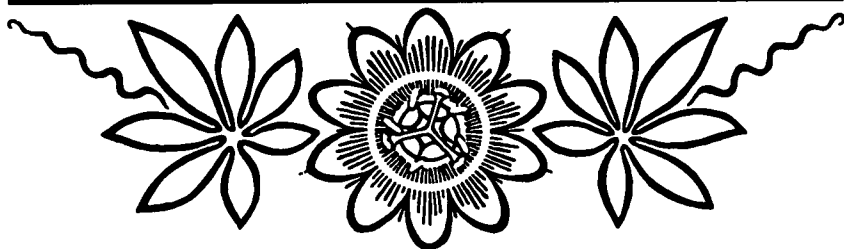
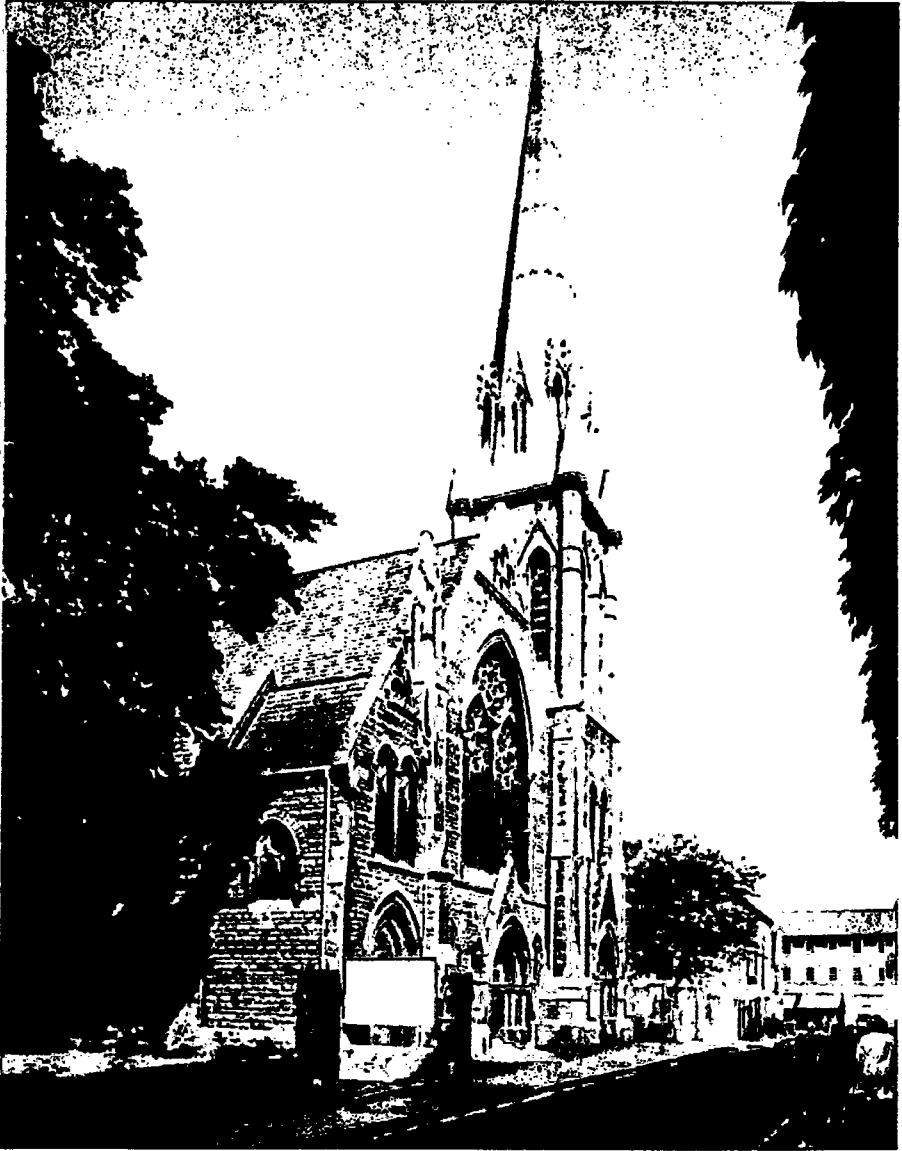


THE
JULIAN
MEETINGS
Magazine



30th Anniversary Edition

**August 2003
£1.50**



The Wesley Memorial Church in Oxford

Foreword

30 years and counting...

This special issue of the magazine celebrates the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Julian Meetings in 1973.

We held a birthday party in Oxford on Saturday 5 July. The first part of the magazine is a report on that day: an article by Gail and Francis Ballinger, some messages of greeting from the Archbishop of Canterbury and from the Julian Meetings in Australia and France, and a prayer used by Hilary Wakeman to lead people into silence.

The second part of the magazine consists of contributions from 20 people with a long association with the Julian Meetings. These range from poems to reminiscences to articles. One theme to emerge is a sense of gratitude for all that the Julian Meetings have meant to so many people over the years.

Another theme, from some of the contributions at least, is the continuing desire for some teaching on contemplative prayer. (This is, after all, one of the two things the Julian Meetings are meant to foster, in our chosen statement of purpose.) In a sense, the articles on contemplative prayer that appear in the magazine are themselves a kind of teaching – but I doubt this is what people have in mind. However, a teaching series, or any kind of systematic presentation, would be a major task.

One way to start would be to find out what issues people would like to see covered. I did this with a small group in a one-day conference on prayer some years ago and there were a number of common themes. Are there any particular issues where some teaching would be helpful? – assuming, of course, that there is a way of providing it. If you have any thoughts, please let us know.

As this is a special issue, other features – book reviews, and any articles which are not anniversary-related – are being held over to the December issue. The deadline for these is **15 October 2003**.

James Toon
Magazine Editor

Part One

Celebrate! Some impressions from our Anniversary Meeting

Gail and Francis Ballinger

On 5 July, the Wesley Memorial Methodist Church in the middle of Oxford was home for the day to about 200 people who gathered to celebrate 30 years of the Julian Meetings. On arrival we had coffee and an opportunity to seek out old friends or look at the exhibition selected from Julian Meetings archives before the morning's main event. Greetings and congratulations were read from the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams; from the Julian Meetings in Australia and from the Julian Meetings in France; and also from the World Community for Christian Meditation and the Retreat Association.

Our main speaker was Hilary Wakeman. She reminded us briefly of the "accidental founding" of the Julian Meetings as a result of correspondence in the church press years ago; and reminisced about the growing enthusiasm that then existed for contemplative prayer and the distinctive ethos of the Julian Meetings with its simplicity.

As she looked back over the last 30 years, Hilary offered us a number of insights and we thought it was worth sharing some of these with those who could not be present.

