



Magazine  
December  
2020

# The Julian Meetings Magazine December 2020

CONTENTS	PAGE
<b>The Fragility of Faith</b> by Simon Lockett	2
<b>Soul</b> by Chris Roe	4
<b>Focus on the nativity</b>	5
<b>Prayer Beads</b> by Deidre Morris	6
<b>Quote from Mother Teresa</b>	7
<b>Julian Meetings during the covid19 lockdown</b>	8
<b>I Believe: Help Thou My Unbelief</b> by Erik Peeters	10
<b>Sculpture</b> by Barbara Hepworth	12
<b>Prayer</b> from Dewsbury Minster	
<b>Christmas Eve in an Empty Church</b> by Shirley Fry	13
<b>Making Time and Space for God</b> by Diane Stone	14
<b>The Carpenter</b> by Kenneth Steven	15
<b>Supporting Us with Donations: how it will work</b>	16
<b>Silence is Golden</b> by Fiona Elliott	18
<b>Revised JM logo</b>	20
<b>Book Reviews:</b> Some Small Heaven, <i>Ian Adams</i> ; The Way of St Benedict, <i>Rowan Williams</i> ; The Way Under Our Feet, a spirituality of walking, <i>Graham Usher</i> ; At the Foot of the Cross with Julian of Norwich, <i>Emma Pennington</i> ; Lady at the Window, <i>Robert Waldron</i> ; Shaped By The End You Live For: Thomas Merton's monastic spirituality, Bonnie Thurston	21-26
<b>JM Magazine information and JM contact details</b>	27-28

*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](http://www.thejulianmeetings.net)  
This QR code will  
take you directly to it



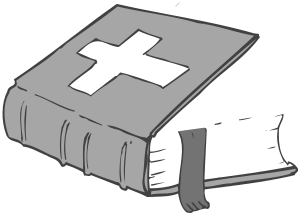
We do not charge for this magazine, but we do invite you to make a donation towards our work and the cost of producing the magazine.

Besides producing a magazine and UK newsletter we also maintain our website, media platforms and database, provide support to the individual Julian Meetings, and pay the expenses of our Council members, all of whom are volunteers. We have no paid staff, nor offices, as our volunteers work from home.

A minimum donation of £3 per magazine would be much appreciated, but the amount can be as much or as little as you feel the magazine and / or The Julian Meetings are worth to you. See page 27 for details of how to donate.

# The Fragility of Faith

Aged 26, I lived in the Elan Valley with my nearest neighbours a mile away. I only had electricity if I turned on a generator that was so loud it drowned out my Hifi. On the rare occasions I used it, it sounded like a full-on rave was happening inside the tiny cottage. To phone Liz, my then girlfriend, I walked that mile to a phone box and then nipped in to see my neighbours. With no radio reception I often read by candlelight: reading was my only stimulation. Prior to this I had partied for 10 years and was, if anything, overstimulated! Now, other than the wind in the trees, birdsong in the morning or the sound of dogs far away rounding up the sheep, there was silence.



## Wow!

One day I ran out of reading material. All I could find was a Bible, at the back of a cupboard. I vividly remember reading the Psalms with a sunset lighting up the west-facing mountains. I got caught up into something I have tried since to

understand: like being lit up from the inside; like falling in love a thousand times. It was something of a conversion experience, leading to a lifelong seeking of faith and silence and a wariness of technology but mostly of diesel generators!

## Questions

A pandemic would rock anyone's faith, whatever that faith is in; Science, God or Nature. Of course, I've often questioned my faith. It's a fragile thing. Perhaps my favourite theologian is the Frenchman, Jacques Ellul, because he is so honest. In a book called 'Living Faith: Belief and doubt in a perilous age.' he writes: "I know deep down that what I believe is uncertain, fragile, unstable...and at the same time I know that this belief is a vital necessity for me, that it's the vital centre of my life."

For me fragility creates questions which become like stepping stones across a river of doubt. Questions are at the centre of

faith. Some are answered and some are not, yet both seem to draw you further in. Like any friendship, the longer it lasts the deeper it can become [of course this is not always the case].

### **Scripture**

Some ask me, why the focus on scripture? You could answer that question with, 'Because I believe it is the word of God', but that would be like answering the question, 'Why are you going to Australia?' with the answer 'Because it's there'. So, my answer to the original question is that I have given the Bible the benefit of the doubt and over the years it has become a trusted friend. Challenging, wise and authentic.

One aspect of any healthy faith, whatever that faith is in, is to question motivation, search the soul or the conscience, and press God for answers. So, however we might understand the term 'God', we often find ourselves wrestling the Divine as Jacob does in Genesis. This struggle is sometimes in the midst of a sense of the real presence of Love, sometimes with a sense of an absent God. Seeing what is happening to our world, faith can't help but be anguished. Usually we would want to let go of such anguish but still we hold on, and that is a measure of faith's value.

