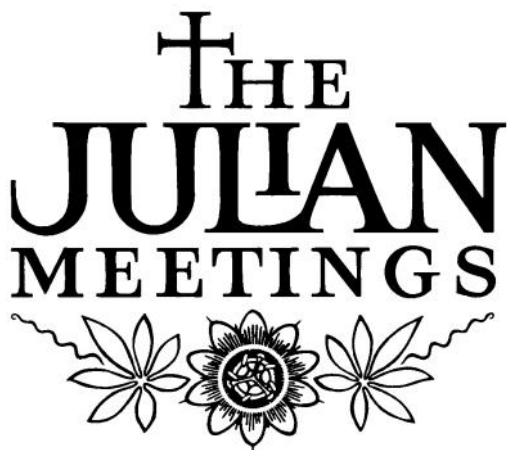




*seeking God
in silence*

*Magazine
December
2014*

The Julian Meetings

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



The Julian Meetings Magazine December 2014

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Children and Silence

Pauline Lovelock, Learning Project Officer at the Julian Shrine, writes about how children find Silence in the Julian Shrine.

I am privileged to work with children and adult groups in the Julian Shrine in Norwich. My background is in teaching and social work.

Over the past six years I have worked with 7,000 children, developing ways of leading them into experiencing silence. In return they have let me enter into their inner secret worlds, allowing me to share their dreams, hopes and fears, as I have tried to enable them to be free enough to encounter the 'sacred' in the silence of Mother Julian's Cell.

I simply lead children into silence and then do nothing. What happens next is between the child and God. It is profoundly moving and beautiful. Madeline Simon writes; 'Never presume to teach anyone anything until you have first learnt something from them'And so a child shall lead us!

Many of the children I work with are secular; some are surprised by what they find. Children have written; "I am not Christian, but I have never felt like this before, I feel loved" another "Thank you for giving us this gift of peace." A girl of ten wrote "Today I found God".

I find most children readily embrace silence. There are many different ways of entering into silence, which can be offered to children depending upon their age and spiritual experience. I use several methods, the simpler the better.

Children love to explore Celtic patterns, tracing their fingers over the paths. Let them into the secret before they start, that as their finger crosses the pattern from one side to the other, they may experience a slowing down, calming effect as their brain switches from left to right and back again.

Finger Labyrinths can help too. The children move their finger around the labyrinth, at each junction or numbered stopping

point, they wait and count one second in their head, at subsequent points they increase the count by one second. Once the end is reached, ask the children to simply notice how they feel, do any thoughts or feelings come to them in the silence?

Children of all ages respond to the use of story. I have found 'Relax Kids Chill' tapes excellent. I can recommend the 'Nature Meditation' CD, which during a series of four minute tracks will, by use of story and music, lead children to climb to the top of a mountain to leave their worries there or relax by the sea or then again to fly like a bird or visit outer space. Children will learn to notice their breathing and be calm.

Older children respond well to guided visualisation. In Julian's Cell I take them back to the sights and sounds of medieval life surrounding Mother Julian and ask what she might be doing in her Cell as she listened to God? What might He have said to her? What might God say today?

Traditional methods work well too. A good way to introduce a child to silence is to let them hold a lit candle in a shade and invite them to blow it out in their own time, to watch the smoke rising, so giving the child control of their experience.



These are some ways to engage children into silence. The methods can be used alone or combined. When the activity ends, hold the silence, for as long as the children are comfortable: let them determine the time span. (As a rough guide, children can hold silence for a minute for every year of their age).

There is no magic formula, but those who attempt silence with children need to be aware that children respond in many ways. It is not for the fainthearted. It can be sensationally good but equally sensationally disastrous, with a group falling about laughing or making embarrassed comments.

The key to avoid this is total honesty and acceptance. Initially

I explain to the children what we are aiming to achieve and why. I explain that they may start to giggle, which is normal and acceptable in moderation. They may feel sleepy or just calm. Some report a change in temperature, sometimes children feel happy or sad.

Most children enjoy silence, but be aware some may find the experience frightening or boring. Many children have watched Dr. Who; two of the evil characters on the programme are 'Silence' and the 'Weeping Angels'. Children do express anxiety about meeting these characters in times of silence.

Children say that a sacred or special place helps them in their experience of silence.

In the Julian Shrine, my recent research revealed over 50% of children went on to speak of bereavement or loss, following times of silence. In spite of this, in the same sample, 97% of children said they felt experiencing silence in a sacred place had helped their well being, by making them feel loved, special and safe. They commented that they lived in a world which was never still; they rushed from one activity to another. The children said they treasured a time to be still, to think and to be themselves.

