

Cover picture—from Clevedon to Wales—Sunset July 2020 PA Luxon

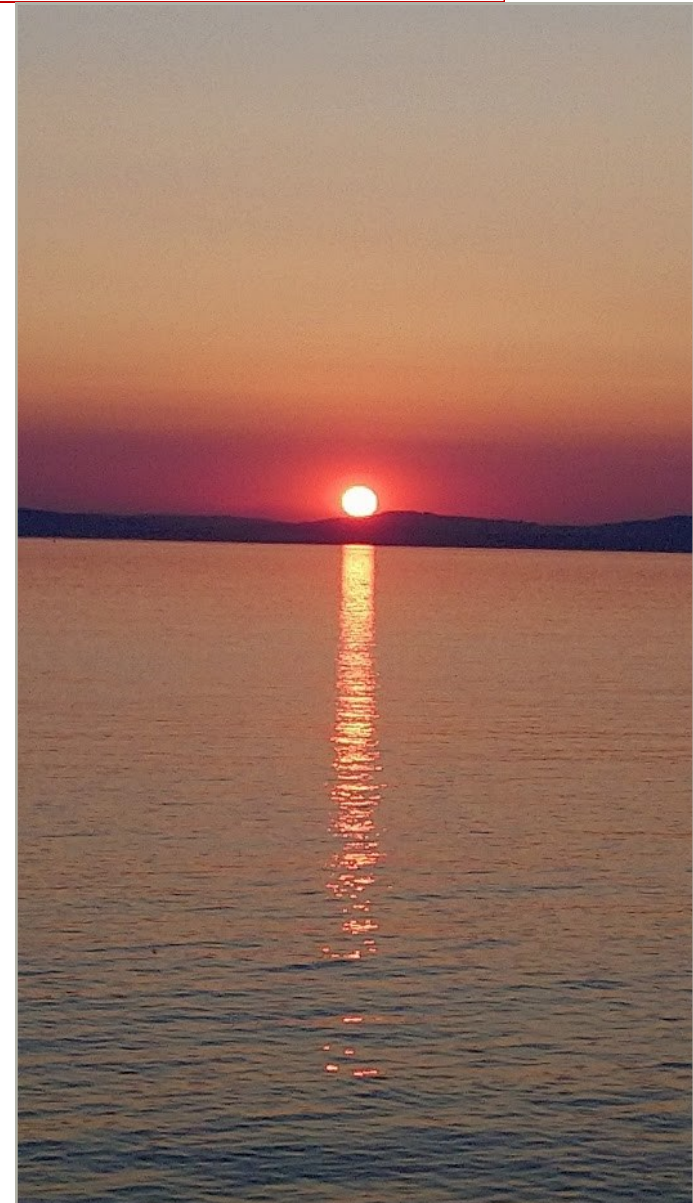
Above—from Google images

Reflect
Methodist spirituality

Reflect

Methodist spirituality

Newsletter
— July 2020



Letter from the Chair

Reflect

Methodist spirituality

Dear Friends,

As we continue through this time of lockdown, with all its anxieties and deprivations, I am reminded of someone who actually chose to live in lockdown, not simply for a matter of weeks or months, but for the whole of her life!

Many of you will be familiar with the writings of Julian of Norwich (c1343-c1416). Julian was an anchorite, that is, a person who opted to spend his or her life walled into a small cell adjacent to a church. Unlike us, however, the focus for the anchorite was not on what they stood to lose out on in lockdown, but on what s/he would find there. For Julian, this was to be a deep sense of the presence of God. From the confines of her small cell Julian's mind was to encompass the whole of creation, and to know it encircled and enfolded in everlasting divine love.

Julian, like us, lived at a time of global pandemic. The Black Death ravaged the known world in her lifetime, killing up to 50% of the population of Europe. Unlike us, the people of that time had no recourse to science for answers, but like us, they did want to know where God was in it all. And like us, they were afraid.

After herself suffering from a high fever, during which she experienced many vivid and powerful visions of Christ and his cross, Julian retired to the anchorite's cell to meditate on them and seek understanding.

