



Let your eyes follow this mountain path till it dwindles into the distance.

Think about your path through life. Has it been smooth, or rocky? Straightforward, or full of twists and turns? Have you ever lost your way and had to turn back? Have you left one path for another?

Picture a part of your journey that comes to mind, and God walking with you. How has God been your companion through life? Where does he want to lead you next?

Please send any items for the November newsletter to [newsletter@reflectretreats.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@reflectretreats.co.uk) by 1st November. Thank you.

**Reflect**  
Methodist spirituality

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Methodist spirituality

**Newsletter**  
*June– July*  
**2022**



Cross on Iona

## Letter from the Chair

June 2022



Dear Friends,

It has been very good to see the work of Reflect returning during the past year, following the gradual return to 'normality' after the pandemic.

Our regular retreats are taking place again; the Northern retreat last November, led by Roger Walton, and the Launde retreat in February, disrupted as it was by the ravages of storm Dudley and storm Eunice! The Southern retreat is still to take place on 29<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> July; this will be led by Rev Hilary Fife, on the theme of 'Be still and know'. There are still some places available, so if you are interested, further details are available on the Reflect website.

We're very grateful to Judith Jessop for continuing our programme of online Quiet Mornings. Judith has been elected on to the executive committee as responsible for Reflect's online work, and she would be very happy to hear from anyone who would like to participate in this valuable work. Details of this year's Quiet Mornings are in this newsletter and on the website.

In addition to our regular retreats, there have been two new events this year – a Reflect visit to Diaconal Convocation, and a silent retreat for Local Preachers, led by David Middleton. You can read more about both of these in this edition of the newsletter.

The Annual General meeting will take place on 5<sup>th</sup> October at 10am, via Zoom. All members are warmly invited to attend. Further details will follow.

The Reflect Day-Conference will be re-starting on November 5th. The President of the Methodist Conference for 2022-2023, Rev Graham Thompson, has kindly agreed to be our keynote speaker, and as before, there will be a range of workshop activities in the afternoon. This year's event will be held at the Bolton Methodist Mission, Victoria Hall, Bolton. There is a flyer in this newsletter. The link for booking is [Reflect Open Day Conference with The President of the Methodist Conference | Bolton and Rochdale Methodist District \(barmd.org.uk\)](https://barmd.org.uk). More details will be available in due course.

After many years of excellent work as organiser of the Launde retreat, David Middleton has decided to step down. I'm sure we would all wish to thank him

## WHO IS GOD?

Quiet morning via Zoom 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> July 2022 9.30am – 12.15pm \*

*"This, this is the God we adore,  
our faithful, unchangeable friend,  
whose love is as great as his power,  
and neither knows measure nor end."  
(Joseph Hart: Singing the Faith 67)*

*Who or what is this mystery we call "God"? What words can we use to describe God? How can we know God? God is fundamental to our Christian faith – the very rock on which all else is built. Yet our understanding is limited and skewed by ideas from our past and from people around us now. What does "God" mean to you?*

*We shall spend the morning in guided reflection and quiet exploring questions about God and the divine basis of our faith and spirituality for today.*

*This online Quiet morning will be led via Zoom by Rev Judith Jessop, a Methodist presbyter from Sheffield*

If you would like to attend please e-mail Gill Dascombe  
[chair@reflectretreats.co.uk](mailto:chair@reflectretreats.co.uk), stating which date you prefer

There is no charge for this event, but donations (suggested £5) may be made by bank transfer to

Reflect: Lloyds Bank, Sort code 30 96 18, Account no 0283311302, ref Quiet Day

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**Save the date—the next Online Quiet Mornings will be on  
Friday 14th or Saturday 15th October, on the theme of  
"Spiritual Growth"**

## Retreats and Quiet Days—

### Northern Retreat 27-29<sup>th</sup> September 2022 Through Turmoil to Transformation



Led by **Margaret Silf**, the well-known spiritual writer and retreat leader. She is the author of highly acclaimed guides to the spiritual journey including Landmarks, Born to Fly and most recently, Soul Journey.

