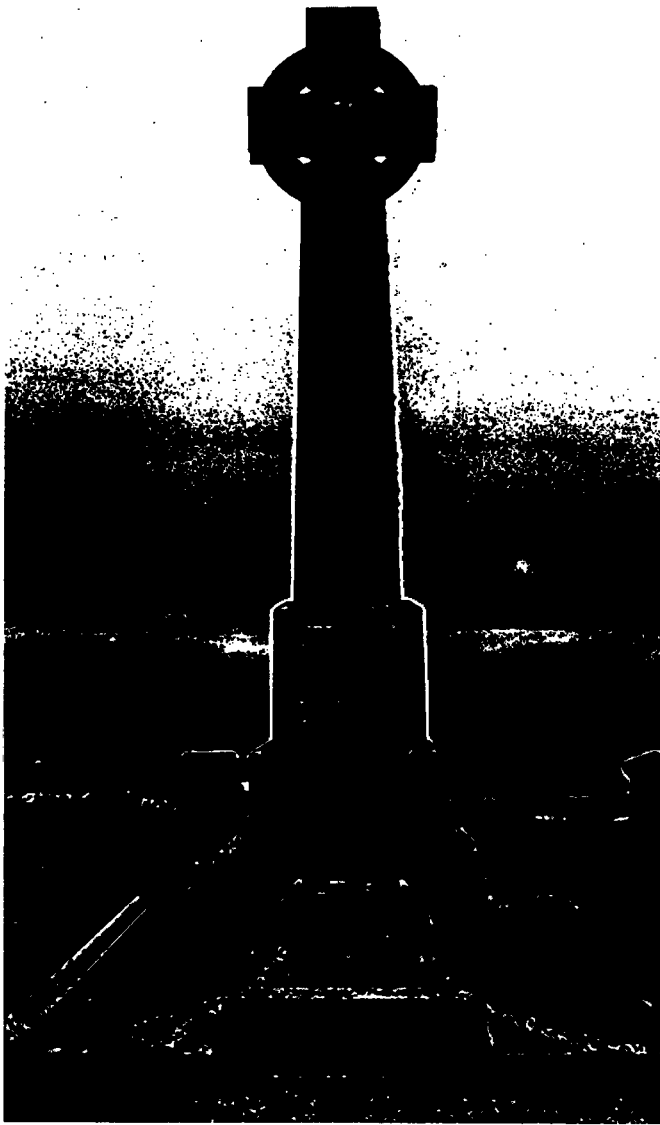


THE
JULIAN
MEETINGS
Magazine



December 2003

£1.50



This Celtic cross on the Isle of Skye stands as a monument to Flora Macdonald, who saved Bonnie Prince Charlie from the English army in 1746.

What makes a Quiet Day?

Mary Kimmins

A quiet building –

wide cool corridors
surrounding a peaceful quadrangle,
cool water to drink.

A quiet room –

Bible readings –
comforting, reassuring, challenging.

Pictures on a screen –
beautiful, peaceful, stormy.

Words of relaxation –
thoughts for meditation,
quiet shared with others.

A quiet garden –

sun and shade,
lovely views,
wind in the trees.

A watchful rabbit by the bushes,
golden dragonfly skimming the lawn.

Quiet with myself,
with creation,
with God.

Ending the day –

Time together, singing, praying,
sharing experiences.

These make a Quiet Day.

A Saturday to remember, to treasure, give thanks for –
in worship on Sunday.

A day to look back on, draw strength from.

God present that day –
God present every day.

Getting started

Gail Ballinger

Reading Sheila Waller's article in the 30th Anniversary edition with the important points she raised, particularly the need for more teaching, made me wonder if readers would be interested to know what happens when people in the UK want to start a Julian Meeting and write to us asking for guidance. I have been answering these enquiries from potential Julian Meetings for ten years.

Each person is sent the contact details for Julian Meetings within travelling distance for a visit, so that they can get the feel of a Julian Meeting if they have no previous experience of one. This is an opportunity for the host meeting(s) to offer some insights into contemplative prayer, and for the enquirer to share in it with other people already practising it together. We also suggest that people from a nearby meeting might help with setting up the new meeting, perhaps contributing to an inaugural meeting to see if there is interest locally. It is always possible to ask for a member of the Advisory Group to be there at the initial meeting and every effort would be made for somebody to attend.

But it is in any case the entire network of around 400 meetings which make up the Julian Meetings. Between them they provide quite a lot of guidance, support and teaching for new meetings. Some of these start with a short course, or as a result of a course, similar to the helpful one produced by John Hawkins (see the 30th Anniversary edition for details), while others may design such a course for themselves later in the meeting's life. Some come about as a result of such events as days of prayer organised by cathedrals and other regional centres of Christian teaching. Often these events have some input from members of a nearby Julian Meeting. Others come about after a regional quiet day, perhaps organised by and for Julian Meetings in the area, but also open to any other interested people.

Each potential Julian Meeting receives a free starter pack of publications containing:

- *Starting a Julian Meeting* with a registration form for a new meeting
- *Some Basics of Contemplative Prayer*
- *Going Into Silence...and Coming Out*

- *An Ideal Julian Meeting*
- *Your Turn to Lead*
- *Some Books to Help You Pray* (booklist)
- a copy of the Julian Meetings magazine and a subscription form
- *Waiting on God in the Silence* (our introductory leaflet) and other publicity material
- an order form so that extra copies can be made available to everyone at the initial meeting.

Another suggestion we make is that once a meeting is established, it should decide how to encourage new members, and that it might make available a welcome pack to give to each new person who attends the meeting. This could include:

- *Waiting on God*
- *Some Basics of Contemplative Prayer*
- *Some Books to Help You Pray*
- a bookmark which offers suggestions for using the silence
- a back number of the magazine with a subscription form
- an order form so they can order other pamphlets if they wish
- any information or guidelines produced locally by the meeting.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that the pamphlets have evolved over the years and all the pamphlets are revised each time they need to be reprinted, so it is worthwhile keeping up to date with them. *Going Into Silence...and Coming Out*, as well as being a resource for individuals, provides incidentally a good picture of what a Julian Meeting is like. Some Julian Meetings produce their own local introductory leaflet with details of venues and a calendar of dates and who is to lead, together with suggested reading and details of who to contact if they wish to talk to someone about contemplative prayer at any stage of their spiritual journey. Some meetings offer each newcomer a chance to meet and talk with someone before attending a meeting. This has the double advantage of providing the opportunity for a little teaching and ensuring that the newcomer sees at least one familiar face the first time he or she attends.

