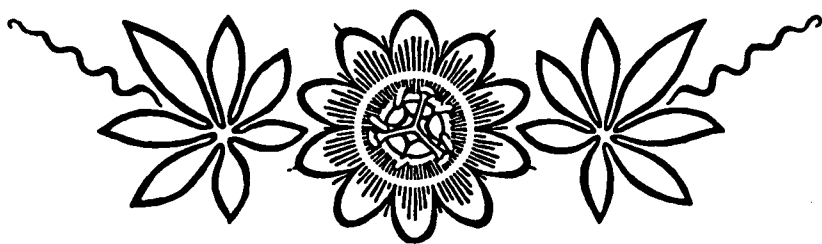


THE
JULIAN
MEETINGS
Magazine



August 2001

£1.50



"Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." (Mark 6:31)

The Quiet Garden Trust offers a ministry of hospitality and prayer through a network of local venues. Details are available on their website (www.quietgarden.co.uk) or by post from Stoke Park Farm, Park Road, Stoke Poges, Bucks SL2 4PG.

All shall be well...

by *Shirley Aranzulla*

All was not well outside. My walls,
warmed by both prayer and vision, held me safe
while war raged, hunger tore the soul and plague
served the Grim Reaper with his scythe. They came
to talk, the poor and needy, to ask why.
What could I tell them, anchoress in my cell?
That God Himself, too, suffered? I recalled
the visions of a tortured body, nails
that tore the flesh and thorns that pierced, a love
that gave immensely of itself, unasked,
and through that sacrifice indeed all would be well...

How could I share the joy that filled me? Give
to them the chance to gaze upon that Face
before whose radiance all earth's troubles dimmed?
The world grew small and precious in my prayers—
small against God's immensity, precious though
unto his heart, so precious that the blood
He spilled fell like rubies in my eyes.

Lord, in my silence may my prayer reach out
To tell a world in pain, all shall be well...

*Written at a Quiet Day on Julian of Norwich at
The Quiet Garden Trust, Stoke Poges.*

21st century JM

by *Hilary Wakeman*

WHERE IS JM GOING? And how can we ensure that, rather than being directed by our own very human inclinations, we are allowing the Spirit of God to lead us? The Julian Meetings have been in existence for 28 years and it seemed to the Advisory Group that it was time for an evaluation of some sort.

Having a minimum of organisation is part of the Julian Meetings ethos. There are no paid staff, no office premises, and no boards or committees other than the minimalist Advisory Group. Each of its ten members has a task, and the group meets two and a half times a year to share information and make any necessary decisions. The "half a meeting" is a couple of hours at the end of the annual JM-UK retreat, and the other two consist of a day-meeting in London, and a residential weekend in May at a retreat house. Although that May weekend is normally part-retreat and part-business, this year's was different.

We met at The Grail, in Pinner on the outskirts of London. To lead us in our thinking we had Sister Madeleine Prendergast, SUSC. Madeleine is wise and holy and

worldly, affectionate and sharp-witted. We could not have had a better facilitator.

First she had us considering the strengths of JM. We listed many factors. Then separately, but unanimously, we came up with two that seemed important above all the others:

- JM is about a yearning for God;
- it is ecumenical.

After that, we looked at what might "break in, steal and destroy" the strengths we had identified. Among other factors we recognised that:

- our Anglican majority could be a problem if it led us to unthinking assumptions;
- there may be a danger of self-aggrandisement, as in the matter of publicity for JM: is it for the Kingdom—or for ourselves?
- the very freedom of JM, which is so valued, could lead to some local Meetings deviating from the JM ethos by being too structured, or built on individual power-trips, or not based on silence, or having no intention of being ecumenical (the same could be true of JM in other countries).

And finally, in the light of these strengths and threats, we looked to what needs attention in the future. The most important points seemed to be:

- inclusivity: we need to ensure a good age spread in the Advisory Group and to encourage the same in individual Meetings;
- promotion: we reminded ourselves that from the very start, the teaching and enabling of contemplative prayer has been the purpose of JM, and that we should be encouraging more teaching;
- organisation: we felt that Advisory Group members could be more aware that a growing organisation means a growing burden of work, that should be recognised and then shared evenly; also, that links between the Advisory Group and individual Meetings could be improved; and that we should recognise that "belonging" to JM was important to people.

Again and again the phrase "JM ethos" came up, and Sr Madeleine had us look at that in some depth by explaining it to her. Doing that, we realised that what is taken for granted by some long-term "Julians" is unknown history to newer ones. And that it might be useful to say something about it now, for the benefit of 21st century JM.

As someone who has been involved with JM from the very beginning, I think I can say that the ethos of JM is largely covered by the word "simplicity." It involves minimal structures, no rules or regulations, no "gurus", no distinction between clergy and lay people, and no hierarchy in the local Meetings or in the Advisory Group. We have no "rule of life" or doctrinal requirements, and we advocate no specific meditation techniques or mantras. We ask only that Meetings be based on contemplative prayer, in the Christian tradition, and be at least potentially ecumenical.

Some examples of this ethos:

- After a few years as numbers and correspondence grew, we experimented with paying an honorarium to the convenor. But somehow we felt it spoiled participants' relationship with the convenor and the practice was dropped. Instead, the work was shared out among the members of the Advisory Group, which then grew with the work.
- It was once suggested that we register as a charity, to enable us to accept a donation from another charity. When we discovered this would require us to draw up a Constitution, and have an AGM and an Annual Report, we decided against it.

