

THE
JULIAN
MEETINGS

A decorative floral ornament consisting of three stylized flowers. The central flower is larger and features a circular emblem in its center, which appears to contain a religious symbol. The two side flowers are smaller and simpler in design. The entire ornament is flanked by wavy lines.

Magazine
December
2008

For while gentle silence enveloped all
things,
and night in its swift course was now
half gone,
your all-powerful word leapt from
heaven, from the royal throne,
into the midst of the land that was
doomed

Wisdom 18: 14-15

Poetry and Prose on my Spiritual Journey

When Dean Neil Collings spoke to us in Peterborough he used the following poems and prose items to illustrate his experience of contemplative prayer.

Prayer - George Herbert

The Bright Field - R.S. Thomas

Musée des Beaux Arts - W.H. Auden

Adlestrop – Edward Thomas

The Listeners – Walter de la Mare

In a Military Cemetery – Rudyard Kipling

Grove House, Iffley – Elizabeth Jennings

Why God Made Dogs and Cats – anon

Poem – Cecil day Lewis

Prayer from an unknown prisoner in Ravensbruck

Pax – D.H.Lawrence

Love Bade Me Welcome – George Herbert

We had hoped to include his notes about these, but as he spoke 'off the cuff' – a fact which may amaze those of us lucky enough to have listened to him – we cannot do so. Instead we include in full two of them, that might be difficult to find otherwise, plus some of the things that struck different members of his audience:

- Neil commented that so much prayer was too vocal, too wordy, and treated God as if he were mentally deficient. How true!
- He spoke of the tension between words and silence, reminding us that 'each word is a step along the road' – but that words only take you so far.
- Finding the balance between words and silence has been

a continuing part of Neil's spiritual journey.

- A word that bears fruit often emerges from silence, and it is through the medium of poetry that the word is often best expressed.

Neil has a great love of poetry and the spoken word. A poem can convey a complexity of ideas and meaning: it can 'speak' quite specifically to each individual and their particular circumstance.

Listening to a poem read aloud is a different experience from reading it to yourself, just as worship is different from private prayer.

We found this for ourselves, as Neil read out the poems and prose items, some of which he has used as lead-ins for Julian Meetings.

Here are a few comments about some of the items:

- ⇒ George Herbert's *Prayer* is a wonderful collection of fleeting images
- ⇒ W. H. Auden's *Musée des Beaux Arts* shows how ordinary life continues even when amazing events are happening nearby.
- ⇒ *Adlestrop* by Edward Thomas is an evocation of a quiet summer afternoon
- ⇒ R.S.Thomas' *The Bright Field* shows how often, at the time, we fail to recognise what we subsequently realise is the thing of most importance.
- ⇒ *The Listeners* by Walter de la Mare gives food for thought on who was listening to, and for, whom – and what responses were evoked. Julian Meetings are places of listening ...
- ⇒ *Poem* by C. Day Lewis was about taking his daughter for her first day at school and included the lines 'Selfhood begins in the walking away, And love is in the letting go'.

Pax by D.H.Lawrence, and *Why God Made Dogs and Cats* (see below) reflect Neil's love of felines. Having shared his life with them for many years he can empathise with how they can illustrate aspects of our relationship with God.

Why God Made Dogs and Cats

Adam and Eve said, "Lord, when we were in the garden, you walked with us every day. Now we do not see you anymore. We are lonesome here and it is difficult for us to remember how much you love us."

And God said, "No problem! I will create a companion for you that will be with you forever and who will be a reflection of my love for you, so that you will love me even when you cannot see me. Regardless of how selfish or childish or unlovable you may be, this new companion will accept you as you are and will love you as I do, in spite of yourselves."

And God created a new animal to be a companion for Adam and Eve. And it was a good animal. And God was pleased.

And the new animal was pleased to be with Adam and Eve and he wagged his tail.

And Adam said, "Lord, I have already named all the animals in the Kingdom and I cannot think of a name for this new animal."

