

Formed by the Spirit

The Newsletter of the Southwark Diocesan Spiritual Formation Group

Opportunities, events, resources and articles
on prayer and spirituality

Issue 11: December 2011



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*O Adonai and Ruler of the House of Israel:
you appeared to Moses in the fire of the burning bush,
and on Mount Sinai gave him your law.
Come and with outstretched arms redeem us*

What's on?

Events, courses, opportunities...

Faith, Hope and Love

Three evenings of prayer and exploration, based on Bishop Christopher's call to mission in 2012



Wednesday 15th Feb, 29th Feb, 7th March at St. Matthew's House, Croydon 7pm to 9pm or

Thursday 15th March, 22nd March, 29th March, at Trinity House [London Bridge area] 7pm to 9pm

The evenings will focus on the experience of faith, hope and love within the development of our relationship with God and our active lives as Christians. Each session will include prayer exercises, a biblical reflection and insights from the Christian spiritual tradition.

Contact chris.chapman@southwark.anglican.org to book

Wychcroft Residential Retreat Praying and Serving

Friday 2nd to Sunday 4th March 2012

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.



Led by David Atkinson former Archdeacon of Lewisham and Bishop of Thetford. Cost: £113. Wychcroft is the diocesan retreat and conference centre near Godstone Surrey.

For enquiries and to book contact Chris Chapman
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

Where are you leading me?

Exploring the Ministry of Spiritual Guidance

Thursday 26th April, 7pm to 9pm in St. Matthew's House Croydon
Spiritual guides offer one to one support in learning to listen and respond to the work of the Spirit in one's life. Is this something that would help you? Or do you feel drawn towards this ministry? This session provides a space to explore questions about giving or receiving spiritual guidance.

Led by members of the SPIDIR spiritual direction network

For enquiries contact Chris Chapman chris.chapman@southwark.anglican.org

St. Andrew's Edenbridge is offering a day on 'How to lead a Quiet Day' on Tuesday 1st May 2012. Places are limited for this so an early booking is advised. A full programme of events at St. Andrew's is available at www.sisters-of-st-andrew.com

Advent Prayer

Advent quiet morning

Waiting on God

Saturday December 3rd, 10am to 1pm at St. Alphege, Southwark, led by Sue McKinney

Faith in the Useless?

Following the fool on the Advent Path

St. Matthew's Church, 71 Station Road,
Redhill, Surrey, RH1 1DL

Should our Christian journey be always sombre and serious? Have we forgotten the childlike joy in playing and laughter? Join us at St. Matthew's Church on 9th & 10th December, 2011 when we will be following the Fool on the Advent Prayer Path via the medium of silence and prayer. Church open Friday 9th December, 1pm to 7pm & Saturday 10th December, 10am to 4pm. For more information contact: Caterina Brown 01737 211728; Anne Currie 01737 760384; or Scilla Wallis 01737 221796

An accompanied Prayer Walk

In St James Church, Riddlesdown
On Sunday 11th December 6.30pm-7.30pm
You are invited to take this opportunity to walk together and experience the Advent message in stillness, prayer, music and reflection.

There will be six prayer spaces. We will spend some time in each, in stillness and prayer. At the end of the 'Walk' we will join in a short time of worship and thanksgiving.

The **Advent Prayer Walk** will be available for personal prayer each Tuesday in Advent 10am-12noon, also on Saturday 10th December 10am-12noon and Thursdays 1st, 8th and 15th December 9am-10am

For further information contact Jane Hoskins, j.hoskins233@btinternet.com

Thursday Evenings Liturgy at 6pm in St Michael's Convent Chapel,

56 Ham Common, Richmond, TW10 7JH.

Sung Eucharist following Common Worship. On the 4th Thursday of the month different styles of worship are explored. All are welcome to attend, and to join the Community for supper afterwards.

Please telephone: 020 8940 8711 ext102 or email: hospitality@sistersofthechurch and let us know in good time that you intend to join the Community for Thursday Evening Liturgy and Supper. Donations welcomed.

