

Formed by the Spirit

The Newsletter of the Southwark Diocesan Spiritual Formation Group

Opportunities, events, resources and articles
on prayer and spirituality
Issue 10: August 2011



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*Contemplation is nothing but a hidden, peaceful, loving inflow of God.
If it is given room, it will inflame the spirit with love.*

John of the Cross

What's on?

Events, courses, opportunities...

Praying the Labyrinth

St. Andrew's Earlsfield,
Saturday September 24th,
10.30am to 12.30pm

Led by Revd. Jonathan Brown, Denise
Mumford and Chris Chapman



Using the new labyrinth garden next to St. Andrew's Earlsfield the morning will provide the opportunity to explore this ancient tool for prayer. At 10.30am, 11.15am and 12 noon we will outline the origins of the labyrinth and outline three ways of experiencing it prayerfully:

- A walk of stillness and awareness
- Daily walking the spiritual path
- The labyrinth and our life journey

You are then free to walk the labyrinth on your own, and compare your experiences with other participants. There is no need to book, and you can arrive in time for any one of the three introductory talks. Coffee and tea will be available.

All will be well:

The Spirituality of Julian of Norwich
Mondays October 3rd and 10th, 10.30am to 1pm in Trinity House, led by Chris Chapman

Julian of Norwich was a woman of prayer, a theologian and spiritual guide. These two sessions will introduce some of the key themes of Julian's thought and explore their contemporary relevance. For example:

- Julian's understanding of God as love, goodness, and being
- Our mother Christ...when we begin to think of God as 'she'.
- Wrestling with how to reconcile faith in the love of God with human suffering
- God as 'the ground of our beseeching' – Julian's experience and teaching about prayer

Explorations in Christian Spirituality

In St. Matthew's House, Croydon:
Thursdays, 7pm to 9pm: 29th September, ,
October 6th, October 13th, October 20th,
November 3rd, November 10th and
November 24th

This course aims to help you explore your own experience of God, drawing on the insights and wisdom of Christian spiritual writers and teachers across time, for example for example Benedict, Francis of Assisi, Julian of Norwich, the Cloud of Unknowing and Thomas Merton

Areas explored include:

- Spirituality and everyday life
- Our experience of God and its significance
- Prayer, action and transformation
- Making life choices
- The place of mystery within our experience of life and God.
- The freedom to love: entering into a new way of relating

Course cost: £20

Will you pray for me?

Exploring how and when we pray for others
Saturday October 15th, 10am to 1pm in
Trinity House, led by Chris Chapman

Sometimes people ask us for prayer; we can feel inadequate, not feeling we have the right words to pray, or even know what to pray for.

We will explore what we pray for, how we pray and our expectations of prayer. In the process we will touch on theological and spiritual questions about this ministry of intercession.

Prayer for Life

Diocesan Prayer and Spirituality Day
Saturday November 19th, 10am to 4pm in
Southwark Cathedral

A leaflet is attached separately with this mailing

For details of anything on this page or to book contact Chris Chapman 020 7939 9474
chris.chapman@southwark.anglican.org

Cathedral Quiet Day
SCHOOL OF THE LORD'S SERVICE

Benedictine wisdom for Anglicans today



*Led by Michael Ipgrave, Archdeacon of
Southwark and Canon Missioner
Southwark Cathedral*

Wednesday 31 August 2011
10.30am - 3.30pm

***The Quiet Day is open to all –
you do not need to book***

Beyond Words

*"The silence of eternity
Interpreted by love."*

We look forward to welcoming you to the fourth in the series of St. John's Waterloo contemplative prayer groups – open to anyone who happens to be in the centre of London on Wednesdays at 7.30pm starting on September 21st.

We shall meet weekly in the New Cut Housing Community Room which is almost opposite the Old Vic, close to Waterloo Station. Each meeting will last an hour and will include about 20 minutes of silent prayer preceded by a short introductory talk and a chance to share experiences of contemplative prayer.

*For more information please contact
Richard Craig at:
richardhcraig@btoopenworld.com
(tel: 020 7928 0495)*

Springs and Wells:

A Quiet Evening

*at St James Church, Riddlesdown
Tuesday 13th September 7pm-9.30pm*

Seeking God's grace in the water of springs and wells.
An evening of stillness, music, reflective spaces and prayer labyrinth [weather permitting!]

