



Magazine
April
2022

The Julian Meetings Magazine April 2022

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*Each writer expresses their own views, which may not be held
by the Editor or by the Julian Meetings Council.*

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*

For more information,
visit our website at
www.thejulianmeetings.net

This QR code will
take you directly to it



We do not charge for this magazine.

We do invite readers who enjoy the magazine, or value our promotion of contemplative prayer, to make a donation towards our costs.

A minimum donation of £3 per magazine would be much appreciated.

Please see page 31 for details of how to donate.

“Silence is more musical than any song”

Christina Rossetti

I have been exposed to music since childhood, beginning piano lessons at the age of four on my grandmother's piano. I remember listening to records of 'Sparky's Magic Piano', played on our old style gramophone.

Throughout my school days, I often found myself asked to play, rather than to sing (or to be quiet...)

My college days, at Manchester in the swinging sixties, were a break from piano duties and a chance to sing along with the Beatles: never a quiet time! Music was always important for me, with more opportunity then to listen...but rarely to be silent.



Taizé on TV

In the 1980s, when involved in playing keyboards at church, I watched a television programme about the Taizé Community, in France. I had always been interested in ecumenism, and enjoyed many international friendships, so the work of this community with young people interested me. However, what really impressed me from this programme was the Taizé community's use of music in their times of common prayer. Simple chants, using short phrases from scripture or spiritual writers, were repeated by the whole congregation, with unobtrusive soloists decorating the simplicity with beautiful scripture-based phrases.

Taizé in reality

Curiosity about this very different use of music in worship led us to call in at Taizé, on the way home from a family holiday in France. Then I was asked to help lead an ecumenical pilgrimage to Taizé, and so we spent a week with the community. In the common prayers that week, held three times a day, I was surprised to discover something new, for me – silence! Each time of prayer at Taizé has a ten minute

time of silence at its core. One is led into – and out of – this time by singing the short, meditative chants..... The experience of sharing both song and silence with a congregation of thousands – of mostly young people – is immensely powerful. Taizé also has other opportunities for silence, amid the beauty of the Burgundian countryside.

Silence and music

Thus music drew me to Taizé, where I discovered silence! Music is, of course, important in worship: “The one who sings prays twice over” *St Augustine*. “After silence, that which comes nearest to expressing the inexpressible is music” *Aldous Huxley*. Taizé describes singing as one of the most essential elements of worship, and explains that meditative singing becomes a way of listening to God. This allows everyone to remain together in attentive waiting on God.

After experiencing storm and thunder, Elijah discovered God in ‘a sound of sheer silence’ on Mount Sinai. Taizé tells us that “Silence makes us ready for a new meeting with God. In silence, God’s word can reach the hidden corners of our hearts.”

Music enhances worship and our daily lives:

“Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, and life to everything.” *Plato*.

However:

“In music, silence is more important than sound” *Miles Davis*;

“A painter paints pictures on canvas. But musicians paint their pictures on silence.” *Leopold Stokowski*;

“Music is the silence between the notes” *Claude Debussy*.

Both music and silence continue to be a very important part of my life, and I try to keep a balance between them.

Jane Shields

For more information on Taizé see their website www.taize.fr

The Colour of Silence

Listen
carefully —
wait
to hear
the colour
of silence.

Silence —
let your soul listen
to its colour.
Concentrate carefully —
what do you hear
when you wait?

Wait
in the silence.
Can you hear?
Listen
to its carefully
crafted colour.

Colour —
you will see it. Wait,
walk carefully

into the silence
and listen.
Can you hear?

Hear
the palette of colour
that creates sound — listen
to quiet green. Wait
in your angry red silence —
listen carefully,

carefully
and you will hear
a rainbow of hope
in the silence,
a myriad of nature's colour
but only if you wait
and listen.

If you carefully listen
to the silence and wait
you will hear colour.

Liz Neal

Silence is Golden

A friend enjoyed visiting the peace of the countryside. One evening, when he was enthusing to me about his bucolic trips, he switched on his recorder, saying 'You're going to hear one of the loveliest recordings I have ever made.'

I waited with curiosity but couldn't hear a sound.

'There's nothing on it to hear' I exclaimed impatiently.

'That's just it,' he said 'You can't imagine how difficult it is to find a place where you can record silence like this.'

Two Aspects of Silent Prayer

Silent prayer teaches us two important aspects of the way in which we approach God.

- 1) To open out.
- 2) To let go.

Strangely, these are both 'doing' words, opening out and letting go. Yet they are both carried out without even flexing a muscle.

They are both 'enabling activities', making it possible for the Lord to take over more and more of our prayer life. For silent prayer also teaches us that it is not the person who is doing the praying - it is God in us.

