


THE  
JULIAN  
MEETINGS

A decorative floral ornament consisting of three stylized flowers. The central flower is larger and contains a globe with latitude and longitude lines. The two side flowers are smaller and simpler. The entire ornament is framed by a wavy line.

*Magazine*  
*December*  
*2012*

## *The Julian Meetings*

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

# The Julian Meetings Magazine December 2012

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## *Julian Meetings Jottings*

### **A5 LEAFLET on Contemplative Prayer**

The centre-fold of this magazine is a leaflet explaining JM and contemplative prayer in a very brief way. A version of this has proved popular at Quiet Days, so we offer it for anyone in JM to use. You can remove the centre pages and copy them, for use by your own meeting, or take to events on prayer, or JM or anything similar. It is also on our publications order form and available from Pat Robinson, and on our website.

### **JM COUNCIL**

On 12 October we held our JM Council meeting, in Oxford, to which 14 of the 16 members came, plus Yvonne Walker the previous National Co-ordinator. It was a good opportunity to share what we do, and discuss how we take things forward in various ways. JM has always relied on Julians volunteering their time and skills to enable the Julian Meetings not only to exist but to flourish, at minimal cost to its membership. We are all very grateful for the voluntary contributions of so many people, both today and in times past.

### **40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

On 11 May 2013 we hold our 40th Anniversary Celebration in London. If you are not familiar with our keynote speaker in the morning, Angela Ashwin, Janet Robinson's article on the next page will enlighten you. The morning will end with a corporate silence. After lunch there will be a time to share memories of JM past and hopes for the future; look at memorabilia and 'anniversary cards'; perhaps hold a workshop; and share some closing worship.

### ***'Anniversary Card'***

On Pages 15/16 you will find an 'anniversary card' which you are invited, if you wish, to write on and send in. It can be from an individual, or from a Julian Meeting. You may write (or draw) whatever you feel is appropriate - greetings, a prayer, hopes, memories, information, whatever you'd like to send in for the occasion. We plan to display them on 11 May, quote

some in future magazines, and keep them in the JM archive, as we did with those from the 30th anniversary event.

We have asked for information about your Julian Meeting to be included on the back, as this will provide a 'snapshot' of typical Julian Meetings in our 40th year.

Please cut the 'cards' out carefully and send them in to:

*Deidre Morris, 263 Park Lodge Lane, Wakefield WF1 4HY*

### ***Photos of your Meeting***

Thanks to the two Meetings who have sent in a photo about themselves to Anne Stamper (see August Magazine) She would be delighted to receive some more in the next 2-3 months. They will be part of a power-point presentation about JM running at Lumen during our day there, and available for presentations / prayer events subsequently.

### ***Booking a ticket***

The GB Newsletter has a booking form for the event (only 100 tickets available) which will also be on the website from the start of January. Ten years ago we had a couple of people from outside the UK who planned to be in England then and were able to come.

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## ***Angela Ashwin***

I hope that Angela will not read this first paragraph, for when she was suggested as the speaker at our 40<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration I had to confess that, unlike the rest of the Core Group, I had never heard her nor read any of her books.

When she kindly agreed to come I repaired the omission. How glad I am that I did. I found that she had written many books on prayer, spirituality and the Christian life and was a renowned leader of retreats. I also learned, and this appealed particularly, that she had achieved all this while leading a busy family life, supporting a Vicar husband and that she is now a Lay Canon and Honorary reader. As a woman who has also led an active family life while trying, not always effectively, to work in the community and the church, I reckon she must speak with wisdom

*Continued overleaf*

and practical experience.

Her *Book of a Thousand Prayers* is, as many of you know, a wonderful resource which can be used in many ways. *Woven into Prayer* (new paperback edition 2010 and reviewed by Gail Ballinger in April 2011) is, I know, a book that will support my personal prayer and reading. But the book which has particularly spoken to my condition is *Faith in the Fool: Risk and Delight in the Christian Adventure* (fully reviewed by Brian Morris in this magazine in 2010). In it Angela explores the creative idea of Christ as one who says the unsayable, teases the Establishment and is not afraid to look a fool.