(Our accounts have, of course, always been available to anyone who wishes to see them.)

- Some years ago when a well-known religious order was considering disposing of one of its houses, the Advisory Group was invited to say what its response would be if the house was offered to JM. Briefly we agonised over it,

then concluded that owning property would tie us down and would therefore be a wrong move.

It was good that we did this evaluation at this time. Thanks to Sr Madeleine's skilful guidance we came away from our exploration with some confidence that JM continues to fulfil a need—and is still open to being guided by God.

The Advisory Group at The Grail in May 2001.

Front row (left to right): Gail Ballinger, Brenda Smith, Deidre Morris.

Middle row: Ann Richards, Yvonne Walker, Hilary Wakeman, Fiona Wallace

Back row: Graham Johnson, James Toon, Michael Tiley.



Astonished and amazed

by *Joyce Rupp*

Like tulips long lying hidden
suddenly springing forth
making beauty out of sunlight

Like soil caught and turned,
warm, moist, and ready for seed,
opening its heart for growing

Like spring speaking to the day
about the goodness of the earth,
patterning green on every plain

Like trickles of raindrops
smoothing earth's rough edges,
healing hardened hillsides

Like all these quiet miracles
so is the coming of Spirit,
telling of the surge of life

Urging me to gaze again
upon my very common days,
to look within and be amazed.

(See Acts 2:7)

Taken from "Out of the Ordinary" © 2000 by Joyce Rupp. Used by permission of Ave Maria Press. All rights reserved.

"Out of the Ordinary" is reviewed on page 18 of the magazine.

A blessing

by *Anne Davies*


When you are afraid
I wish you the peace of God
to cover and enclose you
and whisper comfort and rest.

When you are alone
I wish you the love of God
to be your guide and friend
and show you the tenderness of his compassion.

When you are in pain
I wish you his strength
to come and enfold you tightly
and chase the shadows.

to know the depth
and length
and height
of the Father's love
that will never end
and never diminish

Go forward
and discover the richness
and wholeness
of the holy fire
which shadows you
protects you
from before your beginning
till the journey's end.




SALVATOR MUNDI
by Andrea Previtali
(active 1502; died 1528)