The phrase 'To let go' is used intentionally, rather than 'emptying'. Although this may, quite rightly, be used to describe a preliminary to meditation when, after a busy day, we may need to rid ourselves of preoccupying thoughts, worries and mental activities. Emptying presupposes getting rid of - a negative attitude - whereas opening and letting go are the removal of barriers to let the Lord come in and dwell with us.

So an open spirit will let the Lord come and take possession of our time of prayer. It is an undemanding attitude.

We must let go of:

- * Our expectations
- * Our desire for a 'good' experience
- * The prayers we particularly want to pray
- * The feelings we want to feel both during and after prayer
- * Any barrier between ourselves and God

One final word of caution. Words can be a barrier but so can silence. There is closed silence and there is gentle day-dreaming, but neither of these is the open, surrendered silence described here.

Yvonne Walker

(from the JM magazine, winter 1989) 5

A Space for Quaker Silence for 350 Years

You may ask: 'Have the Quakers / Society of Friends been silent for so long? That is just my catchy headline! It is true that, in service in the community, Quakers have always been very active – and vocal. They have concerns for education, prisons, housing, international affairs, and building peace.

Our weekly time of quiet

However, in a Quaker meeting for worship, which usually lasts for an hour, we first gather together, like Julians, to quiet our minds. We don't have set prayers, hymns or sermons. There is no set service, minister, or creed. In the stillness we open our hearts and lives to new insights and guidance. Sometimes we are moved to share what we discover with those present. Sometimes silence reigns throughout.

A very special place

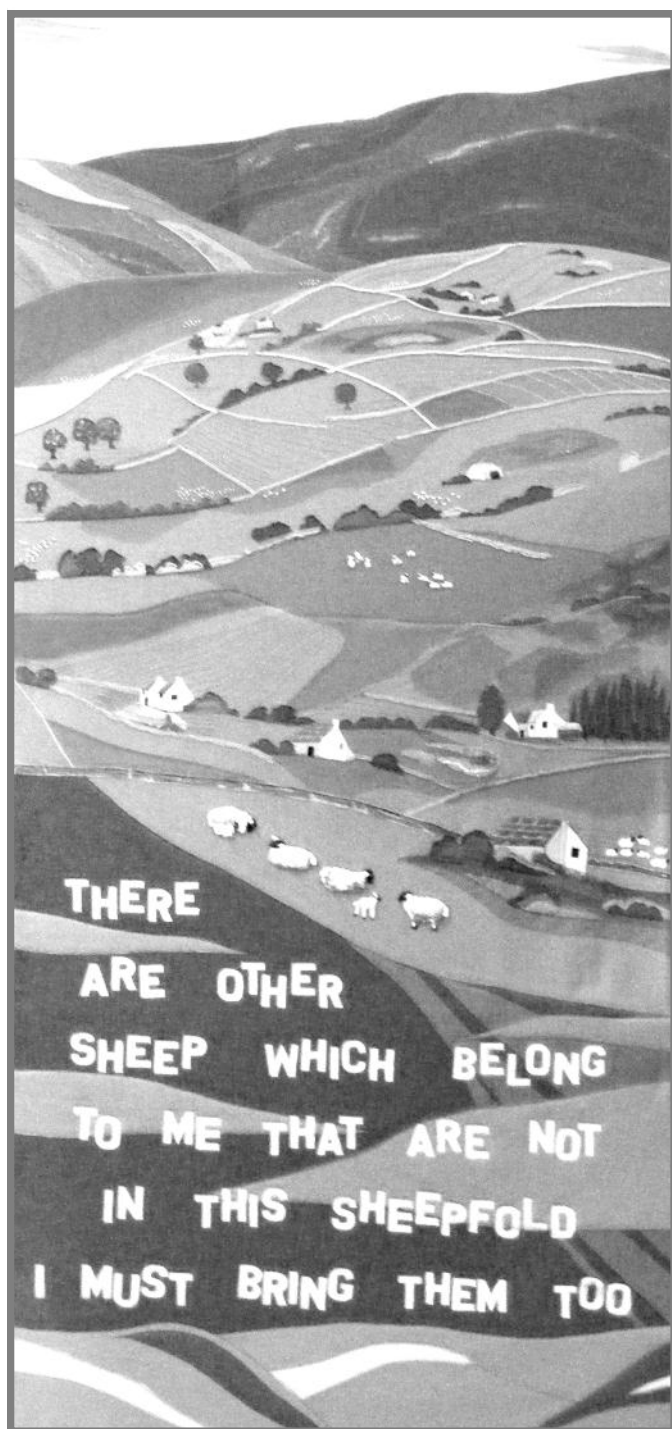
I attend the Meeting in Almeley Wootton in Herefordshire. It is held in a half-timbered building that first became a Quaker meeting house in 1672. It is a deeply spiritual place and one of the very oldest Quaker Meeting Houses in the UK – probably in the world. It has been in continuous use but, like churches, has had its ups and downs. Rooms were added and renovations made. It is set in its own burial ground in quiet open countryside.