And God said, "No problem. Because I have created this new animal to be a reflection of my love for you, his name will be a reflection of my own name, and you will call him DOG."

And Dog lived with Adam and Eve and was a companion to them and loved them. And they were comforted. And God was pleased. And Dog was content and wagged his tail.

After a while, it came to pass that an angel came to the Lord and said, "Lord, Adam and Eve have become filled with pride. They strut and preen like peacocks and they believe they are worthy of adoration. Dog has indeed taught them that they

are loved, but perhaps too well."

And God said, "No problem! I will create for them a companion who will be with them forever and who will see them as they are. The companion will remind them of their limitations, so they will know that they are not always worthy of adoration."

And God created CAT to be a companion to Adam and Eve.

And Cat would not obey them. And when Adam and Eve gazed into Cat's eyes, they were reminded that they were not the supreme beings. And Adam and Eve learned humility.

And they were greatly improved. And God was pleased. And Dog wagged his tail.

And Cat didn't give a hoot one way or the other.

On a very different note is the:

PRAYER

written by an unknown prisoner in Ravensbruck

O Lord, remember not only the men and women of good will, but also those of ill will.

But do not remember all the suffering they have inflicted on us; remember the fruits we have bought, thanks to this suffering - our comradeship, our loyalty, our humility, our courage, our generosity, the greatness of heart that has grown out of all of this, and when they come to judgement let all the fruits we have borne be their forgiveness.

I'm sure Neil has inspired many of us to return to poetry with a fresh ear to what we might hear, and an openness to the less obvious content of perhaps very familiar words.

If you explore poetry, do try to find a place to read the poems out loud: you will 'hear' them quite differently from just reading the words or hearing them silently in your head.



The Pool

Only reflections move
In the still pool. Tree's mirrored trunks
stand guard against the light.
I bring too many thoughts, too many
fears to the silent water.
As I bend down, my face is chequered
with leaves' shadow.

If I could shed pretence,
break through these mere images
which come between me and the stillness ...
...striving crushes peace. There is nothing
but to let the trees' dark reflections
weigh on the water and dwindle
minute by slow minute till the sun climbs
above the imperfection and the pool
bursts with light.

Michael Cayley

Living Life to the Full

Jesus said 'I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.' *John 10: 10*

It would be natural to think that leading a 'full' life was a bit different from leading a simple one. The way we normally talk about a full life tends to focus on wealth of experience and wealth of resources, and the appeal to live simply can sound like an appeal to cut yourself off from the challenging but enriching complexity of human existence.

But there are two things that ought to make us think again, two things that are tied up with theology, though it's the kind of theology that opens up perspectives rather than closing them down. Here's the first. When theologians in the past talked, as they regularly did, about the 'simplicity' of God's nature, what they meant was not that God had only a limited range of life or activity. They meant that all sorts of things that we think of separately – justice and mercy, knowledge and love, and so on – are the same in God. When God does what God does, we may see it from different angles (and sometimes get muddled by thinking that these different aspects are in contradiction with each other), but for *him* it's the same thing: he's just being God.

So what if living simply meant, for us as well, living in a way that expressed with complete integrity who and what we really were? Living in a way that wove together knowing and loving and judging and forgiving in one act of self-sharing that was somehow beyond the fragmented and reactive ways we so often live? If Jesus' life and death are supposed to give us a share in God's own life, as St John's Gospel and many other passages in the New Testament insist, we might expect that one of the effects of faith would be to draw us together, to merge the different aspects of our life into a steady and coherent unity expressed in active, challenging

love, the kind of unity we see in Jesus' own life. From this point of view, living simply would be a state in which we lived with integrity – lived, that is, in a way that was self-consistent, a way that arose from a single and central commitment of loving faith.