Teaching is an ongoing challenge. It happens – not always in obvious ways – but it is something we need to keep constantly in mind. Do let us know your experience, whether as a new meeting or a mature meeting. Please write to the Editor and let us know what more we could do in this area.

A people place

William J Crockett

If this is not a place where tears are understood

Where do I go to cry?

If this is not a place where my spirit can take wing

Where do I go to fly?

If this is not a place where my questions can be asked

Where do I go to seek?

If this is not a place where my feelings can be heard

Where do I go to speak?

If this is not a place where you will accept me as I am

Where can I go to be?

If this is not a place where I can try to learn and grow

Where do I just be me?

*This poem was pinned up on the wall at the Methodist Retreat Centre
in Muswell Hill, north London. The source is unknown.*

Be still and know

Pat Marsh

The silence holds my gaze
in loving adoration
of the stillness which enfolds me,
washes over me,
seeps lovingly into my soul.

The power of the silence
bids me stay;
entranced,
and held.
Embraced.
Embraced in love so strong
that I am drawn
yet deeper still
into the silence;
into unfathomable depths of mystery
and awe,
and inner certainty
that He is here.

He and I are together here,
as one.

A love affair is growing
in the silence.

© 2003 from "Whispers of Love" by Pat Marsh. Used by permission of Methodist Publishing House. "Whispers of Love" is reviewed in this issue of the magazine.

26 out of 30: Julian Meetings memories

Yvonne Walker

I joined the Julian Meetings in 1977 in response to a letter circulated to central London churches. "This looks your kind of thing", said my minister, just at a time when our church-based prayer group was ceasing to meet.

I went along with interest and not a little trepidation, but I was warmly welcomed and made to feel at home. It felt right and I continued to attend the monthly meetings for many years to come. Looking back, I remember that so many of those early meetings were a struggle: learning to focus and centre on God after a busy day at work, and battling with the gremlins "Am I doing it right?" or "Is this really prayer?" or "Help! Nothing seems to be happening!" I particularly remember the winter of the dripping drainpipe which proved far more distracting than all the emergency vehicle sirens (we met just round the corner from Oxford Street).

A few years later I was invited to join the Advisory Group and was given the job of editing the Newsletter. In those days it consisted of just two sides of A4 with very little news at all, just changes in meeting contacts and addresses, and details of the annual retreat. In almost every edition the list of new meetings was a source of wonder, given that we did no advertising at all. I was convinced from my earliest connections with the Julian Meetings that it was Spirit-led and did not need the cult of leaders or gurus to increase membership.

As a business executive, I found the non-directional and unstructured meetings of the Advisory Group quite challenging at first, but this proved to be just part of what the Julian Meetings and contemplative prayer have taught me over all these years. The process is one of going with the flow, letting go of structures and control, relinquishing the need for achievement and success. It is a life-long process of change and growth.

I have attended a great many of the annual retreats, and I have enjoyed meeting members and collaborating with others on the Advisory Group to ensure a smooth-running weekend. Meeting and sharing with individuals has always been a great delight. In retirement I now travel all over the country leading retreats, quiet days and workshops, and I am no longer surprised to find how many people introduce themselves as attending a Julian Meeting.

The fellowship and connectedness have always been important to me.

For more than 20 years the Julian Meetings have opened up for me the challenge of being a contemplative presence in a busy and noisy world. I still struggle with a full diary, the difficulty of saying no and the fear of emptiness. The contemplative attitude in all of life, not just at Julian Meetings and in daily prayer times, is an ongoing process of transformation, trusting the not-knowing, going with the wonder and desire, abandoning structures and self, accepting the incompleteness and gazing at the invisibility of God while seeing God in all things. Contemplative living is all about an awareness of this paradox. It may not be a bed of roses or an easy option: life and prayer reveal the thorns, pain, fear and grief alongside the beauty, joy and hope. Each time we seek that still point in our inner being we confront God's living reality, and deep inside we allow God to look at us so that we can feel accepted, loved and desired by God. To share this in silence and in fellowship with others is to me the essence of the Julian Meetings and a gift which I shall always treasure.

Yvonne Walker is standing down from her post as the Julian Meetings National Co-ordinator.

Prayer is an exercise of the spirit, as thought is of the mind.

—Mary F. Smith

Mid-life spirituality and Julian of Norwich

Sr Winifred O'Brien LSA

This is an edited version of an address given to the AGM of the Julian Meetings in South Africa in May 2003.

It is interesting to note that in the time of Jesus, life expectancy was probably about 28 years. By the beginning of the 20th century it was 47, at least in the developed world. Throughout the 20th century, life expectancy almost doubled so that a longer lifespan became ordinary in some countries. Now, at the beginning of the third millennium, we (some of us, privileged ones) have received the biological, psychological, spiritual gift of a second adulthood, indeed a second lifetime, a time when we are no longer young, but neither are we old.

Much of the attention given to this phenomenon has focused on the problems presented by a worldwide ageing population. The potential for human development, the possibilities opened by a longer lifespan, have hardly begun to be imagined. Why has this gift of life from the Source of all life been given to humanity at this time? I believe it is because the human race desperately needs people who are growing in consciousness, in wisdom and grace.

From a faith perspective, as we live out of our own individuality we can become more and more the unique image of God that each of us is called to be. Each one is called to manifest an aspect of the Divine that has never been revealed before, and our whole lives are telling a story about God that has never been told before.

Our personal journey plays an all-important part throughout our whole life, including the time of mid-life development.

The psychologist Carl Jung, speaking of the second half of life and the unconsciousness of each person as a potential for new growth, says: "The self is our life's goal, for it is the completest expression of that fateful combination we call individuality, the full flowering, not only of the single individual, but of the whole group, in which each adds his or her portion to the whole."

These three strands (faith, personal journey, psychology) are bound together in the work of mid-life spirituality.

From the moment of our birth, we begin a journey outwards, out from our mother's womb, out into a strange world where first one person is all-important to us, then others move into our consciousness. As children we move into a larger world of siblings, then school, and when we reach adulthood, the world becomes larger, with people and places to discover, decisions to make, goals to achieve. Much of our life is taken up in doing, achieving, reaching for the stars – or at least for the top of our own particular ladder.

This stage can last for many years, but sooner or later, for every single one of us, a time comes when things go dead. The life lived, the journey covered so far, seems not to matter, to be less important, sometimes even meaningless. It is as though we have realised that we will never reach the top of the ladder, or having got there, we discover that it leans against the wrong wall. The things we have achieved, the way we do things, even the way we pray, seem to have changed. We think if we try harder we can get back to our old ways, but this just does not work. This can be a terrible shock and something we resist or deny for quite a long time, but sooner or later we discover that life has changed and is never going to be the same again.