Find out more

Over the summer months we are celebrating its 350th birthday with open afternoons, an exhibition, a concert in the local Church and a re-enactment day for local school children. If any Julians happen to be holidaying in the Welsh Marches in the summer, you might like to look in. All details will be on our website and we'd be delighted to see you. The website may well be of interest anyway. <https://almeleyquakers.org.uk>

Janet Robinson
Hay-on-Wye JM



Words of Wisdom from a Weaver

In many cultures, perfection is only for the Gods. The Navaho, for instance, when weaving a rug, deliberately weave a thread into the rug that looks like a mistake. That “mistake” keeps the rug from being perfect and serves as a path for Spirit to enter.

If we accept our mistakes and failures as a path for Spirit to enter then we might take more risks in our work and in our lives. We could stop worrying about perfection and focus on experiencing life. Mistakes are an inevitable part of being human. How we respond to mistakes makes the difference between an integrated or tattered fabric.

After I dress my loom with a new warp, before I weave the first weft, I have to weave in a waste yarn to evenly space the warp threads at the start of the fabric. This filler is removed later during the finishing process.

The weaving of early adulthood, if we have the support and guidance of family and friends, is like that filler. Making our own choices about what career to choose, who to date, how much to drink, what risks to take, we all make mistakes. Some of them will be like filler - helping the warp be even, so that the weaving will go on smoothly. It is easily removable, but not really part of the fabric, just as some mistakes can be unwoven. But some cannot.

Admitting mistakes is a challenge for all of us, requiring that we break old behaviours and ingrained responses. Though we may gather the courage to admit a mistake, some mistakes cannot be unwoven but must become part of the fabric of our lives. Our ability to forgive ourselves is strongly tested. Life can change in a moment: we may wish for the opportunity to go back, to unweave, but often the only choice is to move forward, to keep weaving. We must fight our way through all the “if onlys,” to a place where we stand in the present moment and answer “What next?”

If we develop new skills, create new attitudes, and pick up new threads of courage and understanding, then we can integrate those mistakes into the weaving as though they were planned.

Many relationships - with family, friends or colleagues - are not healthy, physically, mentally, or emotionally. But getting out of a relationship, particularly one where strong feelings of love once lived, is difficult, and may be complicated by social, economic, parental, and legal concerns.

The biggest difficulty is our own willingness to take the blame for what was wrong in the relationship, rather than valuing ourselves enough to feel entitled to change our lives for the better. If a partner betrays us, walks out on us, abuses us, or a friend lets us down badly, or work is becoming unbearable, then we mire ourselves in questions of what we did wrong. We try to figure out what we can do to make things better. Once out, we berate ourselves for getting involved in the first place. Instead, we need to congratulate ourselves for our courage in getting out of that relationship, for admitting the mistake and taking action to change it.

The threads of that relationship are part of the weaving of our life. Like the foundational threads of the warp, the weft threads of mistakes remain part of the fabric of our life. In that way, they remain as lesson and warning for future choices. Can we choose more wisely in the future? Will we pick up threads of love, respect, care and wisdom to weave into our life, creating beauty once again?

Mistakes are part of being a weaver and of being human. Mistakes are an opportunity for learning and growing and compassion. We need to give ourselves permission to be less than perfect - to make mistakes. We also need to give others, our friends, our partners, our children - especially our children - permission to make mistakes as well.

Mistakes are a place for the Spirit to enter

Adapted from an article by Paula Chaffee Scardamalia

Dear God, we are yours,
Weave your way into the fabric of our lives.
Add bright threads so that we appreciate
the beauties of our earth
and the kindnesses of people.
Mend the worn patches of our failures,
quick judgements and lack of concern.
And knit in patterns of hope and cheer
that we can give to others.
Weave, weave into us the golden strands of your love.
Amen

Stilled Spaces in My Week

Standing, dazzled, at my bedroom window as the sun rose in a blaze of golden light behind the houses opposite.

As I waited for the bus, seeing a rainbow grow in the sky to its full splendour, and slowly fade away.

Smiling as I watched, and heard, two blackbirds noisily bathing in our pond.

Feeling, but not hearing, the purr in my cat's throat as she lay on my lap.

Watching a solitary bee working his energetic way over the heather flowers.

Standing under the full moon - the garden seeming quite magical in the cool light.

Sitting in the garden in the evening, almost overwhelmed by the scent of the honeysuckle.

Becoming Quiet

Becoming quiet seems to amplify
creaking wood, the buzz of a fly,
hum of the heating, tap's steady drip,
bubble of kettle, first hot sip.

