

THE
JULIAN
MEETINGS



6

Magazine
August
2010

The Julian Meetings

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

The Julian Meetings Magazine August 2010

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David Self led a short course introducing people to silence and contemplative prayer. As the first of our aims (set out on the inside front cover) is to foster the teaching (as well as the practice) of contemplative prayer we thought his course notes might be a useful reminder for our readers, whatever their experience level. We include part one here, and the rest will follow in subsequent issues of the Magazine.

Approaching Silence - Beginning

Contemplation is a very natural activity. A dog, when a walk is possible or food is around, is totally alert, totally focused. When we are looking or listening deeply our attention is drawn outwards to something or someone else. We naturally fall silent as we contemplate this focus of our attention. What IS scary is how little we do contemplate anything, how little we are truly present to something or someone else without laying on expectations about what we are seeing or listening to.

What about contemplative prayer?

It is making yourself available and open to God, without any expectations. It sounds very simple, yet many of us find it difficult. Sr. Wendy Beckett wrote: 'The real difficulty about prayer is that it has no difficulty. Prayer is God's taking possession of us. We expose to Him what we are, and He gazes on us with the creative eye of Holy Love. His gaze is transforming: He does not leave us in our poverty but draws us into being all we are meant to become. What that is we can never know. Total Love sees us in total truth because it is only He who sees us totally.' (*The Gaze of Love* p. 9)

We are embodied beings. We use our bodies constantly, not

just for living but for every sort of communicating and relating. How remarkable that such small, dusty things as we are can know something of the presence of God before whose glory we could be consumed. It's even more remarkable that God, in his transcendent, holy glory, would embody himself in Jesus to come to us. So prayer is gifted to us, not only to approach and be loved, but also that our eyes may be opened more and more to see God's creation his way.

Consider your body, your most faithful, long-suffering servant, as something to be loved as the Lord's loves it. And as our Lord accepted the limitations of his own body, so must we to learn to accept the limitations our bodies place on us. Alas, the Church has a long history of hating the body, as if God was a purely 'spiritual' matter, as if the body was to be deeply feared instead of deeply loved. Part of learning to love ourselves is to love our bodies, not resent them. And part of praying is to allow the body a full and loved part in the offering. As in every other part of our life, our bodies can be our most valued servants in our praying, if we include them. So that is where we shall begin.

Posture

Gently take a posture that allows your body to become still. If you are sitting, put both feet on the floor without crossing your legs. Let your legs be straight down from the knees and your back be reasonably straight down from the head, supported as necessary. Let your eyes look straight ahead and, when they are closed, imagine that you are focussing on a point some 18" in front of you. Let your hands be folded together on your lap or separately on your knees. If you are using a prayer stool much of this applies as well. Do what you can do, not what you can't, to bring your body into a position of stillness and prayerfulness.

Awareness of the body

Your body has a wonderful capacity for sensing: your skin, the clothes touching your skin, your back touching the chair, your feet the floor. Starting with the head, let the point of your attention move gently, noting each part and greeting it with delight and compassion. Note what you sense, and what you don't. If a muscle is tight, note it and pass on. Do not try to 'correct' anything. This is your one and only body, the gift of God to you. Allow yourself to become aware of all of it - lovingly. Then do it all again, slowly.

Breathing

Let your attention focus upon the breath as it comes in and goes out through your nostrils, cooler coming in, warmer going out. Concentrate on the air, and do not try to control your breathing in any way. If you find yourself becoming tense, then you are trying to control, and you don't have to. If you are tempted to yawn, then deepen your breathing for a few breaths so that all of the lungs are working, then return your awareness to the air coming in and going out. (15 minutes)

These are exercises to bring yourself into the present moment. In particular, being aware of your breathing is a marvellous way of 'centring down' to allow yourself to become more still, more available to the God who is very close to you. You may find that you become more aware of sounds in the street and the house, or birds in the garden. Once we remove the overpowering sense of sight the other senses have a chance. Good. Note each sound and then bring your attention back to the air coming in and going out. These are exercises in the discipline of awareness and attention. So go through the body and breathing once again, slowly.