- The world was a very different place 30 years ago. Society was more organised. There were more organisations and it was common for people to belong to them. Now activity is more individual. Religion was more distinct then with more distinct boundaries between those in the church and those outside. Now there is more moving between denominations, and we are more fluid about our theology. It is easier now to talk with acquaintances about our faith.
- Melvyn Matthews in his book *Both Alike to Thee* speaks of religion now being a matter of experience of God. In general bookshops, religion is little represented but spirituality of all kinds is very well represented.

- Julian Meetings today are not very different from 30 years ago. They were ahead of their time. Their strength lay in being ecumenical and not being prescriptive. Early magazine articles have also stood the test of time and don't seem dated, although today's magazine articles have a wider range and a lighter touch – we find deep articles about pain and bereavement alongside quite light articles. But then spirituality generally is lighter. There are gains in that, though perhaps also some losses.
- The Julian Meetings' Advisory Group has changed a little in 30 years: it is bigger now; and people are not on it for a fixed term but are drawn for the knowledge or skills they can offer, eg computer expertise.
- In the early 1980s there was a liaison day with other Christian meditation groupings. As with Christian Unity in general, there are distinct things of value in each of these. Maybe a new thing we could try is a joint newsletter with other meditation networks.
- Two years ago the Advisory Group did a valuable weekend exercise with Sister Madeleine [Prendergast] looking at how we are functioning, where we are going and what are the strengths and weaknesses of the Julian Meetings.
- 30 years ago contemplative prayer wasn't seen as very important. In essence contemplative prayer is always the same, though it is different for each one of us and at different times of our lives. Even so with the passing of time there are changes: in the way it is perceived; and in the way it is taught, in so far as it is taught at all.
- In one of the very early Julian Meetings magazines, there was a long article by Kenneth Leach quoting Daniel Berrigan saying that he thought contemplative prayer could become a subversive activity. Something with risky consequences. Contemplation opened you to gradual action on behalf of the poor and dispossessed. Ken Leach thought that all too often what was on offer was a bogus contemplation which claimed to reduce tension and promote inner peace. The aim of true Christian contemplation was not inner peace but peace with God, and this involved struggle and spiritual warfare. When books on Christian meditation are alongside books on aromatherapy on the shelves of the bookshop, this is something we still need to hear.
- A comparison between medieval and modern mysticism shows medieval mysticism as being less concerned with the self. Prayer was being with

God with the self out of the way. Current mysticism is intuitive, a warm way of prayer. A proper humility of the place of the self needs to be restored. One reason the Julian Meetings discourage intercessory prayer in its meetings is so as not to represent contemplative prayer as trying to achieve anything.

Hilary then offered a prayer – an old Irish prayer that she used at home in West Cork – to lead us into a time of silence which ended the morning.

The afternoon's forum was chaired by Pam Fawcett, who was editor of the Julian Meetings magazine for many years. The forum gave us the chance to discuss and share – something people have felt a need for in recent years. We started with a brief account from three different people – Hilary Burn, Jean Dale and Graham Johnson – on "What the Julian Meetings mean to me." Further sharing revealed this as a time for looking forward, for asking ourselves what we could do to further the aims of Julian Meetings. As always, people wondered about what we could do to help young people who might be drawn to silence. We learned that this year, the Julian Meetings will be represented at Greenbelt. Another suggestion was further development of the Julian Meetings website, and this is ongoing.

Again 30 years ago, Ernst Schumacher wrote and published a book called *Small is Beautiful: Economics as if people mattered*. "Small is beautiful" seems an apt description of the Julian Meetings, but we should not hide our light under a bushel. Do you have any suggestions about how we can continue to "Foster the teaching and practice of contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition"?

Messages of Greeting

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams

Very slowly, our churches have begun to rediscover that they will not be healing and healthy places without room for silence and the attentive gaze towards God. In our present cultural climate more than ever, if we can't offer the living sense of a larger world to inhabit we can't expect too much credibility.

In this reshaping of our priorities, the Julian Meetings have played a crucial though appropriately quiet part. I am deeply grateful that these networks have spread so far and taken such root in the last three decades; and I hope and pray that they will continue to grow and nurture people in awareness of that love which is God's meaning – "which love was never slakid, no never shall."

Some of the delegates at the anniversary event



JM-Australia

Dear friends in the Julian Meetings, UK: On the occasion of the 30th birthday celebration of the founding of the Julian Meetings, Greetings from Australia. There are now many hundreds of us in this country whose prayer lives have been immeasurably enriched because you dared to venture forth 30 years ago.

We fervently believe that the world is a better place as a result of the presence of contemplatives living quietly and praying faithfully amongst the present turmoil. Not only do we personally benefit as a result of contemplative prayer, so does the whole of God's creation. It is so encouraging for all of us here to know that we have worldwide partners in this prayer of silence.

We are filled with gratitude for the hardworking team who keep this organisation going, and for the production of the magazine which so many of us enjoy. We especially wish to express our gratitude for the courage, creativity and foresight of our founder, Hilary Wakeman. She was willing to step out and put her faith in God and in contemplative silence on the line 30 years ago, and now look where we are!

Thank you, Hilary, and to all who have helped to make this prayer movement a blessing for so many. May the dedication of the leaders in keeping this organisation going through the last 30 years continue to be an inspiration to all of us worldwide, both now and in the years to come.

May God bless us all, now on this joyful day, and as we quietly and faithfully journey together into whatever future God has in store for us.