This often happens in response to an important event in our lives. For some it can be the death of someone important to them, or illness, or redundancy, or children leaving home, or divorce, or retirement. We can feel very alone at this time, but it happens to all of us sooner or later. It can bring confusion, suffering, struggle and a sense of being uprooted.

We have probably all known a very busy time in our adult life. It is a time when *doing* is vitally important: being responsible for many things, and caring for other people. Suddenly we discover that *doing* is not working for us. Our energy changes, and if and when we stop running, we begin to realise that we are being drawn more to journey inwards, with an emphasis on our inner reality and towards *being*.

On last reading the *Revelations of Divine Love* by Julian of Norwich, I asked myself if the illness she suffered at the age of 31 precipitated her into the second half of life. Before this time, she had certainly lived a devout life, prayed, and been aware of the goodness of God, but from this time onwards she lived her life on a different plane as she moved within to discover more and more her own littleness, the all-surpassing greatness of the love of God for her and all creation, and his will "that we go on knowing and loving until

we are perfected in heaven." Indeed she says that to know the goodness of God is the highest prayer of all. To me that sounds like mid-life understanding.

For most of us, there is a lengthy struggle between our so-called adult self that thinks it understands and can work things out unaided, and sees no need to change, and the deeper, truer self that begins to emerge and acknowledge that there is an inner world to explore.

Julian speaks of her struggle: "I was experiencing both regret and deliberate choice at one and the same time. And this was due to the two sides of our nature, inward and outward. The outward side is our mortal physical nature, which will continue to suffer and grieve all the time it lives...The inward side is exalted and joyful and vital, all peaceful and loving...It was this part of me that chose Jesus for my heaven. That the outward could draw the inward to conform to it was not shown to me: rather was it shown that the inward should by grace draw the outward, that by the power of Christ both might be made eternally and blessedly one."

As we reach mid-life there is a second journey to be made, and as we live through this second journey we can find new meaning and make a greater contribution to life than ever before, because we have become more and more conscious, wise and compassionate.

These can be years of a new kind of integrity and generativity [a concern for and commitment to the well-being of future generations]. This is good news, not only for those of us in mid-life and beyond, but also for the young who can look forward to something better after 40 or 50 years of age.

As we live through this second journey we can have new goals, new values. We can be transformed, living lives that are more aware of others and above all of God. Surely this is what Julian did. She blossomed in a way that is hard to understand, and God used and is still using her in a way she certainly never imagined or chose.

She lived a reasonably quiet life, welcoming those who came to her for counsel. (I was surprised when I visited her little cell in Norwich, how available she was.) She did not see herself as doing great things, writing: "the soul is at its best, most noble and honourable when it is most lowly, humble and gentle."

She grew in knowledge, urging us "not to be afraid of knowing such things as He might show us" and writing: "we can never attain to full knowledge of God until we have first known our own soul thoroughly."

And above all she was realistic, telling us: "He did not say, 'You will never have a rough passage, you will never be over-strained, you will never feel uncomfortable' but he did say: 'You will never be overcome'", and again: "God wants us to pay attention to these words so as to trust Him always with strong confidence, through thick and thin, for He loves us and delights in us; so He wills that we should love and delight in Him in return, and trust Him with all our strength. So all shall be well."

So what is special about the mid-life part of our journey, and how does it impact on our spirituality? It is a time to revisit the journey we have made so far and to look into our unrecognised potential: to look again at our choices, our hopes and our dreams. It is also a time to move deeper inside ourselves in praying and in playing as we see the child within us and begin to value ourselves as the unique, wonderful people we are. It is about recognising that we are not alone in reaching this point in our life; that it is not a disaster to be 40, 50 or 60; and that we have an opportunity to move forward to a time just as challenging and wonderful as the days of our youth.

As we know from our drawing to quiet, contemplative prayer, this is the time to move into the world within us where God dwells. It is the time to open ourselves more to the "stirrings of love" and to move into the silence beyond our understanding, knowing, as Julian tells us, that all shall be well.

Sister Winifred is a member of the Little Sisters of the Assumption. The organisation aims "to bring together the least advantaged and privileged in a spirit of family to inspire everyone to participate in creating a just society."

The world was not left to us by our parents. It was lent to us by our children.

—African proverb

The place of no words

Wanda Nash

The Word exploded from a formless void. It was a place of pre-speech, pre-image, pre-thought itself. A place of no boundaries, no definitions, no confines. A place from which creation was born. When the Word exploded, there was Light. Not just physical light, but metaphysical – the light of understanding and relationship, of exchange and delight.

Before a thought forms in us, before a word comes to us, there is still a formless void. It is a place of waiting; waiting inside to land a new, unexpressed idea; waiting without pre-condition for a shape to arrive. Waiting melted, fluid, unformed, loosened, receptive. Waiting for a signature to be written in the sand.

Today, in our present culture, it seems to be a high priority to be in the know; little value is attached to unknowingness, and for some this place of no words is fearful. Noise is safer: you know where you are with words, you know what is expected of you when surrounded by words. Using words, it is easier to feel in control, in the right; to be competent and accountable. Letting go of these things, even temporarily, can be too much to manage. For others, the place of no words is blessed release. Release from having to know; having to control; having to be right. So some of us seek it out, looking for a place that is not expressible, and cannot be expressed. We try to get rid of words for a while, to get out from under the awkward traps that words can set.

God is God in the place of no words. God is God as God wants to be, unshackled from the places where we want to put God. As Eckhart taught us, everything we can say about God underestimates and limits the reality, and therefore is incorrect. There is no word for God. The thing most like God is Stillness. Silence. Space.

For 30 years the Julian Meetings have been witness to the place of no words.

Here in Winchester we have had the idea of shared silent prayer between Christians, Moslems and Jews. The three Abrahamic faiths sitting together in the place of no words. We would simply be together, held in God. The newness, the hope, the invitation, the togetherness in this place of no words, would be like glue for us all. The many colours of strips of sealing wax that

we represent would melt and meld. We have not managed to put this into practice yet but the vision remains.

God, having done all for us, simply waits for us to turn to God.

We wait, waiting for God to free the world of its despair.

We lose patience, and turn to lesser things to divert us from the despair.

God doesn't lose patience; God stills waits.

Thank God for the place of no words.

CHRISTEN KOBKE

View of Lake Sortedam (1838)



Only the brave

John Ryall

This material was used at a Julian Meeting at the home of Meryl Webb, contact for the Julian Meetings in Australia, in July 2003.