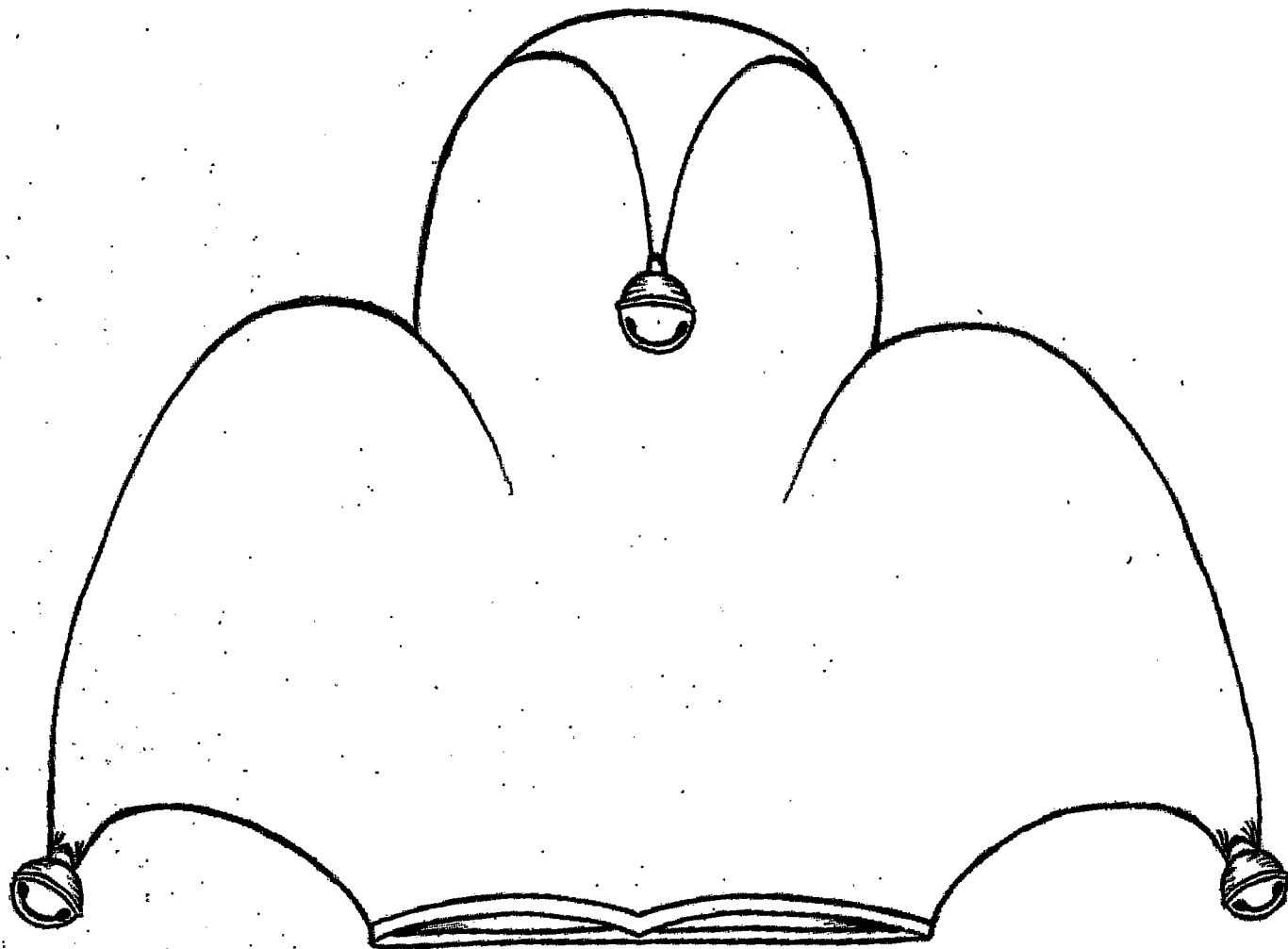
Intercessions at the Retreat

FOR THE LAST FEW YEARS, Gail has included in her summer mailing to all the UK Julian Meetings a drawing of the symbol for that year's JM Retreat. Each meeting is invited, if they wish, to write a prayer intention on the symbol. They add their name, cut out the symbol and send it in.

At the retreat we display all the symbols we have received—there were over 130 leaves last year. All the retreatants can read them. The prayer intentions are included in our time of intercession on the retreat, and made part of the offering in our final worship. This enables many Julian Meetings to feel, and to be, part of the

retreat, even though they cannot be physically present. Some arrange to have a time of prayer at some point over the weekend to coincide with the prayer being offered on retreat.

This year we are using the symbol of a clown's hat. It is printed in the magazine to allow anyone who subscribes, or any Julian Meetings outside the UK, to be part of the retreat as well. If you would like to join us in this way, please photocopy the symbol, write on it your prayer intention, and your name or location as appropriate, cut it out and send it (by 12 September) to 



Reflections on reflecting

by *Yvonne Walker*

I READ WITH DELIGHT the article in the April magazine about children spending time sitting round a candle reflecting, focusing and sharing something important from their day. I had just finished six weeks accompanying some very busy people on their journey through Lent, and "praying the day" is something which many of them have found helpful (see the end of this article for the process).

Unlike the children, these people with busy, responsible jobs do not have the luxury of setting aside time to sit with a candle, but often use their morning commuter train/tube journey for a few moments' pause to look back over the previous day with God. The homeward-bound journey at the end of the day was not such a good time—reflecting soon turned to snoozing!

Praying the day can be done at any time, looking back at whatever period of time suits you best. The regular recalling of God's presence in all our experience brings an awareness, an openness and a time to enjoy simply being with God. It may come quite naturally when things are going well, but on the dark days when everything goes wrong, just a smile or a word of comfort reminds us that God is just as much there in the pain and frustration with us. It also shows us how important

are the little gestures, a smile, a word of appreciation, a shared cup of coffee snatched in a busy schedule. These mean a lot when reflecting on a stressful, hectic day and remind us that in relationships with others, the little ordinary things can demonstrate how much God loves and cares for us.

At the end of the previous article certain comments raise important questions for me personally. "Such emphasis on the experiential approach implies that at root religion is about human experience...it ignores the vital issue of the truth claims inherent in different beliefs." For me the root of religion must be about human experience, what else is the incarnation about? It does not ignore the "truth claims", it lives them. The God in whom we live and move and have our being invites us to be—to be accepted as the unique creature who is being created, gifted, loved and enfolded by God. Reflecting back and praying the day enables us to be and to live the reality which is the creed. This and our religious beliefs are not something separate from the deepest experience of being loved and owned by God. The creed is to be lived and experienced in daily life, not just something to be repeated each week in church, and praying the day is one way to do it.

PRAYING THE DAY—

LOOKING BACK AND HANDING OVER

“God examine me and know my heart,
probe me and know my thoughts.”

(Psalm 139)

- Take time to relax...ask for the help of the Holy Spirit so that everything in you may be open to God.
- Ask God to show you how he has been involved in every aspect of your life today.
- Imagine yourself safe and held at rest, “like a child in its mother’s arms”, looking back over the day with God, as if you are watching a video replay of the day.