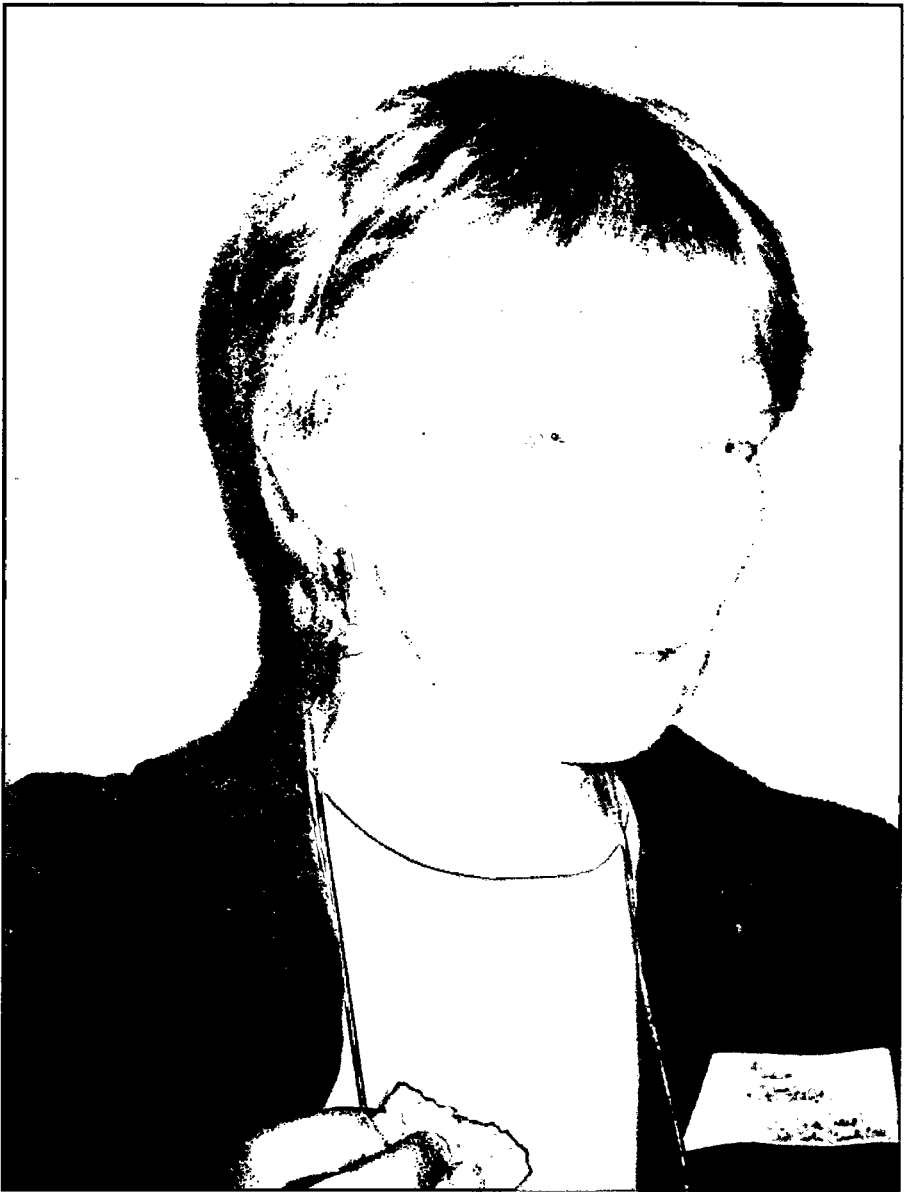
With loving gratitude and many prayers for you all, on behalf of all the faithful contemplatives of the Julian Meetings, Australia.

Meryl Webb

JM-France

The group send their warmest greetings and good wishes to everyone. They all feel very inspired to know that their group is part of the worldwide network. The strength of the Julian Meetings movement, we feel, comes not only from the individual meetings but from the unseen power of the Divine which surely works through all the Julian Meetings on a world scale. Our thoughts will be with you on the day.

George Dobinson



Hilary Wakeman during one of the breaks

The Deer's Cry

Used by Hilary Wakeman as a lead-in to silence

I arise today
Through the strength of Heaven
Light of sun
Radiance of moon
Splendour of fire
Speed of lightning
Swiftmess of wind
Depth of the sea
Stability of earth
Firmness of rock

I arise today
Through God's strength to pilot me
God's eye to look before me
God's wisdom to guide me
God's way to lie before me
God's shield to protect me
From all who shall wish me ill
Afar and anear
Alone and in a multitude
Against every cruel merciless power
That may oppose my body and soul

Christ with me, Christ before me,
Christ behind me, Christ in me,
Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ on my right, Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise, Christ to shield me,
Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me
I arise today.

Part Two

Eddie Askew

The Seeding

I do not know
who rolled the stone away
or how –
(there is a tale of angels
and of earthquakes)
but the process is irrelevant –
it matters only that the tomb
was empty
and that outside
the gardener
was seeding new life,
scattering it prodigally
into the waiting soil.

Thomas

His hand reached out
but never touched
the wounds.
There was no need.
A look convinced
as in the interchange
love bridged the little space
between them.
The wound of doubt
was healed
and resurrection came
to Thomas
as to Christ.

Blossoming

The mystery remains
and I am glad.
Let's keep some secrets
from the scientists
and all who would reduce life
to mechanics.
Beyond
the weighing
and the measuring
the questions
and the theorising
I know only one thing
with certainty.
Once I was dead
but now I am alive.

All poems © Eddie Askew 2003

Simone Brew

History of the Shenley Julian Meeting

In the early 1970s, our sons at university got involved in the meditation movement inspired by oriental gurus. It made me think: why have we Christians failed to pass on the Christian tradition of contemplative prayer? I re-read St John of the Cross and Theresa of Avila.

Then one day picking up the Catholic Herald I saw Hilary's invitation. I was so pleased that other Christians were thinking on the same lines. So I went to that first meeting in London. Going home, I decided to jump in at the deep end with three other people in our village. To my great delight, I saw in the Catholic Herald an invitation by Fr. Matthew, a Carmelite monk, to lay people to join him for a week-long meditation course at Damascus House. About 30 people attended. This gave me the confidence to start a Julian Meeting in Shenley with just the four of us.

When we grew to about a dozen we split up. Five people came from Hemel Hempstead so they started their own group. This process happened several times.

I was the music therapist at Shenley hospital at the time, so our meetings were held in my music room. Sometimes one or two patients joined us. When Shenley hospital closed down we met at All Saints Pastoral Centre, where in the grounds there was a small convent of contemplative nuns. They made us welcome.

About eight years ago I had a serious operation and could not continue to organise the Julian Meeting here. Several people joined other Julian Meetings or made a commitment to practise contemplative prayer on their own.

Now at the age of 75 I am pleased that I still have contact with the Julian Meetings through the Postal Group.

Hilary Burn

What the Julian Meetings mean to me

As the Julian Meetings celebrate their 30th birthday, I find myself looking back into those 30 years with great thankfulness. It has been part of my life for nearly all those years and has been such an important influence on my faith and witness. I was asked in the first instance to help with posting the Julian Meetings newsletters. A few subscribers three times a year, not at all a daunting task. It led to becoming a member of the Advisory Group, taking charge of income and expenditure, and a deep involvement in all that was still developing. And what a privilege it was! My postbag was full of lovely letters from people who were searching for the peace and strength of contemplative prayer. Many were letters of gratitude that at last they had found that other people felt as they did, that this was their way forward in faith.

My own need for prayer was acknowledged and met, with the Julian Meeting that I joined. The many friends with whom I have prayed, sometimes for years, have enriched my life, and the prayer and support continues year on year. Friendship within the Advisory Group has been a joy, and although the Advisory Group is quite different now, those with whom I worked are still valued friends.

How many, like me, wonder where we would have been, how our lives and faith would have developed, without the Julian Meetings? I cannot think of life without it.

Another joy has been realising that through the Julian Meetings men and women have gone further into service in their churches. Some have gone into different forms of ministry, others have so encouraged contemplative prayer that individual churches have been enriched. Now we see evidence of it in several denominations. All this has come from small beginnings, 30 years ago.