Leader: Jane Hoskins
Tea/coffee/fruit juice available throughout the evening
For further information and to book please e-mail
j.hoskins233@btinternet.com or ring 020 8660 7796

**Quiet mornings at St. Alphege,
Southwark Centre for Prayer:**

Close to Southwark tube station [Jubilee line]. All from 10am to 1pm on Saturday

September 3rd: **Praying into Scripture,**
with Jesus as companion for the journey.
Led by Hilary Rock-Gormley

October 1st: **Times and Seasons**
As summer fades into autumn we prayerfully consider times and seasons in our own journey with God
Led by Chris Chapman

November 5th: **Recognising the Holy**
Meeting the holy within the ordinary of life, within others and within ourselves.
Led by Revd. Ray Andrews

December 3rd: **Advent reflections:**
A prayerful entry into this season of waiting in hope for the coming of the Saviour
Led by Sue McKinney

*For details of these quiet mornings contact:
Chris Chapman 020 7939 9474
chris.chapman@southwark.anglican.org*

His Spirit is with us... Holy Spirit Day

*An invitation to explore, discuss
and encounter*



Saturday February 4th, 10am to 4pm
at All Saints Church,
Onslow Gardens, Sanderstead

For details contact:

parish.office@sanderstead-parish.org.uk

020 8657 0665

Teach us to Pray

*Enabling growth in prayer
within the local church*



Wednesday February 29th,
10.30am to 1pm
in St. Alphege Centre for Prayer,
Southwark

- Helping people into stillness and awareness before God
- Ways of introducing different paths of prayer
- Models for supporting growth in prayer within the local church

For enquiries contact Chris Chapman

chris.chapman@southwark.anglican.org

Wychcroft Residential Retreat Praying and Serving

*A weekend retreat to explore prayerfully
what it means to be a disciple of Jesus
Christ in the contemporary world, using
biblical meditations and reflections on
the paintings of Vermeer.*



Friday 2nd to Sunday 4th March 2012

Led by the Right Revd. David Atkinson
former Archdeacon of Lewisham and
Bishop of Thetford.

Open to everyone, but especially
clergy, Readers, SPAs and lay leaders in
churches.

Cost: £113

Wychcroft is the diocesan retreat and
conference centre near Godstone in
Surrey.

For enquiries contact Chris Chapman

chris.chapman@southwark.anglican.org

A Celebration of Age: Growing older is not an unfortunate illness, an obstacle to a meaningful existence or a personal tragedy – it is part of the wonder and mystery of life. This thought lay at the heart of the Celebration of Age service held at Southwark Cathedral on Saturday July 2nd. The following is part of an interview with Trish Bishop, a Southwark Pastoral Auxiliary, taken from the service.

CC What would you say were some of the more difficult aspects of getting older - some of the challenges you have found yourself facing?

TB The death of my husband 6 years ago was the greatest challenge I have had to face. Not only the personal sense of grief at the loss of my closest companion over 46 years, but having to deal with all the other things which went with it – selling a home, buying a home, doing my own accounts, living by myself for the first time in my life.

CC Are there things you sensed you are able to offer more fully and freely as an older person, than perhaps you did when you were younger?

TB Well, obviously, I've got more time, and experience, I suppose...but its as if in the last few years I'm just beginning to know how to LOVE. Before, it was always more like "Am I being loved?" The funny thing is, as soon as I started to really SEE and accept and value other people in their own right, for who they are, the love seems to come back at me from all directions.



CC What about you and God – how has that relationship developed in these latter years?

TB When I was younger I had the traditional, and clear, ideas about what God was like. Now it all seems hazy, but I FEEL earthed, rooted, like I've come home. The nearest image I can give is like the picture on the

cover of your Service sheets – I feel like a small child being held firmly by her father's hand, but I've no clear picture of the rest of the owner of the hand. What I know is, whatever I do, if I get tired, bad-tempered, fall down, try to get away (and there are times when I do any of those) that hand will never let me go.

CC What challenges do you sense remain for you as you look forward to the years to come?

TB I'm lucky, I've always had good health, but recently one or two minor scares have made me think. I'm not afraid of death, but I AM afraid of dying, the process that will lead up to death. I'm a very independent person, and I hate the thought of having to rely on others. But I remind myself of some of the people I visit, and how, despite their various disabilities, they give back to me just as much as I give them, and I just hope and pray that I will learn to be like them.

