



Letter from the Chair—Gill Dascombe

Dear Friends,

On the Wednesday of Holy Week I went to a wonderful performance of Bach's St John Passion at St David's Hall in Cardiff. In the pre-concert lecture, the conductor gave us a background to the work in terms of its musicology, instrumentation and main themes. Then, with passion in his voice, he began to try to explain what the St John Passion means to him. The words, coupled with the richness of the choruses and the chorales all combine to convey a sense of the involvement of each one of us in the drama that was about to unfold before us. "This", he said, "is not just a piece of music, it is a spiritual experience."

Then, to my disappointment, he followed up with a nervous laugh. Spirituality, it seems, is something that 21st century British people are apparently embarrassed to own up to.

It didn't end there! A television explorer described his profound feelings on a solo boat trip to Loch Coruisk and the Black Cuillin mountains on the Isle of Skye. A ballerina at Covent Garden expressed the way she was affected being lost in the dancing of the energetic 'Rubies' movement from the Jewels suite by Balanchine. In both cases the word used was 'spiritual'.

And there it was again, both times, the nervous laugh....

As the number of people attending the mainstream Christian denominations in the West continues to decline, there is, nonetheless, no shortage of people experiencing a sense of the spiritual in their lives. How shall we define this? A feeling of transcendence, of presence in the midst of solitude, of wonder, of truth, of meaning, beyond all words or definitions or ascriptions, but nevertheless integral to the ordinariness of everyday life.

You or I would most probably happily ascribe such experiences to God, who loves us and reaches out to us, and I count it no coincidence that they should have taken place during Holy Week, when the reality of God and God's relationship to humanity was made most manifest. But there are many people out there for whom the 'God' word is difficult or irrelevant for many reasons.

LADYWELL RETREAT 2017.

Over the weekend of the 7/9th July our thoughts will be guided
by the Rev Malcolm Rothwell.

The theme will be ***Lose your head and come to your senses.***

" We spend a lot of time in our heads thinking about things.

Words often act as a barrier between us and other people and God.

This retreat will encourage you to lose your head and start to feel and sense, and thereby get closer to God"

For bookings details please contact Brian Sherrell via email

on brian-car@hotmail.co.uk or 01883 370945

There presently 4 rooms not taken.

PARCEVALL HALL RETREAT

Appletreewick, Skipton BD23 6DG

17-19 October 2017

Celtic Spirituality

Leader: Rev Ray Simpson

Ray Simpson, a well known author, is Founding Guardian of the International Community of Aidan and Hilda and lives on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne. He will lead us on Ancient Prayer Practices for a Post Christian World: learning from saints, seasons and soul friends.

Cost £200

Contact Katharine Cheney

01756 794885 or cheney@uwclub.net



Reflect Retreats in the next year!

The next 2 pages advertise Reflect Retreats.

This is not an exclusive list and other retreats are available, especially as this newsletter comes to members with the Retreat Association book of retreats and places to retreat each year end.

If you have been somewhere different in 2017 we would like to hear about this too. Tell us about the venues you have been to and the content or reflections you have been helped to have on the retreat.

Thanks, Pearl

pearlluxon@gmail.com

Launde Abbey Retreat

Friday 16th – Sunday 18th February 2018

'Walking with God through the Landscape of our Lives'

Leader Rev Vincent Price

Vincent Price is a retired Methodist Minister and until recently a member of the Reflect Executive and has led a number of Quiet Days.

The retreat will be based upon Vincent's personal experience and many challenges of life. He will draw upon his love of walking, on the variety of landscapes he has walked through (mostly with his wife Diane), and the reflections on the landscapes of life prompted by his love of walking. Margaret Silf's work – "Landscapes of Prayer" has been a particular inspiration to him, and he will draw upon this work together with much other material that has inspired him 'along the way'.

For further details contact the retreat organiser David Middleton

Email. davmid@btconnect.com or

Tel. 01353 668210

Hence, perhaps, the nervous laughs....

But surely, what is important here is not the ascription but the experience, and the fruit it can bear in a person's life, whether they follow a religion or not. Which one of us can define God anyway, or decide how God will act, or when or with whom? Let us simply be glad that the unknown God touches the lives of humanity, and seek to do what we can to enhance the spiritual journey of all with whom we come in contact.

Blessings

Gill Dascombe



"I think that I have never lost the intuition that community life could be a sign that God is love, and love alone. Gradually the conviction took shape in me that it was essential to create a community [sic] determined to give their whole life and who would always try to understand one another and be reconciled, a community where kindness of heart and simplicity would be at the centre of everything."