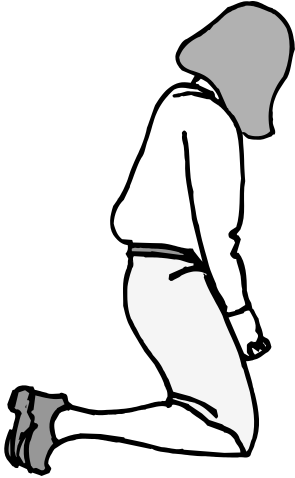
I believe we should listen to our children and offer them the remarkable gift of peace, that so many of us have taken strength and comfort in. Children are intensely spiritual beings, born naturals. We have much to share with them and in return they have much to teach us.

Silence brings with it humility, gentleness, joy and patience, gifts our world desperately needs. Let us offer our children these gifts and the potential healing they bring.

I would love to hear about your experiences with children. Please e-mail me at learning@friendsofjulian.org.uk or write to Pauline lovelock, The Julian Shrine, Norwich NR1

CD Nature Meditations – Chill Skills - Marneta Viegas & Jonathan Hugh. ISBN 190507607

A Medieval Prayer



*We kneel to pray:
and know not what to say;
We cannot tell;
what shall be ill or well.
But as we look:
into thy face or book
We see a love:
from which we cannot move;
And learn to rest in this.*

*So would we pray:
only to have Thy way
In everything:
wise Lord and King.
Grant us but grace:
in all to give Thee place.
To have Thy will,
perfectly. Amen.*

Stafford Julian Meeting - 10 years on

The Stafford Julian Meeting celebrated its 10th Anniversary in June, and we spent a whole day together, not just our usual afternoon.

We watched 'Invitation to a Meal', a video of a Quiet Day with Eddie Askew. Eddie's wonderful gift of painting with words took us vividly through the 'Feeding of the Five Thousand' and the 'Meal at Bethany' at the home of Martha and Mary. The sessions were interspersed with our usual half-hours of silence, when members were able to enjoy the garden or sit quietly in the house.

Silence was relaxed over a shared meal at lunch time, then we watched the third session 'The Breakfast on the Shore'. After our final time of silence the day ended with a simple, symbolic, sharing of bread and wine, closing with the grace.

God's Affirmation of Belonging

It's not so much *who* we are as *whose* we are

In the story of the transfiguration (Luke 9:35) God's affirmation comes through encounter and connection. Listening to the words "This is my child my chosen one" Jesus is also surrounded by the intimate circle of Elijah and Moses and the human company of Peter, James and John - watching and listening together - even though the disciples were weighed down with sleep.

Being open to receive God's affirmation in a group context, helps us to continue to live the truth of who we really are through good times and painful times, and to live out this truth for the sake of others. It is a call to live God's life in this life - now "This is the way, walk in it" Isa. 30:21 - you couldn't get a clearer direction than that.

When life is sheer hell, clinging on to this affirmation of being a beloved child of God connected to others, can help to bring a glimpse of God's Kingdom into the pain and suffering. Leaving behind any false religiosity, letting go any reliance on the world's hollow and broken promises, I find that I can be enfolded by this affirmation of a loving God who cares intimately for every fibre of my being and for all his creation.

It's not about escaping from pain or avoiding vulnerability, however much I may seek to escape from sorrow and suffering. It's about living in it and through it with Jesus by my side. Trusting, as Jesus trusted, in the love of the father and the caring support of those around me.

This affirmation doesn't set the world to rights, it is a call to recognise and be who I am, the unique person that God made me to be. It's a commitment to the life-long task of just being "little old me" but doing it WITH God.

If, over time, I can accept and embrace the authentic me who God has created and who God keeps on loving and re-creating as long as I draw breath, then in parallel I trust that I

can accept and recognise the circle of love from others that goes with me and surrounds me when the going is rough. A circle of connection, encounter and belonging. That's what the Julian Meetings really are about.

Yvonne Walker

Painbearers (continued from April issue)

We cannot escape pain. Some people claim that all kinds of pain can help us grow as human beings. I've met people who have said how their worst fear, e.g. cancer, turned out to be the greatest gift, the best thing that had happened to them.

But pain can be destructive. In trying to understand it we must not become sentimental about pain. How does it affect our contemplative prayer? If we fidget more than usual can we be patient with ourselves or do we get cross with ourselves? Might 'silence without stillness' help, using a craft activity that allows us movement and occupies our hands? Do we remember the resource of returning our focus to our breathing? Just as important, how do we support each other in our Julian Meetings when pain is a problem for a member?

Pain and the local Julian Meeting

Pain has to be managed whether it is acute or becomes chronic i.e. long lasting or permanent; we need, in our Meetings, to take some practical and compassionate approaches to it. Are there ways our Meetings might accommodate someone whose pain makes physical stillness almost impossible? We should begin by being aware that someone may have a pain problem. We could ask what would help them, and also reassure them that they are not a problem. If several members have difficulty, how can we maximise support and encouragement for each one?