CC Finally, is there anything else you'd like to say from your experience?

TB Yes...if there's something you feel called to do – don't be put off just by the thought that you are too old to start something new. There's plenty you can do in older years, even if it's not the same as when you were younger. And when the time comes when DOING is no longer possible, then remember how you ARE is another way of giving. And never forget, that, whatever the difficulties you may have, God is always with you, and will never let you go.

Tools for prayer Praying with parables

Jesus looked at ordinary life and saw within it the pattern of God's working: – a woman making bread, or a merchant searching in the marketplace for the finest of pearls. Life itself is where the word of God is sown, and we can make space to receive this word in attentiveness.

Daily life presents its parables:

- Why did that incident make such an impression on me?
- There I was rushing for my train, and there was that man sitting on the bench looking out at the flowers. Why did I notice him?
- Why can't I get that dream out of my head?

When asked why he teaches in parables Jesus gave a puzzling reply, quoting the prophet Isaiah:

....This is why I speak to them in parables:
"Though seeing, they do not perceive; though hearing, they do not listen or understand.
¹⁴ In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:
"*You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.* ¹⁵ *For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.*"
¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear
[Matthew 13]

Considering Jesus' words positively a pattern of conversion of life emerges

- We are to see *and* perceive
- We are to listen *and* hear
- We are to understand with the heart
- This leads us to turn to Christ
- And to be healed [made whole as human beings]

A word is being generously sown – have we the space to receive it, to allow it to grow and to bear its fruit? It is in some sense a hidden word. It takes time and desire to not only see but to begin to perceive, not only to listen but to begin to hear and understand...to be moved to turn to God present in all we experience...and this turning is the path to our wholeness.

A method for prayerfully considering the parable of everyday life

- I ask God for what I desire – for example, that I be open to understand the significance of my experience and to respond to any invitation from God I receive through it.
- I remember that hearing, perceiving and understanding are all God's gift to me.
- I see and hear the parable of what I saw or experienced – recalling it in my memory, pondering its meaning for me, attending to those moments that moved me in some way. I pay attention not just to the content of what I saw or what happened but my own internal responses to it – what did I feel? what did I think?
- I seek to understand the meaning of this experience. What was significant about what I saw, or what happened to me? Why was it significant? I ask God to guide me as I consider this: how does this event speak to the place where I am today?
- When I am ready I turn to Christ, expressing the prayer that arises from my heart from my reflection
- I rest quietly in the presence of Christ, open to receive what I need at this moment for my wholeness.

Praying the parable of a dream

Some of our sleeping dreams may be the fruit of eating too much late at night! But some may hold meaning for us. At a time when we are seeking guidance from God it can help to pay particular attention to our dreams.

- I ask God for what I desire – for example, that I be open to understand the significance of my dream and to respond to any invitation from God I receive through it.
- I remember that hearing, perceiving and understanding are all God's gift to me.
- I see and hear the parable of my dream: – recalling it in my memory, pondering its meaning for me, attending to those parts of the dream that moved me in some way. I pay attention not just to the content of my dream but the feelings that accompanied it
- I seek to understand the meaning of the dream for me. Whilst many parts of the dream may pass me by it may be that one scene stays with me. I ask God to guide me as I consider this scene: how does it speak to the place where I am today?
- When I am ready I turn to Christ, expressing the prayer that arises from my heart from my reflection
- I rest quietly in the presence of Christ, open to receive what I need at this moment for my wholeness.

From fear to Love

Fear is one affliction many of us live with. Sometimes we need fear to be alert to real danger. But some of us live with fear; like bindweed it creeps over, wraps round and constrains our thinking and our acting. It gets in the way, hems us in.

Fear comes in many forms: fear of failure, fear of being found wanting, fear that if someone really knew us they would turn away, fear that time is running out, fear of losing control, the fear that I won't be able to cope. You can add your own flavour of fear; I have plenty of my own!

Fear makes us turn to a safe place that is never quiet safe; we build walls against what we fear and then find we've only built ourselves a prison. Because of fear of rejection we seek to be what we guess others want us to be, and inside the real person presses to get out. Because we don't like to fail we daren't try anything new. Because we are afraid to lose control we find it hard to trust. Fear paralyses; it holds us in its grip. We become stuck, unable to explore or grow, our spirit diminished.