The result was her book, *Revelations of Divine Love*, an astonishing and profound testimony to the limitless and unending love of God, which contains words which we would do well to keep with us in lockdown:

See, I am God

See, I am in everything,

See I do everything,

See I never lift my hands from my work, nor ever shall, without end

And all shall be well

and all shall be well

and all manner of things shall be well

with very best wishes, Gill Dascombe—Chair of Reflect Committee

Icon of Julian of Norwich opposite

Retreats and Quiet Days—

Yes—we do have some!

Reflect

Methodist spirituality

Wychcroft Retreat—Brian Sherrell

For 2021 I have a retreat arranged for the w/e 9/11th July at Wychcroft Retreat Centre near Bletchingley, Surrey.

The leader will be Rev Jane Day, Jane is a Baptist minister and has led many retreats. The price will be approx £180.

I am unable to provide more details at the moment but more details will be available in the Autumn.

However the numbers will be limited to 20 to allow for everyone to have the right amount of space.

To receive more details please contact Brian Sherrell at brian-car@hotmail.co.uk.

Launde Abbey Retreat

Friday 19th – Sunday 21st February 2021

Sing a New Song – an exploration of Psalms old and new

Leader Revd Dr Carla A. Grosch-Miller

Carla is an ordained minister, practical theologian and poet. She served churches in the US and the UK for over 20 years and most recently has focussed on research, teaching and writing. She is the author of *Psalms redux: Poems and Prayers* (Canterbury Press, 2014), *Lifelines: Wrestling the Word, Gathering Up Grace* (Canterbury Press, 2020), and a co-editor and contributor to *Tragedies and Christian Congregations: The Practical Theology of Trauma* (Routledge, 2019). Carla and her husband David live in Northumberland, where she regularly swims in the North Sea and he does not!

The retreat will follow the usual format of short inputs followed by lots of time to reflect and will be in silence from Friday night to Sunday lunch time. A wonderfully peaceful and comfortable retreat house set in the rolling Leicestershire countryside, **Launde Abbey** offers space and peace for time with God.

Further information from David Middleton 01353 668210

or Email davmid@btconnect.com

I want to be part of a Methodist church

I want to be part of a Methodist church that rejoices in God's radical grace.

A church that celebrates the dignity and worth of every ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity.

A church that challenges all forms of discrimination.

A church where love truly casts out our fears.

I want to be part of a church that offers transforming hope.

A church that confronts injustice and poverty.

A church where all can know they are valued and loved.

A church which reflects the hospitality of a generous God.

I want to be part of a church that is prayer-filled.

A church that is resourced and sustained by the Bible.

A church that can offer hope even in a crisis.

A church that can live well with diversity, difference and disagreement.

I want to be part of a church that welcomes the wealthy, those who have power and influence.

A church that knows how to party and celebrate life.

A church that acknowledges death and speaks boldly of resurrection.

A church that doesn't pretend to have all the answers but encourages all the questions.

I want to be part of a church that throws parties for prostitutes.

A church that welcomes those who seek asylum.

A church that longs and yearns for justice.

A church that listens to those no-one else wants to listen to.

I want to be part of a church that believes in transformation not preservation.

A church where all who are lost can be found.

A church where people can discover friendship.

A church where every person takes responsibility in sharing the good news.

I want to be part of a church whose hope is placed securely and confidently in the transforming love of God.

A church that engages faith in its communities.

A church that makes and nurtures disciples of Jesus.