### **Worship**

Worship and collective prayer are important here. As Eugene Peterson has said 'worship does not satisfy our hunger for God, it whets the appetite'. It deepens the yearning and yearning deepens faith. Not just a yearning for answers but also for experience. An experience of being lit up inside again. An experience that distils, within the treadmill of daily life, a leisure of the soul. A sense of wonder and a sense of peace. Wonder, as thanksgiving for knowing that through joy and tribulation all will be well. Peace, in the knowledge that the work of Divine love, whether through tragedy or ecstasy, is transforming the cosmos into wholeness. Out of leisure comes energy for action to transform lives and society.

Faith is turning towards Divine love. The word Jesus used for

this turning is 'repent'. Words tend, in institutional religion especially, to accumulate baggage. So, 'repent' for many is tied up with guilt and a judgemental image of God. However, the word in the original New Testament Greek is 'metanoia', which can be translated as the 'greater mind'. We turn to the greater mind of God: we enter peace and wonder and glimpse the leisure of the soul.

**Simon Lockett**  
*A vicar in Herefordshire*

---

## **Soul**

Be silent  
Be still,  
Awakened.  
Be the silence  
That struggles  
To be heard.  
Perceive  
Acknowledge ,  
Be the wisdom.  
Love  
Be loved  
Be silence.  
Be this space,  
This inner sanctum,  
That is  
Your soul.

**Chris Roe**



Though I know that a  
virgin this day gave birth,  
and I believe that God  
was begotten before all  
time, yet the manner of  
his birth I have learned to  
venerate in silence, and I  
accept that this is not to  
be probed too curiously  
with wordy speech.

*St. John Chrysostom*



Mary holds her finger out, and a divine hand closes on it. The maker of the world is born a begging child; he begs for milk, and does not know that it is milk for which he begs. We will not lift our hands to pull the love of God down to us, but he lifts his hands to pull human compassion down upon his cradle. So the weakness of God proves stronger than men, and the folly of God proves wiser than men. Love is the strongest instrument of omnipotence, for accomplishing those tasks he cares most deeply to perform; and this is how he brings his love to bear on human pride; by weakness, not by strength, by need and not by bounty.

***Austin Farrer Said or Sung***

# Prayer Beads

Archbishop John Sentamu introduced us to the use of prayer beads at a session he led in Wakefield Cathedral. They were not something I had ever used.

Many years ago, at a Diocesan Day of Prayer in Kent, I went to a workshop on The Rosary, and had been entirely put off the idea: it seemed to consist of gabbling the Our Father and the Hail Mary, at top speed, while slipping the beads through one's fingers. It didn't feel anything like prayer.

So I was a little sceptical when we were each given a strand of beads and a prayer card. +John led us in using the beads. The diagram shows how they are arranged.

You begin at the cross, with a prayer. +John uses:



“I adore you, O Christ, and I bless you;

by your Holy Cross, you have saved me;  
and you have redeemed the world.”

But you can choose to pray whatever seems right for you.

## Praying with the beads

You then move your fingers to the first section of string, and pray for something specific. It could be just a name, or a situation, or it might be more than that.

Then move on to the three small beads, and pray “Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.”

You move to the next section of string and pray for something else. Then, at the large single bead, you pray the Lord's Prayer.

So you work your way round the circle until you reach the cross, where you can repeat the first prayer, or something else, as a conclusion.

## Focus and connection

I was still sceptical – using them in a group context had felt rather unreal. But I took them with me on a 30-minute bus journey – and found them a real help in focusing on prayer. I have often used them if I am awake in the night: I always used to pray then, but found my attention wandered. With the beads I have a focus, and find I pray for people who are connected in some way. It might be those whom I know who are sick; members of my own family; the people I know on our estate; people involved with JM; members of my parish. It just seems to work like that - as I pray for one person I am led on to another who is connected in some way.

## Sharing

I am surprised at how helpful the prayer beads have been, so I thought I would share them. A friend was intrigued by them, so I got a length of fine leather string (strong enough to last) and raided my grand-daughters bead box to create a string for her to use. You make a knot each side of each bead, so that the spacing round the circle is fixed. Using, and perhaps making, some prayer beads might be something you would also find helpful in your prayer life.

*Deidre Morris*

---

*We need to find God, and he cannot be found in  
noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence.*

*See how nature - trees, flowers, grass - grows in  
silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how  
they move in silence.*

*We need silence to be able to touch souls.*

*Mother Teresa*

## **Julian Meetings during the covid19 lockdown**

During this difficult period our Meeting has met 'virtually' every second Thursday of the month at 6.30 pm. We remain in our homes. Different members choose a meditative reading and picture, which I email to everyone. We have valued that time very much as we linked together spiritually. I was interested to read that other Meetings have found the same.