We truly have something to celebrate. We thank God for leading Hilary Wakeman to begin, and giving her the vision to set it in motion. And we thank God that the Julian Meetings have been so blessed, that we who have been part of this movement know the great blessing it has been in our lives.

May this continue in the years to come, as God blesses all who come together to pray in our Circles of Silence.

Patricia Churchill

The Julian Meeting in Carlisle

The Julian Meeting in Carlisle was formed following talks by Etta Gullick and Michael Hollings during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in January 1974. Anglicans, Quakers and Roman Catholics were the first members. All contributed to a fund to send a representative to the annual Julian Meeting retreats.

Members of the clergy encouraged the movement but were not part of our Julian Meeting. There were links with Julian Meetings in Sunderland and Blackburn, and exchanges of hospitality for joint weekends. Members of the Carlisle Julian Meeting who lived in Penrith, Seascale and Dumfriesshire, and who travelled long distances to our meetings, later started Julian Meetings in their own areas.

The JM publications stall was popular



Jean Dale

Doulas for the Dying?

One of the downsides of growing older is the increasing number of funerals you have to attend: family, friends, colleagues, neighbours; lives that have touched and formed your own, lives to be cherished, celebrated – and released.

Death, the great mystery! And yet a mirror for that other great mystery – life. The journey into death shares much with the journey into birth: the sense of participating in something very holy, the unknown, the fear, often anger and regret, and finally the unavoidable surrender.

These days many women have been trained as doulas. A doula is not a midwife, she is a companion to the woman in labour, there to be with, to be alongside the mother, as a listener, an encourager (a word from the Latin *cor*, meaning *heart*). A doula works from the heart to the heart, giving loving strength and reassurance for those making this momentous journey into birth, into life.

Might there not be a place for doulas for the dying? A trusted friend, who is heart-centred, loving but emotionally stable, a companion on the journey into the unknown? Someone willing to share the pain, receive the anger, soothe the fears – and, at the end, release, with blessing, the soul taking flight into the beyond?

One who has learned to sit composed in silent contemplative prayer, centring prayer, is well-suited to such a task, for as we practise the letting go and letting God, we gradually develop an inner stability and composure which becomes a strong rock when we are tempest-tossed. As Julian of Norwich says: “You shall not be overcome.” When we dip into the waters of the Divine Presence at the centre of our being, the ripples spread out and touch lives and situations in subtle ways beyond our knowing. All things are connected, as mystics (and now scientists) tell us, and the ability to sit, just sit, quietly composed, centred upon Divine Love and Light, spreads a healing balm to the people and atmosphere around us, enabling the soul to depart in peace, and soothing the anguish of loved ones left behind.

I thank God for all that the Julian Meetings have taught and given me. May that Divine Love and Light bless all who continue the work.

Pamela Fawcett

From Gum to Mouse

"No *Minutes of the Last Meeting* – and, especially, no embroidering hassocks for Julian Meeting House – and NO Julian Meeting House."

This was part of my agenda when I came onto the Advisory Group in 1980. In other words, let JM be different and let God be God. The majority of JM people are committed to their local churches but Julian Meetings are more basic and more focussed on a simple way of praying than churches could or should ever be. We wait on God in the silence and the rest is in God's hands. We are never in competition with other groups or congregations but stand firmly in the tradition of contemplative prayer as practised by Julian herself and as found *The Cloud of Unknowing* and other teachers of the tradition. In those days the vision was that JM would infiltrate the worldwide Christian Community (starting modestly with the British Isles) and then gently walk into the sunset, with its work done.

There is still a long way to go before this particular vision is realized. There are still some Christians who think that waiting on God in the silence is a dangerous waste of time and there are even more who find it impossible to include a Julian Meeting in a busy schedule of meetings and fund-raising. These and others have yet to encounter this deep and life-giving prayer. So there is still work to do.

But in the mid-1970s, when I first received Hilary's Newsletter, the list of groups fitted on to an A4 page. The growth has been wonderful. It has been organic. One group gives birth to another and JM seems to flow across the country. Groups rise or die in their own (or rather, God's) time. This week I learnt that a new group had been started by someone who regularly comes to *my* group when she is on holiday here. Our first baby.

My time on the Advisory Group was formative and fun. I am not surprised that its members are so reluctant to stand down. I have spent many hours on committees and councils but it was only the JM ones that I knew I would enjoy.

My days as editor of this magazine spanned the change from steam typewriting, through simple word processing to the beginnings of desktop publishing; from the era when cut and paste meant scissors and Cow

Gum rather than two clicks of a mouse. My hope is that technology will continue to be the servant and not the master, and will not lead to the ever-present temptation to exert central control, inhibiting the Julian Meetings' characteristic organic growth.

My contact with JM has been for most of its 30 years. I edited the 10th and 21st Anniversary Magazines and I still miss the Red Sticker.

Pam Fawcett chairing the afternoon session



John Hawkins

Teaching? What teaching?

“The Julian Meetings foster the *teaching* and practice of contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition.” Do they, indeed? I share Sheila Waller’s concern that we hear all too little about the teaching bit. It’s a tricky issue! Anyone setting himself up as an expert in the subject is bound to be suspect. Books abound, but there’s a limit to the amount one can learn by reading. Just as Holy Scripture can often throw a useful light on even the most erudite Bible commentary, the actual practice of meditation can be quite revealing, for those who can spare the time from reading about it.

Yet we continue to hear the question “How’s it done?” And those who have been practising the art for many years – even sometimes nearly getting it right – surely have a responsibility to others setting out on the journey. I know how very much I owe to a structured course on Teaching Christian Meditation which I attended way back in 1980; indeed, it set me on the road to priesthood.

On being asked by a friend if such courses were still available, I had to say I didn’t know. But the question stirred me into devising one of my own that I have been able to offer at my parish church. Limited to 12 participants (a number that has been described as “the ideal contemplative family”), it took place on six successive Saturday mornings in Lent. It was, as they say, experiential, and as each week went by, we found ourselves increasingly learning from each other. The programme was as follows:

- | | |
|--------|---|
| Week 1 | Why meditate?
Preparing to meditate
Meditation and the body |
| Week 2 | The Bible and the imagination
Obstacles to meditation
The Prayer of Jesus |
| Week 3 | The art of listening
The Bible and the mind
Meditation and the senses |

- Week 4 Stilling the mind.
 The science and physiology of meditation
 Coping with distractions
- Week 5 The Western spiritual tradition
 The psychology of meditation
 The use of fantasy
- Week 6 Meditation and belief
 Meditation in movement
 Review of the course.

Based on the above, I have prepared a Teaching Pack for any group convenor who would like to run a similar course. For a copy, please send £3 to me at 44 Castlemaine Avenue, South Croydon CR2 7HR.