This summer we had a three month period of anxious waiting and uncertainty regarding the health of a family member. I chose *Faith in the Fool* for my morning reading and, as she suggested, started where a chapter caught my eye. So I found myself, not surprisingly, reading the section 'The Vulnerable Fool'. So much of it was supportive, encouraging and wise. Her comment on a woman who had suffered a tragic bereavement was such a valuable reminder of mindfulness: "She followed the ancient wisdom of taking one moment at a time"

A passage which I appreciate for its simple honesty is:

*Prayer is a foolish business. There is no guaranteed outcome and if we do not get the answers we want we may start thinking it is our fault or that God does not exist at all.*

She goes on to say that doubt is perfectly natural and that one cannot confine beliefs within unthinking dogma because "no dogma can ever contain the mystery of God".

After being sustained by the section on vulnerability I went on to explore those on The Delighted Fool, where Angela makes a good case for pure enjoyment; on de-cluttering our lives; on learning the value of uselessness. This section, where she writes that stillness can seem daft and useless to many, provides an excellent pathway into quiet prayer.

4 I am so glad that Angela will be with us on 11 May 2013.



## Looking Out of the Window

Birds have been yelling at me all day,  
Trees trying to flag me down,  
The sky making faces.

What does it take  
To get  
My attention?

In the room the clock taps its foot,  
The window opens its eye,  
The chair waits for me patient, knowing

Silence comes in to be with me,  
Doesn't even need a chair  
To be at ease.

Sunlight leans against a tree.  
God and I just sit, saying nothing,  
Looking out of the window.

**Steve Garaas-Holmes**

*Unfolding Light*    [www.unfoldinglight.com](http://www.unfoldinglight.com)

**LISTEN is an anagram of SILENT**

## More Thoughts About Mindfulness

I practised for many years as a counsellor and a psycho-therapist, and found that many of my clients benefitted from practising a variation of mindfulness, especially those who had stress problems.

In most cases, at some stage in the counselling process, I would teach the client a relaxation exercise based on deep breathing. Sometimes, if appropriate, I would pass on a few thoughts from my own experience of 'living in the present moment' or 'practising the presence of God'. I suggested that clients stop for a few minutes at a time to focus on being more aware of their surroundings, using their senses of sight, sound, touch, smell and taste, and to do this several times a day. By getting into this habit it was easier for them to remember to do it when feelings of anxiety started to build up. 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow .....

**Valerie Wallis**

I'd like to reply to Marjorie Humphreys article (August JM Magazine) and "join in a debate" – or talk to people – about the "Mindfulness" course and its use of meditation.

I've not been on this course, but heard about it at a conference on "Meditation and Mental Health" hosted by WCCM in May 2011. I understood that people are taught both watching, rather than reacting to, thoughts, and learning to be in silence. I feel this must be helpful to people who suffer, particularly if prone to depression. I think it corresponds to the spiritual practice recommended in "The Silent Land" by Martin Laird. My spiritual practice has helped me – keep going, keep trying – and, actually, kept me functioning in family and society all these years without another breakdown.

I believe silent prayer lets God in: that people today need to recover the space for the natural spiritual faculties of the inner life, in which God, or Meaning in what ever form you need to describe it (him/her), may be encountered.

It would worry me if, in teaching this course, there was no

mention of a “Higher Power”, such as in the AA Twelve Step Programme, or at least a “Deeper Reality.” Two years ago I was off work with stress and ‘burn-out’ and had a few sessions with a CBT- trained counsellor . I found her helpful, but I was disturbed by nuances in the way she referred to my practice of meditation, of which she heartily approved. My uneasiness was precisely what Marjorie refers to. The counsellor said, “You have the tools”: - subtext - “I can sign this one off.” I believe that meditation - silent prayer - is always, whether we know it or not, open ended, because God is at the other end.