Heather Cotman

*Aylesbury Julian Meeting*

The Whiteparish Julian Meeting, pre-covid, met monthly on a Tuesday morning in the vestry at church. Since March the group has met weekly via email on each Tuesday at 9.30am. Each session has been prepared by a different member each week. Most members value the fact that they are joining each other 'in the spirit', whilst others value the opportunity to take the time to fit in with other obligations. This flexibility has meant that the group has doubled in size - to 18 - with members spread geographically from Lincoln and Fife. There is a conversation to be had once the pandemic enables all local members to feel safe enough to meet back in church!

Each session consists of (nothing radical):-

A prayer / poem / context thought or reading;

Relaxation exercise;

Meditative music lead-in to silence, and to lead-out;

Reflective poem / psalm / reading;

The Grace, said having called the 17 other members to mind.

Sheelagh Knight

*Whiteparish Julian Meeting*

Here in Paul, near Penzance in West Cornwall, we have been circulating the content of each meeting to regular attendees and to others who are no longer able to attend in person but want to keep in touch. They have been invited to light a candle and reflect at home at our usual time of 6.00pm on the first Sunday of the month, or at any time convenient to them.

We kept to our usual format of an opening prayer, followed by the chosen sentence, 30 minutes reflection, closing with a blessing. It is wonderful to be able to meet up as a group again, with safe distancing. As a result of the lockdown experience, we have decided that we will continue to e-mail the monthly meeting details to everyone on our list, so that those who wish may reflect at home.

Mel Le Vesconte

*Penlee Cluster Julian Meeting*

In addition to the above Julian Meetings, the Bexhill-on-Sea, Winchester and Epsom meetings are also using various combinations of video (You Tube), Powerpoint, Word, e-mail and WhatsApp to continue sharing their meetings.

---

## **Are You Into Social Media?**

Michael Cayley has done a wonderful job of managing our presence on social media for the last few years, and also created our Wikipedia page. He gave valuable help and advice on Data Protection (particularly when the rules changed), our web-site and forum.

Sadly Michael now has to retire from this role.

### **Could you take over managing our social media?**

We need someone to manage our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts. We do not expect you to post daily: we prefer to keep things more occasional.

We would like to create our own content as well as sharing posts from other accounts. If you could create video content that would be a bonus.

If you are interested in this role please contact Ann Moran, [it@thejulianmeetings.net](mailto:it@thejulianmeetings.net) She would be delighted to talk things through with you.

## **I Believe: Help Thou My Unbelief**

Each year the German Ecumenical Council for Bible Reading chooses a verse as a motto for the year. For 2020 the verse was Mark 9:24: "I believe, help my unbelief". The despairing cry of a father seeking help for his epileptic son. Jesus, with Peter, James and John, has gone up the mountain and been transfigured before them, along with Moses and Elijah. God says from heaven 'This is my son. Listen to him.'

Returning to the disciples Jesus finds them in an argument. A father says 'I brought my son to be healed of an evil spirit but your disciples could not help him.' Jesus cries 'O faithless generation! Bring me the boy.' They bring the boy, who is immediately convulsed by a seizure. The father begs Jesus 'If you are able to do anything, have mercy on us and help us.' Jesus replies 'If you are able? All things can be done for the one who believes!' to which the father responds 'I believe. Help my unbelief!' Jesus heals the boy: he speaks one word of command and death is banished, life is restored.

### **I believe; help my unbelief.**

I have myself cried the same words over the years. In 2005 my wife, Birgit, was 12 weeks pregnant with our first child and she began to bleed. The doctor said 'There is nothing we can do. Lie down, rest and wait. Either the bleeding stops or you will lose the pregnancy'.

I remember that night praying for Brigit and our unborn child. I had never felt so powerless in all my life. I believed God could help us, but I feared that God wouldn't. Why would God notice me? Why would God care what happens to a small insignificant speck like me?

Next morning the bleeding stopped. Six months later Brigit gave birth to a strapping, healthy baby boy! I believe; help my unbelief. When death reached out for us, God spoke life.

It has become no easier since then to trust that God cares about me and those I love. Again and again things happened that I really did not want; where the situation I prayed for

ended as badly as it could; when death seemed victorious. But then it strikes me again – what is it that I believe? Do I believe that, if I am only sincere enough and pray enough I can force God to act as I want, to do what I want God to do? Do I believe that my relationship with God is a transaction where I pay in prayers and sincerity and God pays me back by doing good for me? If so, I have not enough capital – in prayers or sincerity – to pay for the safety of my family.

### **So what is it that I believe?**

What I've discovered, to my own surprise, is that I do still trust God. Despite all that's gone wrong (a lot!), or can still go wrong, I trust God. I trust that Jesus walked with me through everything. He was walking just a little ahead of me, feeling the pain I feel, feeling the loss I feel, and he has borne it with me.

Every time I reached what felt like the end for me, or for us as a family, when I felt that death had finally won, Jesus led me on to something unexpected and new. So I trust that no matter what happens, Jesus will keep on walking with me and with us through it – as he has done every day of my life – and on into new life.