To be continued in the December issue

Breathe.....

Breathe deeply

Breathe deeply of the Spirit

Breathe deeply of the Spirit of God

God, Whose Breath waits.....

Whose Breath waits to....

Breathe into us

That we may receive

That we may be filled

That His Breath may inspire us

Renew us

Revive us

With His Spirit

His Gentle, Loving Spirit which comes to help and heal us

Only we must remember to breathe

And to breathe deeply of the Spirit of God

There for us in each moment that we come

There for us when we turn to Him

There for us when we ask

Come Lord, our hearts inspire

Fill our lives with Your Goodness

That we may learn to trust You more and more

And let ourselves be guided by

Your Infinite Spirit,

Your Infinite Spirit of Love.

Breathe in us, Breath of God.

Amen

Elizabeth Mills

Contemplation? Meditation?

Having re-read my review of James Roose-Evans book 'Finding Silence', I realize that there is often confusion about the use of the words 'contemplation' and 'meditation'. I think sometimes the latter is used when the former is meant.

So back to the dictionary:

Contemplation: the action of beholding, or looking at with attention and thought—without reference to a particular object. Continued thinking, meditation, musing.

Meditation: The practice of religious reflection, a variety of private devotional exercise, consisting of the continuous application of the mind to the contemplation of a particular religious text, truth, mystery, or object.

The Oxford Dictionary adds: In Christian writings meditation which engages the intellect is sometimes distinguished from contemplation which transcends it.

Confused? I can't say it helped me much!

I then turned to the 14th century author of 'The Cloud of Unknowing' and found what I consider to be a good definition of contemplation:

'It is enough that you should feel moved lovingly by you know not what, and that in this inward urge you have no real thought for anything less than God, and that your desire is steadily and simply turned towards him.'

And meditation? I find the first definition above acceptable: 'The practice of religious reflection' on a text, truth, mystery or object.

I now feel clearer in my mind about the distinction. I hope it helps you.

Janet Robinson

Flowering Prayer

I was at a Quiet Day in March, and wandered into the grounds of the retreat house to enjoy the spring sunshine. After the snow and frost of the winter I found snowdrops and crocuses flowering side by side under the budding trees. As I looked at them I realized that they epitomize two contrasting ways in which we often pray.

The snowdrops, demure in white and green, hung their flower heads and looked down at the ground. Just so might we approach God in contrition, repentance, obedience, humility, and submission. It is a posture showing that we are aware of own insignificance before the greatness of our creator and redeemer.



The crocuses lifted their heads to the sun and, feeling its warmth, opened their purple and gold petals to it. Just as we might gaze heavenwards and raise our arms in praise and thanksgiving to God for all his goodness to us. It is a posture of outgoing joy, of adoration, awe and wonder, celebrating God's glory, love and power in our lives.

Deidre Morris

A book from Wanda Nash

If you enjoyed Wanda Nash's articles in the 2009 Magazines you may like to know that she's now produced a book, a practical manual on the 'whys' and 'hows' of people from different faiths getting together to pray in silence.

SILENCE AS MEETING PLACE by Wanda Nash

ISBN 978 1 873372 34 0

It is available direct from Wanda at:

The Cornerstone, 50B Hyde St, Winchester SO23 7DY
for £4.50 + £1P&P (cheques payable to Wanda Nash)

Poster Success

We have two local Julian Meetings, one daytime, one evening. We got together and produced an A4 poster saying briefly what JM and contemplative prayer are, giving our contact phone numbers and listing the venues and times of our meetings for 2010. We managed to get the poster included in the local 'Churches Together in ...' mailing sent out in March with details of local ecumenical activities over Easter, Ascension and Pentecost. As a result three new people came to the next evening Meeting having seen the poster in their place of worship, which was very encouraging. Two said it was what they had been looking for, but didn't realize was available locally.

We also included on the poster an offer to go and speak to any congregation or church group which might like to know more about JM and contemplative prayer, but so far no-one has taken us up on the offer.....

