

Formed by the Spirit

The Newsletter of the Southwark Diocesan Spiritual Formation Group

Opportunities, events, resources and articles
on prayer and spirituality

Issue 15: January 2013



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And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward springs –
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

Gerard Manley Hopkins

What's On? Events, Courses, Opportunities

Quiet Mornings at St. Alphege Southwark,

King's Bench St. SE1 0QZ, Saturdays 10am to 1pm

These mornings are open to all. There is no charge; a small donation to cover any costs is welcome.

Each morning has a theme and includes input, prayer exercises and suggested reflection material. There are times for quiet personal prayer within St. Alphege, or you can take a guided walk through the local area. If you can't make the whole morning you are welcome to come for a couple of hours.

St Alphege is close to Southwark tube [Jubilee Line], Borough tube [Northern Line] and Waterloo stations. For directions contact Chris Chapman. It's helpful to have an idea of numbers attending in advance. chris.chapman@southwark.anglican.org

January 26th: **At prayer with Julian of Norwich**

Deepening our grounding in God as a new year begins

Led by Chris Chapman

March 2nd: **Being Honest to God the Ground of our Being: - what the mystics have always known.**

Led by Rev. Richard Craig

May 4th **Who are you O my God.... and who am I?**

Reflections on these prayer words of St. Francis of Assisi, with times of quiet, and a several creative possibilities to help us explore something more of the mystery of God, ourselves, and our awareness of connection or not, on that particular day.

Led by Sister Sue CSF

June 1st: **The Spirituality of Ageing:**

Reflections and meditations on the spirituality of growing older. All ages welcome

Led by Rev. Ray Andrews

July 6th **God in creation - Seeing God in all things'**

Led by Rev. Cynthia Jackson



Winter Stillness

Saturday 19th January 2013, 10am-12.30pm

St James Church, Riddlesdown, CR8 2DL

Leader: Jane Hoskins

Spend time in stillness, prayer, walking or just resting,

as we explore the mystery, the hope, the comfort and beauty of our creator God.

Tea/coffee/creative space. Suggested donation £6

A way in the wilderness:

A two evening exploration of the desert tradition of Christian spirituality through the themes of challenge, calling, self-discovery and renewal. We will use the sayings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, and the wisdom and experience of others through time who witness to how God makes a way in the wilderness for those who seek him.

Mondays February 11th and 25th, Trinity House [London Bridge area], 7pm to 9pm
Led by Chris Chapman

Making meaning before you die

How do we provide support and care for those who seek meaning amidst the changes of later life? How do we move from fixed stereotypes of later life as a time of decline towards a place where we see the possibilities for personal growth and fruitfulness? This day workshop is aimed at those involved, formally or informally, in pastoral care and support roles.

Wednesday March 20th, 10.30am to 4pm in Trinity House

Led by Rev. Dr. Andrew Goodhead,
Chaplain at St. Christopher's Hospice

For further details and to book for 'A Way in the Wilderness' or 'Making meaning before you die' please contact:

Chris Chapman, Spiritual Formation Adviser,
chris.chapman@southwark.anglican.org
020 7939 9474

Resources for you and your church

You can find a variety of tools for prayer, resource material for Bishop

Christopher's call to 'Faith, Hope and Love' and past issues of this newsletter on the Southwark Diocesan website at <http://www.southwark.anglican.org/prayer/prayer-spirituality>

A date for your new diary

Diocesan Spirituality Day
Saturday November 16th
in Southwark Cathedral
Details will follow

London Spirituality Centre **For details and to book for events in this column contact:**

bookings@spiritualitycentre.org

020 7621 1391

www.spiritualitycentre.org

The London Centre for Spirituality
The Church of St Edmund the King
Lombard Street ,London EC3V 9EA