Practical considerations might be: Is there a suitable chair? There may be a particular chair (and perhaps only one) which suits several people! Do they need a window open - or closed? Can we provide a little hand-held fan if someone

suffers unduly from heat / lack of air? Can those in pain move about (hopefully unobtrusively) if they need to? Or even lie on the floor - assuming they can get up again! Can we offer them a holding cross, or a cushion to support the back or the hands? Wherever we meet, which of us will take responsibility for providing what is needed?

Support from scripture?

All things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purposes...Romans 8: 28

Not everyone finds it helpful to be offered a passage from scripture when they are in trouble. It can seem patronising, or trite. The choice of Bible passage may be inappropriate or insensitive to the particular person or situation – we never know all the facts, or their implications for each individual.. So there is a risk to offering scripture: it takes discernment and some courage to do this. Some people are aware of the risks, others not.

When I was twenty I had a bad back injury which, after two years and a long spell in hospital, was finally resolved by fairly major surgery. I received a letter from my cousin, who is the same age as me, in which she quoted that passage from Romans. It helped - almost like an oasis in a desert. It might not be so for everyone.

Gail Ballinger

Books that may be of interest, or helpful, at times of suffering

Besides the books Gail gave in the April issue, these may be of help or interest to those in pain or distressing situations:

ASHWIN, Angela (*all out of print, but used copies are around*)

Prayer in the Shadows (Collins / Fount 1990)

American editions: *Prayer without Pretending* (1991) and *From Pain into Prayer* (1997)

Angela addresses those times when it is hard to pray, maybe due to harsh and worrying circumstances - illness, fears,

doubts... She explores ways in which 'our pain and our concern for the world's suffering can, themselves, become the raw material for prayer, in the love of the crucified and risen Christ.' I am indebted to her for the idea of the holding cross, which is designed to be held, and just holding one can be an act of prayer. (see www.angelashwin.com)

COTTER, Jim.

He wrote some short booklets, including *Cancer Psalms*, when living with terminal leukemia, (www.cottercairns.co.uk) A good 'wordsmith', Jim valued silence, believing that the words we use should be few and well chosen. The term 'Pain-bearer' may be his. Also helpful might be *Healing More or Less* and various editions of *Prayer at Night*, the latest being *Praying the Dark Hours* (Canterbury Press in association with Cairns Publications 2011)

MANN, Ivan

Breathing I Pray (Darton, Longman and Todd 2005)

A Double Thirst (DLT 2001)

NORMAN, Andrew

Learn to be at Peace. An Anglican parish priest, Andrew wrote this 28 page booklet when recovering from a brain haemorrhage. His message is simple: learn the practice of stillness and develop a contemplative awareness in all things....*if we cultivate a disciplined life of prayer this will shape our existence and give us strength in difficult times*. (SLG Press 2010 www.slgpress.co.uk)

One thing these books have in common is: NOW. We cope with pain now, not how it might be tonight, tomorrow or in a future dominated by it.

Most refer to the *Sacrament of the Present Moment* or have a comparable attitude to the one in this book.

A good modern version is *Life in God's Now: the Sacrament of the Present Moment – Jean Pierre de Caussade's Self Abandonment to Divine Providence for Everyone*, by Elizabeth Obbard.(New City, 2012) (reviewed Dec. 2012)

John Ryall, from Australia, offers us the lead-in he used with their Julian Meeting in December 2013

An Advent message in the Book of Lamentations? Unlikely as it seems, some verses seem to hold a messianic significance.

In Lamentations the first four chapters are written in acrostic form: each verse - or in chapter 3, each triplet of verses - starts in order with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The book, attributed to Jeremiah, comes just after his prophecies. The poetic form of lament is common in the Old Testament, and there are more laments than praises in the Psalms.

Jeremiah and Lamentations is a tale of judgment on God's chosen people because of their sin and rebellion. However there are promises that some will be saved, that God has not utterly abandoned them and they will be restored. Their very existence was testimony to God keeping his promises. While the people agreed that they deserved punishment, they were impatient for the good bits of the prophecy to take place.

Chapter 3: 22-26: *Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. they are new every morning: great is your faithfulness. I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.*

Jeremiah is expressing his hope in God. Prophecies can have multiple fulfilments and so the prophecy fulfilled in Jeremiah's time has its ultimate fulfilment in the birth of Jesus Christ.

Advent is a season of preparation and waiting. We wait for the One who brings salvation to the world. An angel tells Joseph, Mary's betrothed, in a dream ...*you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.* (Matthew 1:21)

It is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

Two things come together to make Christmas necessary. The first is our need to be saved - not a popular idea today. We are self-made men and women who can chart our own course and settle our own destiny. We believe the hollow promise

that ‘anyone can change the world.’ But it just isn’t true. We don’t all have the opportunity, the ability, or the desire to do that. Our desire is the problem – not only do we desire the wrong things, but we do not desire the One who made us, do not desire to know Him or honour Him. We cannot escape our web of guilt, decay and death. We cannot change ourselves, let alone the world. And we need someone to save us.