Wantage Quiet Day

Eleven of our members shared a Quiet Day with six from Lechlade – a founder member of their Meeting is now a resident at our House. We met at 10.00am to join in the daily Eucharist in our Chapel, followed by coffee and biscuits.

We then gathered in the sitting room called 'Charity' and each person contributed something precious to us – a text, poem, quotation, hymn – sharing around the circle. This wonderfully varied collection of treasures ended with the reading of a short story from China:

So the Master of the garden took Bamboo and cut down and hacked off his branches and stripped off his leaves and cut him in twain and cut out his heart. And lifting him gently, carried him to where there was a spring of fresh, sparkling water in the midst of the dry fields.

Then putting one end of broken Bamboo in the spring and the other end into the water channel in his field, the Master laid down gently his beloved Bamboo.

And the spring sang welcome and the clear sparkling waters raced joyously down the channel of Bamboo's torn body into the waiting fields. The rice was planted, and the days went by, and the shoots grew, and the harvest came. In that day was bamboo, once so glorious in stately beauty, yet more glorious in his brokenness and humility. For in his beauty was life abundant but in his brokenness he became a channel of abundant life to his Master's world.

After sharing our packed lunches we had 30 minutes of Julian silence. This was to have been led by the Rev. John Hedges but, as he was unwell, his wife kindly took over. We could then stroll in the gardens before a tea party and saying our farewells.

Beyond the Regular Julian Meeting

The April Magazine had three reports of Quiet Days, and the previous page has another. All four emphasise different aspects of a Quiet Day. One focused on the practicalities of the day, one on the input from the speaker, another extolled the joys of the location and space and time to be with God. The report from Wantage includes the interesting idea of sharing treasures.

2010 events in the UK

The GB Newsletter for April advertised five Quiet Days, a 24 hour retreat and two Julian tide Celebrations, and we know of another retreat and several Quiet Days which were not included because they were already full. All these were organized by one or more JMs, within their own area. A note in the April Magazine also told of a Quiet 'Day' which ran from 3.00pm to 7.30pm.

Perhaps there are other Quiet Days etc. that we've not been told about? We would like to know what is happening, even if it is not for advertising or reporting in the Magazine or Newsletter: it is very encouraging that so much is taking place across the country.

Do any non-UK Meetings organize events?

2011 - could it be your Meeting?

If you don't live near enough to get to any of the planned events, and wished that you did, could your own Meeting organize something for 2011? Often several Meetings share the organization, with one giving a lead and the others helping. Be imaginative in what you might do, where to go, and when to hold it.

Some points to consider:

- Weekday (cuts out most working people) or weekend (too busy)?
- Morning, afternoon or evening or a combination thereof?

- A venue that is accessible by public transport (not all of us drive) *and* has (not exorbitant) car parking.
- A venue fully accessible to those with limited mobility, and perhaps with a loop system for those with hearing aids.
- Several spaces, including one large enough for everyone to gather in, and some for quiet reflection or for art or craft work, etc.
- A garden, park or other open space for people to use if the weather is fine.
- Do you want to include time for people to share? This is one of the joys for members from different Meetings getting together. Formal sharing (as at Wantage) or informal - at the end, or over coffee / lunch?
- When and how long for shared silence(s)?
- A speaker, or 'do it yourself'?
- Meal silent, or talking allowed?
- Provide food / bring and share meal / bring your own food.
- What to charge? A set fee, minimum donation or just ask for donations.

Some events, as at Wantage, are held where denominational worship may be part of the day. It may be helpful if this takes place at the start of the day, to allow for those who would not be comfortable with such worship to arrive when it is over.

Extra help

JM has a Bursary Fund which can be applied to if you need a loan for in-advance costs, such as the deposit on the booking for a hall. You can (hopefully) repay it from the proceeds of the event. Contact Deidre Morris for details.

You can advertise your event in the JM Newsletter (if you have details available by copy date!) and on the JM website. If you wish to circulate details to JMs within your region, Anne Stamper can provide a list of contacts. You might wish to circulate your local churches, perhaps via 'Churches

Together in ...', as JM is ecumenical.