In 2020 my trust is being tested again as Brexit goes ahead. No-one knows what the consequences will be, not just for EU citizens like me living in the UK, but for the whole of the United Kingdom. My sons enjoy school, but face what school kids have always faced – bullies, people who are just plain mean to them, pressure to perform. My wife, working for the NHS, feels the relentless pressure and stress of under-staffing and underfunding.

You will have your own situations which test your trust – I don't think anyone gets out of this unscathed. Death keeps reaching for us and the darkness keeps surrounding us and threatening us.

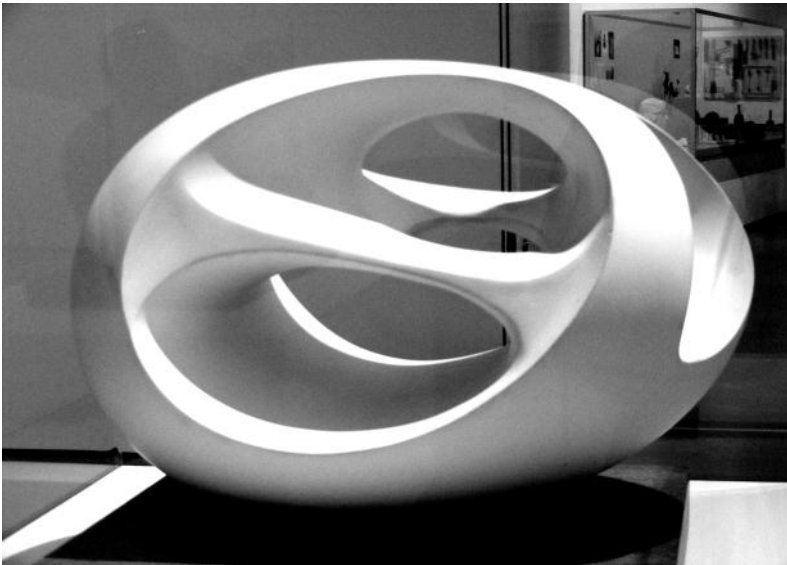
In the midst of my anxiety and worry I cry again 'Jesus, I do believe, help my unbelief!' I cry for help to trust that death will

never have the last word, because God will always speak again, and God's word is life. I believe; help my unbelief.

**Erik Peeters**

*A vicar in West Yorkshire*

*This was written early in 2020, before the coronavirus hit us, which perhaps makes all that Erik says even more relevant.*



*As you leave this place may the living Lord go with you.  
May he go behind you, to encourage you.,  
beside you to befriend you,  
above you to watch over you,  
beneath you to lift you up from your sorrows,  
within you, to give you the gifts of faith, hope and love,  
and always before you to show you the way.  
Amen*

*Benediction - Blair Monie*

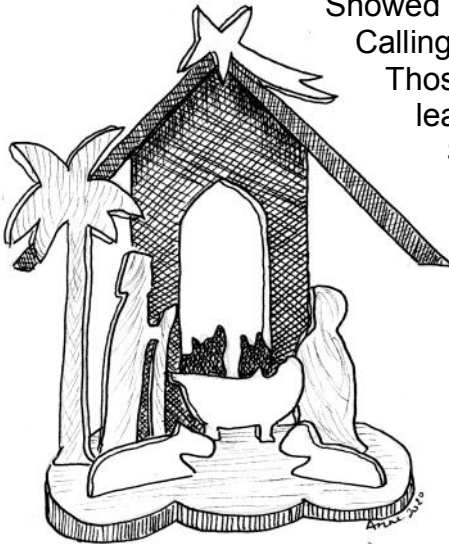
*(from a prayer-request card in Dewsbury Minster)*

# Christmas Eve in an Empty Church

And did that star so long ago  
Reflect the future of the world?  
And did those shepherds really see  
The angel firmament unfurled?

And Mary, straining to give birth,  
Agonising for the earth  
To bear the Son of Man for us  
Without, it seems, a lot of fuss.  
With Joseph, mute, just standing by,  
Waiting for the baby's cry.  
It seems so distant, so unreal.  
What can we say to those who feel  
It's just a lovely story or  
A tale to satisfy the poor?

The world moves on and looks askance  
At those who now would join the dance.  
And yet that babe, when He was grown,  
Showed the way and stood alone,  
Calling to us all in turn:  
Those with ears to hear and  
learn,



Saints and martyrs, early,  
late,  
Lives we cannot emulate.

And so, in this neglected  
pew  
I humbly kneel and  
welcome You.

Happy Christmas.

**Shirley Fry**

## Making Space and Time for God

I recently woke from a dream, influenced by our daughter's strong encouragement to de-clutter, and throw away three items a day! In my dream I am in a post-war railway station, quite dark and dingy. I've lost my suitcase and my best coat and am very anxious, asking people to help. No one can find either the bag or the coat and eventually I have to travel on, leaving both behind.