The whistle of wind, patter of rain,
whining draft through the cracked pane,
the soles of shoes, how they tap and squeak,
or the muted swoosh of slipped feet.

The turning of pages as chapters are read,
slight shift of the chair, stretch of legs,
the close of the book, a yawn, a sigh,
tick of the clock as voices drift by.

Soft wings of birds as the sky turns dark,
barn owl's screech, fox's bark.
The silent moon sits above bare trees
where silhouette branches rustle leaves.

In whispered prayer as the long day ends,
quietness arrives like a long-lost friend,
where attentive ears attune to hear
the softest of footsteps as God draws near.

Time to seek the beloved's face
as a cloak of presence hallows the space,
where hidden sounds of the soul's deep fears
may tumble upon Love's listening ears.

Remembering faith, recovering ease,
embraced by love in an ocean of peace,
enveloped in being completely known,
becoming quiet - the path to home.

Anne Holland

*Sit here in the midst of the world
With all its present pain and madness
You are not the sponge soaking up the
carbon emissions
Rather you are the channel of God's peace
Let that peace arise from within you
Deeper than the sea of your own need or desire
Let that peace be a purity
A swept room
A tidied house
A simple order
An inner spaciousness
A forgiven merciful place
Releasing from clawing need
Let go of the castles you have dug for yourself
in the churned sand
Be washed flat by the beauty of the incoming waves
Let God's goodness in
Like the sparkling incoming tide
Smoothing the sand
And leaving its sheen of silver
Now you have cleared your near distance of the
debris of your mind
See the expanse
Where heaven and earth meet
And all, all from east to west
From north to south
Is filled with light*

Both these extracts are from
Richard Carter: *The City is my Monastery*
reviewed on page 28
Used with permission from Canterbury Press

*When you have cleared the space for silence
It is then you need the discipline
It is easy for empty space to become derelict space
Littered with the packaging of distraction
The quick takeaways
Like bad television, or texts and mobiles,
and cups of coffee
or flitting between magazines and papers,
unfinished tasks and mess
Like a bird tempted to feed on plastics
Sacred space needs regularity and discipline
You do not clear the space simply to
clutter it again
Keep this time sacred
Hold the time
Keep it focused
Centred
Still
Resist the temptation to cut short
Pray in harmony though apart
Held together by the unseen chain of God's love*

After years of meeting monthly on a Tuesday evening, our Meeting's numbers had dropped due to members' increasing frailty. Few wished to come out on winter evenings. They agreed a new day and time, which I wanted to advertise in our parish magazine. Perhaps someone new might now join us, but how could I encourage them to even give it a try? This is an adapted version of the article I wrote, which might give you some ideas if you are promoting your Meeting.

Time to Listen?

My elder granddaughter is on the autistic spectrum, and can get quite intense about things. If you ask her about something that interests her she will talk at great length, ignoring any attempt by you to make it into a conversation ie a two-way exchange of information or views.

I feel God must find us rather like Imogen at times. So often we use prayer as a time to engage God with *our* information, requests and interests, and he gets no chance to speak. If we do give God our time and attention, sitting still, quiet and open to the Spirit, we often find that we are listening to what God has to say to us, now he has chance to get a word in!

Better together



It is not always easy to sit with God in this way. We are used to *doing* things, to prayer being us talking to God. Many people are helped to pray in this contemplative way by joining a group like a Julian Meeting. At our Julian Meeting we sit in a circle (socially distanced at present!) and one person reads

a short passage, poem or prayer and we then have silence for 30-45 minutes. Because we are sharing the silence, it seems to become much deeper than when praying in this way on our own. The person leading keeps track of time, so everyone else can just rest in the presence of God, and they lead out with another reading or prayer. There is then, usually (covid permitting!) a time to share over a cup of tea or coffee. .

Don't Panic!

Many people feel it is not for them, that it is something strange and they won't know what to do. Silence can be daunting. But until we try something, how do we know?

When someone new comes to our meeting, after welcoming them and everyone, I will usually start with this explanation and centring exercise:

"To be attentive to God our body needs to be relaxed but alert. So, as we sit here, we feel the floor firm under our feet, and the chair supporting us as we sit upright but not stiff. We let our hands rest loosely in our lap. We become aware of our body. If we sense any tension or stiffness in the muscles we try to relax them. Now we take one or two deep breaths, letting them out fully, and then just breathe normally, but being aware of our breathing. As we breathe out, we try to let go of any tension and worries. As we breathe in, feel the spirit breathing in all the good things that God freely offers to us. There will inevitably be some noises during the silence, but try to let them fade into the background.

