

Spirituality Network for Gloucestershire
(A Body in Association with Gloucestershire Churches Together)



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NEWSLETTER NO. 50

Summer 2015

Dear Network Member,

I am sorry to have to start my letter with some sad news. Paul Henstock, who had been a faithful and inspirational member of our Core Group for the past nine years, died in March after a short illness. It is a great blow to us all. We shall miss his friendship and his wisdom very much, and have sent our sympathy and that of the Network to his family. Please pray for them, as we do.

On a more cheerful note, our Lenten Quiet Day brought us fresh fellowship and spiritual riches from Bishop Bob Evens the retired Bishop of Crediton. Penny Lidstone was there and sends us her appreciation of the Day – “Bishop Bob led a very calm and reflective Quiet Day in Oddington Church. We enjoyed some quiet words of reflection and some very uplifting music, which enabled us all to reach out to God and ‘catch His breeze’ to refresh us in our walk with Jesus. It was an excellent day and Bishop Bob’s leading was much appreciated by those who attended.”

Our next meeting is our **20th Anniversary Celebration meeting at Gloucester Cathedral 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, 25th July and our leader for the Day is Revd. Nick Helm.** Nick has been prominent in the field of spirituality for many years, first as Spirituality Officer in Leeds and now as Continuing Ministerial Development Officer for the Diocese of Hereford. The new course *Soul Spark* that is currently being propagated in our Diocese is his creation. **He has chosen for his theme the Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola – a guide for Spiritual Growth and Discipleship.**

Ignatius was a fascinating man – born in 1495, he was a member of the minor aristocracy in Spain. Badly wounded in battle he was confined to the house of a relative for many months. In the house were two books – The Bible and a Life of the Saints. With time on his hands, Ignatius set to reading both and to daydreaming away the long hours. After a while he discovered that when he imagined himself back at court winning the love of some lady, he became listless and depressed, but when he imagined himself as a companion of Christ through the events of the Gospel record, he came alive in a new way. His faith in and devotion to Christ grew into an experience that was life-changing. When he recovered he tried to go the Holy Land, but was prevented as he was seen as a ransom risk, so he went to the University of Paris to study Theology. Here his way of life attracted a group of young men, who he led into the way of imaginative prayer with the Gospels that had led to his conversion. This group grew and worked to bring the Gospel to their own and other lands. Eventually they were recognised as the Companions of Christ – or as we know them, the Jesuits, still bringing the Gospel and teaching the way of Christ across the globe to this very day.

Nick Helm has much to offer us on our Anniversary Day. Do try to come along if you can. To reserve your place contact Revd. Dr. Alison Evans, Tel: 01453-824034

e-mail malcolm.alison@btinternet.com The cost of the Day is £12. Drinks are provided but please bring a packed lunch.

If you are looking to make a Retreat this year, we are offering two Individually Guided Retreats at the Monastery of Our Lady and St. Bernard, Brownhill, just outside Stroud. The dates are - July 21st to July 26th led by Sr. Winnie Morley and team and October 9th to October 14th led by Rachael Willard and team. If you would like to know more or to book in, please contact Rachael on 01242-530051 e-mail r.willard15@btinternet.com

Elizabeth Vooght is offering Summer Days of Soul Food at her home, 62 High Street, Thornbury, BS35 2AN. on the following dates –

Thursday 21st May – The Work of Silence

taking inspiration from Maggie Ross's book 'Silence, a User's Guide

Wednesday 17th June – Food

a taste of the theology and spirituality of food

Friday 17th July – God and the Balance of the Brain

drawing on the work of Iain McGilchrist and his book, 'The Master and His Emissary'

Thursday 20th August – Anglo-Saxon Art and Spirituality

taking inspiration from Anglo-Saxon saints, prayers and illuminated manuscripts

The days run from 10.30am to 3.0pm, a simple lunch of soup and bread & cheese is provided a donation of £18 is invited for Christian Aid

To book a place Phone Elizabeth on 01454-414915 or e-mail: elizabeth@vooght.com

At our Celebration Meeting in July I shall be handing over the leadership of the Network to Alison Evans. Alison is the Ecumenical Officer for the County of Gloucestershire, a Baptist Minister and a wife and mother. She has been a most valued member of the Network Core Group for 12 years, and I am very happy that she has agreed to take over from me. I look forward to seeing the Network grow and develop under her guidance.

It has been a great privilege and a great joy to be coordinator of the Network over the past 20 years. We have seen great changes in our church and our society during that time. Now, more than ever, it is vital that we build up the Body of Christ, soul by soul, so that the Good News of God's love and the Way of Christ become more visible and influence our national life for future generations. In this, our own personal discipleship is all-important. I pray that the Network will continue to provide the encouragement and inspiration that we all need as we travel together, as companions of Christ, seeking to reach out to those who are 'without Christ and without hope in the world', and to re-establish His kingdom on earth.

Every blessing to you all,

Pauline

Network Coordinator