Yet that alone would not explain Christmas. We could have been left to take the consequences of our own decisions. But Christmas is necessary because God won’t give up on us. He is true to Himself, and won’t abandon us. His determination to rescue his people, to eventually gather them round His throne and shower them with his blessings, is the great explanation of why Mary fell pregnant and Christ was born.

So let us focus on God’s gracious gift of love and salvation that came to us in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

I conclude with the beautiful words from Isaiah 9:6,7. Notice how often the word “will” appears in this passage. These are the Lord’s precious promises to us, to encourage us in a confused and turbulent world.

*⁶For unto us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
⁷Of the increase of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David’s throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.
The zeal of the LORD Almighty
will accomplish this.*

Great Expectations?

One topic raised at a Core Group meeting was 'What do we expect of the contact person for a Julian Meeting, and how / when is this spelled out to them?' We realised that it is not fully explained anywhere, so the next four pages (which can be pulled out and kept for reference) try to do this.

For everyone. We hope this will be helpful not only to those who are currently contact people, but to all the members of a Julian Meeting. We explain not only what needs to be done, but suggest what else might be done, and what some existing Meetings do, not all of which need be the responsibility of the contact person.

News from the JM Council Meeting

The JM council met in Birmingham in October, from mid-afternoon on a Wednesday until after lunch on Thursday. This gave us time for three long work sessions, plus meals and coffee breaks together to chat and share informally. We also enjoyed two sessions of silence together, one with a beautiful array of autumn foliage and fruits as a focus.

We had wide-ranging discussions about:

- * IT and how JM could best use this to improve our administration and communication, while also retaining our traditional means of communication and working
- * How we could engage with the younger generations to bring them an awareness of silent prayer.
- * JM finances, in both the long and short term, as costs of postage, printing, travel etc. continue to rise, and we seek to make JM better known.
- * JM publicity and publications
- * The JM Magazine
- * Safeguarding implications for JM

Sharing over meals etc. gave us time to get to know each other better, and as most of us would have had to stay overnight anyway it is actually a cost effective way to meet.

Being the Contact Person for a Julian Meeting

Thank you for considering, or actually, taking on the role of Contact Person for your Julian Meeting. JM runs with minimal administration nationally and locally, but some things need to be done, and others are very helpful.

We ask that you will:

- 1) *Register your Julian Meeting on the JM Database, and renew the registration annually.*

If you are starting a new Meeting, fill in the Meeting registration form available on the website (www.julianmeetings.org) or by sending an sae to: Pat Chandler, 15 Mill Lane, Manningtree, Essex CO11 1DQ. When complete, send the form, with the £6 registration fee, to Pat at the above address.

If you are renewing your registration, please check the details on the form that comes with the December issue of the Magazine. Make any necessary amendments, and return the form, and the £6 registration fee, to the address given on the form.

- 2) *Ensure that you provide contact details of a second person.*

If we, or an enquirer, cannot get a response from you we need to have a back-up person to contact. We may be unable to get in touch because you are lucky enough to be on a world cruise – but disaster can also strike. If accident, illness, even death, happens to you or someone close to you, letting us know you are unavailable is the last thing you'd think of.



Or, in the throes of moving house, you may forget to give us your new contact details. So please always provide details of a second person, who will only be contacted if you are unavailable. Please also tell them what they need to do if you stop being the contact for any reason.

- 3) *If any of your Meeting's contact details change, or if you cease to meet, tell Pat Chandler by writing to her at the above address or e-mailing paddy Chandler@aol.com*



We also hope that you will:

Give to any enquirer who gets in touch with you the details of your Meeting, and welcome them to join it.

Read the JM Magazines and Newsletters that you will *receive on behalf of your whole Meeting* so that you know what is happening in the wider JM network. They are sent to all registered Meetings.

Take the Magazine and Newsletter to your Meetings and encourage your members to read them.

Inform your members of anything in the Magazine and Newsletter that they may need to know about – eg a local quiet day, or a request for help with a particular role.

Point out that anyone can take out a personal subscription to the Magazine if they would like their own copy (see our website or the penultimate page of the magazine, for details)

Encourage your members to contribute to the Magazine or the Newsletter.

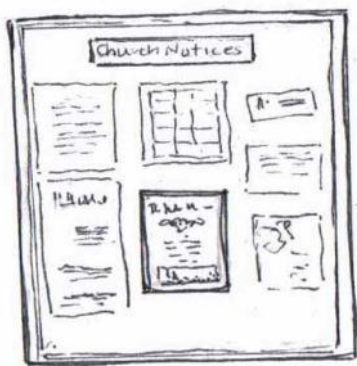
Have a set of the JM booklets, so that members of your meeting may borrow and read them. There is an order form in the centre of the Newsletter.