We all come to this meeting with our own worries and cares, but during the silence our minds need a break from these, so that there is space for God. We can, as it were, put all these distracting thoughts etc. into an imaginary carrier bag and leave it beside our chair during the silence: we can pick them up again when the silence is over.

We cannot empty our mind, or make it blank. Instead we use something to help us to focus on God, and his presence with us. This might be the candle I have lit, and placed in the centre of our circle of chairs. It may be that, from the lead-in, a particular word or phrase stood out for you, and you can use this as a focus, possibly repeating it silently as a mantra. Some people find a visual image comes vividly to mind, and they rest in that during the silence. When your mind wanders (as it will) don't get upset but just bring it gently back to your

focus, and perhaps become aware again of your breathing. Then allow yourself to just wait on God, being open to what ever God chooses to bring to you in the silence.”

[I then use this as my lead-in:

Be still and know that I am God.

Be still and know that I am.

Be still and know.

Be still.

Be.]

Come and join us

The Julian Meeting at St John’s has changed when it meets. It is now at 1.30pm on the 4th Thursday of each month. There is free parking in St John’s Square until 3.00pm. Anyone is welcome to come and join us. Why not come along and give God the chance to speak to you, while you just listen?

There are some helpful leaflets at the back of church, lots of information on the website www.thejulianmeetings.net or I’d be happy to chat with you if you would like to know more. My contact details are on the back cover.

Deidre Morris

Advertising your Julian Meeting

As things, hopefully, resume after the covid restrictions, you may be thinking of starting, or re-starting, a Julian Meeting.

We have publicity materials available to help you do this - buy them on-line or use the order form opposite.

Consider setting up a facebook page for your Meeting. This can be a very good way of publicising your Meeting at no cost to yourselves.

Use local magazines and noticeboards, not just at churches but in halls, libraries, community centres etc.

If you have a local ‘Churches Together’ ask them to send out details.

Art and Poetry on our Spiritual Journey.

I felt I must respond to the article in the December magazine, as I've received such wonderful blessings through attending Painting & Prayer retreats, mostly with CARM but also with others.

Some were on the continent. Others nearer home in our beautiful, prayerful, retreat houses, in lovely surroundings. Each was led by a Chaplain and a Tutor.

I appreciated the rhythm of life on these retreats and found it so helpful: daily worship (of wide variety); time for being creative; and the value of silence from the end of evening prayers until after the Chaplain's address the next morning. From this silence followed a creative time for painting, or other activities. CARM embraced calligraphy, embroidery, poetry, music and others.

One of my first painting retreats was led by Eddie Askew (artist and former Director of the Leprosy Mission), assisted by a Baptist minister: the retreat was organised by BURG, Baptist Union Retreat Group. The theme was 'Holy Ground', with a beautiful visual focal point in the lovely chapel at Holland House in Worcestershire: a pair of discarded sandals leading through 'sand' to the 'burning bush'.

Another memorable retreat was run by Quakers, staying at a monastery in the mountains in Sicily. It was just after Easter; we contemplated the Resurrection appearances, expressing our feelings with, in my case fairly abstract, paint marks.

I am so indebted to the wonderful chaplains and tutors who so generously gave their time and talents to lead these retreats.

A quotation from Teilhard de Chardin

God is not remote from us, He is at the point of my pen, my (pick)shovel, the tip of my paint brush, my (sewing) needle, and my heart and my thoughts.

Sheila Young
Stafford Julian Meeting

Why Didn't They - or You? - Tell Us?

Casually searching the internet, a JM Council member came across two videos about the Julian Meetings. They were very well produced, and gave a good explanation of what Julian Meetings are about. The Council just wish they'd been told about them, so that they could have been publicised across the JM network for any of us to access or use.

One contact for a Julian Meeting not only puts out copies of 'Waiting on God' at the back of his church. He also puts out 'Some Basics of Contemplative Prayer' and 'Approaching Silence' and the JM Magazine. All these have a note on saying 'Please read, and pass it on to someone else or leave it at the back of church at the end of the service' and 'Our Julian Meeting is 30 minutes sitting silently and still in the presence of God. First Tuesday 7.30pm. Third Tuesday 2.15pm'.

Pre-covid, some JM Contacts put out our 'Waiting on God' leaflets, or our 'pew cards', in their local church / cathedral as it was a tourist attraction. Some also provided a supply of 'Waiting on God' to their local retreat house. We only knew about these activities when we asked them how they were using such quantities of 'Waiting on God'. We were very happy the leaflets were being used, but it would have been good to have been *told how* they were being used.

What you, or your Julian Meeting, do to promote the JM Network may seem obvious to you - but it could be an idea for other Meetings to use as well.