My second point has wider implications. Where in Christian talk, and in this magazine, is the “Dark Night of the Soul”? When I was in the utmost distress, 21 years old, at the height of a depressive breakdown, I knocked on the door of the Franciscans in Cambridge. I spoke to Father Barnabas Lindars of my desperation, and he – a brilliant lecturer in the Divinity School – said to me, “What you describe sounds like an experience of the Dark Night of the Soul; I’m afraid I don’t know much about that.” Bless him! With those words – he didn’t solve my problem at all and I certainly didn’t think I was that spiritually advanced! - he included me within the providence of God’s infinite love and wisdom, and gave me - a way back.

I have been meditating seriously, twice a day, for more than fifteen years now. I stick with that. At present I am experiencing much pain, grief and fear – and sometimes despair. Thomas Keating speaks of “the unloading of the unconscious” ( I’ve done a lot of reading!) Perhaps it will come to an end, as he says it does. I don’t consider that I’m experiencing the “dark night of the soul”. But we must know ourselves, before we can know God, and leave behind much that we are attached to. How can there not be pain? Why do we not talk about it?

I pray for a softening of the barrier in people’s minds between the psychological and the spiritual. Do we not all have a wound which is uncovered in the spiritual journey?

***Nan McCubbin***

## **A Quiet Afternoon with Mother Julian of Norwich**

The Boxgrove & Tangmere Julian Meeting meets monthly, for 45 minutes. The first 15 minutes is used for catching up with news and then, for 30 minutes, we lay aside all distracting thoughts and sit in silence, taking it in turn to lead in to the time of contemplation.

On 9 May 15 members gathered at Park Cottage, Halnaker, to share a quiet afternoon of peace and inspiration with the Rev'd Ian Forrester from Boxgrove Priory. We met from 2.00pm - 5.00pm and, despite the variable weather, were able to enjoy Merle and Peter's beautiful house *and* garden.

Fr. Ian's theme was God's unchanging and unconditional love for us. He used Mother Julian's writings, and the hymn 'My Song Is Love Unknown', to show how God's very identity is love, and how God's love is reflected in us. We are loved, and called to share that love with all. We are 'enfolded in love' and shaped by love. Love is always active. Love cherishes, cheers, and always respects others. Jesus' message was that the unloved can be changed, can be turned round. No-one is outside God's love. But we switch off, and keep little bits of our past to ourselves to spoil us. We ration our love, and put up barriers between us and God. We should always examine ourselves and see what prevents us from realising that God is there ready to pick us up and re-enfold us in His love.

Fr. Ian expanded his theme in his second address, reflecting on how it is easy to believe in love when we are surrounded by beauty and love. It becomes difficult when cares rush in and threaten to take us over. But God's love is always constant, and we will never be tipped over the edge if we put our trust in Him.

We ended with an act of worship and a Julian prayer before we left feeling refreshed and restored. Mother Julian had performed her magic once again.

***Iris Watts***

## An 'Olympic' Quiet Day in Yorkshire

The Beverley Julian Meeting held their annual Quiet Day on Thursday 26 July at Wydale Hall, the York diocesan retreat centre on the edge of the North York Moors. The 15 of us from the Beverley Meeting were delighted to be joined by nine members from the nearby North Ferriby Meeting, and to have Deidre Morris, our JM National Co-ordinator, to facilitate our thinking.

Deidre's theme for the day (the eve of the Olympics) was very appropriately linked to the Olympics and entitled Gold, Silver and Bronze. We were helped to think about the attributes and characteristics of each of these metals, and what these may mean for us in our Christian journey and experiences.

"Gold is the metal to symbolise God, GOD with L – for love, or learner, or lost – enclosed within it. We too are enclosed by God's love, to learn to love and to never be lost, but always held in the palm of his hand.

Silver, if neglected or shut away and not used, can tarnish and so can our spiritual lives from being shut away, or doing the same things again and again). The closer we stay to God the easier it will be for us to stay spiritually bright and clear to reflect his love to other people.