Thinking about this reminded me that when Jesus sent out his disciples he told them not to take a money bag or a travelling bag or sandals. So was I being asked to travel light? Much of the time, we carry things that are not necessary, that only weigh us down, slow us down, or keep us from being and doing what God intends for us.

As we journey, we often desire to meet with God. But we often fail to give time to God! We are full of excuses – too busy, too tired, too many burdens. Philippians 4 tells us to: *'be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.'*

Here at Scargill, in mid-2020, we are perhaps travelling alone, travelling light. Being unable to welcome guests has created a void, a void that is, I hope, encouraging us to seek a deeper relationship with God and each other.

Perhaps now is the time for all of us to set aside time, with no excuses. 'Now' is sacred. 'Now' is where God is to be encountered. Not tomorrow, not next week, but here in the middle of this pandemic is when God wishes to be met.

**Diane Stone**

*Diane is a member of the Scargill Community,  
based at Scargill Retreat House in the Yorkshire Dales.  
[www.scargillmovement.org](http://www.scargillmovement.org)*

## *The Carpenter*

*Hardly a wooden man -  
His words could be chiselled fine as cathedrals,  
Simple as wrens. Men felt a plane on their hearts  
And the sawdust of useless years falling away;  
There was a resin in those words which healed  
Made the crowds follow all the sun's day -  
A man who'd been born in a stable!  
That was the carpenter back where he belonged -  
With wood and nails.  
Three days of winter  
Until the acorn burst  
and a bigger tree  
Grew from its broken branches.*



*Kenneth Steven*

*From 'Splinters' 1997, used with permission*

*Kenneth Steven is a Scottish poet, novelist and author of children's books. His many books of poems include 'Iona', 'Island', 'West', 'Letting in the Light' and 'Out of the Ordinary'*

# **Supporting Us With Donations**

## **How it will work from January 2021**

Our August magazine explained that we are moving from individual magazine subscriptions to a donations model. This article reminds you how the new system will work.

### **Registration of Meetings**

There will be *no change* to the present process for the registration / renewal of each Julian Meeting. The fee of £12 per year to register a meeting will remain the same, and each registered Meeting will continue to receive the JM Magazine and Newsletter for their members to share.

### **Current Magazine Subscribers**

Everyone who currently has a personal subscription to the magazine will continue to receive it three times a year as usual. You will not need to do anything to still receive our magazine and newsletter. If you currently receive a large print magazine you will continue to receive this. You will also receive an e-mail (if you've registered an email with us) saying that the magazine is on its way and giving a link to the pdf copy of the magazine.

Instead of a subscription we are now asking you to make a donation for the magazine. You can donate whenever you like, and whatever amount you wish. You will continue to receive the magazine even if you don't donate.

### **How do I donate?**

You can do this online with paypal - you do not need to have a paypal account to do this, it is just the means by which we can accept payment.

Or you can donate by post with a cheque.

Or you can make a direct transfer to our bank account.

The magazine also displays a QR code, for those who find this an easy way to donate.

Details of payment methods will be in each magazine (see page 27) and on the magazine page of the website

## **PDF copies**

You can choose to only receive a PDF copy of the magazine, an option on the unsubscribe page for current subscribers and on the application form for those joining our mailing list.

## **Extra magazines**

If you want extra copies of the magazine they can be bought from our shop online or with the order form in the newsletter.

## **How much money is needed?**

We are always so grateful for your generosity, without which The Julian Meetings could not continue. In the past your donations have formed about 30% of our income, so we hope that you will continue to donate as generously as before. You might consider giving at least the cost of the old subscription (£8 a year) plus whatever extra you feel is appropriate. We appreciate whatever amount people are able to give.



## **Updating your information or coming off the mailing list**

If you wish to come off our mailing list please use the link in the email or write to our mailing administrator, Ian Bailey (see page 27)

If you wish to change any other details (address, phone no.) either email / write to Ian or unsubscribe completely and re-join with the new details.

If you have any questions now or in the future please email Ann at [it@thejulianmeetings.net](mailto:it@thejulianmeetings.net) or Ian at [mailings@thejulianmeetings.net](mailto:mailings@thejulianmeetings.net) or write to Ian (address on page 27)

## **Joining our mailing list**

If you do not already receive your own copy of the magazine, all the details you need to join our mailing list are on page 27. We hope that you will wish to support our work by making a donation if you choose to join the mailing list - or even if you do not!.

## Silence is Golden

In 2002 we had just moved to our dream village home near Peterborough, and I was hoping for a quieter year than the last few, with our three teenage girls settled at school and my husband back at work. As I relaxed with my coffee on the sofa I saw the 'New Home' candle from my friend Brenda and decided to light it in thankfulness, to celebrate this moment of tranquility and contentment.



As I prayed, I thought of Dad, who taught me to pray and encouraged me to keep a diary. As a sixth former in the 70s, I joined an Evangelical Church youth group. I was given some Bible reading notes and encouraged to have a daily personal quiet time (QT) with Jesus. This habit had waned with the demands of marriage; nurse and midwifery training; raising three daughters and making 13 house moves. Now, as I pondered the recent testing years, I realized my faith had strengthened. Guilt from missing the QT had gone, because God had taken me on a different journey.