If you would like some extra help or advice, do feel free to get in touch with Janet Robinson (see page).

You might also like to go to the Retreat Association website, www.retreats.org.uk which has some useful informational leaflets

We are always delighted to hear how your event went, even if we do not have space to include everything in the JM Magazine or Newsletter.

logs blaze
warm in lamplight
beyond the window
soft mist enfolds the
trees
we wait
as one in silence
hearts open
still

who waits?
this self
centre of my world
this body
fades
becomes
a dance of atoms
changing with each
breath
this mind
a stream

moments of awareness
flowing on
into this spaciousness
a voice
come, sister
the work is just begun

only in this place
beyond self
can we awake
remember
who we are
a child of god
remember
we can hear
Christ the bodhisattva
speak

for this we wait

Roger Kidd

The Julian Meeting in Geelong, Australia

The Geelong Julian Meeting meets monthly and our average attendance is 12. We recently gained some new members, indicating a growing interest in this area of spirituality. These new members help make up the loss of some who, due to age and frailty, have moved to nursing care. The lead-ins to silence are based on Scripture, and the meeting follows the usual pattern.

Geelong Quiet Day

On Saturday 20th March 23 people attended the Geelong Julian Meetings Annual Quiet Day at the small Anglican Church of St James at Point Lonsdale. The perfect weather, beautiful Church grounds and the view across the entrance to Port Phillip Bay were very conducive to our meditations. Our thoughts were guided by the local vicar, Rev. Fr. Peter Martin, who originally trained with the Benedictine Order. Fr. Peter spoke three times during the day, without notes and very naturally, on the theme of the journey to the heart as nothing to be afraid of, and then of living from the heart. There was time for silent contemplation to consider what he had said and to allow God to speak to us individually. It was good to consciously set aside time to allow God to speak to us, as all too often our conversation with Him is one-sided – we come with our shopping list.

We divided the profits from the day between local parish funds and Cancer Research. Thanks to Ruth and Wal Jenkyn for refreshments during the day, and to the Church for their facilities.

The lead-in and lead-out to our Meeting 19 April (edited)

This evening I bring some thoughts from Psalm 119 - don't be alarmed; I'm only using one verse. It comes in the third section of psalm 119, which is called Gimel, the third letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Verse 18 reads "Open my eyes that I

may see wonderful things in your law."

God's word is indeed a wonderland. This verse (as all 176 verses do) speaks of God's law. Even in the narrow sense of this being the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament, we find the wonders of creation, instructions on how to worship, God's mighty deliverance of his chosen people from Egypt, and so on. The Torah records what God did, and also what God says. We have his instructions for how to live in society; how to keep physically healthy; how to worship God; how reconciliation and forgiveness bring harmony.

The "your law" can be expanded to include all the Prophets and Writings, and we then see the wonderful thread of God's plan of redemption for mankind. From the Abrahamic covenant we can trace God's heart for mission and blessing that he wants all people to receive and to share.

But we are not automatically excited by God's word. Only when the Holy Spirit opens our eyes and brings spiritual discernment can we see this wonderland. The Spirit must unveil our eyes – this is the psalmist's prayer.

Unveiling starts when we are born again, and the Holy Spirit continues to reveal the riches of God's word, for us to discover their wonders. We've all discovered new wonders in a familiar passage or verse. As the old hymn says, "the Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth from his word."

We need to approach God's word in prayer to understand and appreciate the wonders of the divine author. As we come to our time of contemplation, allow the Holy Spirit to bring more of his wonders to you.

SILENT CONTEMPLATION

David's psalms were written 3000 years ago. On this side of

the Cross, we have all the riches and wonders of the New Testament: the teachings of Jesus in the gospels, the promise of new life in Jesus Christ, the growth of the early church, the doctrinal teaching of Paul and other apostles, climaxing with the wonderful vision of the new heaven and the new earth in John's Revelation. But 1 Corinthians 2:14 reminds us that "the person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Let us allow the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to behold God's wonderland in His Word, which is none other than Jesus Christ himself. We are told to "*let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...*" Jesus promised to do this in his prayer for the believers in John 17:23 – "I in you and you in me."