SO PLEASE - if you, or your Meeting, are publicising JM in ways that other Meetings could copy to their advantage, let us know what you are doing. Sharing good practice is part of the function of any network. We would really like JMs to share with each other, particularly via the website or the magazine. Please get in touch



The Cross

*Where brutality becomes tears,
Where shadows become rainbows,
Decay becomes spring.*

*Where emptiness becomes alive,
Mightiness becomes a whisper.*

*Where I, in all my inadequacy,
Meet you, in all your fullness.*

*Where I am broken enough to be healed,
Naked enough to be clothed*

And tiny enough to be embraced within all creation

Lynne Chitty

Mobile Phones and Meditation

Mobile phones have hugely changed the way we live and communicate, bringing with them many new tools and ways of doing things. They are not something we may associate with contemplation or meditation. Generally, when at a Quiet Day or similar event, or visiting a Quiet Garden, we turn them off or leave them at home. This avoids it competing for our attention and distracting us from switching off and finding stillness. But this isn't always possible and for some people it is alienating.

Be positive, not negative

Mobile phones can actually give us access to a range of tools that can help us to meditate, contemplate and pray.

How can we make this modern technology work for us, rather than letting the phone constantly distract us? What apps are there to help us focus?

Here are some ideas for using your mobile phone for contemplation, as well as a stilling exercise, and a few of our favourite apps.

Dealing with distraction

- 1) The frequently touted remedy to the distraction of our mobile phones is a “digital detox” – banning yourself from connectivity for hours or days at a time. This can work for some, but for others it can have the perverse effect of making the banned object more enticing.
- 2) Another approach is to make your mobile ‘boring’, turning off notifications, badges and deleting or ‘hiding’ distracting apps in folders.
- 3) Most mobile phones offer a ‘silent mode’. Used in conjunction with a ‘timer’ (see overleaf), turning on ‘Airplane Mode’ and ‘Do Not Disturb’ modes when you want to create distraction-free time, will help make your mobile work for you rather than against you.

Continued overleaf

A simple timer

Before being distracted by the many apps on offer, remember that every phone has an in-built simple timer that can be really valuable for contemplation and meditation.



Set a timer for however long you have allocated for praying in this way. This can really help you switch-off and pay attention to what you have chosen to do, rather than getting distracted by recurring thoughts of what time it might be.

Simply set the timer on your mobile to alert you when your time is up – using this in conjunction with ‘Aeroplane’ and ‘Do Not Disturb’ modes will also prevent you being distracted by other alerts.

APPS

There are many apps that offer tools to aid contemplation and meditation – here are a few favourites.

Buddhify | buddhify.com

A small one off fee gets you lots of creative mindfulness-based meditations for various situations: ‘travelling’, ‘walking’, ‘with a friend’, ‘using your phone’, ‘sleep’, ‘meditation 101’ and ‘in nature’. There is also a section just for kids, as well as a solo timer with optional interval bells.

Insight Timer | insighttimer.com

This free app, offers in-app purchases, comes with lots of guided meditations from a range of teachers and backgrounds, as well as a fancy timer.

Pray as you Go | pray-as-you-go.org

Created by the Jesuits, this shares a daily prayer session based on Ignatian Spirituality. It is designed to help you pray whenever you find time, but particularly whilst travelling to and from work etc.

Time to Pray | chpublishing.co.uk

Access to Morning, Evening and Night Prayer from the Church

of England, as well as the lectionary. Free for online use, subscription fee for offline use.

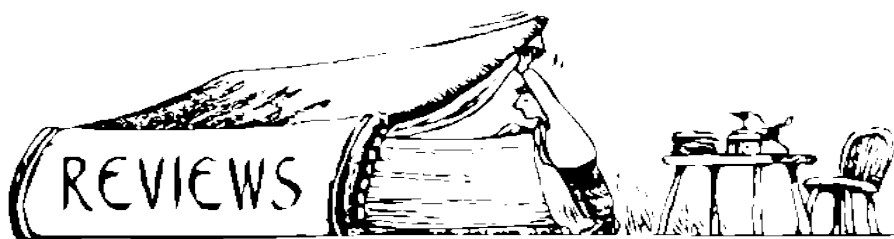
WCCM | wccm.org/content/new-wccm-app

From the World Community for Christian Meditation this free app comes with a timer, instructions for meditation and prayers, as well as links to reflections and further resources.

Much of this information is from the website of the Quiet Garden Movement www.quietgarden.org and is used with permission.



Now we are coming to longer daylight hours and warmer weather you can find details, on their website, of gardens that generous people open on particular days and times for people to enjoy a time of quiet contemplation in a safe and secluded 'green space'.



THOMAS MERTON. An introduction to his life, teachings, and practices

Jon M. Sweeney

St Martin's Publishing Group, USA. 2021.

Paperback. ISBN 978 1 250 25048 3. Price. US\$10.30.