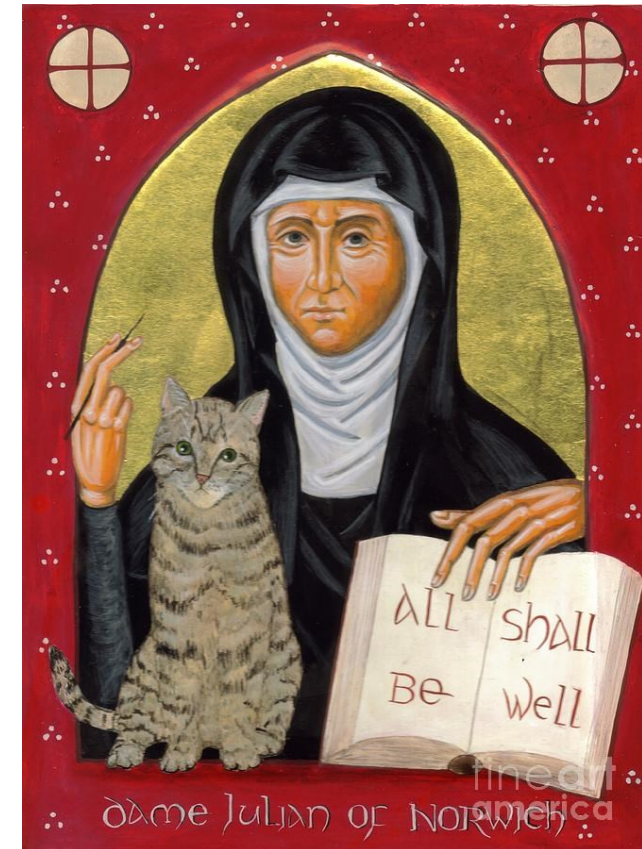
A church where the story of God's love is at the centre.

I want to be part of a church that offers radical grace, transforming hope, unconditional love and engaging faith.

This is God's story. My prayer is that by the power of the Spirit of God at work amongst us, it will increasingly be our story.

Deacon Eunice Attwood © 2018

These words of mine were first written in 2010 and have been revised after this year's Methodist conference reflecting on our President and Vice-President's themes of radical grace and transforming hope and the work of the group Dignity and Worth (www.dignityandworth.org.uk).



A blessing for those who have shielded

Jo Cox-Darling

For those of us who have shielded, may you remain our protection.

For those of us set free and yet still unable to walk to the end of the driveway - may you be our strength

For those now able to catch up with family we have missed for so long, may you be our restoration and help the glue of our relationships hold together.

May you hold us together.

For those of us released but still lonely, may you be present

For those with a letter of liberation, and yet still living with the diagnosis which inspired it, may you bring healing and wholeness

and perhaps a glimmer of holiness.

Whether we are excited or terrified or somewhere in between

- be the I Am that flings stars and paints sunrises and moves mountains with us, around us and within us we pray.

Amen

Reflect Launde Retreat, February 2020

Back in the heady days before lockdown, about 20 of us gathered for the annual Reflect Launde Abbey silent retreat weekend. It feels strange, looking back, how we took this freedom to gather together so completely for granted, a privilege which I guess we will not regard so lightly in future.

The 2020 retreat was led by David Middleton, its organiser for a number of years, as well as a member of the Reflect Executive and a Local Preacher in the Ely and Newmarket Methodist Circuit. The participants were drawn from a variety of denominations, and many different parts of the country. We were a combination of 'old hands' and 'first timers' to this retreat at least. I am always amazed (as a 'new veteran' of 8 Launde retreats) at the closeness of the bonds which develop between silent retreatants in such a short space of time, and how folk with whom you only engage in a few conversations or share a few words or thoughts once a year feel like old friends when you meet again. Such is our fellowship in Christ.

David chose to base the reflections for this retreat on Tom Wright's book 'Quiet Moments', a relatively short book marked by the author's accessible style and profound insights into how God longs for us to find him, spend time with him and what can happen when we do.

As usual, we entered into silence following supper on Friday evening, and remained so until after our service of Holy Communion on Sunday morning. David led us in a series of reflections, based on the content of 'Quiet Moments', but also sharing with honesty and vulnerability from his own personal experience. The sessions centred on the topics of 'Quietness', 'Silence', 'Stillness in busy lives', 'The Silence of God' and 'Prayer'. We were offered plenty of opportunities to explore our own responses, whether through reading, contemplation, writing, walking in the grounds and surrounding countryside or engaging with a variety of craft materials and visual foci.