Encourage members to take their turn at leading into and out of the silence. Our booklets 'Going in ... and Coming Out' and 'It's Your Turn to Lead' can be very helpful.



It has been very sad, at times, to have been contacted by a person seeking a silent prayer group, who finds there is a local Julian Meeting they knew nothing about.

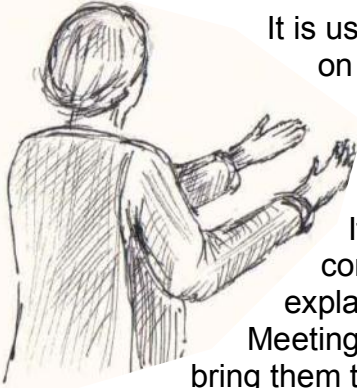
If you value your Julian Meeting please don't deprive others of the chance to belong also. Publicise your existence.



It can be helpful to:

- * Hold a list of members contact details, so that they can be informed if a meeting has to be changed at short notice
Give a copy to the second contact, in case they need it
- * Have details of the nearest Julian Meetings in all directions from you. If an enquirer is unable to come to your Meeting – perhaps the time, or day, or venue are impractical for them – you can give them these details. Details can be obtained by e-mailing ukdata@julianmeetings.org or sending an sae to The Julian Meetings, 2 Margaret St, Derby DE1 3FE
- * If a member is moving away, you could similarly find out for them details of any Julian Meetings in their new area.
- * Every 12-18 months have a discussion about your Meeting, separately from your normal meeting, and / or use the JM Health Check with your Meeting.
- * Agree, before it arises, what to do in the event that you, or the host(ess), or the venue are unavailable at short notice.
- * Agree how you will arrange to pay your registration £6, plus any expenses of the Meeting – room hire, postage, refreshments, buying JM publicity / booklets, phone calls etc.
- * Encourage your members to provide feedback (good or bad), and make suggestions.

Welcoming newcomers:



It is useful to have a supply of our Waiting on God free leaflets, not only for publicity, but to give or send to any enquirer, along with details of your Julian Meeting.

If they are unfamiliar with JM or contemplative prayer it is helpful to explain briefly what happens at a Meeting. Ask if they would like someone to bring them to their first Meeting, or be sure they have very clear directions to find the venue.

When there is someone new at a Meeting, particularly if they are new to contemplation, it can be helpful to give them one of our bookmarks and pew cards, whose wording may guide their use of the silence. Always tell newcomers how long the silence will last, so that they are not surprised. You might begin the silence with a centering exercise – we can all benefit from a refresher session occasionally.

What some Meetings also do, or have done:

- * Provide a paper copy of the lead-in and out, for those who may be hard of hearing.
- * Have a 'book box' of spiritual books, which members may browse and borrow. Or members bring along books etc. that they have found helpful and wish to share.
- * Organise a Quiet day / morning / afternoon / evening. The Retreat Association has a very helpful leaflet about this.
- * Organise a JM event that includes both silence and sharing
- * Have an annual meal together, or go on a day pilgrimage.
- * Go on retreat together

This leaflet covers most things, but we would welcome your suggestions for improving this 'job description'

Make a Noise about your Quiet Day

The weather was perfect for enjoying the North Yorkshire countryside, and the gardens of Wydale Hall, on our annual Quiet Day. Most importantly it was a day to introduce some new people to a Julian experience. In the morning Sister Janet Elizabeth's reflections on some of the writings of Mother Julian were a good introduction for those who were unfamiliar with them, and also unfamiliar with contemplative prayer. The afternoon included extracts from Eddie Askew's meditations, some poetry, and an Awareness Walk in the gardens. We ended the day with a time of devotion as we sat in a circle.

Worth advertising widely

Of the 19 people who came, seven were 'visitors' and three were men. We advertised the day in the JM Newsletter, and on the JM website, which brought in six of our visitors, from Barton-on-Humber, N. Lincolnshire to Chester-le-Street in Co. Durham. I also include it in our church notices, inviting anyone who would like to experience a Quiet Day - it is so easy to forget how many have not, and lack the opportunity. The response of our visitors was very positive, and the group silence for contemplation was much appreciated.

Worth advertising locally

The lady who came from our church challenged me on our way home. She'd seen the monthly Julian Meeting listed in our church notices, but thought it was a house group! It is a while since I wrote about JM for our Church Magazine, and she has joined the church since then. So I was asked to give our circuit an update, which I shall do. I suggested to the lady that, if she had benefitted from the experience, why not write about the Quiet Day in our church magazine, which she did. I am now ordering some more of the JM 'Waiting on God in the silence' leaflets to leave in church, the church centre, and give to other churches in the town.

Brenda Smith

Janet Robinson reviews a talk and an audio-visual which may interest you - she found them well worth listening to and watching.