Also available from Amazon on Kindle. Price £6.48.

Like many others, 50 years ago I was influenced greatly by reading Thomas Merton's *A Seven Storey Mountain*, his autobiography until the age of 30. Grounded in the traditional Catholicism I grew up in, it showed how a search for spiritual growth and wholeness could assuredly be made within the confines of a monastery in Kentucky of the Cistercians of the Strict Observance, also known as Trappists.

Merton (monastic name Father Louis) wrote throughout his relatively short life (he died in 1968 aged 53), but his views and preoccupations changed. He realised that some questions have no answers, which made him ready to listen. This appealed to those Christians who do not claim to know all the answers, but dismayed others. He grew to see that following Jesus meant finding his own humanity in others, and the essential unity of all things in God. His search for wholeness led him to the wisdom of the Eastern mystical traditions. He recognised that we will never be our real selves unless we fall in love with another human being, or with God.

In his later years he wrote about war and peace and showed a deep engagement with world problems, although throughout his life as a monk a strong contemplative urge never left him. He was finally allowed to live in a hermitage.

A lot is packed into this very short and insightful book. It will

help anyone who wonders why Merton's writings cover such a wide range of topics, and help them navigate a way through them all. A short index, at least of those named, would have made it easier to make connections, but that is only a small cavil. This is an excellent short introduction to a man of deep prayer who still fascinates, over half a century after his death.

Peter Rowe

THE ART OF PEACE: Life lessons from Christian mystics

David Cole

Bible Reading Fellowship. 2021.

Paperback. ISBN 978-0857469922. Price £8.99.

Also available from Amazon on Kindle. Price £8.99.

I glanced through this book and felt that perhaps I should be practising contemplative prayer rather than reading about it.

However, I did read it and found it comprehensive, deeply thoughtful and very helpful. Cole is a leader and spiritual guide in the *Community of Aidan and Hilda*, which seeks to apply lessons from the Celtic Church in Britain to the church of today.

The book is arranged in four sections which discuss Stillness, Silence, Solitude and Sanctuary. Much of David Cole's advice is practical. For example, he suggests how the reader might engage in learning to slow down: meditating momentarily — small moments in the day when we take a few breaths and re-centre; then creating a small period of time in the day just to sit and Be; planning to withdraw weekly for perhaps half a day; and, if it can be arranged, having a longer time once a month. He also suggests, at various points in the book, that the reader stops reading, puts the book down and is simply still for a little while. In this way it almost becomes a retreat in book form.

I particularly valued his pertinent examples from the works of other Christian mystics, including some favourites: Julian, the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* and Meister Eckhart.

By reading very slowly and including the recommended

pauses, this workbook could provide a home-based retreat during these days when travelling is difficult. It could enhance our own sense of peace.

Janet Robinson

SEEING LUKE DIFFERENTLY. Reflections on spirituality & social justice from the third Gospel

Graham Turner

OMG.TXTS, Liverpool, UK (available from Amazon). 2021.

Paperback. ISBN 979-8736392629. Price. £4.95.

Also available from Amazon on Kindle. £2.37.

This is a collection of over 100 imaginative, well-researched reflections on the Gospel of Luke. Graham writes 'It is easy to read parts of the Bible as if we have "been there before". We know how the story opens, continues and ends. Familiarity prevents us finding something new, challenging or uplifting.'

These reflections offer a renewed and lively approach to the third gospel. In poetic form, they present in everyday language an opportunity to perceive both contemplation and social justice as fundamental priorities: to recognise them as two sides of the same coin in Jesus' life, as indeed Jesus did, and as we can in our life.

In retirement Graham read each Lucan passage in turn before writing between 100 and 200 words, avoiding religious-speak as far as possible, in order to convey the challenge that each presented. It is for the reader to answer the questions: 'How do these reflections impinge on who you think you are as a person, and what you feel about the part you play on the stage of life?' Moreover, 'In what ways is life calling you, not just to pray and reflect differently, but to live differently in a complex, wonderful and worrying world?'

Dedicated to 'all those who see what others do not see and yet are marginalised by mainstream religious traditions,' we might discover ourselves among such. This book invites its readers to also discover that 'Among them are the prophets we need if we are to inhabit a different future.'

Luke Penkett

**FAITH, FIRE AND SONG: The writings of Richard Rolle
for everyone**
Sr Elizabeth Ruth Obbard

New City. 2021

Paperback. ISBN 978-1-905039-48-7. Price £7.00.

Richard Rolle of Hampole was one of four noted English medieval mystical writers, together with Julian of Norwich, Walter Hilton and the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*. It can be daunting to read their books without some preparation – and this little book, whose simple illustrations capture the emotions and messages of the text, encourages the reader to pause and reflect.