Reflecting on the difference between quietness, silence and stillness proved a thought-provoking starting point, and a question you may like to consider for yourselves. What are they? What do they do? Why and where do we need them? Here are just a few phrases which I noted down:

Quietness: *'a deep well from which we draw living water'; 'the place when all the tears have been cried.'*

Silence: *'the long sigh at the end of the symphony'; 'a space to sit and savour.'*

Stillness: *'crossing the threshold into the presence of God'; 'rest from glaring noise.'*

I wonder what our individual experiences of these states of being have been during these last few months? Have there be more opportunities to find stillness, to enjoy quiet times, to dwell in the silence? Have those opportunities brought us closer to

Services—Westminster Central Hall—Sundays 11am. *YouTube*, Wesley's Chapel—Sundays 10.30am. *YouTube*. New River Circuit, London 10.30am. *YouTube*, and many Circuit Ministers have produced sermon slots look on church websites. Check out more across the Connexion www.methodist.org.uk

[N.B. You will usually need to search for the website via your browser, or search *YouTube/Facebook* unless you have been given a specific link or a zoom access code]

Devotional—this is a matter of taste—Dial a prayer, Pray as you Go app. ; the Ordinary Office, retreat centres like St Katharine's—Brian Draper has a quiet day there soon; The Well (Bristol) and Julian Bond have silent and spoken prayer slots on Zoom or similar. A one day festival of Pilgrimage is coming up at Christ Church, Oxford 14th October! pilgrimage.hymnsam.co.uk

Reading/ Audible/ Podcasts—whether it's on an app, from radio or another source, the plethora of items that are encouraging Spirituality are vast. I find that before spending money or even a lot of time its best to check out the source. Many Christian magazines have websites with speakers, interviews or webcasts/ webinars

Nature/ garden— we have all benefitted from slowing down and noticing nature, the birds, the flowers, the insects, all busily unaware of the pandemic. I hope this will inspire and develop in all of us a lot more, especially as we head into the next crisis of Climate change and planetary extinction. *'God made the earth and all that is.'* Operation Noah, A Rocha and ChristianClimateAction have produced some great materials.

Creativity, Practical— one thing has really struck me about the Pandemic is the church has not simply gone 'online' The church without a building has been freed up to even more service in different ways. Church people everywhere have been busy doing what they can for their neighbours and the community at large! Check out your local community groups, charities and foodbanks etc.

Chronic Illness and death— It was obvious to me back in March, that our society was ill prepared to deal with severe illness and death on a large scale, long before we heard the horrendous stories of suffering and grief, from some brave enough to share their journey.

More work is needed on this and on enabling those left with chronic after effects. Plus there are the effects for those who had to Shield **and** who have long lived with disability or chronic illness. Does society value us equally? What are the Spiritual implications? I - haven't seen much on this. For instance - <http://disabilityandjesus.org.uk/> — <https://www.dyingmatters.org/> — <https://www.godandthepandemic.com/>

Reflect

Methodist spirituality

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

The AGM of Reflect is scheduled to take place at 2pm on 6th November 2020, at The Royal Foundation of St Katharine, 2 Butcher Row, London E14 8DS.

This, of course is subject to any government restrictions in place at that time in connection with the coronavirus pandemic.

If any member of Reflect wishes to attend, please get in touch with the Chair beforehand—

E-mail chair@reflectretreats.co.uk

There are also some residential places at St Katharines, as the Exec is staying over. Please speak to Gill Dascombe—Chair on above email if you are either interested in staying at St Katharine's, or if want to consider helping on the Exec Committee.

Sadly we couldn't have a full day event this year. Instead we are planning to reflect on our future direction at the AGM and over that weekend.

[Click Here](#) for information
about [Staying Safe](#) at St
Katharine's.



The Royal Foundation
of St Katharine



God? Or has the loss of our 'old normal' patterns of personal devotions, corporate worship and schedule of activities led us to places where the stillness becomes oppressive, the quietness isolating, the silence full of anxiety and fear? I suspect most of us will have experienced a range of these reactions at different times. What have we learned from our response to a different way of living?

'*The silence of God*' is another multi-layered concept, which we can approach from a positive or negative viewpoint, and again we may have encountered this dichotomy in recent months. God's 'silence' may sometimes feel like abandonment, or a place where our questions seem unanswered- yet it can also be a place of pure presence, where words are superfluous, into which we can enter and just 'be' and know that we are loved, treasured and forgiven. Where we can be 'lost in wonder, love and praise'.