Let us stand now for the benediction.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.

The peace of the Lord be with you ...
(and also with you.)

Let us share that peace with one another.

John Ryall

A Julian Meetings Haiku

*In gathered silence
we wait, prayerfully, on God
In circled stillness*



The Visitation.

Anne
09

Annunciation

After the frosts, my father's men
would plough the field. Then wait,
and watch the sky for signs of rain.
Before it fell, they'd scatter grain
across the furrows. Then, again, a wait before
the field turned green, and grew
to gold at harvest.

But the time

I loved the best was when,
for just a few short days, the new-sprung green
was dashed with colour, where the lilies
grew, and flowered and died.
Man planned and planted,
but that light and joy
was God's good gift.

Perhaps that's why it happened there
on that Spring evening. I stood, transfixed
with joy, as the sun's rays, sinking, brought
intensity unseen at mid-day to the flowers,
and heard a voice. 'Mary! Hail, chosen now
by God!' The colours deepened, blue to purple,
scarlet changed to crimson. And I knew.
'But how?' I asked in silence. 'How,
unmarried as I am?' And as the shadows
lengthened, wrapped around me like a cloak,
the answer came. 'Colour remains in darkness,
though unseen. God's joy and peace still grow
unseen in those who give them space and time.'

'I am your handmaid. Let them flower
in me. You are the one
I love, enjoy, serve and desire.'

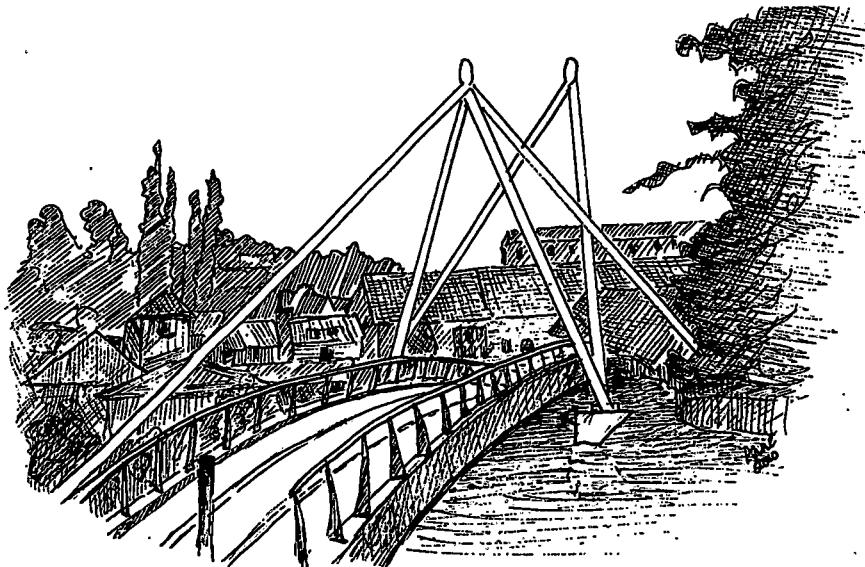
REVISITING THE JULIAN SHRINE

Over 15 years after my last visit to Norwich I went there to celebrate Julian's Day as 8th May 2010 fell on a Saturday. I also wanted to see the new Lady Julian Bridge (see drawing) which is a 5 minute walk downstream from Norwich station. The elegant £2.5m swing / suspension bridge for pedestrians and cyclists was opened on 15 Sept. 2009 in the presence of Sister Pamela and Sister Violet of the Anglican Community of All Hallows Ditchingham, who run the guest house and centre adjacent to the Julian Shrine. They won the public naming competition for the bridge, which links a riverside shopping and housing complex with King Street and St Julian's Alley which leads up from King St. to Julian's Church and Shrine.