And then the second point. In the Fourth Gospel living life to the full is living the life of Jesus; and living the life of Jesus is living in perfect *communion* – in the unity between the Father and the Son and the Spirit, into which the community of Jesus' friends is invited. It is to be able to receive from God the richness of intimacy, liberty and love we were made for, and to be free to give this love back to God and outwards to the community and the world. When our lives are cluttered with anxiety and the passion to possess, when we fail to live simply in the ordinary sense of the word, we make ourselves incapable of communion. We are not in a position to receive because we are paralysed by anxiety about giving or sharing. Our lives are shrinking because we cannot see how they are bound up for their health and fullness with the lives of others. The failure to live simply and sustainably is a failure not only in material but in spiritual 'ecology', in the balance and mutuality of life in a complex world full of difference.

Jesus offers life in all its fullness: true simplicity (which is integrity, wholeness of perception and action), and true communion (which is frustrated and distorted when we try to live only out of our self protective instincts). To pray that Jesus may give us life in its fullness is to be ready to be moved into that integrity and that mutuality which belong to Christ's people as the supreme and distinctive gifts they have to share with the world.

Rowan Williams

From '*Live Simply*' edited by Annabel Shilson-Thomas
Canterbury Press, 2008, page 52 reproduced with permission
'*Live simply*' was reviewed in the August Julian Meetings Magazine

JM on BBC Local Radio

in the 'Pathways of Prayer' series Lent 2008

"Dear Sirs

I have been commissioned by BBC – Religion and Ethics – to produce a 6-part Lent series for BBC Local Radio. I'm interested in including something about contemplative prayer and wondered if you could put me in touch with someone in West Yorkshire who may be able to help me?

Jackie"

The above e-mail arrived with Anne Stamper on 14 January 2008, and she forwarded it to me, as both being National Co-ordinator and living in West Yorkshire. I thought this was a great opportunity to publicise JM and duly left a message for Jackie.

After a week I was rather concerned at the lack of response – Lent began on 6 February! I wondered what she envisaged for the 'slot', as recording silent prayer for a *radio* broadcast could hardly be what was wanted.

When Jackie rang, I said I could arrange for four to six people from the two Wakefield Julian Meetings to be at our church on an agreed afternoon the following week, and she could take it from there.

Being recorded

Four of us turned up. I was glad one man came, both to provide a male voice, and so that people realised contemplative prayer is not just for women. Jackie talked with us about JM and contemplative prayer, so that she understood what we were about. I gave her a *Waiting on God* leaflet and some information I had produced to explain some aspects in greater detail.

Jackie interviewed us in turn, for between 5 and 10 minutes each. We then gathered as for a meeting with Jackie as a

newcomer to the group, and she recorded this, including the first part of the silence. The whole thing took about 80 minutes, and was an interesting experience.

The Broadcast

I wondered how much of the recorded material would be included in the final broadcast, and how Jackie would use it. The 'slot' actually ran for 5 minutes, and we felt gave a fair impression of JM and contemplative prayer in such limited circumstances. Below is a transcript of the actual broadcast:

Noise of door opening and shutting

Jackie: I've been invited to join a Julian Meeting that's taking place at this inner city church. I don't know much about contemplative prayer, other than that it involves staying silent for a period of time - which I'm sure will take me out of my comfort zone.

Deidre: Since Jackie is new, let us have a reminder on how we can start before I lead into the silence. Let us prepare to wait on God in the silence. Sit on your chair, with both feet on the floor. Sit tall. Let your hands rest gently on your thighs. Close your eyes, or leave them open, as you wish. Take all the 'luggage' of your day – the thoughts, worries, fears, concerns that crowd in on you – and lay them aside for now. Now become aware of your breathing. Just breathe naturally, and as you breathe out let go of all that hinders your openness to God. As you inhale, breathe in the life giving spirit of God.

Be still and know that I am God

Be still and know that I am

Be still and know

Be still

Be

Quiet music plays now, and between each spoken section and at the end.

(Jackie could not leave just silence because if there is no sound for more than a short time the system assumes there is a fault and goes into 'panic mode'!)