And finally some phrases I noted about the experience of **prayer**:

'Prayer is me being me in the presence of God'; 'prayer takes the tangled wool and gently unravels it without cutting or breaking it'; 'prayer helps me grow to my true height'.

Ironically, one of my strongest memories of that weekend is the invasive sound of gusts of wind tossing and thrashing the trees around the Abbey and the lashing of blustery squalls of rain across the lead-paned windows! But I wrote this in my journal:

..yet the house feels solid, safe, secure, unassailable, the walls thick, the foundations sure. We gather to eat and meet, focussed on God, while the elements rage with-out....the participation in shared silence is one of the deepest and most moving I've experienced...maybe enhanced by the wind roaring outside but it's almost tangible... humming with the presence of God.'

'The storm may rage without me, my heart may low be laid-

But God is round about me- and shall I be dismayed?'

Our sincere thanks to David for his thoughtful preparation and sensitive and honest leading.

Next year's retreat- God willing- will take place from Friday 19th – Sunday 21st February, and will be led by Revd Carla Grosch- Miller- further details can be found elsewhere in this edition.

Sarah Leeson

Creative writing responses to the retreat are overleaf



Quiet Moments

Into the quiet,
into the silence,
into the stillness,
God comes.
Into the candles,
into the gathering,
into the community,
God comes.
Into the leader's words.
into the hearer's hearts,
into the fellowship,
God comes.

God will be with us
as we journey back
into the busyness of our lives.
And we will find him
in the stillness
if we make time to seek him

Michael May

Two Haikus by Marilyn Fleming:

In still quietness,
silence of God's presence heard,
calm, peace beyond tears.

Silence beyond words,
overwhelmed, no sound is heard
save a beating heart.

Spiritual Resources/ Church resources during Covid-19 1/2

A big retreat? A hermitage experience? A trial? An imprisonment? How have you coped during this last few months? How have you regarded it? What has helped?

According to Sue Chastney, Membership Secretary, only 15 out of 168 members have not given us email addresses. So I suspect that many of you have been accessing local newsletters from your Church or Circuit, by email. Many of you may also have been accessing online services via Zoom, YouTube or Facebook. Any of these go out live, but many are recorded for watching later or, except for FB I think, can be recorded beforehand to be transmitted at a specified time. I hope you have been successful in the technical side of this!

I've been reaching my Spiritual Director on a platform called Whereby.com and many others use Skype or Google Meet and Microsoft Teams. I am sure there are more. Most of these are simple to set up and straightforward to use.

As with my reflections on p8-9, I'd love to know if there's some aspect of Lock-down, Shielding or Quarantine, illness or the online experience of Church that has affected you and moved you or changed you in some way. Do write to me [email is below](#) thanks.

Most of the resources I have gathered have been found through our research since my retirement on 1st March during lockdown. There are many, many more out there.

So please do your own research and make recommendations via my email address or another member of the committee.



From the Editor—practical notes

I'd very much appreciate more articles sent, including book reviews for November. Please send items for publication, photos and pictures, either with a written piece or separately.

Please send on email: pearlluxon@gmail.com

IMPORTANT NEWS for those who value this newsletter

It was agreed to reduce the costs of the newsletter by starting to send newsletters via email where possible. Hard copies will continue to be available to those without email.

This current newsletter will therefore be distributed in this way to all we know who have email addresses. If you have an email address but you think we don't have it, we would appreciate being sent it—to Sue on Email—schastney@ntlworld.com

The photo preceding this page is from Google Images



***The Son of God be shielding me from harm,
the Son of God be shielding me from ill,
the Son of God be shielding me with power.
The Son of God be shielding me this night.***

Sleep, O sleep in the calm of each calm.

Sleep, O sleep in the guidance of all guidance.

Sleep, O sleep in the love of all loves.

Sleep, O beloved, in the Lord of life.

Sleep, O beloved, in the God of life.

From the Ebba Compline—Northumbria Community— Thursdays

Chris Wood

1945-2020

It is with great sadness that we must announce the death of Christopher (Chris) Wood. Chris was diagnosed with motor neurone disease in November 2019, and died in March 2020.