John described this as a belated response to Sheila Waller's article in the December 1998 Julian Meetings magazine.

Martin Israel

Julian of Norwich

I always remember Julian in passages from *Revelations of Divine Love*. "Also he showed a little thing, the quantity of a hazel-nut in the palm of my hand; and it was round as a ball. I looked thereupon with the eye of my understanding, and thought, 'What may this be?' And it was generally answered thus: 'It is all that is made.'"

Julian saw that God's love was the basis of its existence. Elsewhere in the *Revelations* comes the celebrated observation: "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."

In the world in which we live, this positive faith is vitally important. The joyous calm that is expressed in Julian's writing is a positive influence in a situation of peril. Her certainty is that, in the face of disaster, we have one to whom we may turn, whose nature is love, if only we can embrace our adversary with a similar devotion. Thus we read in the Sermon on the Mount: "You have heard that they were told, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy,' but what I tell you is this: Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors; only so can you be children of your heavenly Father, who causes the sun to shine on good and bad alike, and sends the rain on the innocent and the wicked. If you love only those who love you, what reward can you expect? Even the tax-collectors do as much as that. If you greet only your brothers, what is there extraordinary about that? Even the heathen do as much. There must be no limit to your goodness, as your heavenly Father's goodness knows no bounds" (Matthew 5:43-48).

Julian is a happy mystic. It is interesting that she was never canonised. Perhaps her smiling face was unwelcome to those in authority in the Middle Ages. The Julian Meetings do well to commemorate her life and her wonderful book. One wishes that souls of her calibre were living now.

Robert Llewelyn

Be silent, still, aware

Be silent
still
aware
for there
in your own heart.
the Spirit is at prayer
listen and learn
open and find
heart-wisdom
Christ

These words from a former revered Abbess of St Mary's Abbey, West Malling make an admirable focus in silent prayer. They are to be whispered gently (and later silently) into the heart until by frequent use they become lodged there in such a way that no discernible effort of memory is needed to recall them. They remind us that the more important part of prayer is not in praying but in allowing ourselves to be prayed: something the Holy Spirit is always eager to do, so long as our desire for prayer remains.

The words also closely link us with those of St Paul in Romans 8:26 where he tells us that we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that the Spirit is deeply at prayer within us.

When we have become well familiar with the prayer we may often shorten it and return to it during the day, looking to the heart and saying in whisper or silence: "In your own heart the Spirit is at prayer," and then rest in that assurance for a while.

A card is available from St Mary's Abbey, West Malling ME19 6JX. 5p + postage.

Wanda Nash

Memories

So the Julian meetings are thirty years old. Fantastic. All that work, and gathering, and praying; all that formation of silent, low-key power houses at the heart of local parishes. A bit like alternative energy solar panels. It's made me look back at my own story...

Just about the only stable thing in my childhood was personal private prayer. Every year or two after I was eighteen months old we'd move house and often move country, even continent. So I left familiar churches pretty frequently, and also schools, and friends, and pets, books, toys, to start yet again somewhere new. But everywhere we went that inside special place came with me, and God was always there. Watching the waves from the prow of a ship, or the clouds from a plane, or the telegraph poles from a train, it always seemed to me that it was God who carried me around God's world.

When I was left at boarding school in Oxford (I was eleven) I couldn't find a place of silence in the dormitory so I converted a tiny disused room in the basement. I remember putting a few chairs in order down there, facing a table on which I put flowers, and spread a cloth I had secretly embroidered with a cross. I'd sit in there every day - what the teachers thought about it I shall never know!

Much later, when I was a young clergy wife at my first clergy wife retreat, Bishop Hare encouraged us in wordless meditation. When we moved to London the local curate ran a silent contemplation group on the lines described by Robert Coulsdon. Then in Winchester we got our first Shared Silence group going and in 1973 - oh bliss! - I read the initial letter from Hilary Wakeman in the Daily Telegraph. So I wasn't odd, or on my own, after all, there were others out there praying in silence too.

Since then the memories flood in: of groups setting up, of introductory talks, of retreats, of writing, of training. It has been such a major part of my life for so long now I can scarcely imagine what life would be without it.

What I can't remember is actually saying "Thank you, Hilary; may blessings shower upon you." How can one say that to someone so obviously one of God's very special instruments? But I do, from the very bottom of my full heart.

John Newton

The Place of Silence

One of Charles Wesley's hymns begins:

Open, Lord, my inward ear,
 And bid my heart rejoice;
Bid my quiet spirit hear
 Thy comfortable voice;
Never in the whirlwind found
 Or where earthquakes rock the place,
Still and silent is the sound,
 The whisper of thy grace:

The background is the story of Elijah on Mount Horeb, sheltering in a cave from the wrath of Queen Jezebel. There is a great storm, but, amazingly, the Lord was not in the wind, fire or earthquake. Rather, Elijah hears God speaking to him in "the still small voice", the deep silence that follows.

In the second verse, Charles draws us into the silence of contemplation, of quiet waiting upon God:

From the world of sin and noise,
 And hurry I withdraw;
For the small and inward voice
 I wait with humble awe;
Silent am I now and still,
 Dare not in thy presence move;
To my waiting soul reveal
 The secret of thy love.

I have found these lines a very helpful entry into the prayer of quiet, the prayer of simplicity, in which, rather than framing either vocal or mental prayers, we simply open ourselves to God in loving attention to his word and will for us, letting him reveal to our waiting soul "the secret of his love."

The third verse transports us from Horeb to Golgotha, to the hill of

Calvary, where also – apart from the Seven Last Words – there is a great silence from the crucified Lord:

Thou didst undertake for me,
For me to death wast sold;
Wisdom in a mystery
Of bleeding love unfold;
Teach the lesson of thy cross;
Let me die with thee to reign;
All things let me count but loss,
So I may thee regain.

In the fourth verse, contemplation leads to deeper self-knowledge and penitence:

Show me, as my soul can bear,
The depth of inbred sin;
All the unbelief declare,
The pride that lurks within;
Take me, whom thyself hast bought,
Bring into captivity
Every high aspiring thought
That would not stoop to thee.

The whole hymn is a reminder of the creative power of silence and contemplative prayer, as it ends on a note of triumphant praise and adoration:

Thine in whom I live and move,
Thine the work, the praise is thine;
Thou art wisdom, power and love,
And all thou art is mine.

Chas Raws

Silence – and silence

Quakers meet for worship in silence, but the silence of Quaker worship differs from the silence of contemplative worship found in the Julian Meetings. Both arise from a sense that silence is the most valid response to the awe-inspiring presence of God but, whereas Quakers expect God to prompt them in the silence to speak and to act, contemplatives simply lose themselves in wordless adoration. Like the difference between pure and applied mathematics, contemplation is pure worship whereas Quaker worship is applied worship.