WHAT GROWS IN THE GAPS: Silence and Human Maturing: a talk given at Silence in the City 2014 by Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury

2 CDs £10 +£2pp; MP3 £3.00

Agape Ministries: www.agapeministries.co.uk
archie@agapeministries.co.uk

I am new to Silence in the City so it was useful to hear about the structure of the evening sessions and the introductions.

I found Bishop Rowan's talk absorbing and extremely helpful. He pointed out how difficult it was to talk about silence and indeed, that we "are stuck" before we start. However, he did so in a completely accessible way. He asked us to think about how we encounter silence in everyday life and suggested that in most circumstances we are lost for words, become inarticulate. Sometimes silence can be a corrupting thing – if people are silenced, shut up. Jesus could have been in this situation but his silence before his accusers became a presence.

Bishop Rowan then talked of our own attempts to "be silenced before the mystery of God", to let God be God, to let God occur in us. How do you stop trying? His thoughts and suggestions are most practical.

He said, of liturgy, that sometimes we just step up the activity in our anxiety to communicate God to others. We want to fill the void. Good liturgy should lead into silence. The language should flow out of silence and lead us back into it.

There were good questions and responses at the end of the talk, all of which were most useful.

This is a most inadequate description of an excellent lecture. I hope that our Julian meeting might spend a session listening to the CD together as I know we would all find it helpful.

ETCHED BY SILENCE

In book form this was reviewed by Anne Stamper in the April 2014 magazine. There is now a DVD on which the late Jim Cotter reads 25 poems by R.S.Thomas, from that selection, and marries them with moving pictures of land-, sea- and sky-scapes around the Lleyn Peninsula in North Wales. Some of the poems could have been written in the locations; some certainly were.

The DVD is mesmeric and contemplative. I have watched it three times now and value it most highly. Jim Cotter, who reads the poems so well, asks us to “go through the eye of the needle”, to clear our minds of clutter and pay attention to both the words and the scenes and linger with them. If you chime with the work of R.S.T. and if you like to gaze long at rocks, sea and sky then I believe you will find tranquillity and inspiration from this work.

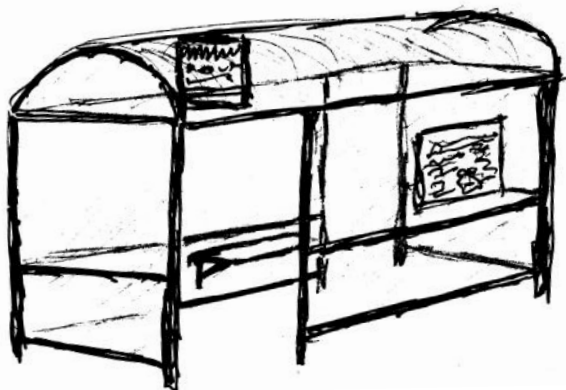
Our Julian meeting hopes to include it as part of a Quiet Day, combining the thoughtful complexity of the words with the superb scenes of natural beauty.

God's Bus Shelter

The Northern Julian Day included this imagery:

Across the road from our house is a bus stop. Because it is for buses into town it has a bus shelter, which I can see from our landing window. It may seem odd, but the shelter makes me think of God's presence with us. The bus shelter is there all the time. People can come and shelter in it whenever they need – even if they are not waiting for a bus. Sometimes the local teenagers use it, when it is too wet or windy for them out on the street. The shelter is there for any people who are travelling, so that they know where to wait for the bus; can be protected from the worst of the elements, except cold; there is a, rather basic,

seat, and information about when the bus should arrive, what number it should display and where that route number goes



to. There is also a light, so that anyone using the shelter is not left in the dark but can read the notices and see anyone else who is there.

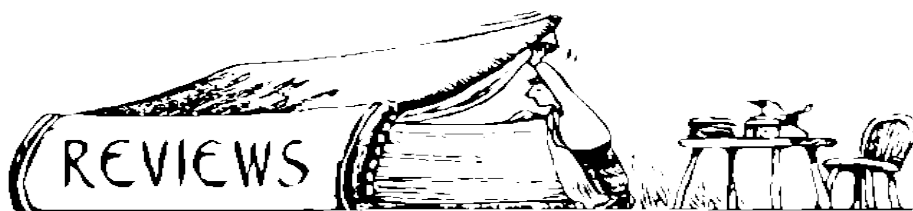
It is when I look out at 3.00am in the dark of the morning, and see

the light on in the shelter, that I think of God. No-one is around. Most people are in bed. There is no bus due for at least 3½ hours, or 6½ on a Sunday. But the shelter is always there, always ready for use, and the light is always on, for anyone who needs it. Just as God is always there for us, pilgrims on our journey. He provides guidance & information, in the Bible; places for us to rest along the way; a shelter from bad weather; a place to meet fellow travellers; and light in the darkness.