Opening thoughts

Only brave people enter stillness and quietness. It is then that you can experience in a deeper way the presence of God. It is then that you are at your most vulnerable, in simply being. As you are focused completely on God, enjoy his presence.

You and God love each other; there is no need for words.

But it is then that He may choose to speak to you. He may bring comfort in sorrow, encouragement in difficulty, assurance in times of doubt.

What if He brings to your mind a task to be done, working with Him? It is then that our vulnerability is put to the test. He may call you out of your comfort zone to some new challenge that only He brings to your conscious thought. While we may be initially alarmed, He will provide the necessary spiritual, mental and physical strength to carry it out. Only the brave, who have entered stillness and quietness, can rise to the challenge and answer His call.

Only the brave can enter stillness and quietness and can rest secure in the presence of His love even if he chooses not to speak. You do not become disappointed that nothing has apparently happened. This may simply be an indication to continue doing what you are doing, and to continue to be in His presence. We might ask ourselves the question: Do we dare to trust God when there is only silence? To answer this question we only need to look back over the ways He has been with us throughout our lives to realise that God is totally faithful and trustworthy and that he acts and directs us in our best interests, sometimes to have closer communion with Him.

Of course, God can speak to you at other times when you are not quiet. But if we examine closely what happens at such times, we find that in spite of external busyness and noise there is an inner quiet which is receptive to His voice and thought.

Those who do not wish to hear God speaking to them can fill their lives

with work and endless trivia, completely blocking Him out of their conscious thoughts. They do not want to be brave in a spiritual sense. God has to intervene either through circumstance, or through human agency, or directly, to get them to hear Him. Even then, such people are not compelled to take any notice of Him or obey Him. But they ignore Him at their peril.

We can be numbered among the brave as we enter this time of stillness and quietness, to open our lives to Him, to enjoy His presence and maybe hear Him speak to us.

Closing thoughts

You have just spent time with God, experiencing His presence and allowing yourselves to be open to Him. You have ventured into the unknown to be with Him, and God will honour the vulnerability you have brought to Him.

You have shared with Him who is greater, wiser and more intelligent than you. You have probably found a God in action. It is God who gives you hope in darkness.

As you have shared silence, you have preferred His still, small voice to your own. Language has been renewed. Indeed, it is God's word that gives shape and meaning to your words and lives.

Prayer

O Lord, as we have shared this time of silence with you and each other, may we be strengthened by your presence, directed by your voice, and encouraged by your Spirit to serve you in whatever way you call us to: we ask in the precious name of Jesus.

God cannot want from us what is not possible.

—Neville Ward

Reflection on a May evening: Alnmouth Friary

Margaret Field

Wide sky, high, bright, melting into water's far horizon.
Sparkling azure gems on a millpond sea, soft as down.
Banked with evening clouds, draped between day and night.
After the grinding of the day, might there be more?
Still points of sunlight shafting the grey to eager colours of a rainbow,
 to entrap this gaze.
Framing the earth with the still promise, Covenant sign, speechless,
 yet speaking, love to the world.
Settling stillness, up-welled by joy, soft clouds held by clarity of colour.
A sweet companion, silently speaking of care, melting future and past
 in the curve of a bow.
Drawn ungraspable, calming the heart, cooling the mind
 to the wideness of knowing.
Being known, piercing inner self with reality, of now and yet to be.

Silent prayer

Ann Graham

Candle flames flicker
in the darkened room.
Sitting in the incense-scented silence,
we look into the leaping light,
centre ourselves,
"In the name of the Father..."

The curtain across the window
moves slightly in a draught,
the breeze caressing my cheek.

In the distance
the sound of a police car siren
comes and goes
as the vehicle speeds
along the night streets.

I pray for the victims,
the urgent, tense officers,
the fleeing criminals,
"Lord, have mercy..."

We wait on God,
held in His love.

© *Ann Graham*

The Online Julian Meeting

Christopher Stokes

Here's a question for you: where on earth is there a Julian Meeting whose members have never met?

And the answer, in this technological age, is simple: in cyberspace!

For as the Julian movement celebrates its 30th anniversary, there's another little milestone being celebrated too – by members of a Julian Meeting which is unique.

The Online Julian Meeting, which has nearly 20 members in several different countries, is delighted to be marking its first anniversary in January 2004.

Its members “meet” on the last Saturday of each month at 4.00pm UK time. They log on to their computers in their own homes, thousands of miles apart, and join each other in their own internet chatroom – perceptively entitled *Amid The Noise*.

Infuriating computer hitches, and problems with international time zones, invariably make way for moments of techno-bliss as members share a few reflections before and after spending half an hour in silence together.

A typical meeting of the Online Julian Meeting finds five or six members – perhaps from as far apart as Britain, Italy and South Africa – sharing this special time in cyberspace.

The idea was the brainchild of Liz Gentleman, who lives in Italy and heard about Julian of Norwich whilst volunteering at an ecumenical centre in the Italian Alps three years ago. At first she imagined a regular face-to-face group in her local area but, when this didn't take off as planned, she hit on the idea of an electronic group uniting people across great distances with a common aim.

Liz said: “I was drawn especially to the idea of using silence to open the spirit to God, hence the group name *Amid The Noise*. I would say that, one year on, we are still coming to grips with Julian's vision of contemplative prayer, not to mention the internet technology which has given us some tricky moments. It is my hope that in 2004, our second year of being, we shall evolve further in our practice of wordless being in the presence of God.”

Online JM member Carolyn Einhorn, in South Africa, said: “I had been

unable to find a Julian Meeting in Johannesburg so I was thrilled to find *Amid The Noise* on the internet. What a privilege to be praying with people all over the world. After my first meeting with you I felt as though God had wrapped his arms around the whole world and given it a hug."

Daisy-Winifred, who has a special prayer shed in her UK garden, confirmed: "Having this group in cyberspace seems to me to emphasise the possibility of joining our energies and intent, no matter the distance, no matter the glitches of life or technology, all can be traversed to find each of us a part of a powerful moment."

If you would like to join the Online Julian Meeting, please go to:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/amidthenoise/>.

The remains of Beauport Abbey, on the coast of Brittany in northern France. The Abbey was completed in the 14th century in the Gothic style.



Prayer journey

April McIntyre

Prayer is God's gift to me:
a seed, planted in my secret place,
which I try to tend with care,
feeding, watering, protecting.
But despite my best efforts,
I cannot make it grow.
As roots push deep into the earth
and new shoots reach joyfully to the sun,
I recognise this as God's work in me
and His pleasure.

Truly it is a mystery:
that the One who waits with hungry father-love
for me to return to Him in my need
is the same God
whose presence prayers within
this wayward heart He calls His home.