Bronze is usually an alloy of copper and tin, an amalgam of more than one metal. Because of this it is stronger, and also less prone to corrosion. We too, as Christians, need other Christians for mutual worship, support, encouragement, challenge, learning and growth."

After each of the excellent teaching sessions we were encouraged, in silence, to enter into the stillness of this beautiful place with its spectacular gardens and views; its labyrinth; its chapel for silent contemplation; other rooms where we could sit, read or write; or use the drawing and colouring resources thoughtfully provided by Deidre to help

us express ourselves or become more aware of God's presence. We were asked to keep silent until the end of the closing worship, other than during lunch when we were given the option to sit at a 'talking' table or one set aside for silence.

The whole day was very enriching and feeding. It made one want to stay longer in the peace and quiet we were leaving behind. Though it was good to have the chance to step aside into the tranquillity of Wydale it was also good to realise we were able to take with us all we had been given on this special day of Christian teaching, contemplation and fellowship, and to look forward to our ongoing monthly Julian Meetings.

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*A Quiet Day at Ivy House used as a focus the words of a modern hymn 'Gentle as Silence', with verses 2 & 3 reversed. The hymn was written by Estelle White, a Roman Catholic, who died last year aged 86. We thought you might also find her words an aid to contemplation*

## **Gentle As Silence**

Oh, the Love of my Lord is the essence,  
Of all that I love here on earth,  
All the beauty I see He has given to me,  
And His giving is gentle as silence.

Every day, every hour, every moment,  
Have been blessed by the strength of His love,  
At the turn of each tide, He is there at my side,  
And His touch is as gentle as silence.

There've been times when I've turned from His presence,  
And I've walked other paths, other ways,  
But I've called on His Name in the dark of my shame,  
And His mercy was gentle as silence.



## CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Contemplative prayer has been part of the Christian tradition since earliest times. In the medieval period it became mostly associated with monasticism, but in the 20th century it was reclaimed as a normal part of many people's spiritual journey. 'The Julian Meetings' is a network of groups to foster contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition. Other such networks are listed in a leaflet produced by the Retreat Association.

The terms contemplation and meditation are often used interchangeably. But they are different ways of being open to God. Imagine being shown a picture:

If you meditate on the picture you actively engage your mind, imagination, and perception. What is the subject? How was it painted? How does it affect you? What might the artist have intended?

If you contemplate the picture you just sit and gaze at it, allowing it to 'speak' to you however it may.

So in contemplation we just 'are' before God with the four 'S's: Stillness, Silence, Simplicity, Surrender

**Stillness** enables us to give all our attention to God. It is most important when a group contemplates, as movement or noise from one participant can distract others from focusing on God.

**Silence** allows for the 'still, small voice' of God to be heard, and helps to focus our attention on God — not easy in a society where noise is used as an escape.

**Simplicity** does not mean it is easy, but that it needs minimal external input.

**Surrender.** Much of our Christian life - when, where and how we pray, worship, study - is decided by us. In contemplation we give all the initiative to God, letting God be in control, not us.

Stillness and silence help us to BE fully in the present moment, entirely aware of NOW

## **Different approaches to contemplative prayer.**

We are all different, and at differing stages on our spiritual journeys. So one approach may help us now, but as we grow we may need to try something else. An approach that suits us may not help another person.

Julian Meetings allow you to experience going into and out of contemplative silence, and 'being' in the stillness, with a group of other people. This may make it easier for you to try making time just to BE, alone, with God. It may help you explore a personal approach to the prayer of contemplation, or you may decide to try joining a contemplative prayer group.

## **Ways to lead into, and out of, contemplative silence**

**Words** are often used as a lead into and out of silence. It is usually a passage of scripture, or a poem, or from a religious book, or a novel. The words chosen should not encourage you to *think about* God (ie to meditate) but to become open to some aspect of God as the focus for your contemplation.