Chris was an active member of Reflect for many years. He served on the executive committee as Membership Secretary, Chair and most recently as deputy Chair. He was known and respected as a retreat leader and worker for and promotor of spirituality for all. He spent some years as the manager of the Scargill retreat centre in Yorkshire.

Chris had a deep and thoughtful Christian faith, which he was happy to share with others in his valued role as a spiritual director to many. He was also a talented musician and organist at his local church. Chris was a lifelong Methodist, with a passion for social justice, which found expression in his work as a social worker and probation officer both in Edinburgh and at the West London Mission.

Chris always brought great enthusiasm and commitment to everything he did. We give thanks for his life. We shall miss him greatly.

Gill Dascombe

From the editor—a personal reflection

So what has happened to Spirituality over lock-down and Covid-19? Well to be honest I used to rely on a number of things that have 'gone for a burton' in recent months. These things have also been exacerbated to some extent by early retirement, three years of relative amounts of being careful where I went and who I mixed with – oh and moving house, so that we are no longer in a manse near my former churches and finding a new place to call 'home' for our Church-fellowship. I still miss preaching, which fed me spiritually, which gave me as much as I gave, if not more, but it's 2+ years I last took a full service.

So we **Slowed down** and **locked down**—**Waited, Listened** and **Noticed** things around us, perhaps for the first time! I've no doubt that for those of you who have been exploring with a spiritual accompanist, as I have on video conference platforms, these themes come up quite regularly. Here I want to look at a few other themes for me.

Being thankful— I, indeed we, have once again had cause to be thankful for the NHS and for our neighbours, family and friends, even people we didn't know and new groups have sprung up to meet every need (well almost). Circumstances still conspire to resent some people, who perhaps be-spoil the countryside. But we can be and are thankful in the main!

Being concerned, angry about inequality, loving our neighbour near and far, is also a facet of our Spirituality, particularly our Methodist Spirituality, including black lives matter! So I've been struck by research that says we are not 'all in this together', and the poorest, including women and children, refugees, asylum seekers and the homeless would bear the brunt of the virus and poverty would be exacerbated both here and across the world by the virus. I've been struck by further research that shows only 6% of people here in the UK want things to go back to how they were. They want things to change, they want a fairer world, and that's even before we start talking about racial inequality, more on that another time. Back to the core topic!

So, has spirituality moved online? Yes, it has in many ways. Some people are naturally wanting normal services to be resumed, except it certainly won't be 'normal', not without singing. This was another core feature of my Spirituality, together with being part of a choral society.

Setting aside the issue, a hot topic on social media, of Holy Communion, many of us who have long been confined to the home for months on end have sought out different ways of fellowship. As a fairly huggy, people person, I have still missed 'in person' fellowship, but there is more to be gained from exploring online than simply the issue of our physical presence as a group, in a particular building, however fond of it we thought we were.

Last year I took part in an online course on the Spirituality of St Frances, called 'Beyond the Birdbath', conducted by Richard Rohr of the Centre for Action and Contemplation in USA. This year I have signed up to a much less intense course with fewer numbers too called 'Creatvity & Connections' - focusing on journalling and labyrinth, with Sadelle Wiltshire and Frank Faine. Again an international group of folk connecting through email, Zoom and Facebook! The formal sessions are only monthly for three months.

So formal Sunday or weekday worship on Zoom. I wonder how you have found this? Some is great in parts, a lot is not. Some have been plugging away creating stuff for the disabled and able bodied community alike, as they were before C-19 came along – like Disability & Jesus who created the Ordinary Office. Some have continued to use apps such as Pray as you Go, which has an Ignatian approach. I am also part of a number of FB groups reflecting our faith in these times, as I was before.

Added to these I've been tuning into Rachel Mann's YouTube morning prayer* on 3 out of 5 days pw, she's now resting for August. And once a week with a Community of Prayer we belong to based on the retreat house El Palmeral, with their Compline slot*, live on Facebook.

What other resources are out there?

What other area of Spirituality have been changed or impacted, as you reflect on the past few months, since mid-March? I have listed these on another page, with some brief sentence of why they should be there. Perhaps we could explore these at a future event.

Grace and Peace,
Pearl Luxon

**both Northumbria Community prayers*