And so He leads me on
through desert wastes He knows so well
where there are no answers.
He disappears amongst the bread-shaped rocks
as I grapple with my enemies,
but sends an angel incognito to my aid.
No-one shares my pain like Him.
Our hearts quicken together,
With each sigh of bliss, each throbbing doubt
Which only my lips could express.

Once I thought I had my prayer life
all worked out,
structured religiously

in most impressive order.
Proudly I kept things spick and span
until the time I realised
the box was empty.
I watched the wild Spirit
swoop and soar over chaotic teeming waters,
defying convention and habit,
leading beyond the noisy breakers
to the still deeps of a new dimension.

So, in the silence I wait,
in a place beyond words,
where to be in God's presence
is the beginning and end of prayer.
No longer asking, seeking, knocking –
just abiding.
Nothing is more important.

I do not pray alone
but carry in myself
a connectedness
to individuals and needs,
to all the worlds through which I move.
God knows,
I do not have to solve the problems for Him
but trust that,
somehow,
my being in prayer
will make a difference.

Whether I hit the spiritual heights
or stagger onward
with the weight of my own Calvary,
He is with me.
That is all I can desire,
my peace and my joy.

Three trees...from where I sit

Lynn Stevenson

Three trunks
claw the slope.

Unseen roots
sneakily suck
springs of the field,
so shoots sprout out.

Muscle-tough, they bump
and it's all quite "ouch!"

But from where I sit
I cannot see
whose twig it is
that sketches the sky,
whose branch plays with shape
and the spaces between.

The clouds above
see just one blob,
in winter, brown.

But Oh! The spring
will smother in green,
and what a sight
that will be:
the Three in One.

Julian's journey from Norwich to Thirsk

Elizabeth Baxter

Holy Rood House in Thirsk, North Yorkshire, was the venue for a challenging research weekend on Julian of Norwich last March. Professor Brian Thorne from the Centre for Counselling Studies at the University of East Anglia opened the weekend with a lecture entitled "Journeys in Relationship: Carl Rogers and Julian of Norwich." The next day he developed this theme, then Dr Kevin McGill presented a paper entitled "What Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe have so much to talk about", and Petra Galama presented a paper entitled "The Transformative Capacity of Beholding Lovingly." The day was drawn together by Professor June Boyce Tillman from King Alfred's College, Winchester, who also gave the evening's performance of "The Life and Work of Julian of Norwich" through music, drama and dance.

For those who stayed over the weekend in Holy Rood House, Sunday morning (Mothering Sunday) provided an opportunity to explore Julian's understanding of the Motherhood of God. The Eucharist was written entirely from Julian's words, in an original liturgy developed at Holy Rood House.

We now look forward to another research weekend on Julian, on 6-7 February 2004. Professor Grace Jantzen, Research Professor of Religion, Culture and Gender at Manchester University, will be giving the Annual Hildegard Lecture. Her subject will be "A Comparative Study of the Writings of Julian of Norwich and René Descartes, and the Consequences for Models of Identity and Relationship."

Jonathan Baxter, Co-ordinator for the Centre for the Study of Theology and Health at Holyrood House, is always pleased to hear from people doing research in these areas. The Centre has an excellent library, and Holyrood House provides a comfortable and supportive base for writing and reflection.

Elizabeth and Jonathan Baxter can be contacted at Holy Rood House, 10 Sowerby Road, Thirsk, North Yorkshire YO7 1HX.

- telephone 01845 522580
- email: holyroodhouse@centrethirsk.fsnet.co.uk
- website: www.holyroodhouse.freeuk.com

Take down your lantern

Anon

Take down your lantern from its niche and go out;
you may not rest in firelight certainties
secure from drifting log of doubt and fear;
you may not build yourself containing walls,
and say thus far
and thus far
and thus far shall I walk
and these things shall I do and nothing more.
Go out,
for need calls loudly in the winding lanes,
and you may seek Christ there;
your pilgrim heart shall urge you
still one more pace beyond,
and love shall be your lantern flame.

This was printed earlier this year in the final edition of Christian Community, the magazine of NACCAN (the Association of Christian Communities and Networks).



RAPHAEL

The Madonna of the Pinks (1507–08)

Reviews

At Sea With God

Margaret Silf

DLT, 2003, £8.99

"We are all in the same boat. We are 'all at sea'. But my experience, and yours, might give us reason to believe that we are not at sea alone. We are at sea with each other and with God. Journey well!"

With these words, Margaret Silf ends her introduction to this fascinating, challenging, inspiring and insightful allegory of the spiritual journey. Coming out of the depths of her own weather-beaten faith, her reflective living and her creative imagination, this book explores spiritual voyaging in all its aspects from launch to shipwreck and beyond. It is a chart and compass, a guide and mentor, a handbook and almanac but, most of all, it is a "deep calling to deep" – an invitation to put to sea.

We are led to look at our spirituality from the perspective of a voyage – the importance and variety of boats, the preparation and equipment necessary.

While scripture, as it informs, and is informed by, the author's experience, is the bedrock of the book, we are also offered insights from the story of the Titanic, the high-flying Jonathon Livingstone Seagull, the Ancient Mariner, John Harrison (inventor of the concept of latitude), Ellen MacArthur and a great cloud of other witnesses.

There is a great deal of helpful input from the author's own experience and it is shared in such a way as to enable the readers to get in touch with their own journey and resources. Helpful and searching questions and suggestions lead us deeper into our selves, into our own experience and our deeper longings. The meditations are thoughtfully written and moving in more than one sense. There are many gold nuggets here:

- Heaven is the wholeness of each of us within the wholeness of all creation
- The voyage itself is our personal part of the eternal story that is unfolding through aeons of time
- The chains that hold us captive can be the very same chains that can lead us to the depths of ourselves
- Many of us have overdosed on a sense of sin.

This is an excellent, imaginative, deeply spiritual and inspirational sequel

to Margaret Silf's book *Taste and See*. It is for nautical types and landlubbers alike. It is for all who wish to enjoy a depth of relationship and living which, in the words of a famous hymn, is "wide, wide as the ocean...deep, deep as the deepest sea", and for all who would obey the call of Jesus to "launch out into the deep".

Ken Lawson

Infinitely Beloved: the Challenge of Divine Intimacy

Brian Thorn

DLT, 2003, £8.95

Brian Thorn is a person-centred therapist and a liberal Catholic Anglican. He was invited to deliver the 2002 Sarum Theological Lectures at Salisbury Cathedral from his unique perspective at the "psychological-theological interface". This book is a slightly amended version of those lectures.