A short passage is usually preferable to a long one. You may find that one word or phrase, or an image, stands out for you. Hold that as your focus. When your mind wanders (as it will), just bring it back to that focus.

**A Mantra** is a specific way to use a word or words in contemplation. A word or short phrase — Jesus; Maranatha come Lord Jesus; Lord have mercy; be still and know that I am God — is repeated slowly in your head throughout the silence, the repetition allowing it to go deep into you and resonate. It is usually repeated in rhythm with your breathing.

**Music** can lead in and out of contemplation. It is very useful where issues of language might make words inappropriate, as in bi-lingual parts of Wales, or in a multi-faith group.

**A gong** or a 'singing bowl' may be used instead of music. This again avoids the way words can be too specific.

**A Symbol** may be used as a focus, either on its own or with words, music etc. Many people light a candle when they contemplate. Some use a picture or icon as a visual focus. Many objects - religious, created or natural - can be used as a tactile focus, held in the hand. Scent from herbs, flowers or incense is used by some people (be aware that incense or strongly scented flowers could trigger an allergic or asthmatic reaction, so avoid them in a group).

### **Contemplative prayer on your own.**

Outside the gathered silence and stillness of a group, you may find that other things help you with solo contemplation. Some people can focus their attention better if their hands are busy with a repetitive task like weaving or knitting, or some repetitive aspects of cooking or woodworking. Embroidery or painting helps others. Just walking, or being in a garden, or by the sea may help.

Take thought as to where and when you might wait on God in silence on your own.

Some people can set aside a house corner, with a cross or icon, candle, flowers. You might be able to use a local chapel or church. The garden may suit, if there is a summer house for wet days!

When you seek a time for contemplation consider what time of day will fit in both with your own life, and that of your family, and also the times you are alert enough. Are two shorter times more practicable than one longer time? It can be helpful to have a timer to set - possibly an alarm on your watch if it is not too loud, or a kitchen timer in a cupboard, so that you can hear it go off but it doesn't make you jump.

Ideally personal and group contemplative prayer should complement and enhance each other.

## Words of warning

In contemplation we give the initiative to God. We are there, for that time, just to be with God. God may interact with us in whatever way he/she chooses — but we should not *expect* anything. Many times we may feel that nothing is happening, that it is all a waste of time, but often we do receive something — and it may be quite amazing.

Whatever happens, we should be thankful, and persevere. Human beings (beings, not doings!) are naturally impatient but all things happen in *God's* time, not ours.

Occasionally emotions, fears, regrets, anger etc. may surface during or after the silence, sometimes very strongly. If this does happen it can be very helpful to have a good Christian friend or pastor available with whom you can talk, pray, share.

## Silence is not easy for some.

Many people are unused to silence - finding it unsettling, or scary, or even threatening.

Some people have encountered silence as a threat, or as a punishment. They may at some time have endured hate-filled or angry or terrifying silences.

For some people meditation / contemplation can be very challenging, but it can also be very rewarding if they will persevere.

## Gathered Silence

Sharing prayerful silence with a like-minded group can be both encouraging and strengthening. The whole group can benefit when different people lead in and out of the silence, bringing their own insights and ideas. There can develop an intensity and depth to the silence that is not describable, but can only be experienced and shared.