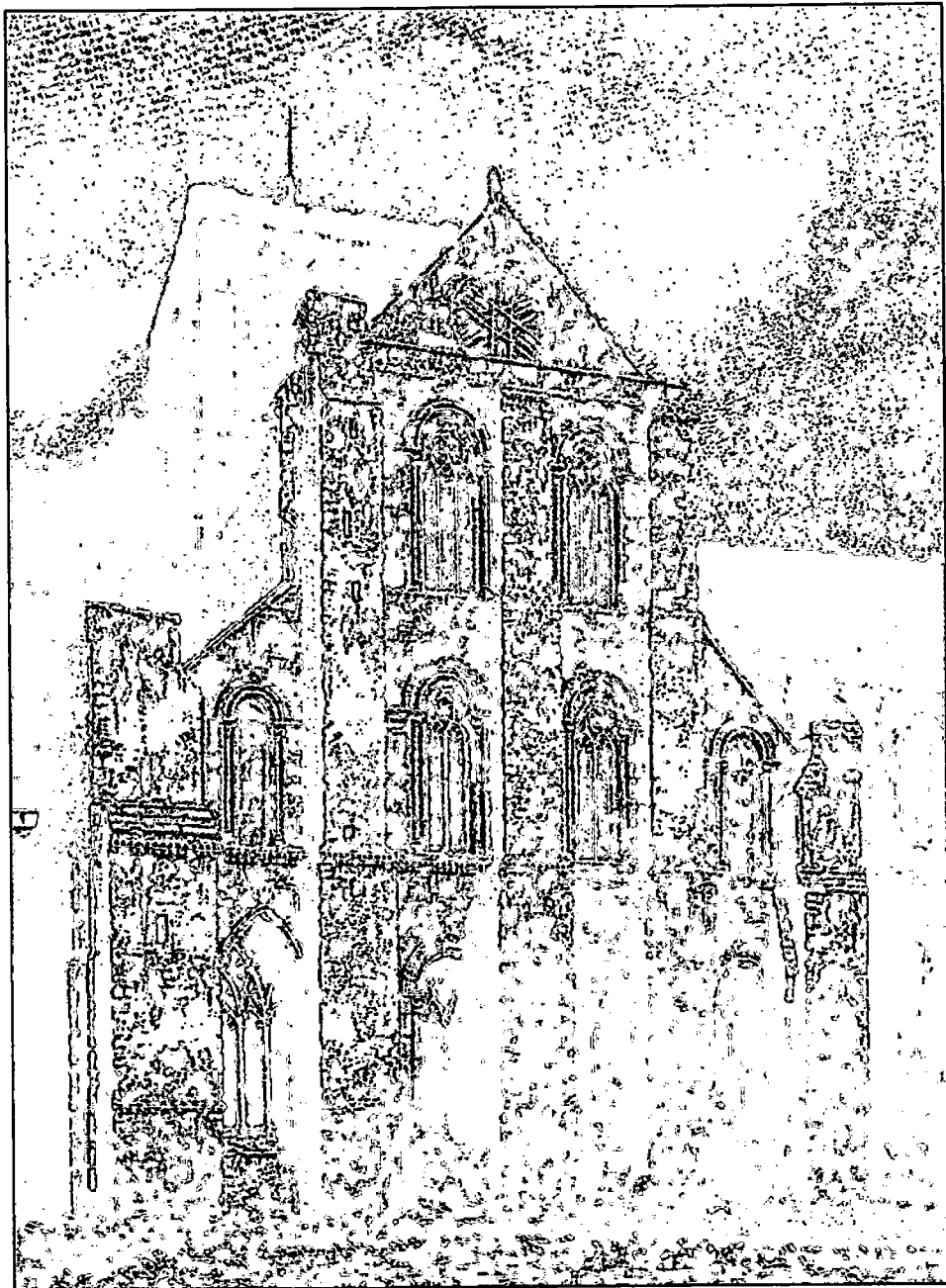
- Allow the moments and events which you enjoyed to emerge, savour them. Tell God how you feel about them.
 - Let the day “play back” again and observe the things you regret. Express your feelings about them to God.
 - Now look forward to tomorrow and be aware of the things that worry you. Ask God for what you need.
 - Entrust yourself, all that is you, into the tender and loving care of God as you go to sleep.
- “God provides for his beloved even as they sleep.” (Psalm 127:2)

A prayer

by Dorothy Kerin

May the eyes of Jesus behold you
may the lips of Jesus speak to you
may the ears of Jesus be open to your prayers
may the hands of Jesus bless you
may the feet of Jesus guide you
may the heart of Jesus pour forth
his great love upon you and
guide and keep you in
peace and safety
Now and evermore.

Quoted by permission of the Kerin Trust. Dorothy Kerin (1889-1963) was the founder of the Burrowswood Christian Healing Centre in Groombridge, Kent (www.burrowswood.org.uk)



A view of the North Transept of Winchester Cathedral. Dated 1817.

A Celebration of the Love of God on Julian's Day

by Sarah Salisbury

IN MAY LAST YEAR, our Julian Meeting (North Baddesley near Southampton in Hampshire) attended the annual Julian Celebration at Winchester Cathedral. About 50 to 60 people attend and it is held up in the Quire in front of the high altar. This is an opportunity for members of Julian Meetings in the Winchester Diocese to meet together to worship, share silence and get to know each other.

Our area co-ordinator, Ann Lewin, arranges the date and then each year the worship is led by a different Julian Meeting. That evening our JM agreed to lead the service in 2001.

A year seemed like a long way off, but it was very soon upon us and so, on a beautiful May evening, several car loads of us parked in The Close, in Winchester. We were feeling rather nervous and apprehensive but also very much looking forward to this special opportunity to lead worship at our beautiful Cathedral.

Our theme for the evening was based on a reading from Psalm 40:

I waited, I waited for God, then he stooped to me and heard my cry for help. He pulled me up from the seething chasm, from the mud of the mire. He set

my feet on rock, and made my footsteps firm. He put a fresh song in my mouth, praise for our God. Many will be awe-struck at the sight, and will put their trust in Him.

Our vision was for a large rock to be placed in the centre of our circle of chairs up in the Quire of the Cathedral. Fortunately the husband of one of our members was able to make us one from papier maché! The rock was set in a mire (black cloth), with a candle with three wicks on the top and covered in small rocks. Members of the congregation were invited to collect a small rock to hold during the silence to focus their prayers on the strength and confidence that comes from God.

We chose hymns and wrote prayers on this theme and also had a reading from Julian's own writings, from "The Revelation of Julian of Norwich", Chapter 68.

Just as in his first word that our good Lord revealed, referring to His blessed Passion: "With this is the Devil overcome"—Just so He said in this last word with completely true faithfulness, referring to us all: "Thou shalt not be overcome." And all this teaching and this true comfort is universal for all my fellow Christians as we said before—and this is

God's will. These words: "Thou shalt not be overcome", were said very sharply and very powerfully, for certainty and comfort against all tribulations that can come. He said not: "Thou shalt not be tempted; thou shalt not be troubled; thou shalt not be distressed", but He said, "Thou shalt not be overcome." God wills that we take heed to these words, and that we be very strong in certain trust, in well and in woe, for as He loves and delights in us, so He wills that we love Him and delight in Him and strongly trust in Him; and all shall be well.