June: Well I've always been brought up to pray. I came from a Christian family where prayers were said every evening before you went to bed. I'm so used to asking God ... not for things but asking him to help me to do things and I just found contemplative prayer was lovely at the end of a very frantic day when you've been rushing round and your brain feels addled. It was just so lovely to sit and be quiet and let God come to you.

Brian: It's the fact that it's looking at God's agenda rather than ours. We can spend an awful lot of time talking to him but we've one mouth and two ears and it's good to spend time listening.

Zena: I love to go to church, I love to sing, I love all about meeting people at church and having that experience of God. But it's the silence. It's the having my own dialogue with my God, in a completely different way. It's peaceful and it also gives me something that I take back into my normal life and busy life as we have nowadays.

Deidre: If you're always talking to God, or at God, when does he get chance to put a word in? Whereas if you take time to take the chance where you say 'Well, OK God for the next half-hour I'm here with you, just like we are a couple of old friends, but the initiative is with you' that's very different to, say, intercessory prayer and it's not something many people are familiar with.

Deidre Morris

If anyone actually heard the broadcast and wants to let us know what they thought of it, we'd be glad to hear from you.

Reflection Outside The Cell

This morning I began my day of study by sitting in the church of St. Julian, gazing at the archway that bids one enter the cell. Specifically I gazed at the carving at the apex of the archway to the cell as it was re-constructed in the early 1950's.

This cell is larger than the original cell and has a door that invites pilgrims to enter, which was not part of the original construction. Today the cell is a chapel of prayer and a place for weekday low mass to be said for a small congregation.

The archway was not part of the historic St. Julian Church; it came from St. Michael at Thorn Church, one of

the 52 churches that used to serve the people of Norwich. On 27 June 1942 an enemy bombing raid destroyed St. Michael at Thorn: all that was left standing was a 12th century Norman Arch. St Julian Church was also damaged in the raid, but it was decided to restore it because of their most famous resident. When plans were made to reconstruct the cell of the anchoress Julian, the lovely carved archway from the wreckage of St. Michael at Thorn Church was acquired.

I passed through that arch several times during my sojourn in Norwich. I noted its lines, the columns on each side with their regal caps - the same lovely carving that I have seen in so



many other churches and cathedrals during my time in England. But I did not see the carving at the apex of the arch until yesterday. No doubt I would not have seen it then, but for the artists who met in the Julian Centre with Professor Brian Thorne, the Chair of the Friends of Julian.

The artists had taken several pictures of the arch and had discovered a carving. As they pored over the picture of the carving, Professor Thorne turned to me and asked, "Do you know anything about symbols?" Before I could respond he said, "Tell me what you think this is and what you make of it?" I took my time. But I was sure of what I saw immediately - it was a cock and above it an empty cross.

I had been musing over Julian's understanding of the Trinity and how the notion of the Trinity had not been a part of her Shorter Text but had played an important role in the Longer Text that she penned twenty years later. I was most interested in the role of each person in the Trinity. The First person was attributed with Power. The Second person, whom she called Mother-Jesus, was attributed with knowledge, wisdom and the divine leadership. The Third person was attributed with divine goodness. (Longer Text Chapter 58)

I was struck immediately by the image of the cock and recalled Peter's three denials of Jesus. The cock is traditionally the image of turning from God. Of sin. I recalled how by the seaside, the Risen Christ gave Peter the opportunity to be redeemed. Three times Jesus asks - "Do you love me?" When Peter replies in the affirmative Jesus gives him instruction for his life and mission. (John 21:15-22) A trilogy of forgiveness and redemption and a way, a path, instruction for how to begin again.

So this symbol above the door of Dame Julian's cell is a reminder of Peter's three denials of Jesus and the ways we all deny the One we say we serve. Above the cock the cross

- the empty cross - the way, the path, the instruction to begin again.

I said something like that when asked to offer my "wisdom", or maybe just my best guess, about the symbol above the door. I confessed that I had not noticed the symbol and Professor Thorne affirmed that neither had he.