The Juliantide Festival Eucharist was held in a packed church on a rainy day, and I enjoyed singing some specially written Juliantide hymns set to familiar tunes. The service, with its dignified Anglo-Catholic ceremonial and incense would, apart from the hymns and the use of English, not Latin, have been mostly familiar to Julian and her parishioners.

After the service Professor Barry Windeatt of Emmanuel College Cambridge gave a fascinating Annual Lecture for the Friends of Julian of Norwich. He spoke on *Julian's Showings - Work in Progress*, showing the relevance of Julian's writings for to-day's society and church, particularly in relation to inter-faith relations (she was aware of Jewish and Muslim beliefs even in her day) and equality of our relationships with our 'neighbours'. I hope we might be able to print the lecture in an issue of our Magazine.

After the lecture we ate our picnics in the church and the adjacent Julian Centre which provided tea and coffee. The Centre and Bookshop were quite new to me, created from the former guests' dining room at the Ditchingham nuns' house next to the church. The bookshop had JM's 'Circles' books, and



publications by the Friends of Julian of Norwich and the US based Order of Julian. There was no poster about JM or the monthly Julian Meeting at the Shrine but the bookshop and Centre Manager, Nicole McDonald, said she'd be willing to put up JM posters and consider stocking some of our booklets publications.

The Julian tide Festival then had the AGM for the Friends of Julian followed by a service of Benediction. I missed these as I had a business visit to the famous Colman's Mustard Shop / Museum. I also visited Weston Longville (five miles NW of Norwich) to see Parson Woodforde's church and memorial. This famous 18th century diarist wrote in detail about life and times in his small rural parish, but his diaries were only found by a descendant, and then published, in the 1920s.

I caught my train home with minutes to spare after a long but enjoyable 'pilgrimage' in and around the fine City of Norwich.

Mike Tiley

Dark Moments

'All shall be well' ...
She must have said that
Sometimes through gritted
teeth.

Surely she knew the moments
When fear gnaws at trust,
The future loses shape,
Gethsemane?

The courage that says
'All shall be well'
Doesn't mean feeling no fear,
But facing it, trusting
God won't let go.

'All shall be well;
Doesn't deny present
experience,
But roots it deep
In the faithfulness of God,
Whose will and gift is life.

Ann Lewin
(from her book
'Watching for the Kingfisher',
reviewed on page 24)

*In silence we can
meet ourselves as
we really are —
and find that God
is already there.*

JULIAN MYSTICAL REVELATIONS

*Words selected and adapted
by Sarah Passingham,
music by Roger Mayor*
CD SRS 3050.

Those who went to the Julian-tide Retreat at Ivy House in Warminster listened to this CD on the Saturday evening. Lasting just one hour, it was a good way to enter into Dame Julian's experience.

Recorded in 2002 in Norwich Cathedral, it was beautifully sung by Claire Tomlin and the Keswick Hall Choir, baritone soloist Patrick Heley, Miles Quick at the organ. The conductor was John Aplin.

Roger Mayor's music complemented the words admirably: mostly hauntingly lyrical, there were dramatic moments as the Fiend tried to break Julian's trust that because of the work of Christ on the cross, 'all will be well'.

The CD is available from:
Prelude RECORDS,
25b St Giles Street Norwich,
price £10.99, plus £1.30
postage and packing.

Ann Lewin

BOOK REVIEWS - BOOK REVIEWS

DISCOVERING GOD

C V M Heron

The Society of Mary and Martha 2009 £10.00

Available as hard copy or electronic download

smm@sheldon.uk.com

ISBN 978-0-9556384-2-8

This is a unique and very personal book. Catherine Heron has used her art to express the search for deeper spiritual understanding. It is presented as a spirally bound A4 booklet; on the left hand page is one of her drawings and opposite is her accompanying text, handwritten, so that you feel you are privileged to read her own private meditations.

In the first part of the book are meditations on 'the Son of God' and the second part 'Son of Man'. Her drawings are meditations in themselves. They are made in crayon, I think (not explained anywhere) and her use of colour is dramatic at times, especially in her illustrations of the second part of the book when she considers where God is in times of anxiety, depression, suffering and anger.