The service went well and everyone seemed to enjoy it and received a feeling of God's strength and peace. We shared silence in the stillness of that beautiful building, bathed in

sunlight from the west window, surrounded by stones which had absorbed the prayers of Christians over centuries.

I hope that this article will encourage other groups to consider presenting such an event. We designed the service ourselves, starting with a blank piece of paper and some guidance from Ann Lewin. For all of us it was a first. Twelve of us took part in leading the service itself—it was very much a team effort which did share out the nerves!

The service and the preparations beforehand were very special to our group. To lead a service in our Cathedral was a great privilege and we have some lovely memories.



A detail from the Izaak Walton memorial window in the Chapel of St John the Evangelist and the Fishermen Apostles in Winchester Cathedral. Walton was closely associated with Winchester towards the end of his life. He died in 1683 at the age of 90 and is buried in this chapel.

The window was installed and dedicated in 1914. In the background are the River Itchen and St Catherine's Hill just outside Winchester. Walton, who was a devout Anglican as well as an angler, believed that sitting by the riverside was the quietest and fittest place for contemplation.

Celtic knot

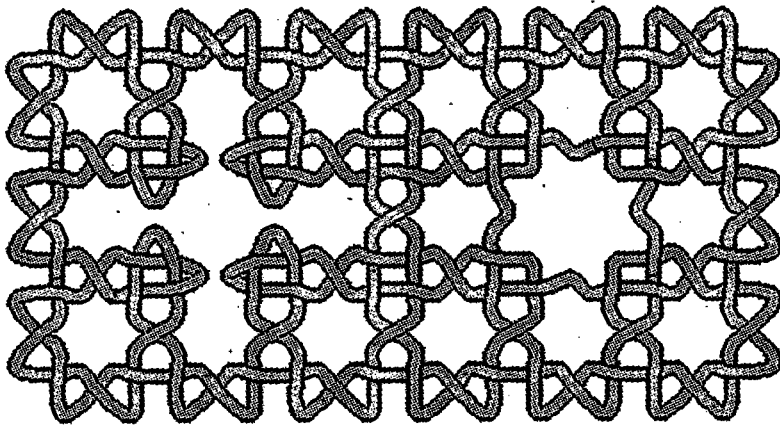
by *Ann Lewin*

The tangled roots from which I spring
nourish my depths and
send out shoots for growth;
separate yet entwined
friends, relatives, strangers
and people I don't like.
We grow together in
intricate relationship.

Weaver God, pick up the
threads of my experience,
craft the pattern, and
in your time
reveal significance.

*From "Flashes of Brightness" © 2001 Foundry Press.
Used by permission of Methodist Publishing House.*

"Flashes of Brightness" is reviewed on page 21 of the magazine.



JM-France

by George Dobinson

Having had experience of a Julian Meeting in Sheffield, I was keen to start a JM for members of St Bartholomew's British-American Church in Dinard (Brittany) when I settled in France with my wife over two years ago. The first meeting was held in January 2000 and we meet every second Wednesday of the month. Attendance averages twelve members amongst whom there are not only Anglicans but also two Roman Catholics, a Sufi group attendee, a Quaker (myself) and, joining in June, a French Zen monk. Many of the chaplains of the church, who come from the UK, and their wives attend, and a few of them have decided to

start Julian Meetings in their parishes. Some chaplains come from the USA, Australia and New Zealand. Comments have been made along the lines of "Our services are so wordy!" Clergy very much appreciate the opportunity of a time for contemplative prayer.

Meetings are always followed by a bring-and-share lunch and everyone benefits from a strengthening of spiritual and social bonds, most of all members who are able to attend regularly.

The Lay Reader at the American Cathedral in Paris hopes to establish a Julian Meeting in the autumn.

JM-Australia

by Meryl Webb

WE HAVE JUST HAD OUR 11th Annual Retreat in Victoria, and also our first ever retreat in New South Wales. We had a Baptist minister, Jill Manton lead us here. She is also director of an ecumenical organisation in Melbourne called

Wellspring. It was very good—she gave us reflections on the Lord's Prayer.

New South Wales had Roger Sharr for their first retreat. He has just moved back to the east from Wollaston. All apparently went well.

Beyond words

James Toon reviews "Beyond Words: An introduction, guide and resource for a contemplative way of prayer" by Patrick Woodhouse, Canon Precentor of Wells Cathedral.

CONTEMPLATION is one of many ways of praying. Where is it located in the spiritual life? Is it something relatively advanced, for those who have passed through other more active forms of prayer? Or can anyone do it at any time?

The traditional view is that we progress towards contemplation. Julian of Norwich believed that contemplation was the highest form of prayer. St John of the Cross set out three tests for determining whether people were ready to begin contemplative prayer, the first being that they no longer derived any satisfaction from the practice of imaginative meditation. St Teresa of Avila located the beginnings of contemplation in the fourth of the seven mansions of the Interior Castle.

The emergence of the Julian Meetings and similar organisations over the last 30 years reflects a different view. Though not denying the basic movement from word into silence, and from activity to rest, the emphasis is on contemplation in itself, as a simple, natural form of prayer for which no previous experience is needed. The JM

introductory leaflet describes it simply as "waiting on God in the silence."

