

Spirituality Network for Gloucestershire

(A Body in Association with Gloucestershire Churches Together)



From the Coordinator

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Dear Network Member,

I hope you have had an enjoyable summer and that you have been able to enjoy some rest and relaxation during that time.

Autumn is now here and its coming brings a heightened awareness of the turning of the seasons. In recent years, many Christian churches have started celebrating the "Season of Creation" (also known as Creation Time) between September 1 and October 4, which is the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi who saw everything in the natural world as his brother and sister. September 1 was proclaimed as a day of prayer for creation for the Orthodox in 1989, and was embraced by the other major Christian European churches in 2001 and by Pope Francis for the Roman Catholic Church in 2015. It is a time when Christians are invited to pray and care for creation.

Many of you have I am sure, recently celebrated harvest in your churches. Since the supermarkets sell so many kinds of fruit and vegetables all year round, most of us have by and large moved away from the idea of eating seasonal produce but it is good to be reminded of the goodness of God to us all through Creation and to give thanks for the people around the world who work hard to produce, package and transport the food we enjoy through the year. It is also good to remember that as human beings we are part of the natural world and that we have a God-given responsibility to tend the whole of creation.

Around fifty people were present at the day with Canon Mark Oakley held at St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, Brockworth on 23 September and entitled *Encountering the Collage of God: poetry, faith and experience*. During our time together, Canon Mark who is Canon Chancellor of St. Paul's Cathedral, shared with us something of his own faith journey and spoke of his discovery of poetry and the ways it conveys truth and meaning using language but "not as we know it". Some of the poems Canon Mark shared with the group are examined in his recent book *The Splash of Words; Believing in Poetry* Canterbury Press 2016 ISBN 978-1-84825-468-8. This book which would be suitable for both private and group study and even if you are new to poetry (or have given up on it because you think it is too difficult), it is very accessible and well worth reading.

Looking ahead, our final event in 2017 A Quiet Day for Advent: *The Spirituality of Mary* is on Tuesday, 5 December led by Canon Paul Williams at Tewkesbury Abbey Parish Room, Church Street, Tewkesbury GL20 5RZ. Cost £10. To reserve a place, contact Mrs Penny Lidstone penny@lidstone.net 01452 741410. The day will start with coffee at 10 a.m. and finish at 3 p.m. Tea and coffee are provided but please bring a packed lunch. A poster is enclosed. **Please do pass on these details at church and to anyone who you think might be interested.** If you need any further information, let me know.

Before that, Cynthia Bourgeault is speaking on *Perennial Wisdom for Troubled Times: Contemplative Awakening and Conscious Engagement* at St. James Priory, Whitson Street, Bristol BS1 3NZ 7.15 p.m. on Tuesday, 31 October. To book, contact Roger Layet bristol@christianmeditation.org.uk or 01275 463727. Suggested donation £10. Modern day mystic, Episcopal priest, writer, and internationally known retreat leader, Cynthia Bourgeault divides her time between solitude at her hermitage in Maine, U.S.A., and travelling globally to spread the recovery of the Christian contemplative and wisdom path. In her talk Cynthia will explore the persistent intuition of the Wisdom tradition that there is such a thing as "a conscious circle of humanity" from which we may receive guidance - and how contemplative practice prepares us to awaken to it.

The Network Core Group is busy planning the **Network programme for 2018**.

- A Quiet Day for Lent on Saturday, 3 March led by Revd. Dilwyn Edwards, a Methodist minister from Bristol who worked in Gloucestershire before his retirement
- A Day of Study and Reflection on Saturday, 19 May with Revd. Duncan and Mrs Lesley McLean of the Northumbria Community who are based at the House of Azar in Herefordshire
- A Day of Study, Prayer and Reflection on Saturday, 13 October led by Angela Ashwin who is a well known author of books on prayer and a leader of retreats and quiet days.
- A Quiet Day for Advent on Wednesday, 5 December led by Revd. Liz Palin, Team Vicar in the North Cheltenham Team Ministry and a member of the SNFG Core Group.

The programme for the year including venues and other information will be available shortly but in the meantime, please put these dates in your diary.

Rudford Retreats, is a quiet day held on the 3rd Thursday of each month 10am – 3pm at Rudford near Highnam, just outside Gloucester. Places are still available for **16 November**. The quiet days resume in January 2018. To book, complete and return the [booking form](#). If you have any questions please contact the team on rudfordretreats@gmail.com or phone 01452 306433. The cost of each day is £12, payable in cash, or cheque to 'Rudford PCC', to be brought on the day. Numbers are limited so early booking is advisable. For more information, go to www.highnamchurch.org/Rudford/

In the previous newsletter, I mentioned the wealth of material which is available on the internet to nourish the spiritual lives of Christian people today. Here are two websites which may be of interest.

www.pray-as-you-go.org offers a daily prayer session, designed to go with you wherever you go, to help you pray whenever you find time, but particularly whilst travelling to and from work, study, etc. A new prayer session is produced every day of the working week and one session for the weekend. It is not a 'Thought for the Day', a sermon or a bible-study, but rather a framework for your own prayer. Lasting between ten and thirteen minutes, it combines music, scripture and some questions for reflection. The material is written by Jesuits, both in Britain and further afield, and other experts in the spirituality of St Ignatius of Loyola. Although the content is different every day, it keeps to the same basic format. An app can be downloaded to your phone or tablet to enable you to follow the daily prayers and reflections when you are on the move.

Something rather different is www.spiritual-life.co.uk which is produced by Anne Solomon who is one of the tutors on the Gloucestershire Spiritual Direction training course. It contains extensive reflections on the spiritual life rooted in her experiences as a Spiritual Director and psychologist, which are regularly updated.

I look forward to seeing you at future Network events.

With every good wish and blessing,

ALISON EVANS