St. Alfege pilgrimage, 19 April 2012, St Alfege, was killed on Easter Sunday, 19 April 1012, on the site where St. Alfege Church in Greenwich stands. The day begins at Southwark Cathedral at noon where we will be welcomed by the Bishop of Southwark, Christopher Chessun, and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, who will give a short introduction to the themes of the day, and pilgrimage in particular. After this service pilgrims can make their way to the afternoon gathering in St Alfege Park in Greenwich on foot, or by cycle or public transport, Walking pilgrims will follow a guided route. For full details go to www.st-alfege.org

Quiet mornings 2012
at St. Alphege Centre for Prayer, Southwark
Second Saturday of each month from 10am to 1pm

January 14th

Praying with Parables

Attending to the parables of the Gospels and the parables of daily life
Led by Chris Chapman, Spiritual Formation Adviser

February 11th

**The house of God
and the gate of heaven**

A meditation on Jacob's dream [Genesis 28] and its implications for a modern understanding of the church with ancient roots.

Led by John Ansell, Chair of the Southwark Diocese Spiritual Formation Group

March 10th

**Christ's resurrection
and the cosmic dance**

A reflection for Lent and Easter
Led by Ursula Hodges, licensed Lay Minister at St Mary's with All Saints Churches Putney and quiet day leader

May 12th

Encountering the risen Jesus

An invitation to spend time in stillness, reflection and prayer as we explore some of the accounts of Jesus' resurrection meetings with his disciples and others.

Led by Jane Hoskins, SPA at St. James' Riddlesdown and quiet day leader

June 9th

Benedictine Spirituality:

A reflection on the application of the monastic wisdom to our life today.

Led by Ray Andrews, Priest-in-Charge of St George the Martyr with St Alphege and St Judes,



You are welcome to come
without booking.

For travel details contact
chris.chapman@southwark.anglican.org

Tools for Prayer Waiting on God

*I wait for the Lord; my soul waits,
And in his word I hope...
My soul waits for the Lord
More than those who watch for the
morning... [From Psalm 130]*

What are you waiting for?

- For the next step on your path through life to become clear?
- For an answer to a question?
- To become free within?
- To find purpose or peace in your life?
- For the fruit to come of what you have sown and nurtured?

We wait actively...working, and searching, for life is in our hands. It is the one who seeks who finds, and the one who asks who receives, and the one who knocks who will find the door opened.

And yet we also wait passively – for the right time to come, for growth to take its course, and to receive by gift what cannot be ours by effort alone.



Waiting is at the heart of prayer

Wait now in the presence of the Lord...

Name before God what it is you are seeking...

Hold before God the desires of your heart - even those too deep to name.

Let go to God,
not in resignation but in hope.
Everything is gift,
and God is generous in meeting our deepest needs.

Ask God what it is you can do to help bring an answer to your prayer
But be content to wait...

Use the words from Psalm 130 above to express your waiting in hope. You may find it helpful to repeat them quietly as you wait before God, and to come back to them as your day continues

Sometimes an external action helps to express our waiting on God:

- Sow seeds in a pot ready for the season to come, or clear a patch of ground in your garden ready for new planting.
- Clear out a cluttered space in your home – a drawer, a corner of a room. Leave it a little while before you decide how you will use it in future.
- Take time out to go on 'pilgrimage' – to take time to walk or travel to somewhere you don't normally go. Your outward pilgrimage is an expression of your inward searching

Spiritual Growth in the Local Church

My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. [Isaiah 56: 4-7]

It would be wonderful if each local church could do something extra in 2012 to support and inspire congregation members and visitors to set out on the adventure of prayer.

Here are some possible ways forward in brief – what might work in your setting? If you want help or ideas in relation to any of these please contact Chris Chapman chris.chapman@southwark.anglican.org 020 7939 9474

A Prayer Table

Setting up a space with resources, tools and guides for prayer that congregation members and visitors can use when they visit the church.