He draws on the insights of Julian of Norwich, Carl Rogers (who developed the person-centred school of therapy), and George Lyward (founder of Finchden Manor, a therapeutic community for troubled adolescents). His theme is that we are infinitely and individually beloved of God, and have within us His capacity to love others openly and unconditionally. He appeals to society and the church to live out these truths in an increasingly desperate world.

It is a bold and diverse call, ranging from education and parenting to materialism and weapons of mass destruction! This broad sweep results in generalised observations that offer food for thought rather than cogent argument. Thorn is deeply critical of what he sees as the judgement-oriented nature of the institutional church, though his clarion call for change offers general statements rather practical suggestions.

I personally struggled with his implication that we not only reflect God's image as we express his love, but actually "become divine". Perhaps his over-grandiose view of humankind is not surprising: both Carl Rogers and George Lyward started out as ordinands before leaving the church altogether. Julian alone maintained a Christ-centred focus, living out her days within the church, even as she looked out on the world.

Despite this misgiving, I was left with much to think about, not least the breathtaking insight that "we are beloved of God simply because we exist."

Julie McGuinness

Silence of the Soul: a Guide to Prayer of the Heart through Words and Music
Margaret Rizza

Kevin Mayhew, 2002, £13.99 (CD)

Margaret Rizza introduces her theme of prayer as gift, as grace (using words of Julian of Norwich). A love relationship with God and His desire for each one of us to be completely one with Him.

The CD takes the listener on a journey through words and music to the silence of the heart that gives strength to bring about change, even transformation. An experience, not theory, of allowing ourselves just to be.

In the words of John Main, Margaret Rizza explains that the Prayer of the Heart leads us into deeper realms of silence and into the mystery of prayer – the eternal silence of God, the invitation to Christian prayer.

The CD is an excellent resource for groups as well as for personal reflection. I have used sections of it at our Julian Meeting, together with teaching on meditation and contemplation, and these have led each one present into a personal experience.

Brenda Smith

God in All Things: the Sequel to God of Surprises

Gerard Hughes

Hodder & Stoughton, 2003, £10.99

Those who have come to admire Gerard Hughes as a trusted guide in matters spiritual will certainly appreciate this thoughtful book. *God in All Things* is billed as a sequel to Hughes's *God of Surprises* – a book written some 20 years ago which has become a classic of spiritual guidance. In *God of Surprises*, Hughes introduced many people to the God of gentleness and compassion. The book had a special appeal to those who could “hardly dare believe that God is within them”. Similarly, *God in All Things* is written not just for those who are faithful church people, but also for those who are on the fringes of Christianity, or who are disillusioned with Church structures and dogmas.

The substance of Hughes's argument comes from his understanding that since he wrote *God of Surprises* the world has become a very different place: the pace and stresses of life have increased while organised religion is in a terminal decline. We live in a post-modern pick-and-mix society. He points out that today people are not interested in the Church or matters

of faith, but spirituality has become fashionable. Readers are helped to see this split between life and religion and between religion and spirituality. Hughes says that for most people, God and the church have nothing to do with the ordinary things of life. Taking this into account, the result is that those who are seeking a spirituality face deep confusion. He asks "What is holiness?" – the meaning of which he goes on to explore. Such thoughts are not necessarily new but many people will find some truth in Hughes's comments.

Naturally, Hughes affirms religion as something which cannot stand apart from God and creation. In reality the ground for all things is God with whom is our ultimate identity. We can be at one with God and experience Him in the ordinary, in the joy and sadness of things. Hughes longs for people to share in this understanding which, for him, gives a sense of meaning to the whole of everyday life and living. "We can only meet God in and through our experience of the world." God is for all people, in all people and in all things.

He asserts that God may be known outside the straight-jacket of the Church. God should not, and cannot, be locked up in pious formalities of religion. God is the "loving God of the impossible" and is "always greater than all our expectations yet closer to each of us than we are to ourselves."

Recognition of all this, and acting upon such knowledge, will give new hope to people in all kinds of spiritual need and ultimately to the Church, reversing the decline in religion and promoting faith. Hughes does not abandon the Church as an organisation. He writes: "I feel confident in the future of the Church because God is always greater, and that no one of us can predict what forms the Church may take in the future."

As in *God of Surprises*, Hughes offers his readers various exercises to complete to take them deeper into his psychological and spiritual wisdom. The book may be used for group study as well as read individually. It is certainly a book of support for all who are struggling with issues of faith and life and gets right to the heart of spiritual needs to stimulate and encourage.

It is impossible in a short review to do justice to Hughes's clearly-argued account of his ideas. *God in All Things* will repay careful reading; and the fact that it is written by Gerard Hughes will rightly recommend it.

Paul Harrison

The Smile of Love

Joyce Huggett

Kevin Mayhew, 2003, £9.99

A smile is recognised throughout the world as a sign of openness, love and acceptance, and this book conveys God's smile of love. A person's smile can convey so much including encouragement and reassurance, so Joyce Huggett gives examples from her own life experiences to show this. She continues by revealing how God's smile and Jesus's love can be found in the world around us and in the bible, making references to verses and psalms. She also includes a delightful anthology focusing on God's love by drawing from Christian writers throughout the centuries, including five opening entries from Julian of Norwich.

On a more practical note, a series of short meditations are provided, with helpful direction, complemented by sensitive two-tone line drawings by Sister Theresa Margaret CHN. This book can provide a bounty of nourishment for those needing structured help along their prayer journey and I would happily dip into it with awe and wonder at God's love. It can be read individually or as a group, but either way it is a reminder of just how much God loves each one of us even amidst our busy times.

Fiona Wallace

Colourful Prayer

Sheila Julian Merryweather

Kevin Mayhew, 2003, £7.99

When words simply don't convey what we want to express, this book provides an alternative way, by using colour. It is clearly and simply presented with a sensitive approach inviting you to pick up a crayon and have a go. The process of using colour unfolds as exercises are explained and plenty of examples given.

The book can be used on its own with your imagination and feelings or in conjunction with something else, perhaps a picture, a piece of scripture, some music or a photograph. It can be approached as an individual or in a group, so the appendix provides an outline plan for a day's workshop for those intending to share their experiences. It really is a wonderful way to pray when words are inadequate, for all ages, for everyone.