At a recent Julian Meeting the lead-in (from the August 2012 Magazine) was about us not being afraid to miss the bus, but just sitting still and silent in the present. When any stray thought came along, like a bus you could just let it go by without getting on it.

I found myself, for the whole 45 minutes of our silence, sitting in the bus shelter with Jesus. We just sat side by side, not chatting - though I rather hoped he was waiting for the same bus as me! It was a powerful and moving experience..

Deidre Morris



HOLY LUCK: Poems of the Kingdom

Eugene H. Peterson

Canterbury Press 2014 £10.99

ISBN 978 184 825 6248

Because Eugene H Peterson is known for his excellent Bible translation in contemporary English (The Message) I expected to find something fresh and applicable with these poems. He introduces them with a helpful short commentary on how they relate to his own Christian journey and the circumstances behind their production.

The first section is based on the Beatitudes, (the Holy Luck of the title) but instead of approachable colloquialisms, there is a thick mass of language and I had to pause, repeat, search and think as I read. The poems are phrased in densely-worded, long sentences and have strong references to nature - avalanche, beaches, meadows, clouds. They all come back to a reflection on how the Beatitudes impact on our choices in life as in The Lucky Pure (Blessed are the Pure in Heart):

*Every blossom's a breast
Holding eventual sight for all blind and
Groping newborn: we touch our way
Through these splendours to the glory.*

Careful reading is rewarded; these poems are not for brief encounters. However, the second and third sections of Holy Luck are more day-to-day, for example the whole Christmas experience (trees, presents, candles) seen afresh. But the language is not the fluid fun of The Message. Although Peterson presents some thoughtful insights and some amusing scenes, all related to Bible passages or Christian experiences, the poems are clunky, maybe too linked to Peterson's personal world and I had to turn to a dictionary (Womb: *Phylogeny recapitulates ontogeny*) and an Atlas (Dawn: *Along the*

Susquehanna...Down the Monongahela...Up the Allegheny)
to follow his train of thought.

But within this collection are a few very beautiful moments. In Silence (Isaiah 53, “...*he opened not his mouth*”) there is a successful transmission of understanding and feeling:

The temptation is always to say too much,
Compensate for His non-saying
With verbal tinsel and bauble tunes.
Unnerved by the dimming of angel glory,
Fading echoes of exuberate hosannas,
We dazzle with evangelical smiles,
Amplify earnestness to deafen doubt,
Then miss the pre-dawn silence-swaddled virgin
Birth.

Karen Woollard

WHEN GOD IS SILENT - Divine Language Beyond Words

Barbara Brown Taylor

Canterbury Press 2013 £9.99

ISBN 978 1 84825 454 1

This is lovely, thoughtful little book reflects on how we yearn for communication with a God who often seems to be silent. Each of the three chapters was a lecture in preaching given to Yale Divinity School. In chapter one, 'Famine', the author considers the limitations of our language and how words lose their power in a world teeming with noise. We are, she says, in a famine of the Word while surrounded by " piles of our own dead words ", and we use more and more words precisely *because* they do not nourish us. In today's culture, torrents of words can drown out the messages we really need to hear.

In chapter two, 'Silence', Taylor asserts that God is silent not because we've done something wrong but because silence is part of God's language. In Scripture, God's voice was heard less frequently over the years as God spoke through prophets and leaders, until it was heard clearly again through Jesus.

In chapter three, 'Restraint', Taylor argues persuasively for simplicity and economy in preaching or pastoral encounters;

conquering our fear of silence, and being respectful to those who listen when we are preaching, teaching or tending. She cites practising restraint, not as deliberately withholding God's word but as reaching for more reverence when speaking of the divine. Jesus' stories ask not for decisions but for reflection and identification, which is where transformation begins.

Pat Chandler

JULIAN OF NORWICH: a contemporary translation

Mirabeau Starr

Canterbury Press 2014 £12.99

ISBN 978 184 825 5937

This new translation of Julian is recommended by some noted spiritual writers. Richard Rohr, quoted on the cover: 'genuinely exciting to find such a faithful but freeing translation.' Starr has specifically written for spiritual seekers in the broad sense, so has taken some liberties with the original text, as she writes in the introduction: *Translating classical mystical masterpieces is a delicate undertaking. It is a dance between fidelity to the original and accessibility for a new audience. I want to make a place at Julian's table for people of all faiths and none, without offending those of her own root tradition.* She has done this admirably: for example, using 'Beloved' where Julian would write 'Lord', 'spirit of evil' instead of 'the Devil'. The translation has a beauty which lends itself to reading aloud. Another plus is sub-headings within the chapters, so short passages are already to hand, for meditation alone or in a group setting. Sadly these sub-headings are not listed in the contents, which would be useful if looking for a specific topic. The sensitivity to inclusive language, sounding totally natural and unforced, will make Julian loved as a true theologian of the Motherhood of God. Some of Julian's favourite themes are mentioned in the Introduction so that a reader new to Julian is alerted to them. I highly recommend this book and look forward to using it myself over and over again.