Saturday 2nd February 11am-4pm
The Still Centre : A quiet day in the heart of the City of London A day of peace and quiet in the heart of London with all the facilities of the London Centre for Spirituality on hand. There is space to sit and read or reflect; areas for prayer and contemplation; and the streets and alleys of the City to explore without the rush and busy-ness of weekdays. Each day begins and ends with a short meditation. *£10 please bring your own lunch, drinks are provided*

Saturday 9th February 11am-4pm
Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land
A day for reflecting on the experience and practise of ministry in contexts that are alien, hostile or indifferent.
Led by Rev'd Dr Cally Hammond
£40 please bring your own lunch, drinks are provided

A Lent Retreat in Daily Life: Ash Wednesday (February 13th) to April 17th 2013

A "retreat in daily life" that enables you to meet regularly with an experienced prayer guide at a time that is convenient for you over the weeks from Lent and into Easter. You are invited to set some time aside each day for reflection and prayer and to meet with your guide each week or when mutually arranged. The guide is there to listen and to talk with you about your spiritual exploring, to share ways of praying that might be helpful to you in your particular circumstances, to offer passages from scripture or other writings that may assist you in your reflections.

There will be a gathering for all involved on Ash Wednesday at 6pm; this will be a chance to meet your guide in person and will begin with a short act of worship. There will also be a short closing gathering on Wednesday 17th April at 6pm.

Wychcroft Retreat Weekend
**Fruit from the Tree
of Christ's Passion**
A prayerful preparation for Easter



Friday March 15th to Sunday March 17th 2013

Led by Chris Chapman and Jane Hoskins

May those who sow in tears

reap with shouts of joy [Psalm 126]

This weekend will provide a relaxed but prayerful space to become open before God in preparation for Easter.

There will be input, personal space, prayer times and a variety of suggested reflection exercises. The retreat will include times of stillness to help us be attentive to the Spirit at work in our lives. We will draw on themes that flow from the bible but connect with our experience.

The weekend will begin at 6.30pm on Friday evening and end after lunch on Sunday. Cost £116.

Wychcroft is the Diocesan retreat and training centre in the countryside near Bletchingley, Redhill, Surrey.

Chris Chapman is the Southwark Diocesan Spiritual Formation Adviser. Jane Hoskins regularly leads quiet days and is experienced in creating spaces for prayer.

For enquiries and to book contact Chris Chapman at:

chris.chapman@southwark.anglican.org 020 7939 9474

Tools for Prayer

A Prayer for the Dark

Winter reminds us of how much darkness is part of our experience of life. The nights are long and light lasts a few brief hours. We tend to see darkness negatively as the absence of light. Darkness may carry with it a sense of threat or danger. We are not in control in the same way as we are when we can see our way. We make artificial lights to avoid the unknown of night. When we are in trouble, confused or in pain we may feel ourselves to be 'lost in the dark'. And yet many of us will have learnt as children to close our eyes when we pray. We let go of the stimulation of our moment by moment existence to rest in a presence that is in every moment and beyond every moment. God is in the darkness as well as in the light. Night invites a deeper trust to that presence and care that is always there. Night bids us relinquish our weary efforts to micro-manage life. We let go – not into nothingness – but into Love...hidden from us perhaps, but very real. God bids us rest.

Find a physical dark space. Turn off the lights.
You might want to light a candle but be open to the darkness surrounding it that makes this light shine so brightly and warmly.
Sit quietly, relaxing into the moment.

As worries, concerns, thoughts and fears come to mind
neither fight them, nor cling to them.
Let them come and go, passing them over into the darkness.
Rest the palms of your hands on your thighs, turned upwards and open;
that way your preoccupations can slip away from your grasp
and God can look after them for you.

You may feel you want to move away:
darkness and stillness allows inner anxieties and hurts to surface;
they can seem overwhelming.
But stay in the dark.
Just as your eyes slowly adjust to the night
so you might begin to sense the presence of a Love you can trust and rest in,
surrounding and enveloping you
clothing you with kindness..