But I assured him that I would not be able to miss the carving now. I knew that I would see it each time I entered. For once something is brought to our awareness and we have sought its wisdom, it can no longer escape our acknowledgement.

Proverbs 18:15

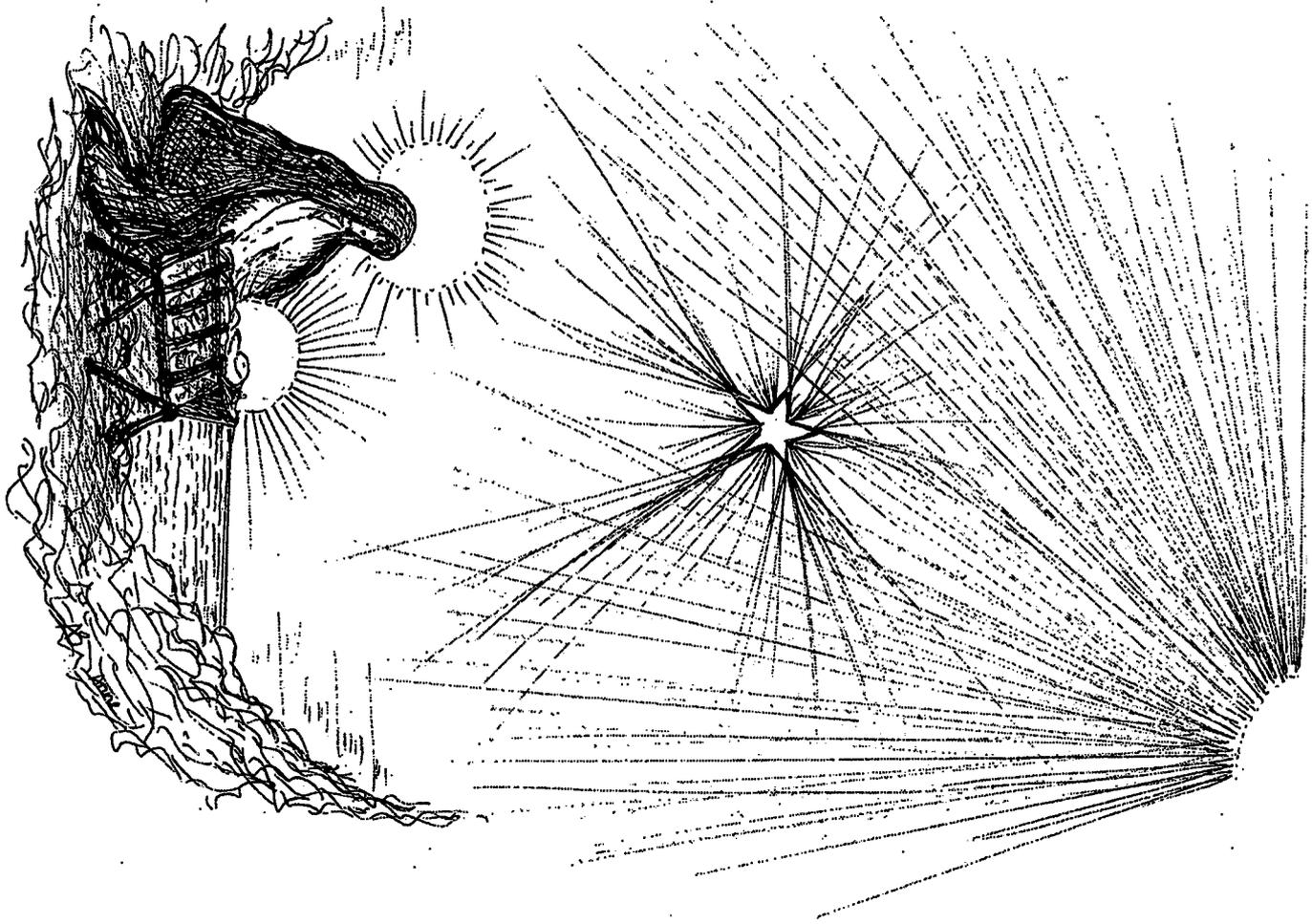
"The intelligent acquire knowledge
But the wise listen, seeking knowledge." (NRSV)

For those who are intentional; those who make a choice to come to a place that is off the beaten path, a place that is not a part of the route of their daily life; those who take a detour and invest time to sort out some things in their life; those who come seeking wisdom - Lady Wisdom herself is present to listen and offer the desire of the seeker.