Elizabeth Obbard

Advent and Beyond

MAKING ROOM FOR JESUS ISBN 978-1-78259-143-6 £4.99

TRANSFORMED BY THE PRESENCE OF JESUS

ISBN 978-1-78259-237-2 £4.99

TRANSFORMED BY LOVE ISBN 978-1-78259-262-4 £6.99

Liz Babbs

CWR 2014

I was drawn to these books because I have read the author's *Into God's Presence* - her book on Christian meditation.

Making Room for Jesus is an Advent study guide for small groups or personal use with six studies in all. Liz invites us to move beyond the traditional Bible study methods, inviting us to adopt a meditative approach to familiar stories e.g the coming of the magi. Scripture passages are printed in full.

Transformed by the Presence of Jesus was first published as a Lent guide on similar lines and has now been reprinted to be appropriate at any time.

Both books include a section of leader's notes. These two books would be a really valuable introduction to imaginative meditation (not unlike Ignatian contemplation) on a scripture passage, for those who are more used to studying and discussing the Bible. They offer the chance to go deeper. While not appropriate for use as lead-ins to silence at a Julian meeting, many 'Julian's' would find them helpful for personal reflection.

Downloadable meditative resources are available

Transformed by Love is different: a collection of 'prayers and reflections for all seasons', divided into 12 different themes, all around love. Many are poems. This would be a resource for 'lead-ins' to silence for Julian Meetings. It would perhaps also be a welcome Christmas gift.

For more details and examples see JM Bulletin board

Gail Ballinger

SILENT COMPASSION: finding God in contemplation

Richard Rohr

Franciscan Media 2014 \$12.99/ £7.43

ISBN: 978-1-61636-757-2

A 2013 Festival of Faith in America was attended by people from many of the world faiths. In this book are extracts from two addresses given by Richard Rohr, a Catholic priest; plus his short comment before an address by the Dalai Lama, and extracts from two magazine interviews.

His central theme is the importance, in our spiritual journey, of silence and the “unitive consciousness”. Also the problems that can arise from over-reliance on words and from “dualistic consciousness” - our tendency to distinguish “everything from other things... [we] would do well to first see the similarities and deep identities of things before [we] distinguish this from that...” The use of words is inevitable, but cultivating true, inner silence is important because silence is “somehow at the very foundation of reality” and without it “we do not really experience our experiences.” Stressing the metaphorical nature of all religious language, he splendidly remarks that “God is more a verb than a noun”, and that “God is another word for the heart of everything and for everything precisely in its connectedness.”

There are many such striking insights in this book. This is not a ‘how to be silent’ manual, of which there are many, but one man’s vision of the possibilities and, indeed, the necessity of finding true silence, not as a way of running away from the busyness of the world but of engagement with it at its real depth. He clearly embraces the “perennial philosophy”, the understanding that there are universal themes which occur in all the world faith traditions, and that truth is not confined exclusively to any one tradition alone.

A short book, but stimulating and, for a word-addict as I am, challenging. I commend it.

Richard Skinner

THE SINGING BOWL: collected poems

Malcolm Guite

Canterbury Press 2013 £10.99

ISBN 978 1848255418

The title poem of this beautiful collection invites the reader:

'Begin the song exactly where you are.

Remain within the world of which you're made.'

Then the reader is led gently to the song within:

*'Become an open singing bowl, whose chime
is richness out of emptiness*

and timelessness resounding into time.

And when the heart is full of quietness

Begin the song exactly where you are.'

Malcolm Guite, poet and priest, says that in the poems he was 'trying both to celebrate the world of which I'm made, finding 'Heaven in Ordinary', and to discern and echo a little of its music.' The poems are divided into six sections: Local Habitations, The Four Loves, Word and World, Intimations of Mortality, Clouds of Witness, Three Sequences. 'The Four Loves' takes its title from C.S. Lewis's book on our fourfold loving, from friendship to familiar affection, *Eros* to *Agape*. I found myself reading, pausing, reflecting, re-reading.... I doubt I will ever tire of these poems and cannot do justice to them all in this review. So I will just comment on one, in the 'Clouds of Witness' section: a poem about Julian of Norwich. Guite invites the anchoress to draw him closer to God:

'Show me, O anchoress your anchorhold

Deep in the love of God, and hold me fast'

It's impossible to summarise, so here are the last six lines:

'Show me again the wonder of at-one-ment

Of Christ-in-us distinct and yet the same,

Who makes and loves and keeps us in each moment

And looks on us with pity not with blame.

Keep telling me, for all my faith may waver'

Love is his meaning, only love, forever.'

Audios of Malcolm reading his poetry are available via his website:

www.malcolmguite.com His Twitter account is @malcolmguite

Christine Quinn-Jones