*Can the turmoil through which we are currently living, from pandemic, to war, to climate breakdown, possibly be an invitation to humanity to become more than we are or think we can be?*

*The retreat will include plenty of time for quiet personal reflection.*

**At The Briery, Ilkley, West Yorkshire**      **Cost £245 tbc**

Interested? Contact Revd Sandie Exley-Watts

[sandie@exleywatts.me.uk](mailto:sandie@exleywatts.me.uk) 01924 678431 mob: 07719  
925019

This retreat is proving very popular so please contact Sandie and secure your place with a deposit of £50.

for all his hard work and expertise over the years, and hope he will still retain strong contact with Reflect. We are glad that Sarah Leeson has agreed to take on this responsibility and we look forward to working with Sarah on the committee.

Just a reminder that Sally Rush, who looks after our website, is keen to receive contributions from the members, such as photos, poems and articles. If you have anything at home you would like to share in this way, please do not hesitate! Send them in to Sally at [sally@reflectretreats.co.uk](mailto:sally@reflectretreats.co.uk)

I would love to hear from Reflect members who lead retreats and Quiet Days. As Chair, I am often asked to recommend people to lead these kind of events. If you have experience in leading, or have any other ideas for Reflect's work, do get in touch with me at [chair@reflectretreats.co.uk](mailto:chair@reflectretreats.co.uk)

With very best wishes

**Gill Dascombe**  
**Chair of Reflect**

## National Forum for Spiritual Direction UK



[www.sdforum.uk](http://www.sdforum.uk)

The launch event for the forum happened in May. If you were not able to be there, you can find out more at <https://sdforum.uk/2022/05/20/launch/> The day followed the theme of the disciples on the Road to Emmaus as those gathered focused on the questions: Where have we been? Where are we now? Where are we going?

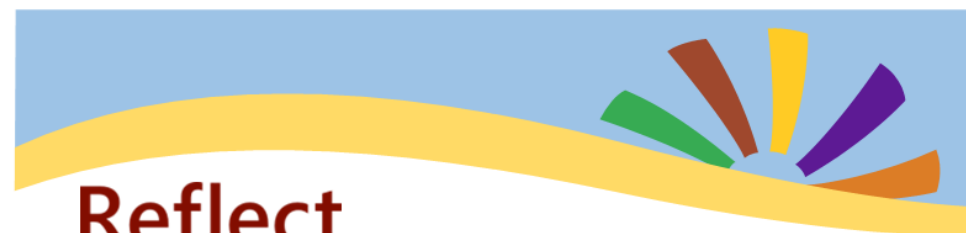
You can read the text of the reflections and meditations led by Chris Chapman and Alison MacTier, and watch the video of Julie Dunstan and Nick Helm reflecting on the vision for the Forum, and the prayers of commitment and blessing.



**Reflect Retreat**  
**Launde Abbey 18-20 February 2022**

Eunice hadn't actually been invited to the Reflect Retreat, but she made her presence felt in all kinds of ways. I am referring to Storm Eunice of course, and she made a perfect storm for David Middleton, who had to email people to find out who could travel to Launde and when they thought they might arrive, and then, when it turned out that our leader, Carla Grosch-Miller, would be waiting five hours at Peterborough for a train connection, he advised her to go home and we would ask her to come to next year's retreat.