If one such seeker came to Dame Julian's window, she would listen with compassion. Perhaps she would reflect back what they said, telling the seeker what she had heard: in essence holding up a mirror to the one seeking wisdom and offering words of encouragement. Perhaps even the words that are well remembered and are a trilogy or a Trinitarian statement:

"All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well."

Dr. Stephanie Sauve
Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School



Antiphon

*O Emmanuel, Rex et legifer noster,
exspectatio gentium et Salvator earum:
veni ad salvandum nos, Domine, Deus noster.*

*O Emmanuel, our King and our lawgiver,
the hope of the nations and their Saviour:
come and save us, O Lord our God.*

O Emmanuel

O come, O come and be our God-with-us
O long-sought With-ness for a world without,
O secret seed, O hidden spring of light.
Come to us, Wisdom, come, unspoken Name
Come, Root, and Key, and King, and Holy Flame,
O quickened little wick so tightly curled,
Be folded with us into time and place,
Unfold for us the mystery of grace
And make a womb of all this wounded world.
O heart of heaven beating in the earth,
O tiny hope within our hopelessness
Come to be born, to bear us to our birth,
To touch a dying world with new-made hands
And make these rags of time our swaddling bands.

Malcolm Guite

*From 'Live Simply' edited by Annabel Shilson-Thomas
Canterbury Press, 2008 reproduced with permission.*

*'Live simply' was reviewed in the August issue
of the Julian Meetings Magazine*

Embracing the Stillness

Liz blurted out the words in a rush.

'It's not that I don't want to go on the Retreat – it's just that I don't do silence.'

As we unpacked the feelings behind what she had said, I began to learn why not only Liz, but many people, find it difficult to 'do silence'.

What does the word silence conjure up in your mind? Is it peace and quiet, or more negative images from childhood?

Do you remember a teacher telling the class to sit in silence because they had misbehaved?

Or did your parents send you to your room as a punishment and, in the silence, your imagination worked overtime?

Or were you ever 'sent to Coventry' - your friends refusing to speak to you?

If you associate being silent with non-acceptable behaviour, and perhaps

even fear, is it any wonder that it does not speak easily of a relationship with a loving God?

Perhaps the word 'stillness' may be helpful here. For Liz, it suggested something freely embraced rather than forced. So we agreed that to spend each day a few minutes in prayerful stillness might be a good way to begin. Perhaps then a Quiet Day would be possible before the retreat itself.

After the retreat Liz said: 'I was really surprised how differently I felt about work on the Monday after the retreat. I could be at work with a 'still centre'. It helped me cope with all sorts of things where I would usually have got really cross.'

Tom agreed, 'It helped me to put the world in perspective again, with Jesus firmly at the centre.'

So perhaps silence is not such a bad word as long as we understand what it's about.

In our world of constant noise, is silence the thing that papers over the cracks between activities – or can it be the base on which all activity is founded?

The gospels show how

Jesus would answer that question.

What about you?

Ann Coleman
Formerly priest-director at
Wydale Retreat House,
Yorkshire

*This is an edited version of
her article in
'Home & Family'
Summer 2007*

Taking the Lead

A member of our Meeting had come for several months, and then offered to take her turn at leading in and out of the silence. After she had done so, as we shared with each other following the silence she said, 'It was so different having to keep an eye on the time. I couldn't let myself go as deeply as I usually do during our silence. Now I understand why it is only fair that we take turns to lead. Taking my turn also gave me the privilege of choosing the lead in and out, and I really enjoyed doing that.'