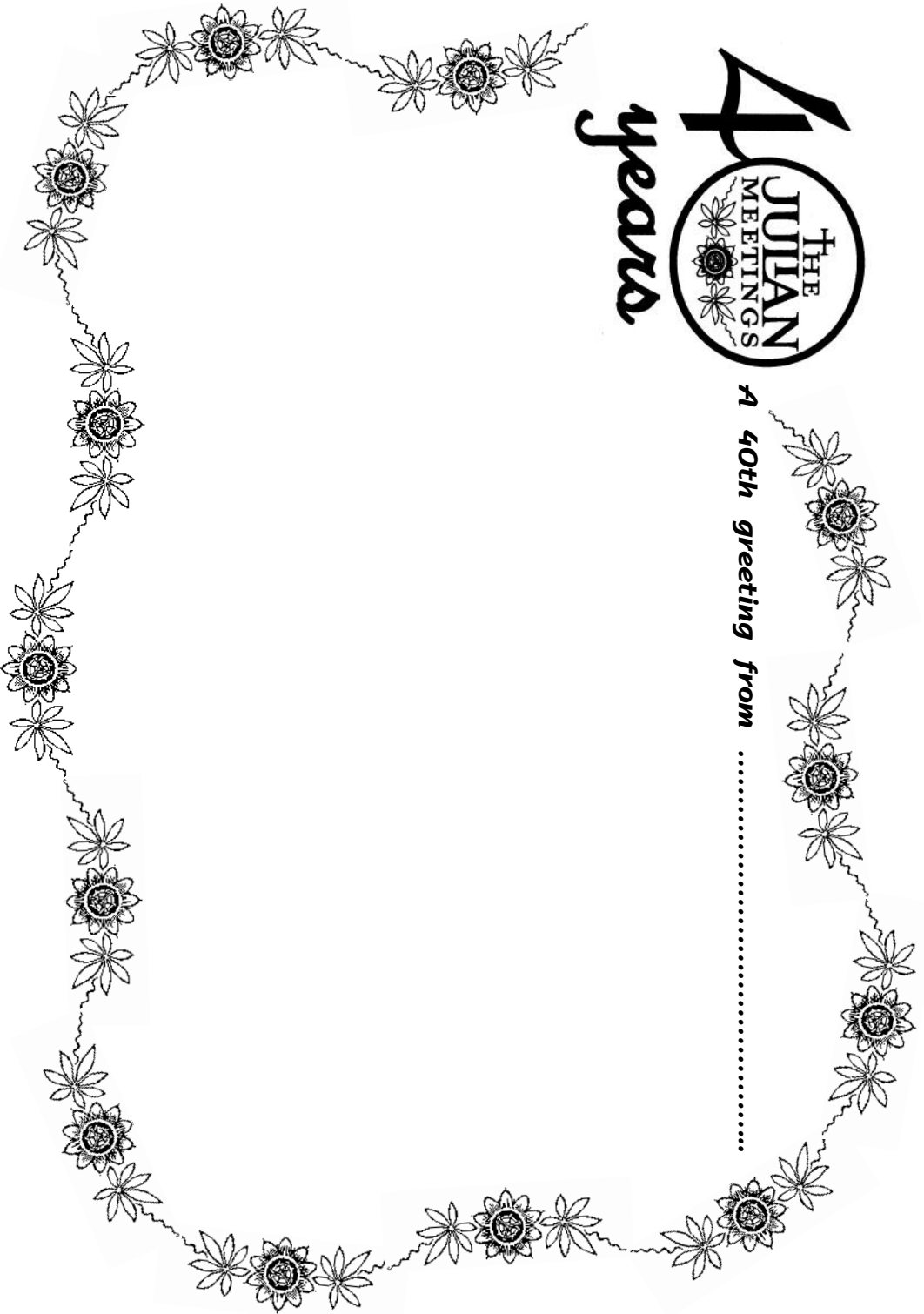
**For more information about The Julian Meetings**  
*visit [www.julianmeetings.org](http://www.julianmeetings.org) or send an sae to*  
263 Park Lodge Lane, Wakefield WF1 4HY



# 4 years



A 40th greeting from .....



## Overleaf is a 40th Anniversary Message from

My name (if from an individual).....

Name of Julian Meeting .....

Name of your town, village etc. (If different) .....

Name of county .....& country.....

How long have you / your Meeting, belonged to the JM network? .....

How many in your Meeting? ..... How many below retirement age? .....

How often do you meet? Weekly / twice a month / monthly / .....

Where do you meet? eg church, home,.....

## BOOK REVIEWS - BOOK REVIEWS BOOK

### **'COME EMMANUEL: approaching Advent, living with Christmas**

***Ann Lewin***

Canterbury Press 2012 £8.99

ISBN 978 1 84825 207 3

There is nothing we can do that can't be an opportunity for making the connection between God and the world.

