

What is reflect – Methodists supporting spirituality and retreats?

After his term as President of the Methodist Conference, the Rev Harry Morton set up the President's Commission on Spirituality, which reported to the Conference of 1974. The commission had about 24 members, lay and ordained, drawn from across the Connexion; the chair was Rev Gordon Wakefield and the secretary was Rev John Taylor. One topic which the Commission explored was the adoption of a Rule of Life – a daily pattern of prayer and discipline – for Methodists. In addition, it encouraged the connexion to promote church retreats, quiet days and church family weekends, for fellowship, study and spiritual enrichment.

Retreats have long been a part of the life of both the Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions. The commission report introduced Methodists to this practice of taking time away for quiet reflection in which to deepen our relationship with God and become more aware of God's presence and activity in our lives. The result was a growing take-up of church away times, and themed weekends, and an increased interest in the Retreat movement.

The MRG was then set up in 1979, and it built on this introduction by organising retreats and publishing helpful material, the most important of which was 'What is a Retreat?' written by Rev Mary Holliday, one of the group's founders, and a prominent figure in this field for many years.

The MRG adopted a scallop shell as its logo, being then the symbol of Methodism, taken from the Wesley coat of arms, but also an ancient symbol of pilgrimage. The words of Sir Walter Raleigh were taken as a motto: 'Give me my scallop shell of quiet'.



Retreats can take many forms: silent, preached, theme- or activity- based, and are part of a wider and ever-growing spectrum of ways intended to help people explore and develop their spiritual lives. These include quiet days, weeks of accompanied prayer, workshops and spiritual direction. To reflect this breadth, MRG changed its name in 2003 to the Methodist Retreat and Spirituality Network, and then in 2011 to **reflect** - Methodists supporting spirituality and retreats.

reflect is open to anyone connected with Methodism with an interest in and passion for sharing and developing these and similar spiritual practices within our denomination. It produces a twice-yearly newsletter, and is an active member of the ecumenical National Retreat Association.

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