Beyond Words by Patrick Woodhouse falls into the second category. This comes out clearly in an interesting first chapter ("The Challenge of Praying"), where he describes the difficulty of praying at all in our increasingly secular world. Against this he points to a religious dimension to life which persists, and which is marked by occasional moments of transcendence. He quotes some vivid descriptions of mystical experiences which had an enduring effect on those (Thomas Merton and others) who experienced them. In his view this kind of experience, or a glimpse of it, tends to unify our vision of existence and leads naturally towards a more receptive kind of prayer.

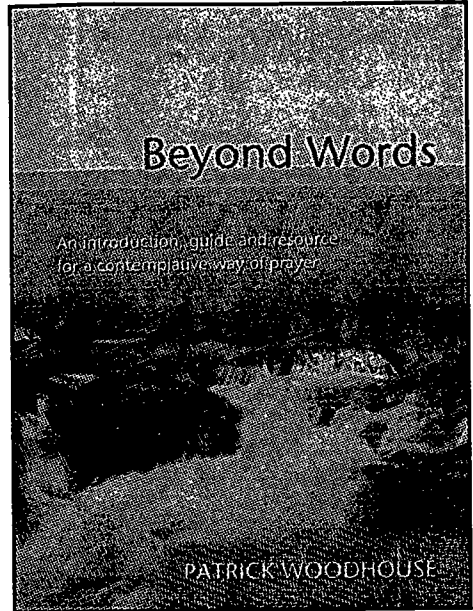
Chapter 2 ("What do I need? Four Essentials") sets out the preconditions for this kind of prayer: time, space, solitude and silence. This is familiar territory, but he has some interesting things to say about the change in our attitude to prayer over time—the discovery that prayer is essential—as we persevere through the difficulties.

There is encouragement here for both those new to contemplation and the more experienced.

Chapter 3 ("What do I do? Shaping the Time") considers the practicalities of becoming still in body and mind. Some kind of focus is necessary for this. He suggests the use of either a phrase from the Psalms or just a single word, but this is not prescriptive and he recognises that other approaches may be suitable for some people.

The main section of the book, and this is its really distinctive feature, is a gathering of resources for contemplation for every week of the year. There are two pages for each week and the material can be used on a daily or weekly basis. It comprises:

- **Stilling and Centring:** with a different verse from the Psalms each week for use if needed. He stresses that this is the most important part of the time of prayer.
- **Offering:** a time to re-engage with the outside world and to offer ourselves anew to God in the day ahead.
- **Reflecting:** with a reference to a Gospel reading, mainly from Luke and some from John, and some thoughts on it which are designed to assist the process of contemplative reading. As he recognises, this is a more active mode of engagement and is best done at a different time.



- A commentary on the process of praying in a contemplative way, in which he considers some of the obstacles and some of the ways towards the deeper reality underlying this kind of prayer.
- Quotations on a contemplative prayer from a range of sources down the centuries.

This book is meant not only to be read but to be used. Those who use it over a period of time will find themselves naturally developing a contemplative way of thinking and praying.

"Beyond Words" by Patrick Woodhouse (2001) is published by Kevin Mayhew at £8.99.

Book reviews

Out of the Ordinary: Prayers, Poems and Reflections for every Season by Joyce Rupp

Ave Maria Press, 2000 £9.95

This is a collection of Joyce Rupp's prayers, poems, reflections and guided meditations not previously published from the author's work. The anthology is particularly meant to be used in the context of worship and small group gatherings, and the material can be duplicated with just the copyright acknowledgement. Subjects cover the liturgical and natural seasons, ministry and service as well as family occasions and difficult times. There are meditations for personal use as well as lead-ins to silence. A companion recording of Taizé-like chants to accompany the book is also available.

Yvonne Walker

Growing into God

by Edwina Gateley

Sheed & Ward, 2001 £12.50

Edwina Gateley's poems will be familiar to members of the Julian Meetings who have seen one of them reproduced with kind permission on our bookmark. The collection "Growing into God" reflects the shift in relationship when the author recognised that the God "out there" had become the God within, with the accompanying call to grow into God. The poems are grouped into sections headed Conception, Gestation, Birthing, Dying, Home, and are borne out of the experience of silent prayer. They are for individual pondering and some would be suitable for lead-ins.

Yvonne Walker

Exploring Spiritual Direction

by Alan Jones

Cowley Publications, 2nd edition 1999 £9.99

Alan Jones explores spiritual direction in the context of spiritual friendship and our need for companionship on our spiritual journey, with others and with Christ. He draws out the importance of this ministry which is rooted and grounded in the love of God: a vocation open to both lay and ordained.

This book was well received when first published in 1982 and it is good to have this new edition available. It has been updated but the text is basically the same. I would recommend it for widening knowledge to any already in this ministry.

Brenda Smith

The Forest Stations

by **William Fairbank**

Frontier Publishing, 1998 £14.95

The Forest Stations were on display in Gloucester Cathedral earlier this year. Perhaps you have been lucky enough to see them there or elsewhere as they have moved to different venues over the last few years. They are a series of fifteen wood sculptures by William Fairbank and are modern Stations of the Cross. This book explains briefly their origin; has excellent photos of the stations, and some close ups; has the text that accompanies each Station in the series; and has some technical data on methods, woods used etc. It is an excellent reminder of the reality, if you have seen it.