Brother Roger of Taizé "God is love alone"



reflect
Methodists supporting spirituality and retreats

Open Day Conference
OPEN MEETING

‘A COVENTRY PILGRIMAGE’

18TH NOVEMBER 2017 10.30am – 3.30pm
Coventry Central Hall, CV1 2HA

Keynote address by Jill Baker (Vice-President of the Methodist Conference 2017-18)

- ◇ Pilgrimage around the city of Coventry
- ◇ ‘Walking the Way’ meditation tapestries by Ruth Sprague
- ◇ Labyrinth
- ◇ Shoreline Conversations
- ◇ Reflect short AGM to follow at 3.45pm

All are welcome; there is no charge for the day, but donations requested to cover expenses



**Retreat Association Office report
May 2017**



Our key activities over the last year have included the following:

Launch of Guidelines for Spiritual Direction February 2016

These guidelines are intended for use by spiritual directors and those responsible for spiritual direction training and provision. The vision behind developing these guidelines is a desire to promote greater consistency of practice across different training schemes and Christian traditions. Please contact the office or see our website for more information.

Launch of new website December 2017

Our website is now compatible with mobile devices such as tablets and smart phones and includes other new features such as regular news via our social media and a tracking facility so that we can see where most of our visits come from and go to. We receive approx 1000 unique visits per week. Thanks to Lynne for all the links made from Reflect website to ours.

Local training days and quiet days

Through the generosity of retreat centres our programme of these days is now in its eighth year. Training day themes this year include walking the labyrinth, ways of praying, how to lead a quiet day, spiritual direction and Ignatian spirituality. Most venues offer a discount to all members.

Dates for your diary

Summer Event July 2017

Royal Foundation of St Katharine, London 14 July 10am-4.30pm

Revd Dr Andrew Walker will be talking about ‘Soul Matters’. Our patron Revd Graham Sparkes will be leading discussions and questions and liturgist Emily Walker will be leading worship. There will be opportunities to network and browse resources. For more information please see our website or contact the office.

Conference 2018

Our conference at Swanwick is on 18-21 June and will be on the theme of ‘Sounding the Silence’. We are currently gathering main speakers to take part and more details will be available during the summer. An early bird discount of £25 will apply to all members.

Alison MacTier April 2017

Reflect Retreat at Launde 17 th – 19 th February 2017 – ‘Seven Spiritual Gifts of Waiting’ – Led by Hazel Aucken

The original leader, Mari Ovsepyan, had to cancel due to other commitments so I arranged for Hazel to lead the retreat. The retreat was entitled ‘Seven Spiritual Gifts of Waiting’. The key themes and inspiration were taken from Holly Whitcomb’s book of the same title. Hazel asked us to consider three questions throughout the weekend: What? So What? and What Now?