Violence often seems to have roots in fear: we strike out against the perceived threat of someone who is different, or challenges our assumptions, or who might take what is 'ours'.

Fear is opposed to the giving and receiving of love. True, some fear is other-centred: the fear that something might happen to our children or those that we care for. But most fear centres on self-preservation in one form or other; it turns us inward. On the other hand love expresses a generous concern and attentiveness for another, leading us out beyond ourselves. That is why fear is isolating: it makes us 'safe' but prevents real engagement with other people.

Henri Nouwen wrote a book entitled *In the House of the Lord* where he suggested the spiritual journey is one from the House of Fear to the House of Love. There is 'no fear in love', says the first letter of John, for 'perfect love casts out fear [4.18].

Jesus spoke these words to his disciples 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid' [Mark 6:50].

He invites us to 'abide in love' [John 15].



So how do we move from fear to love? When the disciples had locked the doors of the room where they staying after the death of Jesus, afraid of what might befall them, their Lord came to them in their house of fear, bid them be at peace, and sent them out through the breath of his Spirit. [John 20: 19-22]

It is by gift of the Spirit that we begin to relinquish the chains of fear; it is something God does, but not without our co-operation. It is not done in a moment – it is a journey.

From fear to Love

Name your fear

When I was a small child I was afraid of the dark. I couldn't sleep. I imagined I could make out the shadowy outline of a gorilla in the darkest corner of the bedroom – not the best inducement to sleep! Then one night inspiration came: I named my gorilla 'Charlie'. Somehow I wasn't afraid of 'Charlie' in the same way as my looming, nameless gorilla-shaped terror. Sleep came more easily, and in time Charlie no longer seemed to be around. It helps to pin down just what it is you fear so that you can see it for what it is. For example, 'if I try something new I will inevitably fail'. Naming your fear helps in beginning to address it: 'I own I am afraid of this, but I don't have to be held by this fear'.

Share your fear: Fear becomes magnified in size when we seek to hide it from others. Share your fear with someone you trust.

Look at where your actions take you

The inner voice of fear bids us be 'safe' but this safety is often illusory. Choosing the safe can lead us to be more trapped than ever. The pattern often repeats itself – so be aware of it. There are other responses we can make that will help us in the longer run to be happier, less constrained and more confident in our ability.

Don't listen to discouragement:

In his advice to spiritual guides Ignatius Loyola notes how when we seek to overcome our fears and move to a greater trust in God, what is damaged and closed to the Spirit within us will 'harass, afflict with anxieties' and 'put up false obstacles'. On the other hand the voice of the Spirit within is heard in 'every interior joy that calls and attracts' us towards wholeness, freedom and generous self-gift. Fear drives us, whilst the Love that is God invites.

One exercise that may be helpful is to divide a piece of paper into two columns. In the left column write down what the inner 'voice' of fear says. In the right column write down in answer what, in better moments, you have sensed God saying to you... 'you are worthy, capable...there is a future for you...'

Act your way into a new way of thinking

If we wait until we feel total trust and freedom before we step out of a fearful pattern of behaviour we may wait a long time! But if we dare to step out when Love calls, ignoring the voice of fear, then trust and self-belief will grow.

Stay in the moment, for 'now' is where Christ is.

'The rule is jam tomorrow and jam yesterday – but never jam today'

[The Red Queen in Lewis Carroll's: *Through the Looking Glass*]

Fear usually concerns what has happened in the past or what *might* happen in the future. All our capacity to be gratefully present to the gift of 'now' and to work creatively is sapped away. Yet 'now' is where Christ is. Even if the worst we can imagine did happen, Christ would be within that 'now'.



Jesus invites his worrying disciples to 'consider the ravens...consider the lilies, how they grow'. It's impossible to 'consider' what is before us if we're somewhere in the past or future preoccupied with our own needs. Jesus advises: be present to what is. Spend a minute or two giving all your attention to the sounds you can hear - voices in the street, rain against the window – listen to the texture of these sounds rather than getting tangled up in what they might signify. Or, absorb yourself in what you can see – the lines on the desk in front of you, the movement of clouds in the sky. Slowly you will find your heartbeat slowing. In this breathing space, Christ 'is'.

Go with the flow

The movement from fear into love is a movement of the Spirit. It is like a stream we launch our boat into and then the current takes it along. It takes effort and courage and persistence to place ourselves within this stream but the transformation it slowly brings about is all gift.