### Upheaval

Autumn 1996 was the start of the tumultuous years. We bought our first house, hoping to take some control over the military life. But the relocation from our RAF Quarter to Leicester was drawn out and tiring, as we both juggled jobs while transporting the girls to their new schools. Shortly after we were settled my father, aged 65, died suddenly 12 days before Christmas. In spring '97, just before my 37<sup>th</sup> birthday, I was diagnosed with MS (Multiple Sclerosis). Summer '97 brought the final trauma: just as I thought our roots were firmly planted we were told we'd be posted overseas in a year's time!

At the thought of leaving our precious, longed-for home with lovely garden, 10 rabbits and now a dog, I grabbed the new puppy and charged across the field screaming and sobbing. I did protest, but it was Mike's dream job. Eventually I could

see, past the losses and upheaval, the opportunities: I knew we were in God's hands. So, as military wives do, I got on with it: finding temporary homes for the animals and house plants and putting the house up for rent.

### **A peaceful interlude**

After the UK rat-race, the gentle pace of life in Cyprus was blissful. The warmth and beaches; the light and creative energy; the culture and the people all contributed to a feeling of calm after a storm. In this new quietness I too, like Elijah, heard the still small voice of God. But this dream tour was not one long holiday. Living with isolated military families contained together on a station, thousands of miles from home, is like goldfish circling in a small bowl.

Most service churches abroad thrive, being a welcome hub to connect. RAF Akrotiri was no exception. Amongst the work buildings, this traditional church stood out and sheltered a smallish congregation, all seeking fellowship. Our family joined with them, sharing faith and friendship. I soon felt completely at home. Empowered. If God was a gardener, He had prepared the ground, cleared the weeds and nourished the soil for me to grow. I grew in confidence and self-awareness. Here, we were all companions for this special and unexpected journey, however long or short it may be. I was soon involved with Sunday School and started a daytime group for young Mums, where most of my spiritual growing took place. My husband led an Alpha course and we counted our blessings.

### **Storm clouds and sunshine**

Then Mike was rushed to hospital with acute chest-pain and treated for a cardiac virus. His convalescence took some weeks. On his return, an already difficult working relationship deteriorated further. I worked part-time in the tiny RAF hospital. When a vacancy arose for a community midwife I applied but found that I was unsuccessful because my husband's rank was not thought to be appropriate to the role.

We both started to feel trapped. The haven was becoming toxic. A senior team member from the UK came to review the situation – and suggested shortening our tour from 2 years to 18 months. This felt unfair, but we determined to make the most of our remaining 6 months.

I contacted a lady who led retreats and organized a quiet day in the cool of the Troodos Mountains for the young Mums. Our day started with a meditation in the simple chapel in the forest. Classical music led us into a meditation from scripture, and silence. We then had free time to roam, rest, read, paint, write or just relax and listen to the peace amongst the trees. We re-grouped to feedback at the end of the day sharing our thoughts and closing with prayers.

We all seemed changed by this serene day.

**Fiona Elliott**

*You will have to wait until the April magazine to find out just how life changed for Fiona, and how God continued to walk alongside her. .*

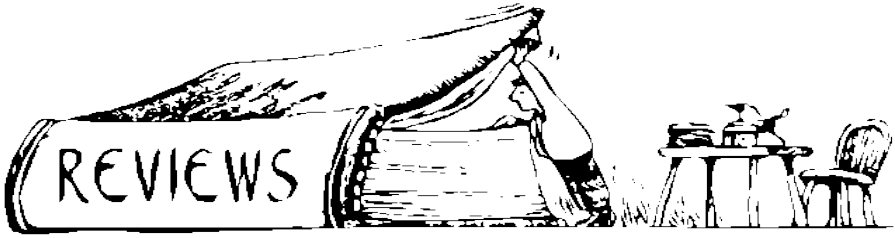
---

The sharp eyed amongst you may have noticed that our logo has been enlarged with the words 'Meditation' and 'Contemplative Prayer'.

This was a necessary change, to make it clearer what the Julian Meetings exist for. We know what 'Meeting in silence with God' is all about, but many people do not. But often they *are* aware of the terms contemplative prayer and meditation.

On a practical level, in this digital age, internet search engines are now far more likely to find us. This is so important for those surfing the net for a way into silence with God, as they are more likely to find us listed.