Do remember that our booklet 'Your Turn to Lead Into The Silence' offers practical advice and helpful hints on this, while 'Going Into Silence ... and Coming Out' also has suggestions.

If each Meeting has copies of these to lend to members it may be easier to encourage people to take their turn to lead, and enjoy doing so

Quiet Day in Torbay

On 17 July 2008 some 30 Julians met at Brunel Manor for the annual Devon Quiet Day. We were led by Bishop Richard Hawkins, who retired to live in our lovely county.

Bishop Richard chose, as his theme, words from the start of Paul's letter to the Hebrews: 'God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake ... hath spoken unto us by his Son'. From these he led us into some of the many ways and channels through which God encounters us and draws us into a deeper knowledge of his love and purposes, as our ears are open.

The first address

This explored the rich variety of our human experience of God; the partialness of our individual understanding of him; our need and gift of each other to each other. So often God builds us up in the truth through each other. Not least through those most different from us, or of whom we may be most sceptical

and afraid, including those outside the church. We are to learn from things precious in other's perceptions of God, while holding unashamed to those things revealed to us. Neither faith, nor God, is for privatising – we learn of him as we learn together.

The second address

This focused on '...now, in his Son.' The yardstick and fulfilment of all our unique experiences was Christ. Bishop Richard suggested we should discern the truth in three main ways:

- Through our minds and head work. Forming them as Jesus own mind was formed by constant immersion in the scriptures
- Through our hearts. Through discerning our own hearts, not least through listening to God in prayer and reflection.
- Listening to Christ. Learning to discern Christ in other people, through whom Christ addresses and encounters us.

Only so shall we what is
fundamental to our unity;
where we should expect and
welcome diversity within it;
and where diversity truly and
fundamentally separates us.

The third address

This centred on Christ's
words 'I am the way, the
truth and the life.' We all
need to be affirmed in that.
The way of truth, however
painful to face and including
those parts we seek to
avoid, is always the way of
blessing. We are affirmed,
purged and strengthened in
that Way by a host of new
experiences, even the most
painful, so long as we face
them (as God reveals them
to us) knowing we are held
unconditionally within His
strong, compassionate,
loving hands.

Of course, between the
addresses and before the
final feed-back and prayer,
there was the invaluable
space for silence. It was
another precious Quiet Day.
Our thanks to Jenny Draffan
for arranging it.

Philip Brown

A Poem

*(composed during
the Quiet day
with Bishop Richard)*

The leaves are all different,
Various shapes and shades.
The plants need them all:
The bricks are all different,
The wall needs them all.
I see God in flowers and
trees,
In hills and rivers,
And express myself in verse.
Others hear God in music
Or books or sermons.
Some paint fine pictures
Or carve in wood or stone.
Let us affirm and be
affirmed -
Christ the Way, the Truth, the
Life
Holds us in His arms.
He is the pure sap
Giving life to the plants,
The mortar that holds the
wall.
Experience, head and heart
All play their part.
We must press on to the love
Of Him who reigns above.

Joan Mason-Martin

'WAIT AND SEE'

A CD Rom to help with quiet prayer.

I am grateful for the invitation to write about the recent CD Rom *Wait and See*. This is a new venture for me, and was undertaken in part out of frustration that my two books of pictures and words leading into prayer, *Wait and See* and *Wait and Trust*, had gone out of print while people were still asking for them.

I explored ways of recycling this material, and McCrimmons Publishers had the idea of putting about half the meditations from the two books into a form that could be used in a Powerpoint presentation, or just on a computer. So the CD contains twenty-one pictures and their accompanying texts, and offers quick and easy access, either to the pictures alone or to words and pictures together.

I am pleased with the imaginative way in which the design department has used the images: the overall effect, to my mind, is lovely to look at. There is no soundtrack, as we felt this would complicate matters. But you can use peaceful music with the meditations if you wish.

So who might buy it?