As I also try to express my faith through art it was this aspect of the book that attracted me, but the words that accompany the pictures are equally attractive. Her meditations are Bible-based and searching. The words complement the pictures and the two together make for thoughtful, slow reading, taken at one page a day. Some of the words would make suitable 'lead ins' for a Julian Meeting, and the picture might be used as a focus for a small group.

This booklet has been donated to sell in aid of the Sheldon Long Barn Appeal, at the Society of Mary and Martha in Devon. The plan is to convert the Long Barn into further accommodation for guests and retreatants.

Anne Stamper

**THE PATH OF LIGHT: meditations on prayers from the
Celtic tradition**
David Adam

SPCK 2009 £7.99
ISBN 978-0-281-06070-2

Formerly Vicar of Lindisfarne David Adam lived among the same stones and landscape walked by Cuthbert and Aidan and he is steeped in an understanding of Celtic Spirituality. This book of meditations draws on the prayers used by Celtic people for whom it was completely natural to share their lives and everyday concerns with God. There is an earthiness as well as a rhythm in prayers which have stood the test of time.

Divided into themed chapters, David Adam's insights expand the thoughts in these prayers and he offers simple guidelines into meditation. The wealth of material in this book is not to be read quickly or unreflectively: you can't rush from chapter to chapter. However as a guide for personal meditation, and used discerningly as a 'lead in' to a Julian Meeting, there is much to offer - a resource worth having on your bookshelf and one that I would certainly recommend.

Chrissie Rapsey

HOLDING ON, LETTING GO: reflections, stories, prayers
Chris Leonard

SPCK 2009 £8.99
ISBN 978 0281060597

Chris Leonard deals with universal themes that many of us will relate to. At times in our lives the crux question can be 'What to hold on to? And what to let go?' Whether it's a job we are starting to loathe, or a friend who seems to hurt us more than help, this book could provide comfort.

The book has four sections, one being 'Letting go of bad ... moving on to good'. You can dip into the book, or read it from cover to cover. Although only 145 pages long it is

'thick' with ideas and prayers and is emotional from start to finish (or did it just resonate strongly with me and my life?) Each sub-section has a mix of real-life stories, prayers and bible passages and this works well. Under the heading 'Letting go - of a house' I recalled my son's love for an old family home and how upset he was when we moved away. Another theme is Letting go of our 'rights' and there's a poem whose first verse goes:-

I sit with open hands
Heavy with the weight of
Unfulfilled dreams
Empty desires
Bitter disappointments
And misplaced hopes...

Wouldn't most of us recognise these feelings? The poem is actually 'about' a woman who's found that she cannot have children.

Overall the 'nudge' from Chris Leonard is to let God be the driver in our lives – but this is not pushed at you, just suggested every now and then.

Zena Cumberpatch

SIMPLER LIVING, COMPASSIONATE LIFE

Michael Schut (editor)

Morehouse Publishing 2009 \$20, £14.50

ISBN 978 0 8192 2369 2

This book brings together twenty-two spiritual writers (with Henri Nouwen, Richard Foster, Cecile Andrews as the better known names) exploring the theme of voluntary simplicity and how choosing to live a simpler life leads to spiritual wholeness and abundance. Topics include:

Seeking the Abundant Life; Time as Commodity, Time as Sacred; How Much is enough?; Simplicity Is Nothing New; Social and Environmental Impacts of Everyday Food Choices.

There is a helpful study guide for using the book for groups

to explore the theme of Living a Simpler Life together. These writings challenge the reader to consider their own lifestyles and choices and how these affect others. A small niggle is that, as the book was produced in and for the USA, the examples relate to American culture. But they can still be interesting and relevant to non-American readers, who can find equivalent examples from their own experiences.

Living a simpler life is a popular idea and this book would be a good starting point to explore the concept more deeply. It certainly made me stop and look again at my own life, and renewed my desire to choose a simpler lifestyle, both as an expression of faith and to have a more balanced approach to my life in general.