A Prayer Walk

Setting up a prayer walk with 'stations' around the church building – perhaps related to the season

Prayer garden:

Using the outside space around our church buildings to create an oasis of calm and refreshment for local people

Prayer in common

Making more of daily morning and evening prayer within church life

A School for Prayer

Setting up local opportunities for people to explore different ways into prayer, and to deepen the relationship between prayer and daily life.

We assume that we all know intuitively how to pray without any help or guidance. Yet there is wisdom passed through generations that can help us.

A way of life for individuals

A way of life provides a flexible and practical structure for daily life whereby we safeguard times for those activities we know to be essential for our wellbeing and spiritual growth

A way of life for a local church:

Drawing up a shared way of life enables a local congregation to think through how to make God the source of its shared life and work. The framework of a common way of life will help individuals consider, draw up and live by a personal way of life that reflects the same values and principles

Open for prayer:

An open church expresses the hospitality of God. What are sustainable ways of opening the church building for personal prayer?

Words and Silences

Creating space within our shared worship, day to day church life and individual prayer for quiet openness to God.

Reflection:

There is only one joy

Some twenty five years ago I took part in a course for spiritual directors. At the heart of the experience was a guided 30 day retreat. Rest days, roughly once a week, punctuated the intensity of meeting oneself [and God] in the clarity of silence. These were times to walk, to sleep, to read something other than the bible - whatever it took to take a deep breath before beginning again. On one such day in April the clouds rolled in from the hills bringing a cold rain which eventually turned to snow. Two of my fellow retreatants had very different reactions: one, from Scotland, turned her back to the window in her room, refusing to look out at this untimely outburst of winter. Another, from Indonesia, gazed in wonder at the miracle of snow. Hearing that her friend was so downcast she passed on a message: 'Tell her to look out of the window. There is only one joy'.

Last year, after the death of my father, the story came back to me. The years after retirement were perhaps the freest and most enjoyable my parents had known...holidays in the sun, morning coffee out in the town, their forming of a formidable if sometimes fractious badminton partnership...these were good times. As years went on the fabric of their lives gradually unwound. Physical problems became more dominant and then first my mother and then my father began to lose their minds to dementia. After my mother's death, my father seemed to rally for a while, digging out the jacket she had never let him wear. But daily life was precarious and after a series of falls he spent his last months in hospital. For long periods it seemed there was little breath of life left, but then he would sparkle again, telling us about his war years, or chatting up a nurse. And then he was gone.

It is tempting to cast these last years in terms of tragedy, compared with the flourishing of what had come before. They were certainly difficult times, not just for them but for us as children who bore the anxiety and now feel the loss. But in me I hear someone telling me not to turn my back upon the experience but to gaze through the window, for 'there is only one joy'. Those painful, unsettling years held the gift of a new depth of intimacy with my father – holding and feeding him who had once held and fed me. In his stories, invited and repeated so many times, I saw his life afresh, not only as my parent but as a young man taking hold of the adventure the war years presented.

Like most people, I live in denial of growing older – I don't want to know. With two parents with dementia I wonder whether that will be my road too, and hope I won't be too embarrassing when I'm no longer in a state to wholly care! But having gazed through that window I am less afraid. If my father, through his dependence on others, could bring forth such love and knit together a family who had lived up to then too far apart, who am I to say that this happening to me would constitute a tragedy?

I am not in the land of easy answers, and I know there are far more difficult pains people bear than this. There are deaths where there is no time to say goodbye – no opportunity to speak the unsaid. But the thought remains that the unanticipated and unwanted sorrow, the messiness of fading health and increasing dependence on others, and the stark reality of death are yet part of the mysterious bundle of life. Such a belief takes us far from the prevailing spirit of our time, where wellbeing is defined by youth, beauty and vitality, as if there were but one good season in human existence.

I naturally see the beauty in the blue of a summer cornflower or the painted interior of the tulip bowl in spring, but it has taken more looking to see beauty in a brown autumn seedhead or lichen finding a home on a winter branch. But now I have seen it, like snow in April, I begin to know joy.