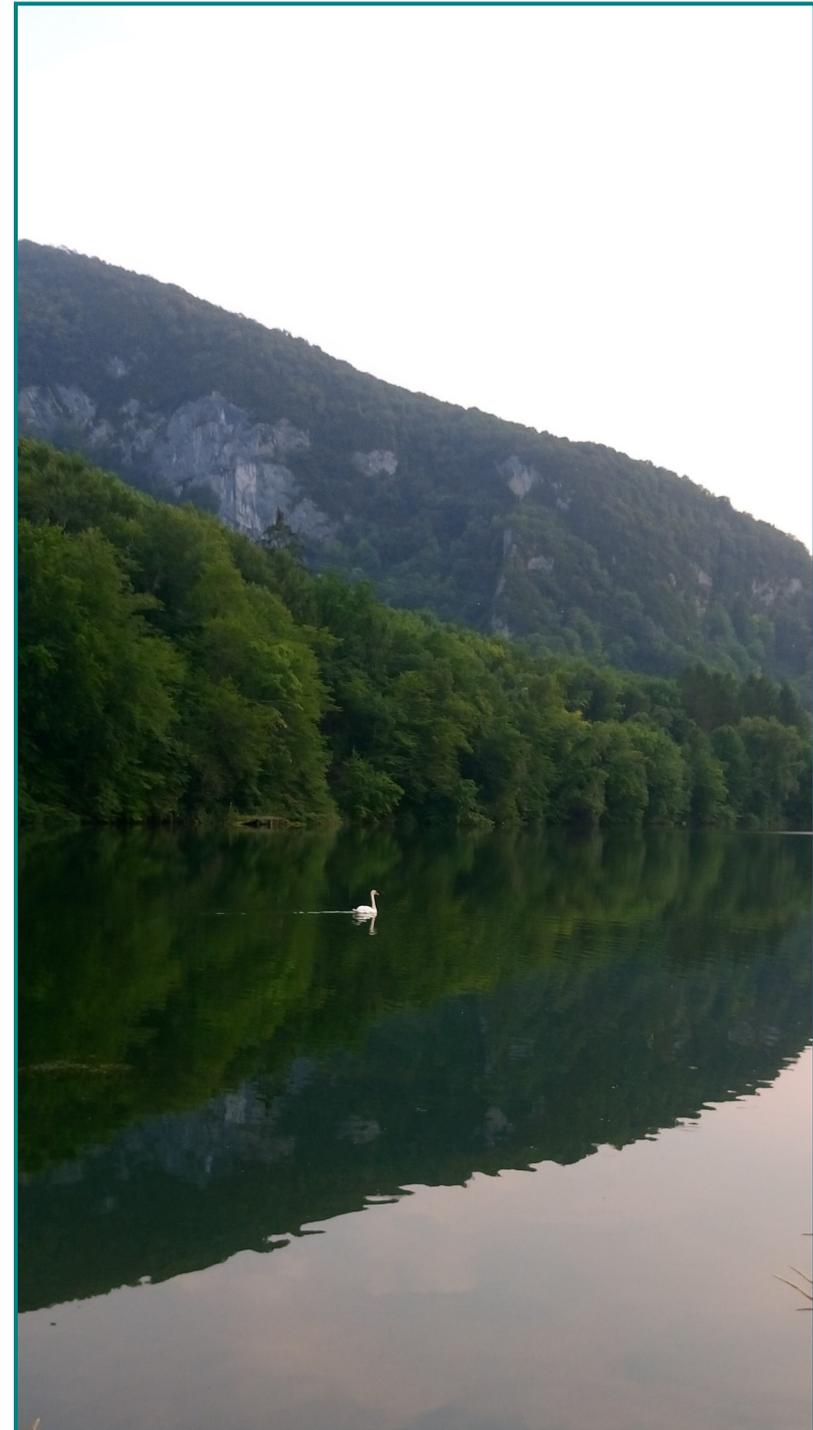
She encouraged us to consider these questions with God, for ‘we’ and God are the experts in our own relationships with God. In our final session we thought about our own situations and ‘what’ God might be saying to us. And ‘so what’ is our situation teaching us, and ‘what now’ having considered the gifts of waiting. We are grateful to Hazel for her gentle leadership, for the meditations and the expressions of her own waiting through painful and traumatic experiences of her life.

And we thank Rev Diane Daymond for sharing the sacrament of Holy Communion with us, Mary Thomas for always being ready to play the piano/ keyboard to lead our singing and of course Launde for their great hospitality. We had 24 attendees and I currently have 15 reservations for 2018. Regarding ‘how people hear of the retreat’ the analysis is as follows:

- Attended a previous year’s retreat 17
- Email from myself 1 (I email all who have expressed an interest in the retreat whilst I have been organiser)
- Reflect Newsletter 1
- Recommendation from another retreat member 3

Next year the retreat will be led by Vincent Price on a theme based upon ‘Walking with God through the Landscape of our Lives’ and will run from 16 th – 18 th February 2018. Once again this is a change of leadership; it became apparent through prayer and discussion that the original leader was not ideally suited to this group. I thank Vincent for his willingness to take over and we look forward to an inspiring weekend.

David Middleton, Retreat Organiser.



A swan reflection on the River Ain, Jura region, France. By Pearl Luxon

Time at Taizé

www.taize.fr/en_article21138.html

I chose to spend a week at Taizé as part of my sabbatical, as Ken agreed to go with me and I had wanted to go there since my mid 20s! This is not my normal style of retreat, as I prefer to spend a week in silence. Taizé is not silent! Instead, young and old, but mainly young, converge from all over Europe and across the world, to this special community.

There are many, many weeks when ‘adults’ (over 30s) are welcome and they have a programme that is geared for all. This year they are studying some writings of their new head, who is Fr. Alois (*see article link—above*). The founder, Brother Roger, very sadly, was killed in 2005.

Taizé was founded in the ashes of the Second World War, as an ecumenical community designed to promote communication, reconciliation and peace. It started with just a few brothers in a destitute village near Cluny in the Burgundy region of France. They are known worldwide for their simple chants of music in many languages, designed to promote contemplation and inclusive worship. Worship is 3 times a day for the visitors. The Brothers also pray separately and their chapel, the Church of the Resurrection, designed in the 1960’s is an amazing, inspiring place.

The programme each day was that after breakfast (following an ‘extended’ communion service) there would be Bible studies based on the outline of Fr Alois and this would also set questions for the groups to discuss later. We were encouraged to spend some of our spare time reflecting on the questions. A well-judged/ well-practiced method of splitting us up into groups firstly of 30-40s and then Franco-phones and the rest, then by Birthday month, meant we were in a group of Dutch and Germans mainly, only two of whom could not speak good English! Ken and I only have English.