There was a period when it was customary to refer to Quakers as mystics, and some certainly are. But their corporate worship is not primarily directed towards the practice of the presence of God in itself – rather towards a corporate listening for the guidance of God. The first reference to Quakers that impinged on my spiritual search was their description as “practical mystics.” That may be as near as we can get to placing them in the religious spectrum, but as I have grown in Quakerism even that phrase seems to me to be misleading. The silence out of which God speaks to prophets is not the same as that through which mystics seek to adore the Godhead.

Some say that the silence experienced in meeting for worship changed in nature during the first generation of Quakers and that this in part explains the change from dynamic and radical to quietist and conservative even before the end of the 17th century. As a few theologically-literate men like Robert Barclay joined the movement, they sought links between the Christian tradition and Quaker practices, and there was an obvious connection between Quaker silence and that of some monastic orders. Or was there? By focusing on the sanctity of silence it is suggested that they may have tapped into a different kind of silence and lost their dynamism in the process.

Yet true mystics are often prophets: Thomas Merton comes to mind. I conclude that the two aspects of silence are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The rapt contemplation of Julian of Norwich, and the listening obedience of Elijah before the still, small voice, are united in the example of Jesus Christ, whose long vigils of prayer on the hills of Galilee led to a growing sense of union with God and a radical programme of prophetic word and deed: in Whittier’s words, “the silence of Eternity / interpreted by love.”

Carol Self

Memories

I first attended a Julian Meetings retreat when we lived in Southampton. I remember feeling quite anxious. That didn't last long though because I got a lift from Brian Wills who soon put me at my ease with interesting conversation.

I guess it was a couple of years after that first retreat that I was asked to join the Advisory Group. It was my first experience of consensus decision-making. I was sure it couldn't work but it did, and does in other settings too. I found the group such fun. There was so much laughter and yet we got the work done that needed doing. Everyone carried a share of the responsibility that they felt able to do. I don't think I can remember there ever being any pressure. Something needed doing and someone volunteered. I felt supported always.

I took on the task of keeping a record of the groups. In those days, not being at all computer-literate, it was all done by hand. But the up-side of doing it was, come the retreat, and I had the pleasure of putting names to faces and we greeted each other like friends.

I was sad when other pressures meant the time had come for me to step down and I still miss those wonderful meetings, the friendships that we formed, and being at the centre of things at the retreats.

David Self

Memories

Nearly 30 years ago I was a university chaplain at Van Mildert College in Durham. We did not have a chapel but a quiet room set aside for worship and other events. There was a Buddhist group meeting in the room as well and together we set up an evening of dialogue on our different understandings of contemplation. It proved to be a fascinating evening, after which some of the students came to me and asked to learn more about the richness of the Christian tradition. So we started a group to explore contemplative prayer.

At that time Hilary Wakeman had sent out her letter asking whether such groups existed, and we waved hello. I think we became the youngest Julian Meeting at that time, and it continued until I left Durham in 1978. Some of those who formed that original group still attend contemplative groups of one sort or another now. I have always been grateful that I had been introduced to the Christian traditions at an early stage in my ministry, and it saddens me how so many churches seem to have lost touch with the richness of our own traditions which reach back at least to the desert fathers in the 3rd century. We have been given such richness, such treasure and we need it more than ever in such a time when we are flooded with information and busy-ness and material things, but starved in the soul.

Thank God for the recovery of Julian of Norwich whose book was clearly written for our age, some six centuries after her own life and after the text had been almost totally forgotten. And thank God for the modern wise people who have helped us stay in touch with contemplation. We have much more to discover and share!

David Smith

Memories

As with all true movements of the Holy Spirit the Julian Meetings arrived, 30 years ago, at just the right time. It was the right moment in the history of the Western church and particularly of the churches in England. Eastern meditation was attracting many people including members of the mainstream churches who were seeking something deeper than they usually experienced at Sunday services. Within the Julian Meetings they were able to find this experience in a Christian setting. We rediscovered the teachings of the Christian mystics, who had been largely neglected for so long. In particular, interest was reawakened in the English mystical tradition to be found in *The Cloud of Unknowing* and the other 14th century writings of Mother Julian of Norwich, Walter Hilton and Richard Rolle.

The Julian Movement brought all this to the attention of those who were seeking to discover God in this way. The meetings organised by Hilary Wakeman in different parts of the country enabled the eventual formation of local Julian Meetings at which we were led into the riches of silence and the peace of God. We were encouraged by meeting with others and found that in some intangible way the shared silence became deeper and easier to maintain than when we tried to pray in this way alone. We learnt that it was not a selfish form of escapism, but that we were bound together at a deep level and were the guardians of each others' silence and stillness, in which we were able to come to a deeper awareness of God and be touched by His Holy Spirit.

Hilary Wakeman

The Julian Meetings in rural Ireland

Religion is altogether different in Ireland. When I moved here, seven years ago, I wondered whether I would ever again be part of a Julian Meeting. Being rector of a Church of Ireland parish wouldn't help, I thought, as any moves I made to start one might be misconstrued as part of my parish work, and therefore identified as a Church of Ireland project. So it would have to be outside my parish. Also, I wondered what difference it would make that over 90% of the population were at least nominally Roman Catholic.

I needn't have worried. There are now two Julian Meetings within easy reach, meeting alternate Friday mornings. Some people attend both, making weekly participation possible. The majority are Catholic, though the minority includes another member of the Anglican clergy. But apart from an American Methodist we are all Catholic or Anglican. One Meeting uses the lovely carpeted oratory of a Catholic retreat house: we face a window that looks out over fields and trees and sky. The other meets in a pink-painted Church of Ireland parish hall, where today we meditated outdoors among birdsong and the chatter of an unseen stream. In either place we always have great conversation afterwards, over the coffee and biscuits. We talk about prayer, the how and why of it, and what our various traditions have given us concerning it; we talk about God, and what God means to us; we discuss the current state of our two Churches, not uncritically by any means. And of course we talk about births and deaths and everything in between. Not everyone comes every week, but there is a solid core of attenders, and enormous support in times of need. I feel closer to these people, and more open to them, than to anyone in either my own parish when I was working, or in the other churches I have attended since my retirement two years ago. The churches seem to be largely social communities, hung on a religious framework. But in the Julian Meetings the focus is clearly on God, and our pleasure in each others' company feels like a natural reflection of that focus. *Buíochas le Dia* ("Thanks be to God").