**SOME SMALL HEAVEN; Seeking Light in Winter; Advent, Christmas, Epiphany**

***Ian Adams***

Canterbury Press 2017 £8.99

ISBN 978-1-84825-993-5

Ian Adams invites us to journey with him from Advent, through to Epiphany. Luke's three great seasonal songs (four if you add the Songs of the Angels Luke 10.14): The Magnificat, Benedictus and Nunc Dimittis form the structure of the book. We read them, one line each day, alongside a reflection; deep, personal and honest, through which our fears and hopes may be acknowledged and faced. Adams contemplates the Advent theme of light coming out of darkness, after a period of waiting; sometimes uncomfortable, or despairing, sometimes in hope, moving towards the light of Epiphany. Each day has a hauntingly beautiful black and white photo of the Devon or Cornish coast: images to explore the relationships between light and darkness, in the world and in our own lives. Each day he adds one, two or three Prayer Words - an opportunity for silent repetition and reflection on a sentence from Luke's songs. The reflections enable us to look into our own anxieties, which can be very valuable. He also reminds of something real and practical that we can attempt or strive towards each day, such as choosing to love, show tenderness, actively seek for joy or to sing.

The book is grounded in the real world of fears, difficulties and darkness so that the reflections feel real and relevant. He offers ways of accepting and facing up to these prayerfully. He offers fresh insights into familiar scriptures which are so much part of our seasonal readings. An enjoyable and wise Advent read.

***Brenda Cox***

## THE WAY OF ST BENEDICT

*Rowan Williams*

Bloomsbury Continuum. 2020.

Paperback ISBN 9781472973078. Price £12.99.

eBook ISBN 9781472973092. Price. £12.46.

This book emphasises how important the Rule of St Benedict was to the formation of Western Christianity and, therefore, of modern western culture. It offers fundamental advice on how we grow as human beings, and on how healthy community relations are built. For instance, 'it is a good Benedictine principle that . . . committed life together matters more than any individual search for spiritual fulfilment,' the focus being on holding together dependence and liberty, labour and contemplation. The 'work of God' in Benedict's Rule is simply and exclusively prayer by the community as a community. By the 10<sup>th</sup> century it had become 'social' and public, a work of intercession on behalf of society, a precursor of the modern sacred / secular divide.

To reflect further on contemplative prayer Rowan Williams' final chapter discusses Abbot Cuthbert Butler's *Western Mysticism* (1922). 'Mysticism' for Butler is what the Catholic Church has traditionally understood as 'contemplation'. For Butler, some form of mystical-contemplative prayer is accessible for all Christians and should be seen as the natural and normative issue of the spiritual life. He is also concerned about the balance between action and contemplation, having previously written that '*a contemplative life does not lie in the absence of activity, but in the presence of contemplation*'. Williams concludes that Butler's message is a liberating one: 'the exercise of simple loving will in prayer, without complex schemes of meditation and efforts to stir the imagination, is truly contemplative, a fundamental part of what "mystics" are writing about.'

I found this book both interesting and informative, and also challenging to read.

**Sue Cutts**

## **THE WAY UNDER OUR FEET: A Spirituality of Walking** **Graham B. Usher**

SPCK, 2020

Paperback ISBN 9780281084067. Price £12.99.

eBook ISBN 9780281084050. £9.99

This book by the new Bishop of Norwich is a beautifully composed series of meditations on such experiences as praying, accompanying, fearing, and seeing as we journey on, perhaps, a road less travelled.

Bishop Graham is an ecologist, in addition to being a deeply spiritual man with a love for Julian. Part of his own preparation before his consecration as Bishop of Dudley (his former role) Bishop Graham walked and cycled from Dudley to Worcester. Of this trip he said, 'This means taking in the landscapes at a slower pace, feeling the earth underfoot and seeing the changing industries, listening to the different sounds, and praying for the different communities I pass through.'

This is a timely publication, full of wonderful surprises with quotations from writers as wide-ranging as Augustine of Hippo, Mark Twain, John Chryssavgis and Stephen Cottrell. Some parts will bring back a flood of happy memories and others beckon us to delight in new discoveries. This is an encouragement for us all to enjoy walking, as we emerge from lockdown. As Graham Usher writes, '*The Way Under Our Feet* invites us to walk ourselves back into life.'

**Luke Penkett**

---

## **AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS WITH JULIAN OF NORWICH** **Emma Pennington**

Bible Reading Fellowship. 2020.

Paperback ISBN 9780857465191. Price £8.99.

This very attractively produced book is small and compact, but full of wisdom, as we are led ever more deeply into those chapters of her *Revelations* where Julian speaks of the Cross. There is much scholarship lightly worn as the author explores Julian's words and their devotional context in 14<sup>th</sup>

century England. She sees one of Julian's functions as enabling us to pray the Passion through Julian's eyes as she, and we, contemplate the suffering Saviour. We discover, in our contemplation, the amazing love of God that the Cross reveals.

As this book just focuses on Julian and the Cross it would be good (but not absolutely necessary) to have read the whole text so as to put the relevant chapters in a wider context. But I, for one, will never see Jesus' face on the veil of Veronica, or the crown of thorns (the garland of both pain and victory), in the same way, as Julian leads us into this mystery of suffering and joy so closely combined.