Thoughts and words of prayer may come,
but you may also find it enough to simply rest without need for words.
There is no need here for explanation
and often words fall so short.
It is enough to 'be'.
Because the God of love is so close to you, you cannot see him.
Because divine light so dazzles you, you are in darkness.
But you are in God
And God is in you.

Reflection

A resolution for a new year.

Like many others I have often not carried through my new year resolutions. Or to be more accurate I have – but only for a day or two! I wonder if in part this has been because I have plucked them from the surface of my life rather than allowing them to arise from some deeper place within. 'I will drink less coffee through the day'; 'I will tidy up my desk at the end of each day, not allowing any clutter to accumulate'. These good and useful wishes need attending too; yet they do not reach to the core of me. Instead as I walk around the park near our home words form themselves into a prayer: 'How can I 'be' unless I draw near to you?' If my life is not grounded in God I am all over the place, I am not at home with myself and I have nothing to share. So my first 'resolution' is not about coffee or my desk. It is to turn to the one whose gaze is always turned to me; it is about a way I desire to face life, my work and my relationships. Of course that turning will need to find its practical expression day by day, and it might even mean I am more moderate in my coffee consumption and I respect my desk more. But the turning comes first...and last.

In this Epiphany season we hear echoes of this inner resolve to turn towards Christ.

The wise men from the East resolutely follow the star. [Matthew 2]

The servants at the wedding feast of Cana are told to fix their attention on Jesus: 'Do whatever he tells you.' [John 2. 5]

Two disciples of John the Baptist are drawn to ask Jesus 'Where are you staying?' and are invited to 'Come and see'. They 'remain with him that day'. [John 1. 35-39]

Simon and his brother Andrew respond to Jesus' invitation: 'Follow me'. [Mark 1.17]

Jesus chooses twelve apostles 'to be with him' [Mark 3.14]

Other steps will follow, but they have no meaning without this first and enduring one: to resolutely set oneself towards Christ, seeking his company, attending to his word, walking in his footsteps.

Give me the grace to seek you,
for you seek me.
Turn my gaze towards your face,
for you look with love upon me.
Draw me to my home in you,
for you are at home in me.

Renewal of the life of the local church

As part of the Southwark Diocesan Strategy for Ministry, Bishop Christopher called for a day of prayer and fasting in every local church on January 5th. I went to the Cathedral early on that morning in response to that invitation.

As with the diocesan church so with any local church there are any numbers of responsibilities and concerns that take up our attention. Resources – whether or people to carry out essential work or the materials we need – are often in short supply. There are new opportunities too: – to serve, to share our faith or to build community; but how are we to do this? What matters more and what matters less? How is the Spirit at work in our context and how do we begin to hear this and to co-operate with this movement?

There is something raw, real and necessary about sitting before God...

We lay down all the questions, projects and burdens;
we let go our preconceived ideas.

We step back from asking God to bless our plans
and allow the room for God to lead us into his plans.

We put ourselves in a position to be taught, led and enabled.

We remember our complete dependence.

How do we build such 'sitting before God' into our shared life as church?

We might do it as a 'one-off' exercise but how do we make openness before God the heartbeat of our common life?

There is no more important question.

- A time of quiet prayer at the beginning and end of PCC meetings
- Making the half an hour before the Sunday service begins a gathering time for 'sitting before God' perhaps with prayerful quiet music to help still those who come in to the space.
- A time of stillness within the Sunday service when all are invited to bring before God the church's daily life and work.
- Creating a time in the week when the church is open for prayer with simple resources to help people enter into the time.
- An annual day of prayer and fasting for the life and work of the local church.
- 'Termly' quiet days
- A prayer calendar used by congregation members with intentions relating to different areas of the life of the church and local community
- Encouraging more people to share in daily morning and evening prayer, whether by physical attendance or online.

The answer might be any one or more of these things. What is important is what they express: that the one and only foundation to build on is dependence on God.

Make us living stones,
building a house in which you dwell.
Create us as a people of praise,
singing the greatness of your love.
Be the living spring of our shared life,
that overflows in service of others.