So it was that some arrived on Friday afternoon and others on Saturday morning. David re-arranged the timetable so that the led part of the retreat could begin on Saturday, and he looked through notes from previous retreats and led us, very ably, through a series of reflections on prayer using the theme of learning to ride a bike—Everyone is Capable of Prayer; With Stabilisers, Without Stabilisers, and Free as a Bird. Using those headings we looked at being silent in prayer, learning to come before God with nothing. Practising the presence of God will become more natural the more we practise, and this takes the discipline to simply look and listen



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## Open Day– Conference 2022

**Keynote speaker—Rev Graham Thompson,  
President of the Methodist Conference 2022-2023**



Afternoon workshops - more details to follow

All are welcome—Admission is free, donations accepted to cover expenses

Tea and Coffee will be provided—please bring your own packed lunch, or order one for £3.50, to be paid on the day

**November 5th 2022, 10 for 10.30 to 3.30pm**

**Victoria Hall, Knowsley Street, Bolton, BL1 2AS**

To book your place, follow this link: (control + click)

[Reflect Open Day Conference with The President of the Methodist Conference | Bolton and Rochdale Methodist District \(barnd.org.uk\)](https://barnd.org.uk/reflect-open-day-conference-with-the-president-of-the-methodist-conference-bolton-and-rochdale-methodist-district)

searching for sunday - loving, leaving, and  
finding the church  
Nelson Books, 2015

Rachel Held Evans tells her story of her struggle with church in an honest and approachable way. This is not a chronological account but reflections under the titles of Baptism, Confession, Holy Orders, Communion, Confirmation, Anointing of the Sick, and Marriage. In each section there are a number of chapters which tell something of her story but also give reflections on the church in general and what God is calling us to be.

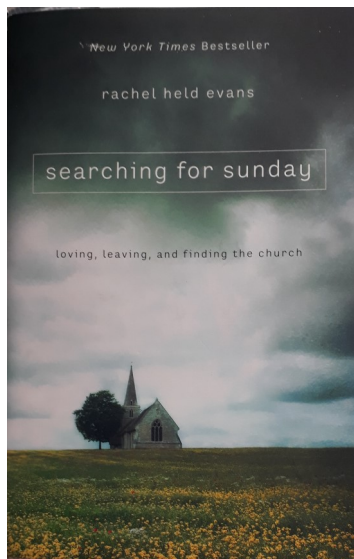
Millennials, Evans tell us in her introduction, “aren’t looking for a *hipper* Christianity [...] We’re looking for a *truer* Christianity” (page xiv).

In the section on Communion, Evans reminds us that when early Christians came together to eat and remember, “the focus of these early communion services was not on Jesus’ death but rather on Jesus’ friendship, his presence made palpable among his followers by the tastes, sounds, and smells he loved” (p. 125).

In the chapter on Healing, Evans speaks of the trap we so often fall into, of trying to “fix” people and make problems go away. Instead, she reflects: “there is a difference between curing and healing, and I believe the church is called to the slow and difficult work of healing. We are called to enter into one another’s pain, anoint it as holy, and stick around no matter the outcome” (p. 208)

There is much in this book that merits a second reading, a slower absorption of what Evans has written, and a reflection on our own church practice and how it helps or hinders believers old, new or aspiring.

**Christine Crabtree**



without demanding a response. Putting in the practice is so important, because without that practice we will not find the freedom to simply ‘be’ in prayer.

I found that this really spoke to me about the need to make time for quiet, not just prayer but silent prayer, and that just as learning an instrument or a language, or becoming more proficient in a sport or a craft takes time and effort, so will contemplative prayer take our effort and then reward us with the freedom of becoming more natural.

Many thanks to David for leading us so thoughtfully at such short notice, and ensuring that, although we did not get the retreat we had planned, we were still able to be in the presence of God and of one another.

And Carla Grosch-Miller? The plan is, next year!

**Christine Crabtree**

***A Moment of Celebration***  
***Reflect Local Preachers’ Silent Retreat***  
***Launde Abbey 13-15 May 2022***  
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‘A Moment of Celebration’ was the title that caught my eye when reading our Circuit Newssheet, so I started making enquiries, thinking it might be just what I needed at that moment in time. I’d never really been a fan of silent retreats, but I’d signed up before the penny dropped! Perhaps that was as well, because the Local Preachers’ Retreat at Launde Abbey completely changed my perspective—especially after the first somewhat raucous suppertime when we exchanged stories and experiences with enormous hilarity.