Helen Lems

WATCHING FOR THE KINGFISHER: poems and prayers

Ann Lewin

Canterbury Press, new enlarged edition 2009 £9.99

ISBN 978 1 85311 989 7

The poems in this book are prayer-full: the fruit of the author's prayer and the starting point of the readers'. The title is a phrase from a poem about prayer. Other poems focus on experiences of Jesus and his friends, inspiration from the natural world or the suffering of poverty or plight of asylum seekers. There are some very moving poems rooted in bereavement and caring for an ageing parent. Several of the poems reflect her love of birdwatching. I found each poem spoke to me; some brought healing. I missed this first time around, only discovering it recently while on retreat. Ann Lewin has led retreats for Julian Meetings and Disclosure, the poem quoted in the title, I did know from a long ago retreat. If you like poetry and, like me, you missed the first edition of this book do get it.

Gail Ballinger

See page 20 for one of Ann Lewin's poems from this book.

THE ORDINARY GOD Notes from the Far West of Ireland
Hilary Wakeman

The Liffey Press £13.95 2009
ISBN 978 190578573 5

Hilary Wakeman is well known to those involved in Julian Meetings as the 'founder'. Her writings are always thought provoking and this is true of this, her most recent publication. One of the first women to be ordained in the Church of England, she was, for ten years until her retirement, Rector of the furthest south-west parish of the Church of Ireland. From September 2007 she wrote regular articles for the Southern Star newspaper and some of these have been gathered together in this book. Of course some of the articles are specific to Ireland, but many more have a relevance to any Christian today. The articles were written for Catholics and Protestants and for those who don't belong to any church but are interested in the difference between religion and spirituality. Each chapter is quite short and some have arresting titles: – Praying to the God of the Parking Spaces, Singing 'O how beautiful' and sitting in the shade, In Touch with Something Greater than Ourselves. Hilary has always challenged people to think and act in new ways – and she is still doing it now.

Anne Stamper

TIME TO CHANGE: an Ignatian Retreat in Everyday Life
Michael Campbell-Johnston SJ

DLT 2010
ISBN 978-0-232-52782-7

Now available online at www.spirexnet.co.uk, this version of the Ignatian Exercises first appeared as an MP3 download. In his introduction the author points out that this is not a book for reading but for making "in silence before God, usually and ideally with the help of a director or guide". He goes on to say that the true director is of course the Holy

Spirit and the daily suggestions for prayer and meditation are likely to appeal not only to those familiar with Ignatian Spirituality but to a much wider audience. This little book would suit anyone seeking daily suggestions for their prayer time – it has thirty, but each may spread over more than one day, following the promptings of the Spirit to rest on one meditation for several days at a time.

This type of 'retreat is about what God does in us, and the invitation is always open to us. This little book provides the opportunity to listen to and answer God's little nudges.

Yvonne Walker

DISCOVERING HOLINESS: a book of insights

Margaret Macleod

New City 2009 £1.95
ISBN 978 1 905039 03 6

Margaret Macleod's book was a delight to read and is dedicated 'to fellow travellers on the Way of Holiness.' The introduction says 'Those who are holy bring a blessing of peace to our hearts... we see in them ... an inner light and their beings speak of God.' Through her observations of life - her own and others - she sees stages of growth in the spiritual journey and offers insights into each stage.

I liked her broad vision: 'There are many paths up the Mountain of Holiness. In addition to the Christian path, there are paths of other faiths, and even the path of the reverent agnostic. In all of them the Holy Spirit can be at work'

Stephen Foster's illustrations beautifully complement the written word. That of a figure leaning on a tree by the lake-side, looking towards the mountain that is reflected in the lake, goes with the words: 'Moment by moment, I listen to the words of love you speak. Your love, my God, is the rock my life is built upon.'

This encouraging book could be valuable to people at any stage of their spiritual journey; there is a lovely serenity in Margaret Macleod's work.

Sheila Simm

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

Magazine Contributions

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

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

Please send contributions for the December Magazine

by 25 September 2010

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