Each chapter ends with suggestions for 'going deeper', and questions to ponder or discuss - I would add to 'journal with' - plus a practical application such as 'How can you bring love and life to someone who is suffering this week?'

A bonus is the section of full colour plates that show us the kind of pictures and devotional objects that would have influenced Julian as she pondered Christ's Cross.

An excellent book for Julian lovers to use again and again.

***Elizabeth Ruth Obbard ODC***

---

**LADY AT THE WINDOW: The lost journal of Julian of Norwich. A Novella**  
**Robert Waldron**

Paraclete Press, 2020.

Paperback ISBN 9781640605343. Price \$16.99.

Julian has been the subject of several works of fiction. Brenda Rickman Vantrease's *The Illuminator* (2005) had a wealth of detail and real empathy for her characters. Jean Flowerdew's *The anchoress* (2010) has an evocative sense of mystery which truly draws the reader in. Other books look beyond Julian's cell. Lillian Lewis's *All Shall be Well: An Irish Inheritance* makes few allusions to Julian but turns Julian into an invisible presence. Margaret Coles achieves the same effect in her atmospheric book *The Greening*.

Robert Waldron has written scholarly books on Merton and Nouwen, and three novellas: *Blue Hope*, *The Secret Diary of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, and *The Hound of Heaven at My Heels*. In *Lady at the Window* he chronicles the final Holy Week in Julian's life.

If you seek the antithesis of Julian - a Julian who bemoans her sins, regards God as a *Deus Absconditus* who is absent from her life, then read this. Waldron's Julian seems, like St John of the Cross, to be undergoing a dark night of the soul, which is as far as you can get from the real Julian. We need more than a few words spelt in a quaint, old-fashioned way - deare, lykened, and synne - to enter the spirit of 14<sup>th</sup> century Norwich. In contrast, Simon Parke does this remarkably well with *The Secret Testament of Julian*. But, I'm afraid, *Lady at the Window* left me cold.

**Luke Penkett**

---

**SHAPED BY THE END YOU LIVE FOR. Thomas Merton's  
Monastic Spirituality  
Bonnie B. Thurston**

Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN. 2020.  
Paperback ISBN 9780814688076 £15.99 (Amazon UK price)  
Ebook. eISBN 9780814688328. Amazon Kindle Price £9.71.

Although it is over 50 years since the death of the American monk Thomas Merton in December 1968, there has been no lessening of interest in his extensive writing which chronicles his growing awareness of the work of God in his life. After his conversion to Catholicism, the attraction to him of rigorous monastic life led him ever deeper into the solitary life. Out of this flowed an apprehension of human life which included others, and broadened into a wider appreciation of the religions of the East.

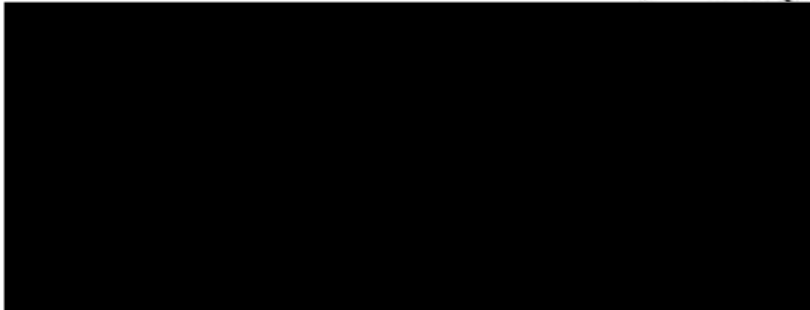
Bonnie Thurston brings to her book a deep acquaintance with Merton's extensive output. The book begins with a brief overview of Merton's life, and recounts the struggle between his vocation as a writer and the constraints of Trappist

silence.' This was 'compounded by the urgings of his superiors to continue his writing, which in the end, led him to be 'almost certainly history's talkiest Trappist' (p.36). In the process he soon became aware of a true or inner self, which did not always reflect his outward persona. It is that true self which most readily engages with God, and in the process does not become separate from others, but instead reveals 'the doorway by which he enters into the mystery of God and brings others into that mystery by the power of his love and humility' (p.90, a quotation from Merton's Disputed Questions, p.188-9).

The continuing attraction of Merton is largely due to his life's absorption in prayer/contemplation (for him the two seem to be synonymous) and to his clarity in conveying his own experience. By doing this, he helps others to engage in their turn with God. I most warmly recommend this book to anyone seeking a deepening of their prayer.

***Sister Mary John Marshall OSB  
Malling Abbey***

We welcome articles, short meditations, stories, poems or artwork for the Magazine, We may not be able to include them. and may edit them before inclusion. Book reviews (300 words max) to include title, author, ISBN, publisher, year published, hard- or paper-back, price.



**At our website:**  
**[www.thejulianmeetings.net](http://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
- \* join in a discussion forum
- \* 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

You can follow us on  
Facebook, Twitter and Instagram  
so if you, or friends, are into social media  
do pay us a visit!