Fiona Wallace

Showings of Love

Julian of Norwich, translated by Julia Bolton Holloway

DLT, 2003, £9.95

This is a new translation of the greatly-revered book that is usually known as *The Revelations of Divine Love*. It was Clifton Wolters's translation, first published in 1966 as a Penguin Classic, that made the Lady Julian's book so readily available. Since then there have been very many translations, edited versions and adaptations each of which has had a slightly different aim, whether scholarly or devotional. Clifton Wolters's aim was to render a medieval text into modern English and so to reach the general reader. The fact that Penguin has reprinted it again and again is a tribute to his success. At the other extreme, Marion Glasscoe (University of Exeter, 1976) gives us a straight transliteration of the Sloane Manuscript no.1, a 17th century copy of a lost manuscript, which retains its medieval flavour. Julian was the first woman known to write a book in English. She used the language that came naturally to her. If, now, we are fascinated by the quaintness of her vocabulary, this has nothing to do with Julian or the value of her great book.

Julia Bolton Holloway's book scores over all the others in that she has amalgamated all the MSS but provided a useable apparatus to guide the reader through the inevitable complications. She uses grey and red type to help with this and also to embellish the text, as a gesture toward the beauty of hand-written manuscripts. She translates some of the words but not all, so we do not forget that we are visiting the 14th century.

This is a delightful book to hold and use, but not so handy for the pocket as the Penguin. It is full of information about the various manuscripts and has a little to say about theological content. Unfortunately, Julia Bolton Holloway relies heavily on speculation when she considers Julian's circumstances and background. For example, there is no evidence that Julian was prevented from joining the Order at Carrow because she was disabled. Others have played with the idea that she might have been married and widowed, and even have lost children to the Black Death. We know little of her life. That must have been how she wanted it.

It is a pity that the cover designer does not seem to know what English hazel leaves look like.

Pamela Fawcett

Open to God: Meditating on the Incarnation

Joyce Huggett

Kevin Mayhew, 2003, £9.99 (4th revised edition)

Open to God is a guide to imaginative contemplation. The emphasis is on *doing* – on learning by praying, so although about a third of it is made up of the direct teaching of contemplative prayer and the use of the imagination, most of it is guided meditations. Most of the meditations focus on the events which preceded and followed the birth of Jesus, making them particularly good to use at this time of year. The core content of the book remains the same as earlier editions, but the presentation has been improved; it is written in a more direct style, particularly in the guided meditations; and there are new suggestions for music to accompany them. The book is generously illustrated with line drawings by Sister Theresa Margaret CHN and one from Sister Catherine SLG.

It is good to see *Open to God* in print again. It has become a firm favourite with many people since it was first published in 1989 and it has lost none of its appeal.

Gail Ballinger

Finding Hope Again: Journeying through Sorrow and Beyond

Peter Millar

Canterbury Press, 2003, £8.99

For many years, Peter Millar, a minister, and his wife Dorothy, an eminent bacteriologist, served people in India and other parts of the world – people who were marginalised and often suffering. They also worked on Iona where Peter was warden of the Abbey and offered support and ways of renewal. Peter wrote this book after 27 years of marriage, as a response to Dorothy's sudden and unexpected death.

Initially he explores his own reactions and grief, offering intimate and honest comments on personal bereavement. He has included letters written to and from friends and associates at that time and in so doing has added a useful dimension to the language of grief. People give of their thoughtful, loving best in such letters and it is good that they reach a wider audience.

In later sections of the book, Peter Millar expands the circle of grief with stories of people he has known who have been bereaved through personal loss, through breakdown, through lost causes. He shows that, through

perseverance and courage, hope can return – the experience of loss can move people on to new beginnings which, in a mysterious way, are rooted in the loss.

The book is more than a quarry for the bereaved, who can hew from it poetry, incidents and encouragement to sustain them. For them, and for those who have not experienced directly the trauma of personal bereavement, it provides opportunities to grow in understanding and to obtain an informed awareness of loss. Above all it affirms, in the words of Václav Havel which are quoted in the book, that:

“It is hope

Above all, which gives us the strength to live

And continually try new things.”

Janet Robinson

Stories to Help you Pray: Stories with Guided Prayer Journeys for Children
Susan Lacy

Bible Reading Fellowship, 2002, £5.99

Each of the guided meditations in this book is taken from the Gospels, told from the point of view of a child and set within its historical background, enabling children to enter the story with their imaginations and to meet Jesus. This book is an excellent resource for teaching children to pray. There are notes for teachers to help them pray and meditate with a group or class. At the end of each story there are notes on how to “look in”, questions for reflection, notes on how to “look out” and finally a prayer.

The author is a member of the National Association of Writers in Education and all the material in the book has been thoroughly field-tested.

The material has been used with some of our Sunday Club by one of our layworkers, who found the book to be well-written with up-to-date language and especially well thought-out stories. These are traditional but explore the possibilities of children seeing the stories from a different angle and becoming involved themselves.

The prayers and meditations are well set out. By using the examples given, children are enabled to focus and to experience what is happening, encouraging them to express themselves more fully, with prayer becoming for them part of daily life.

Brenda Smith

Whispers of Love

Pat Marsh

Foundry Press, 2003, £4.99

This is a collection of over 40 poems/meditations which explore the author's experience of God. They are all grouped into sections such as Personal Trials, Questioning, Surrender, Celebration. I have used some of the prayers in the section Prayer and Stillness as lead-ins to silence.

These meditations resonate deeply with our own journey of faith and are expressed with simplicity and freshness. A little book to be prayed over slowly.

Yvonne Walker

The Treasures of Darkness: a Spiritual Companion for Life's Watching and Waiting Times

Barbara Mosse

Canterbury Press, 2003, £7.99

The initial inspiration for this book and its recurrent theme came from the words:

"I will give you the treasures of darkness
and riches hidden in secret places,
so that you may know that it is I, the Lord,
the God of Israel,
who call you by your name" (Isaiah 45:3).

The book is focused on Advent and Lent, aiming to help the reader make the most of these seasons, but the intention is that the reflections should equally apply to any time of darkness in our own lives: the painful, bewildering, sometimes empty times that shape our path.

It is an unusual undertaking to consider Advent and Lent together in this way. The author approaches the task by considering a series of scenes; the scenes for Advent and for Lent are separated into two acts, each with a slightly different flavour. The Advent scenes convey a general sense of darkness as an experience of waiting, expectation, anticipation and yearning, while the Lent explorations are more sombre and convey a sense of darkness as a time of suffering, fear and questioning. The first scene in each act sets the context by outlining the origins of Advent/Lent. Each scene draws on the author's thought and experience and that of a wide variety of people from St Francis

of Assisi and Hildegard of Bingen to Joni Eareckson Tada, Thomas Merton and Brian Keenan. Each scene concludes with Ideas for Prayer and Reflection which are intended to provide a flexible starting point for exploratory prayer work by individuals or groups; these could be resources for lead-ins for a Julian Meeting.