I really liked this book of reflection, poems and prayers for the seasons of Advent (shaped by the Advent Antiphons) and Christmas (focused on the coming of the Light and growing into the challenges of the future). It is simple yet touching mystery and just the right amount to ponder and digest, encouraging space for stillness, and listening to God.

Themes include: The Antiphons, Wisdom, roots, God with us, suffering, martyrdom and Epiphany. There is an underlying emphasis on contemplation alongside the challenge of responding to the world.

Six chapters are devoted to Advent, four to Christmas.

As well as individual use, the author also suggests a pattern whereby the book could be used in a group over a period of six weeks.

***Gail Ballinger***

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### **BELONGING TO THE BORDERS – a sojourn in the Celtic Tradition**

***Bonnie Bowman Thurston***

Liturgical Press 2011 US\$14-95, £11.99

ISBN 978-0-8146-3367-0

“This is an odd little book, part church history, part spirituality, mostly poetry.” Thus writes the author in the introduction which she calls “The Autobiographical Why”: I am pleased that she wrote those words because it saves me doing it!

It seems an 'odd little book' for an American academic theologian to write unless you appreciate her background and the search for the Celtic traditions of her ancestors. In the late 1990s she visited this country as a guest of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and became friends with Esther de Waal, who wrote the foreword to this book. The author stayed with Esther on the Welsh borders and she was introduced to some of the places she visited and later wrote about.

This is a book of poems, with helpful footnotes to some of them giving their background and context. The collection is in two parts: the first part is poetic meditations on Celtic saints, the second has poems about places she visited: St Davids, Herefordshire and the Welsh borders, Iona..... The poems are her response to the living tradition and continuity of Celtic spirituality.



*One verse from 'Norman Churches, Herefordshire'*

*Unpretentious churches  
root the life of this land  
in the practice of prayer,  
at many crossroads  
quietly offer all comers  
an invitation to pause,  
to rest, to remember  
that peace passes  
understanding*

*St Issui's Church, Patricio*

Like all books of poetry this is an anthology to take slowly. I have visited many of the places that she writes about and I

share her love of the Celtic. Her poems about St Issui's church, Patricio, tucked away in the Black Mountains, took me back to that place while her sequence about Iona will resonate with any who have visited there and make others long to go.

*Anne Stamper*

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## **THE PSALMS: A CONVERSATION**

Malling Abbey, 2012, £2.40.

This 46 page booklet contains an unnamed Anglican nun's reflections on the Psalms, as experienced by her through reading and scholarship, and in the prayer, silence, and worship of an enclosed Benedictine order. The central theme is that the Psalter can be understood as a human-Divine conversation and an invitation to participate more fully in it.

The human contribution is expressed in words of praise or lament, (the latter includes complaints and cursing). God's side of the dialogue is prophetic, (the Psalms are the source of more than a third of Old Testament references in the New Testament, including over thirty by Jesus), and Trinitarian: 'the Spirit opens us to the promise and the judgement of the Father and to the presence of the Son who is the kingdom'.

The author points out that listening for the Divine response requires effort, patience, and respect for silence. These are often in short supply but God's determination is more than a match for human evasion: 'It is stronger than our disabilities, stronger than our dullness, stronger even than our delusions that we know it all'.

The narrative is beautifully crafted, eloquently written, and the fruit of much prayer and meditation. It provides rich material to use as a prelude to contemplative prayer. It is available at, or from, St Mary's Abbey, 52 Swan Street, West Malling, Kent, ME19 6JX.

*David Bunch*

# **A SUNLIT ABSENCE**

***Martin Laird***

OUP 2011 £11.99

ISBN 978-0-19-537872-6

This is a companion volume to the same author's 'Into the Silent Land'. I am inclined to think that the earlier book should be read first. Both are extremely wise, serious and uncompromising guides to silent prayer.