Why would you buy the book if you had not seen the Stations? It would give you a wonderful idea of what they are like—the photos are very good. But if you find a visual focus is helpful for meditation, as many do, then this book has much to offer. There is so much to see in each Station. Fairbanks often shows only just enough of a scene: the essential elements. Or the context is widened to a crowd of figures which draws us into seeing how we, today, are inescapably part of this event. The text will help some, but it is the sculptures themselves that speak, even from photos. The use of wood—139 different woods—is stunning. The colour, texture and grain are all used to express the sculptor's vision so vividly.

In the introduction he says "I invite you to view these sculptures with as open a mind as possible. I was drawn to this subject because the Stations of the Cross have always been about personal devotion and this means that each of our own views is unique, relevant and valid." His view certainly is.

Deidre Morris

The Eyes of the Heart: a Spirituality of the Senses

by **Dennis Lennon**

Triangle SPCK, 2000 £5.99

We live in a society that is overwhelmed with information, so much so that we do not take much of it in. So much communication and not much communion. In this small book Dennis Lennon explores the ways in which we can use our senses, especially our eyes and our ears, not only to find God in the world around us but to find God in those we meet. We should be "entering the present moment with eyes wide open" because we are called by God into it. This book helps us to explore ways of doing that. There is an echo of Celtic spirituality in it which affirms a Christocentric pantheism [the idea that everything exists in God, against pantheism which holds that everything is divine - Ed]. If you are familiar with Dennis Lennon's "Encounter with God in Job" (Scripture Union 1995) you will find this a good companion.

Bill Elliot

Praying from the Margins: Gospel Reflections of a Gay Man

by **Glen O'Brien**

Columba Press, 2001 £5.99

The time will come when the Christian Church will be appalled at the way it has treated homosexuals. In the meantime, here is a book which will encourage gay men and lesbians to claim the confidence of being sons and daughters of God. And—equally valuable—it will give others an insight into the joys and difficulties of being both Christian and gay.

The author takes some favourite gospel passages and relates them to the spiritual experiences of gay men. Sometimes he writes in his own voice; other times he uses the stories of people he has known. Many are heart-breaking, as in the account of a bereavement that cannot be made public. Others show the damage that the necessary hiddenness can do: the self-esteem that is so low that it becomes self-loathing and leads to faith becoming frozen.

Sadly, the author has felt it necessary to use a pseudonym. Please God such necessities will soon be a thing of the past.

Hilary Wakeman

Praying the Hours

by **Suzanne Guthrie**

Cowley Publications, 2000 £7.95

This American book, which initially put me off a little, proved to have a lot to offer in practical spirituality and prayer. The author is a wife, mother, priest, and teacher, so knows the demands modern living places on our prayer time. She deals with ways to fit prayer into a busy day, and the complexities of modern living, using the monastic hours as a pattern. The first chapters deal with "praying in place" when after moving house, she had to learn to pray all over again in new surroundings, as she absorbed the sounds, scent and sense of her new house, garden and district. The later chapters deal with "praying in time." The day's activities she (often humorously) describes—sleeping, waking, reading, worship, working, coping, magnifying, returning—root us in the reality of living while she reveals how her prayers are woven through all the circumstances of the day. The book records experience, and reflections on it, rather than advice. The short chapters encouraged me to read the book in small chunks over many days. I found it helpful—and fun to read—when I had only just moved house and was trying to re-establish a routine of prayer in new surroundings. But you can enjoy it and learn from it without moving house!

Deidre Morris

Flashes of Brightness

by Ann Lewin

Foundery Press 2001 £3.75

A new collection of poems and reflections in which Ann Lewin prayerfully ponders those flashes of insight which accompany our journey and may be triggered by events in our own lives, in the world around us or by passages of scripture. As in her previous collection "Candles and Kingfishers", Ann covers a broad canvas from the story of Mary and Martha, to Daybreak and Autumn and from Asylum Seekers to her own experience of cancer. This is a rich treasury to be prayed over slowly, making our own connections to the themes covered. Some lead-ins for silent prayer groups to share together. An attractive cover and design make this slim volume an ideal gift.

Yvonne Walker

Saint Clare of Assisi: her Legend and Selected Writings

translated by Christopher Stace

Triangle, 2001 £7.99

For those familiar with the Little Flowers of St Francis this will be familiar territory: a good translation of the bull canonizing St Clare and her rule alongside four letters she wrote. If you are unfamiliar with medieval descriptions of the saints, then sorting the praise and the myths from the facts might be worth doing. What comes through is a strong compassionate woman, determined to follow Christ and his demand of poverty and observe the principles of her friend St Francis: someone who despite attempts by her family, friends and Papal interference was the first woman to write a rule of life and establish an enclosed order.

Francis Ballinger

The Story of Christian Spirituality

general editor Gordon Mursell

Lion Publishing, 2001 £25.00

An illustrated history of Christian spirituality subtitled "Two thousand years, from East to West" presents a fascinating picture of humanity's desire for the divine starting with the Bible and the life of Christ. Contributions cover the saints and mystics, Eastern and Russian traditions, and the Protestant tradition in Europe and America. This is a serious reference book which is made easily accessible—the illustrations and the imaginative use of colour and lay-out positively invite the reader to explore further. The book ends by looking ahead to the new millennium. Sadly no mention of the retreat movement, just a passing mention of the word "retreat" under Ignatius, Iona etc. But still a rich tapestry of information, well-presented and good value for money—not to be missed.