First of all I am thinking of people in prayer-groups, especially those who spend time quietly together and use some kind of meditation to lead into the silence. If wanted, there is an introductory page entitled 'Pathway into Silence'. This is designed to help people to settle and become physically still, especially if they are not used to a more reflective style of prayer. Then any of the meditations could provide a lead-in for a contemplative gathering such as a Julian Meeting.

The CD could also be used:

- ◇ as a focus in worship;
- ◇ during a meditation;
- ◇ at a conference;

- ◇ on a retreat or quiet day;
- ◇ in a prayer-corner in a church or cathedral.

I understand some schools are buying it to use as a backdrop for assemblies. Individuals could also use it for prayer and meditation while sitting at their desks.

Angela Ashwin

Wait and See *A CD of images and meditations*
by Angela Ashwin

£29.32 + p & p from:
McCrimmons Publishing Co. Ltd.
10-12 High St, Great Wakering, Essex SS3 0EQ
Tel: 01702 218 956 www.mccrimmons.com

This Powerpoint CD provides a collection of 21 meditations consisting of a variety of images, with text for use with prayer groups, meetings and for worship. The meditations are divided into three sets: Opening Up; Going Deep; Surrender.

Not being overly familiar with the intricacies of Powerpoint, I really liked this CD not least because I found it easy to use, with a clear layout and sufficient explanations. The initial instructions, and the prayers provided, offer helpful support for those less experienced in leading meditations, and there was relevant practical information.

The images, all by Christian artists, vary in style and content but are of equally high quality and are a great resource in themselves.

The meditations and images may simply be used as presented, but the opportunity is offered to develop a more personalized approach by use of the images on their own with your own choice of text. This extends the usefulness of the CD, making it a valuable resource.

Helen Lems

The Meaning is in the Waiting by Paula Gooder

*ISBN 978-1-85311-908-8 £8.99 Paperback
2008 Canterbury Press*

The title of this 'Book for Advent' is taken from R S Thomas' poem 'Kneeling'. All his poems are profound: some obscure. This book is profound but also very clear and gives us plainly the meaning of Advent. As the title says 'The Meaning is in the Waiting'.

Paula Gooder is a scholar and has grounded this book in scripture. She takes the Advent Candle Wreath, now so popular in many of our churches, as her pattern and uses it to take us through the Advent scripture readings of the Church and the people each candle on the Advent wreath represents.

We are encouraged to enter into the waiting of the Patriarchs; the Prophets; John the Baptist; and the Virgin Mary, and to begin to understand our own waiting. We are waiting for the One who has already come. We are waiting too for the end-times, in a society that positively discourages waiting.

The format of this book is straightforward. We can read as much or as little of scripture as we wish to enter into the stories of the various characters. Paula tells us that waiting draws us into a different way of being, that does not rush to easy answers. Our own discipline of waiting in Advent, as well as waiting in everyday life, does not provide us with easy answers but enables us to enter into a new and fulfilling way of being.

This Advent book encourages us to use and trust scripture and the lessons we can learn from it on our own spiritual journey. We find that our relationship with God is deepened and our trust is strengthened in the God who is present in the waiting. We then discover that the meaning really is in the waiting.

Caroline Wareham

nb On page 49 surely she means David Attenborough, not Richard

God of Surprises by Gerard Hughes

1985, revised & updated 2008 ISBN 52153 0

Darton, Longman and Todd £8.95

As Eugene Patterson says in the foreword to this new edition of a best-selling classic: 'Many books are written, some get published, a few last. This book lasts.' It is an invaluable and practical resource for the reader's own search. The chapters are ordered with clarity and make the text eminently suitable for group discussion. Gerard Hughes pulls no punches. He is accessible, provocative and has a rare understanding of the spiritual search. If you don't yet have a copy, do get this new edition to explore its wisdom and inspiration.

Janet Robinson

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

Magazine Contributions

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

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

Please send contributions for the April Magazine

by 20 January 2009



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