Rolle, born in Yorkshire, was educated in Oxford, before he returned to his home county for three wilderness years. He endured temptations of mind and body. He recorded his mystical encounters, setting out a vision for holiness of life as we prepare for the holiness of the eternal. He rejected theological learning to concentrate on longing for God – on love. The nature of love flows out, shedding goodness on friends, neighbours, enemies and strangers, unifying humankind to each other and to God. 'It is enough for thee to know that God is, knowing him to love him, loving him to sing him, singing him to rest in him, and by inward rest to come to eternal rest.' Like other medieval Christians, Rolle graphically imagined Christ's suffering in his Meditation on the Passion to soften our stony hearts. 'No creature can love God too much.'

Distant in time, we may be attracted to Rolle's writings today for their simplicity, radically different from theological arguments and questions that can distract from the core message – seek and experience the love of God. He lived a life of joy in God, expressed in praise – even in the time of the Black Death plague. 'Good Jesus, you have bound my heart to think of your name and now I cannot but sing it.'

Ann Morris

THE CITY IS MY MONASTERY. A contemporary rule of life

Richard Carter

Canterbury Press. 2019.

Paperback. ISBN 978 1 78622 213 8. £16.99 eBook. £16.99.

Also available from Amazon on Kindle. Price. £11.83.

Published in late 2019, we did not review this book at that time. Two readers recently referred it to me as something that we should have noticed then. I agree: hence this review.

Richard Carter was a member of an Anglican religious community in the Solomon Islands until, in 2006, he moved to parish ministry in Trafalgar Square's St Martin-in-the-Fields. In early 2017 he went away for a month's reflection on whether he should go back to a more monastic sort of life.

Unlike the fathers of the Egyptian desert, who opted for solitude in remote places, he concluded that the city was his monastery and he is still at St Martin's. A community of over 50 has joined Richard in his vision and is known as the Nazareth Community. It 'was formed by being with God and by being with one another: with silence; with service; with scripture; with sacrament; with sharing; with sabbath; [and] staying with'.

The book is divided into eight sections, entitled 'With Silence', 'With Service' and so on until 'With Sabbath', and finally 'When the Me became Us'. Although 'A contemporary rule of life' is the book's subtitle, it is not a definitive handbook, like one of the classic monastic Rules. It consists of a series of memories, dreams, reflections, poems, biography, prayer and advice.

As a book to be read a page or two at a time, all will be helpful for the reader who wants to be led deeper into the Christian life and contemplative prayer, and many passages are suitable for opening and closing Julian Meetings.

Peter Rowe

See pages 12 and 13 for extracts from this book

7 WAYS TO PRAY: Time-tested practices for encountering God

Amy Boucher Pye.

Form (SPCK). 2021.

Paperback. ISBN 978 0 281 08496 8. Price £9.99.

eBook. ISBN 978 0 281 0897 5. Price £7.99.

Also available from Amazon on Kindle. Price. £5.69.

This book is readable, accessible and practical. The author is open and generous in sharing her experiences and insights. Chapter 1, 'God's Word to Us,' opens with her account of how experiencing rejection, aged 13, profoundly changed her experience of prayer.

There are chapters on How to: pray with and through the Bible; practise the presence of God; listen in prayer; pray without ceasing, pray the Gospels imaginatively; hear God. All draw on traditions such as Lectio Divina, and figures such as Saint Ignatius Loyola, Teresa of Avila or John Wesley, plus stories and needs of today's Christians.

The prayer of lament shares experiences of how to cry out to God in pain and grief not only in the books of Job, Psalms and Lamentations, but also in the ancient and modern-day experience of the Wailing Wall.

Breath prayers play their part too.

Each chapter ends with suggestions for how to practice both individual and group prayer.

This is a rich resource for those wanting to explore new ways to grow in their relationship with God. I found it helpful when life's ups and downs left me feeling exhausted recently.

Form is a new imprint of SPCK, aiming to publish books that help busy readers to cultivate spiritual rhythms and practices in everyday life.

7 Ways to Pray is also part of a new venture The Big Church Read (www.thebigchurchread.co.uk) which includes video talks on YouTube.

Gail Ballinger

At our website:
www.thejulianmeetings.net

You can:

- * find out more about Christian Meditation & Contemplative Prayer
- * find information about the Julian Meetings
- * view our worldwide Meetings directory
- * contact our administrators
- * find our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts
- * view an events diary
- * download our free leaflets and listen to audio versions
- * buy our publications by post or online
- * join our Magazine mailing list
- * make a donation
- * read our latest news

Other resources for JM Meetings include:

- * advice and information on how to start a Julian Meeting
- * publicity for JM events
- * registration of a new Julian Meeting
- * publicising your Meeting on the Meeting Directory

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