I did not find this book easy; perhaps it went too deep, too fast for me, but I know that I shall return to it again and again, gathering new insights every time. It is particularly valuable in helping to deal with the experience of the distractions and difficulties we encounter in contemplation. It opens up many areas of the stages that silence brings to one's mind and heart.

Laird calls upon many masters of the art of contemplation to illustrate his views and every quotation gave me pause and opened up new vistas of thought. Sometimes one gained comfort from a quotation. I liked this from Teresa of Avila:

“The centre of our soul is difficult to define. It is hard enough just to believe in it.”

And Laird makes many comments of his own which, read once in the quiet of the morning, keep coming back to mind to be chewed over during the day:

“If God is the sculptor, our practice is like a chisel that works effectively and patiently to remove stone.”

Later chapters deal with some of the difficulties which the practice of stillness “winkles” out of the depths of our minds and emotions and that can be uncomfortable. We may think we are getting nowhere but in reality our prayer is deepened through such trials.

“Stick with it,” is Laird's advice and he gives steady and nourishing support.

***Janet Robinson***

**Life in God's NOW** The Sacrament of the Present Moment  
**Elizabeth Ruth Obbard**

New City 2012 81pp £5.95  
ISBN 978-1-905039-11-1

This little book gives us the wise teachings from Jean Pierre de Caussade's 'Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence' in Sr. Elizabeth's lucid and engaging prose. It is illuminated by her relevant and amusing line drawings.

De Caussade focuses on finding God in the HERE and the NOW. He emphasises that we should expect to find God in all the ordinariness and 'littleness' of daily life, rather than seeking great deeds or mystical experiences. When we surrender our lives to God we then accept whatever he sends us, and live each moment as it comes, trusting his providence. We should neither dwell on the past, nor worry about the future. When we surrender our lives to God we also accept our particular calling – the thing God asks of us and of no other. Whether it be big or small, if we do not do it, it will remain undone.

There is much wisdom in this book, written in a very understandable style, but readers should be aware of two things: Firstly, it was not originally written as a book, but is a collection of notes made of a series of addresses de Caussade gave over a number of years. So there is often a repetition of major points, though with varying emphases, because the addresses could have been given months apart. It may therefore be helpful to read a section at a time, as they would originally have been heard, and ponder each before moving on.

Secondly De Caussade was addressing the Sisters of the Visitation, an order of nuns, in Nancy. So the context in which he spoke was very specific. It was also very different to our modern day life in the secular community, yet much of what he said is still very relevant to any Christian today. It is certainly worth reading, and more than once.

**Deidre Morris**

# **GOD LOST AND FOUND**

**John Pritchard**

SPCK 2011 £9.99

978-0281063529

This book will interest a wide audience including people who have suffered a breakdown of faith, or lost touch with a living experience of God. The author draws on his own experiences of dark times, offering starting points to help readers re-discover and re-imagine a more realistic faith in the ever present God, whether recognized or not.

The book is divided into two parts: *Part 1: Why?* *Part 2: New Beginnings.*

Within these self-explanatory headings he introduces the reader to reasons for loss of a living faith. Among those likely to find this book challenging are those who continue to go to church despite the apparent meaningless of services, and those who avoid church.

It will speak to members of Julian Meetings who already seek God in ways which differ from formal church services.

John Pritchard asks “Why are so many services so often dull?” He proposes readers think about church experiences – are they alive with challenges about living, or how we contribute to society’s ills? Is it cosily friendly, keeping the boat afloat but avoiding difficult issues? Have we grown out of faith but still like meeting our friends once a week? Or have we grown up in faith, having explored the Old Testament with its dire passages of prejudice and spite? It is all too easy to hold on to unhealthy religion by reading. Pritchard makes it clear that all human ideologies and institutions can be fallible and hold deep instincts which are twisted into a distorted parody.

Having explored the “Why” of losing God the reader is offered constructive ways of rediscovering His amazing love and grace. I leave details of that rich section for readers to discover.

**Maureen Lahiff**