This book repays slow and reflective reading and could be a recurrent companion. Having read it during the bright and sunny days of September, I look forward to reading it again during the dark season of Advent.

Gail Ballinger

Beads and Prayers: the Rosary in History and Devotion

John D Miller

Burns and Oates, 2002, £9.99

The origins of the rosary are buried in legends of the saints and visions of the Virgin Mary. The rosary prayer has been energetically promoted by generations of popes, who have enriched it with indulgences. Add to this the (to the uninitiated) daunting technique required to practise it, and you have the epitome of Roman Catholic piety and culture. For millions, great and small, learned and unlearned, it was and still is (in spite of a recent decline in its use) "the compendium of the entire gospel" – a form of prayer grounded in the mysteries of the incarnation and redemption. Dr Miller soberly and skilfully guides us through the history, varieties, symbolism, papal teaching, methods and devotion of the rosary and incidentally explores numerous allied Catholic prayers and devotions. He helps us understand both the appeal and the profundity of this prayer, in which we are invited to meditate on the "great events of our redemption" in the company of the Blessed Virgin Mary "who pondered all these things in her heart" (Luke 2:19). This prayerful pondering, as Dr Miller makes clear, is not hindered but helped by the mantra-like repetition of the Lord's Prayer, the angelic salutation (the "Hail Mary") and the doxology; nor by the simultaneous passing of the regularly divided "worry beads" through the fingers: both of these practices help quieten the mind and the body, allowing the gospel scenes and words to penetrate to the heart, the organ of prayer. This book may be recommended as a stimulus to the devotion of those already familiar with the rosary and a reliable introduction to this prayer for those who are not.

Paul Rea

Turning the Diamond: Exploring George Herbert's Images of Prayer
Dennis Lennon

SPCK, 2002, £9.99

In his exploration of George Herbert's sonnet "Prayer", Dennis Lennon helps us get below the surface of what is an incredible, almost surrealistic prayer containing lines such as "The Milky Way, the Bird of Paradise". As Dennis Lennon says in his opening chapter, "If this is prayer, then I know nothing about prayer." This book will not tell you what George Herbert meant when he wrote these words. It will help you to explore more fully the different facets and images of prayer as the author takes each line of the Sonnet and teases it open. This book can also lead you into a different world of prayer through a prayer which is utterly different to what most of us think of as prayer.

Bill Elliot

God is Love Alone

Brother Roger of Taizé

Continuum, 2003, £8.99

For many of us there are times when we need to be reminded of part of the central core of our faith.

Just as for many Taizé in itself can be a beacon of light and hope and reconciliation, so Brother Roger's books can help revive flagging spirits. At the core of Brother Roger's teaching is a belief that God is in all and through all and with all: God shares in our suffering, that through compassion and simplicity of life from humble trust in God comes serene joy.

With a few anecdotes Brother Roger illustrates his central theme that "all God can do is give His love", and throughout the book comes reassurance that God loves everyone, forgives everyone and asks everyone to forgive. He emphasises that God loves all: that there is no will to punish in God. He reminds us that "God speaks above all by silent intuitions" and that "in this silence the Holy Spirit can enable us to welcome God's joy and hear God's call."

I recommend this book as an antidote to flagging spirits, and as a reminder that there is love, forgiveness and hope in our world. Many short passages can be used as lead-ins, but above all this book is a call to each of us to find the faith and hope and love that is at the centre of our calling by God.

Francis Ballinger

Mystics: a Guide to Happiness

Theresa De Bertodano

Lion Publishing, 2003, £4.99

This compact and reasonably-priced handbook is a well-designed source of short quotations from a wide variety of well-known mystics from the past, such as St Teresa of Avila, Julian of Norwich, Thomas Merton and Evelyn Underhill, and from some contemporary mystics such as Roger Schultz (the founder of Taizé), Pope John Paul II, Desmond Tutu, Jean Vanier and Graham Kendrick.

The quotations are divided into seven themed chapters with titles such as The Love of God, Prayer, Joy, Suffering, Living with Others, Growing Older, and Inner Peace. Each chapter has a short introduction followed by about 20 quotations on the theme accompanied by some vibrant colour photos of views from nature which complement and add depth to the themes. Each chapter can be used as a lead-in for meetings, either with one reader/leader or possibly with other members of the group sharing in the reading of the quotations and showing the photos between the quotations.

Michael Tiley

Doors into Prayer: an Invitation

Emilie Griffin

DLT, 2003, £6.95

This little book is chiefly made up of 90 or so pages of short reflections on prayer – or “invitations” as they are called here. These can be read straight through to give a useful overview, but the author intends them to open doors into prayer: “My hope is that you will often put the book down and pray.” I found myself drawn by the invitations to do just that. They include some teaching of techniques but also expand the reader’s experience by drawing on that of a range of prayerful people from Jesus to Karl Rahner. The length of the reflections and choice of subject makes Part One an ideal resource for lead-ins to contemplative prayer either for individuals or groups.

The invitations are followed by five longer, structured exercises; these need an hour or so to use them fully. Each exercise calls for a slightly different prayer method, based on scripture and on the experience of modern people, and would be helpful to use on an unstructured quiet day or part day.

Gail Ballinger

Quiet Spaces: Prayer Interludes for Busy Women

Patricia Wilson

BRE, 2003, £5.99

This book offers a series of meditations, taking approximately five minutes each, which would fit perfectly into the daily schedules of busy modern women at all stages of their lives. The meditations cover a wide variety of situations and occasions, and each offers words of wisdom from scripture to be held in the heart to support and encourage throughout the day. Together with the thoughtful meditations there are prayers and short exercises to anchor the insights the book gives into the very fabric of one's life. A warm, uplifting book that will light up the "Quiet Spaces" of the day.

Shirley Cooke

Tenby, south Wales: the harbour at low tide



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 **1 February 2004**. Please type, or write clearly, on one side of the paper. Contributions by email are welcome.

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Large-print magazine

The Julian Meetings magazine is also available in an A4 size, large print format (actual type size as shown here).

If you would like a large print version of the magazine instead of the usual A5 size, please contact the Editor.

Magazine subscription: price rise

From 2004, the cost of an annual subscription to the Julian Meetings magazine will rise from £4.50 to £6.00. We are sorry to do this as we know that it will make it more difficult for some people to subscribe. This is, however, the first increase since 1997. Since that time, printing costs have risen, and the magazine is also much longer (and therefore more expensive to produce) than it used to be. We have to cover our costs and we reluctantly decided that we had no alternative but to put the price up. We hope you will consider that the magazine is still good value for money.