Yvonne Walker

24-7 prayer

by *James Toon*

SPRING HARVEST is a large Christian event that takes place every year over the Easter holidays in the British seaside resorts of Minehead and Skegness. The programme includes worship, ministry, teaching, bible study, lots of seminars, entertainment and much else besides.

This year I went to Spring Harvest for the first time. Of the many activities on offer, one stood out: a room set apart for prayer, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. I turned up at this shortly after midnight, one night towards the end of the week, to find a large, dimly-lit room, and about 30 (mainly young) people, some alone and some in small groups. Some were praying; others were gently singing; a few were painting or drawing, decorating the walls with art or poems in a creative expression of worship.

I found a place to sit down. This was a long way from the silence of the monthly Julian Meeting that I attend. But that didn't matter—the room was made holy by the continuous prayer of the preceding days. By the time I left, the sense of peace and the presence of God that filled the room had filled me too. I went back several times over the next couple of days and it was exactly the same.

Now if you take a large number of Christians and place them on the same site for a week, you might expect some of them at least to get together and pray, even after midnight. But this was no isolated event. In the past two years, about 400 prayer rooms have operated, in some 30 countries across the world ranging from Australia to Zimbabwe, and in over 100 locations in the UK alone. There are striking reports of answered prayer. Not only that, the experience of praying at length is changing people. It is becoming an addiction and a way of life.

How has all this happened?

The idea of constant prayer is not new. The Bible enjoins it and the early Church practised it. There have been times of prolonged prayer down the centuries—most notably when a group of Moravians started to pray in a village near Dresden in August 1727 and maintained their prayer meeting for over a hundred years. In and beyond that period, over 3000 evangelists went out from the village to take the gospel to many countries, their most famous convert being John Wesley.

24-7 prayer began by accident in September 1999 when a group of young people from Revelation church in Chichester, in southern England,

decided to pray continuously for a month in one-hour shifts. At the end they found they couldn't stop, so they kept going until Christmas. And the idea has spread rapidly across the UK and elsewhere since then. It seems easier to mobilise people to pray in this way, usually for a single concentrated week, sometimes longer, than through the more traditional weekly or monthly church prayer meeting. Although the focus is on youth, it is open to Christians of all ages.

24-7 prayer would not have grown so quickly without the information and communication possibilities offered by the internet. Their website, www.24-7prayer.com, includes articles on the principles of 24-7 prayer; a map and a diary showing where and when prayer rooms are operating; resources for starting and maintaining a prayer room; a gallery of art created inside prayer rooms; a "wailing wall" to post prayer requests; and a series of on-line forums for debate and discussion, news about current prayer rooms, reports of answered prayer and so on.

Aside from the continual growth of prayer rooms, two new initiatives are emerging. The first is the establishment of 24-7 prayer teams to work alongside churches in locations outside the UK. These teams are not confined to prayer rooms but are engaging in a range of activities including prayer for local needs, mission, and practical help. Three teams are going out this summer, to Delhi, Ibiza and St Petersburg.

The second is the establishment of permanent prayer rooms—operating not just for a week or a month but for a whole year. Within the movement these are known as boiler rooms! This is obviously a significant undertaking. For it to happen anywhere it needs the support of several local churches, a suitable site, and, most importantly, enough people willing to sign up for prayer slots on a regular basis. At present, negotiations are underway for the establishment of boiler rooms in two cities in England. Such places could meet many needs—not least providing a prayer venue for Christians working in major cities who cannot find a church near them that is open during the week and reserved for prayer, not used for other activities.

What has 24-7 prayer got to do with the Julian Meetings? On the face of it, not a great deal. The type of prayer is intercessory rather than contemplative; the average age of participants is much younger; the language used is different—passionate, modern, and radical, rather than gentle, quiet and mystical. But they do have this in common: both are fuelled by a longing for God and a desire to spend time—lots of time—in his company. Both recognise that prayer is the most important activity that can be undertaken and that it should be central to our way of life.

Something extraordinary has been started; and who knows where it will end?

The Julian Meetings

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

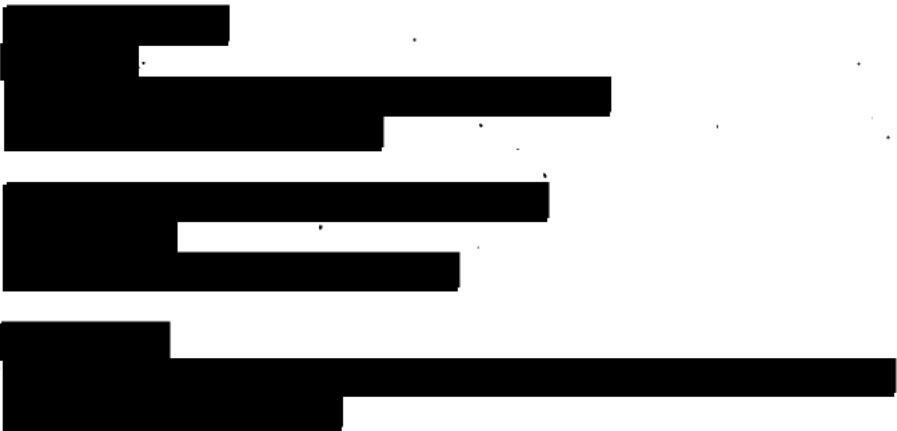
Encourage people to practise contemplative prayer in their daily lives, and explore ways of doing this which are appropriate for them

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 2001**. Please type, or write clearly, on one side of the paper. Contributions by e-mail are welcome.



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