Keith Walker

Memories

The 1970s found me as a residentiary canon at Chichester Cathedral. I had been touched by the spirit of the 1960s, as many of us were, and the teaching of Thomas Merton, Theodore Roszak, Paul Tillich and others meant much to me. Old structures did not always convince and New Age spirituality seemed to call for a response from the Church. I had spent time studying the life and spirituality of William Law and I have always been drawn to the inward way of Christian commitment. Suddenly there was a rumour of spiritual stirrings at Norwich, and Hilary Wakeman asking for responses from those who would like to help form Christian cells of prayer, meditation and spirituality. This led to quiet, open meetings and, in my case, the formation of a particular kind of meditation group at the Cathedral. It flourished for some years. We debated the name for our new-found organisation and, against my wish, "Julian" was chosen. I felt the name particularised a certain form of spirituality, but more people thought differently.

Sheila Waller

Looking back and looking forward

In 1976-77, Dr Martin Israel and Sr Rosslyn CSA ran a year-long course entitled *Prayer*. The talks were rich, comprehensive, and mind-blowing, with the emphasis on contemplative prayer and contemplative living. Each session ended with a period of corporate contemplative prayer. At the end, Sr Rosslyn suggested that the participants might like to form a Julian Meeting. "What's a Julian Meeting?" we cried. She explained – and we did.

Members of any contemplative prayer group benefit from the mutual support gained through meeting regularly to pray together and sharing any insights or difficulties. The Julian Meetings bring added advantages. These were started by a laywoman under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They developed from various denominational pews in response to a felt need, rather than from the pulpit. Thus Julian Meetings can more easily be ecumenical, and have the freedom to organise themselves as they wish. There is no set JM "line."

However, the lack of a prominent leader figure can, I suggest, also be a weakness. How many Julian Meetings offer teaching to a newcomer? Who teaches the teachers? (Yes, I've beaten this drum before!) Contemplative Outreach, for example, has a highly-structured system for teaching its teachers, culminating in a formal admission ceremony during a Eucharist. This would be quite foreign to the JM ethos, and I am not suggesting that the Julian Meetings should set up something similar, but I think some basic teaching should be given to every group that wants to be listed as a Julian Meeting, so that they can fulfil the two-fold purpose of teaching and practice.

30 years ago there were few books on contemplative prayer. Today we are spoilt for choice. Might literature be part of the answer? Perhaps each new group could be offered a package of a short book list, together with one or two (free!) copies of the JM booklet "Some basics of contemplative prayer" and the lead-in booklets, and a visit from a member of the Advisory Group.

I am forever grateful to Hilary for starting and nurturing the Julian Meetings, and to Martin Israel and Rosslyn for the excellent grounding they gave me. But I suggest that as we give thanks for the last 30 years, so also we should try to discern how the Holy Spirit might be leading us deeper into our commitment to foster the teaching, as well as the practice, of contemplative prayer.

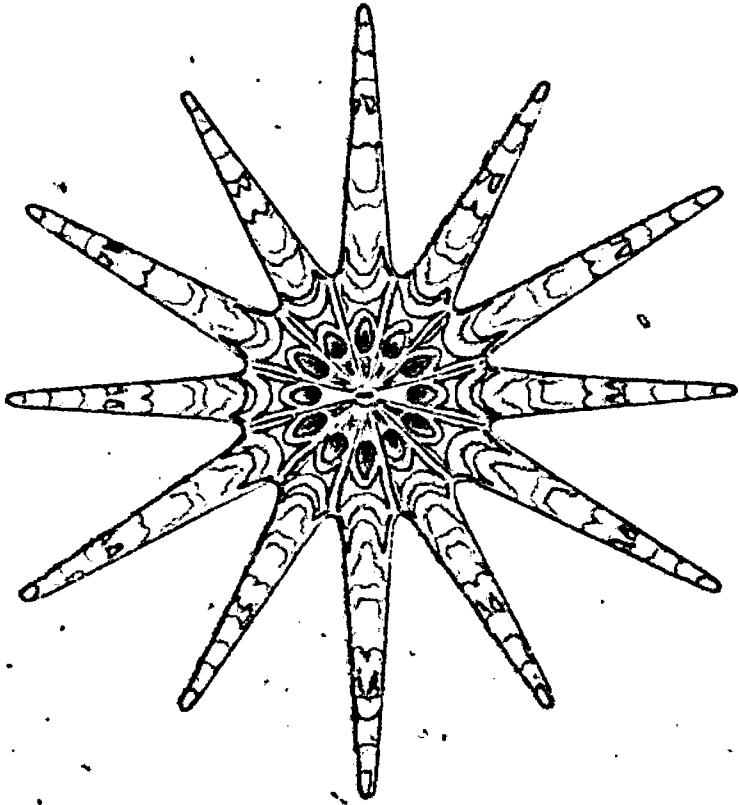
Hebe Welbourn

Contemplative prayer – embodied

I sit under some trees. The trees are in continual process: the strong growth force in each tree responding to gravity, sunlight, the traumas of life and to each other. Death is also part of the process: leaves, flowers, twigs, branches and eventually whole trees die off and return to earth. I am sitting here, still, but I'm never completely still, I'm always moving. My breath flows in and out as it has since my birth and will continue until my final expiration. My vertical posture is dynamically maintained by the architecture of my skeleton. At present, in meditation, my skeleton is in such equilibrium with gravity that my muscles are almost completely relaxed. My heart and body tick over gently, unconsciously. The process is only minimally ruffled by thoughts, perceptions, emotions etc.

When I get up and walk about, the process immediately becomes much more complicated. Now there is a complex moving pattern to be held in dynamic equilibrium. Like a ship in full rig. It is beautifully illustrated in the growth and movement of sea creatures in a little book entitled *Seashore Life and Pattern* which a Chinese friend gave me many years ago. There is no way that "I" can hold this together by my conscious effort, any more than the tree can hold the whole pattern of the wood. My own infinitely complex process is one with the whole natural ecology and the politics of history. No single individual can hold the tragedy of our time. So how do we pray?

When I got up from meditation and begin to walk about I can do so *slowly*, in walking meditation. I don't do this in order to concentrate very hard so as to have it all under my control. Rather, I practice to let go of "my" control in order to fully participate in the movement. Like a dance: "supple and buxom" as Julian of Norwich would say. Sitting meditation and meditation in movement – walking, exercises such as yoga or tai chi, or dance – are basic embodiments of contemplative prayer. Embodied: not just "my" body but God's.



Sea anemone, from "Seashore Life and Pattern" by T.A. Stephenson (Penguin, 1944)

Brian Wills

Reflections on the formative years

When an idea whose time has come is circulating among like-thinking friends, the reaction often heard is: why did no-one think of this before?

Certainly, when a friend wrote to tell us about the publication of Hilary's letter proposing the creation of non-denominational contemplative prayer groups run by lay people, explaining that she had participated in several exploratory local meetings and describing her as "a busy housewife completely at home in her jeans – none of that blue-rinse stuff", I knew immediately here was someone I needed to write to.