Our first introductory session soon set the pattern for the weekend as we began to focus on various elements involved in our ministry as preachers—beginning with Silence and a page of quotations from Tom Wright’s book *Quiet Moments*. The sessions went on to look at Faith, Prayer, Worship, Liturgy, and Eucharist, all highlighting aspects from Tom Wright and others.

There was an introduction to each of the themes, but no heavy lectures. David Middleton had a very gentle approach to his subject, with personal experiences and thoughts to reflect on and often to relate to, after which he gave us space to continue in prayer and reflection in whatever way each of us felt right for our own situation.

Launde itself gave us space—all the space we needed, especially in the vast grounds where it was impossible for anyone to feel restricted or ‘overlooked’ in any way. I hadn’t been there for twenty years. So much seemed to have changed and I spent some time exploring and trying to remember where things had been, as it almost seemed that the house itself had been turned right round! An abiding memory had been the sheep which had given me much inspiration on my first visit as the MRG editor. But where were they? On the Saturday free time, when we were all able to find our own space in the grounds, I found them! And so much more—a daffodil labyrinth, outdoor worship area, the vast walled garden, the woodland with Stations of the Cross, even shepherds’ huts for hire, and finally the lake. Each time I ventured out there was something new.

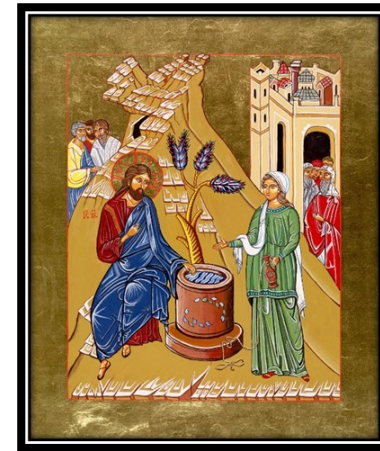
Our retreat culminated with a Eucharist in the Chapel led by the Warden at Launde, during which the participants were invited to share their experiences—what they had learned or felt, how their lives or ministry had been enhanced. The change in atmosphere from that first evening was palpable. In some way or other we had all begun to refocus. Launde being very Covid-aware, the worship concluded with Communion by intinction, something possibly unusual for Methodists and which I hadn’t met with since being in Atlanta in the late eighties when fear of AIDS was endemic.

The staff at Launde were wonderful and really made us feel that the individual mattered, however difficult at least one of us proved to be; that was something unchanged from my first visit. It is a lovely place to be—and day visitors are clearly as welcome in the vast acreage as retreatants.

It is hoped that this will become an annual event—I recommend it, but prepare to be changed! For me personally, generally a hard nut to crack in spiritual terms, having supposedly ‘retired’ more than once, I came back with a renewed eagerness to be back in the pulpit, regardless of age and infirmity.

**Patricia Batstone**

## May Convocation



... my thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in him.’

At May’s Methodist Diaconal Order’s Convocation, members of Reflect led a presentation and *visio divina* or ‘sacred seeing’, focussing on the Retreat Association Icon, the Samaritan Woman at the Well. We were invited to explore the icon with our eyes; to reflect in imagination, and experience; to sense how God is speaking into one’s life in this moment through the icon; and to rest in awareness of God’s presence. Those of us in the hall, and those attending by zoom, were very thankful for the meditative space that was opened up.

After a break, there were 8 small groups in the centre led by members of the Order following the theme of drawing the living water from the well through, for example, imaginative prayer, monologuing, other encounters with women Jesus has, and our wellspring places. I joined a group invited to look at ‘What is living water for the bereaved?’: a question to explore our experiences of loss; to notice that the encounter at the well speaks into such experiences; and that enhanced understanding of one’s experience of loss can become a gift to offer to others.

Members of Reflect also shaped Taizé – style evening worship with a review of the day . . . . a day that many of us will gratefully remember.

**Malcolm Knowles**