The discussions were good and thought provoking, as were the Bible Studies and the paper they were based upon. You will see more photos of our time there in this edition and subsequent ones. I found the worship very calming and beautiful. The surroundings and environment was also lovely and although we were there with close to a thousand to 2000 at the weekend, there were still spaces for peace and reflection in the grounds and church. I’d like to try a week of silence there sometime!

Pearl



The Tree of life—Sally Coleman

(N.B. usually in landscape, so please turn on page side on)

the old order
of things
IS passing, a
new day
HAS dawned,
and
in my soul
a flame,
a fire has
been kindled,
and though
at times
it burns low
it WILL NOT
be extinguished...

the old order
of things
IS passing, a
new day
HAS dawned,
and
in my soul
a spring,
living water
has begun to
flow,
and though
at times
it is
only a trickle
it WILL NOT
dry up...

the old order
of things
IS passing, a
new day
HAS dawned,
and
in my soul
a soft breeze
blows scattering
the debris of
what was,
and though
at times
it is softer than
a single breath
it will not cease....

the old order
of things
IS passing, a
new day
HAS dawned

*Sally Coleman
Also, her picture below is
'Tree of Life' overleaf*

Douai Abbey Retreat 2016

We had a mixed group 8 ladies & 2 men, some who had never been on a silent retreat before. They all held the silence and wrote loads in their journals. We followed the usual programme pattern for sessions/ 1:1s and personal prayer time. Craft materials were available.

We asked for feedback on post it notes in the following categories: -

Good

- All of it, especially imaginative contemplation
- Praying with a picture
- Godly Play story
- Centring prayer
- Variety of prayer techniques which gave surprising results
- The prayer focus which changed/ developed. Especially floating candles
- The love and care of Becky & Katherine for each person
- Loved the structure allowed time alone/in the group/ self led and led
- Led times helped us to go deeper. Loved the practical methods
- Appreciated 1:1 with Alison
- Care and organisation
- Beautiful relationship between B&K, respectful and loving
- Variety and gentleness
- Bedtime story weaving in with the theme
- Gentle presence, guidance, food for

prayer & thought

- Opportunities to respond & record in a creative and open way
- Very well done.

What would be better?

Less input on Saturday

Godly Play at the beginning so we are not so far on in the silence. Would have liked a communal place to relax in silence or a silent walk together

More time given to body prayer activity/ learn more about it.

We were asked to stand up for body prayer then sat down immediately/ longer body prayer

Instruction on the etiquette of silence/greeting each other/mealtimes etc.

I enjoyed the Godly Play but it stood out as not being about boats and I wondered about that.

Next time

⇒ A prayer walk

⇒ Being here on Saturday when the monks sing Litany of Our Lady after Compline

⇒ Art materials for those who don't think they are artistic (? Perhaps this means colouring))

⇒ Use of the picture for reflection

⇒ Not sure silence is for me I might consider other retreats

⇒ Not to go to Vespers as the first activity I found it hard being in Latin and met a lot of internal resistance!!

Thanks to Katherine who led for the first time, as the feedback shows we got along OK together. **Becky**



Attic retreats

is a peaceful and calming environment in the midst of the busy town of Chatham.

The retreat space has two bedrooms, a prayer room, a bathroom and a small kitchenette for self-catering, and access to the peaceful garden at the back of the house.

You are welcome to come to **Attic retreats** for:

- ◇ · Space
- ◇ · Time to reflect and pray
- ◇ · A retreat with spiritual accompaniment
- ◇ · An Ignatian retreat with the Full Spiritual Exercises

For more information please contact

The Companions of Christ:

Revd Susanne Carlsson

07795 167 603 / susannecarlssons@hotmail.co.uk

Revd Madeleine Dahl

07469 246 443 / madeleine.dahl@outlook.com

65 Maidstone Road, Chatham ME4 6DP, Kent, UK

A word from the Editor—Pearl Luxon

Please, please keep book reviews, retreat reviews, photos and poems coming in! Your feedback is also welcome.

We were a bit short for the summer edition, so I advertised a new venture that a friend is involved in - see above - in Chatham Kent, 'Attic Retreats'.

As you can see from my above article on Taizé I am on sabbatical and I haven't had time to pursue the theme I offered last time.

Also, if you don't get replies from me on email till later September you now know why. Email: pearlluxon@gmail.com

Now—another quote from Taizé: -

"The exchange with God becomes real for us in prayer: by his Holy Spirit, God comes to dwell within us. By his word and by the sacraments, Christ gives himself to us. In return, we can surrender everything to him."

Brother Alois, Letter from Cochabamba

Space now to reflect ...