What followed was an invitation to meet for a talk after a gathering fixed to take place soon afterwards in St Edward's House in Westminster. I found myself in a room that appeared to be full of Anglican clergymen and monks, and was soon listening to a discussion that my Quaker upbringing clearly hinted to me had a hidden agenda. Quite simply this was: What should we do about Hilary's Big Idea?

Despite initial sharing of uncertainties, the discussion that evolved was surprisingly non-contentious. Most agreed her proposals were wide-ranging, and therefore likely to reach a large congregation of believers. Some expressed caution about the need to watch for possible freak group behaviour. But, in the end, it was agreed by consensus that Hilary should be encouraged to go ahead and respond to requests for co-ordination and guidance that had come to her from a growing number of interested correspondents. And the first Advisory Group was nominated, to help make new contacts and support Hilary on a continuing basis.

My own stimulating talk with her resulted in my being given photocopies of helpful documents, and encouraged to set up a group at Alton where I lived. Soon afterwards there was an invitation to join the Advisory Group, with meetings two or three times a year, to help Hilary find answers to organisational questions she had to deal with. A particular challenge in those early years, as the number of local groups in the country started to climb, was to respond to feedback about the need for yearly weekend retreats at national level. Should these be solely an occasion for silence between talks from a well known retreat leader, and another convenient venue for the Advisory

Group? Or should these national get-togethers also be an opportunity for introducing some form of democracy into the movement?

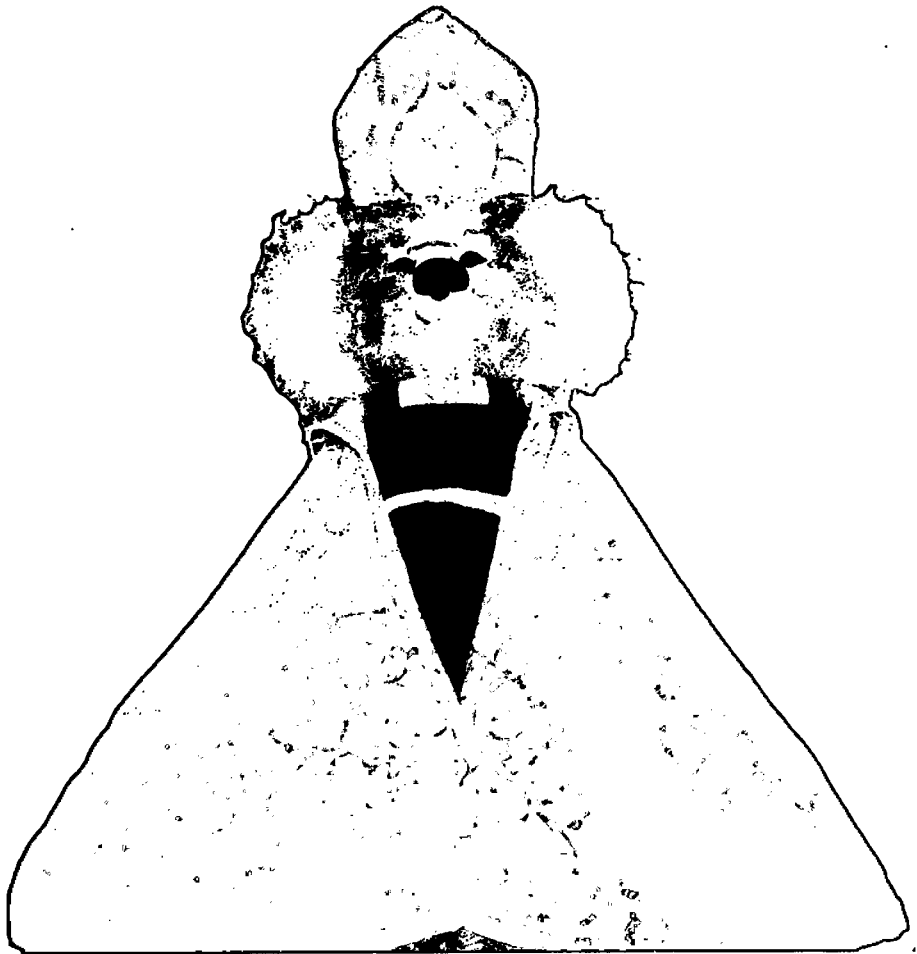
To explore these ideas it was agreed that the annual retreat at Alresford, to be led by Christopher Bryant, should involve periods of silence mixed with small-group discussions about what members of dispersed local groups might need by way of additional organisational support and participation. It fell to me to chair the final plenary session, opening with the words: "Well, after all those discussions, shall we now try to draw conclusions about JM's needs, now and in the future?"

What followed was a deepening and wonderfully nourishing silence that lasted more than half an hour, broken only by one of us, following her Quaker tradition of testimony, seemed to speak for the rest of us in quietly quoting from the Acts: "They were all with one accord in one place."

It was a powerful collective statement that retreat silence was much more highly valued than matters concerning local or national organisation. And, for me, what happened at Alresford and in the years that followed, was the realisation that for any movement such as JM, with a clear vision that can be expressed in a few words and which everyone can understand, there is no need for a top-down structure because there exists a self-managing framework that fully accommodates the participative energies of everyone involved.

At least, that is what I have been telling others about JM's achievements! And I feel immensely grateful for having been able to participate in the formative years of a movement which, by its rapid growth within and outside church circles, showed it could respond to a previously unfocused human need. And 21 years later, when we happily celebrated the movement's anniversary, it was obvious those early fears that local JM groups might get out of hand were completely unfounded. For not only had the number of groups increased to around 400 in Britain and abroad, but a truly extraordinary evolutionary change in lay and ecumenical life, that still holds the centre, had taken place within relatively few years.

So, in this important anniversary year, there's little need to be overly concerned about the next 30 years, is there?



We were honoured to have the Archbear present with us in Oxford. The Archbear, a friend of the Editor, is made of German tipped mohair and filled with steel shot and fibrefill. This makes him cuddly on the outside and firm on the inside.

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 views expressed in this magazine are those of each writer, and are not necessarily held by the Editor or the Advisory Group.

The Editor is always pleased to receive original articles, short meditations, stories, poems or artwork for use in the magazine. Book reviews for publication should include date, publisher and price.

Contributions for the next magazine should be sent to the Editor by **15 October 2003**. Please type, or write clearly, on one side of the paper. Contributions by e-mail are welcome.



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We commissioned this to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Julian Meetings. It could be used as a coaster (on which to place the 21st anniversary Julian Meetings mug?) or else as a candle-mat to support a candle in the silence.

Shown actual size, it has gold lettering on a dark blue background. It is available from the Julian Meetings at 50p + post and packing.