

# Formed by the Spirit

The Newsletter of the Southwark  
Diocesan Spiritual Formation Group

Opportunities, events, resources and articles  
on prayer and spirituality

## Issue 27: February 2016



### Contents:

What's on? Events, retreats, opportunities...	2-6
Reflection: Made from clay and breath	7
Tools for prayer: How to pray when we don't want to pray	8

By prayer I mean not that which is only in the mouth,  
but that which springs up from the bottom of the heart

*John Chrysostom*

## What's On? Retreats, Events, Opportunities

### How to lead a quiet day

March 1<sup>st</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>, 10.30am - 1pm  
in Trinity House. London SE1 1HW  
Led by Chris Chapman

A day set aside to be open to God can take many forms. These two sessions will move in a step by step way through the process of planning and leading a quiet day. We will explore how to help people into stillness and a variety of prayer related resources.



### Deeper into God:

#### Prayer within the Carmelite tradition

Wednesdays April 20<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup>  
6.30pm to 8.30pm in Trinity House  
Led by Chris Chapman

These two sessions will explore how we co-operate with the work of the Spirit drawing us deeper into relationship with God and outwards with God into the world. We will consider how prayer, in its different forms, allows God to form and lead us, drawing on the writings of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross.

### With the Spirit as our guide:

*Exploring the ministry of spiritual direction*  
Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May, 10am to 1pm  
in St. Matthew's House, Croydon  
Led by Chris Chapman

A spiritual director helps another to listen to the Spirit and deepen prayer amidst the complexity of daily life. This session is aimed at those who wish to widen their understanding of this ministry, and explore opportunities for development within it

To book for the above please contact  
[ministryandtraining@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:ministryandtraining@southwark.anglican.org)  
020 7939 9475

### Diocesan prayer and spirituality day

#### Awakening:

*Meeting the risen Jesus in daily life*

Saturday April 16<sup>th</sup> 2016, 10am to 4pm  
in Southwark Cathedral



#### Speakers:

Margaret Silf &  
Bishop Christopher Chessun

There will be a variety of creative prayer spaces and a marketplace of resources for individuals and local churches

#### Workshops on:

- ❖ Discerning the Spirit
- ❖ The power of story
- ❖ Circle Dancing
- ❖ Creative writing
- ❖ Meeting God in loss & change
- ❖ The labyrinth and prayer
- ❖ Creativity and prayer  
and more...

**Cost:** £5 per individual or £20 per parish  
booking [up to 8 people]

**To register** and for further details contact:  
Caroline Wakelam-Jones  
[awakening@southwark.anglican.org](mailto:awakening@southwark.anglican.org)  
020 7939 9475

*[more details in attached leaflet]*

## Wychcroft

### Resource & Retreat Centre

Wychcroft, Bletchingley, Surrey, RH1 4NE

Wychcroft will be offering a programme of quiet days, exploration days and retreats from March this year. The House offers prayerful and hospitable space set amidst the hills, woods and lanes of the Surrey countryside. Wychcroft will soon have its own dedicated website with more information on what the House is able to provide for individuals and groups.

Day events cost £26.50 which includes lunch and refreshments

**If you are interested in any of these events please contact: Chris Chapman, [chris.chapman@southwak.anglican.org](mailto:chris.chapman@southwak.anglican.org) 020 7939 9474**

### Soul Searching:

*Thomas Merton on conversion, prayer and compassion*



**Thursday March 17<sup>th</sup>, 10am to 4pm  
Led by Chris Chapman**

Thomas Merton was one of the foremost spiritual writers of the twentieth century. He was also a man who struggled to reconcile the different pulls on his heart: the call to action and to contemplation, to solitude and to relationship, to discipline and to freedom of spirit. This day explore how Merton's quest for wholeness through openness to the mystery of God relates to our own soul searching. The day will include an opportunity to view the acclaimed documentary of Merton's life, *Soul Searching: The Journey of Thomas Merton*

### A Touching Place with the Divine:

*An opportunity to allow our senses, particularly the sense of touch, to lead us into imaginative interaction with Biblical narrative.*



**Thursday April 21<sup>st</sup>. 10am to 4pm  
Led by Penny Bord**

Together we shall explore some Bible stories using our senses and especially the sense of touch, allowing our imagination to lead us into contemplation, with the expectation of an encounter with the Divine. There will be Bible study, guided contemplation, poetry and music, and also plenty of space for your own silent exploration, using suggested prayer exercises if you so choose.

### Springtime and Sabbath-time

*Poetry and pictures for prayer.*

**Tuesday May 10<sup>th</sup> 10am to 4pm  
Led by Magdalen Lawler SND**



A gentle day reflecting on the lovely month of May in a prayerful context. Scripture, poetry and pictures will lead us into prayer

## Wychcroft

*Resource & Retreat Centre*

### The Inner Life:

*Christianity, Psychotherapy  
and the Practice of Spirituality*



**Tuesday June 7th 10am to 4pm**

**Led by Mark Vernon and Marie-Elsa Bragg**

An exploration, via talks and experiential exercises, of the insights of depth psychology and developmental psychology, and what they have to offer those engaged on the inner journey in Christian life.

### Metamorphosis

*Discovering the transforming power of God within our lives through reflection on the natural world and a range of creative prayer activities.*



**Tuesday July 12th 10am to 4pm**

**Led by Bonnie Clarke and Chris Chapman**

Together, we can draw closer to God by exploring a variety of scriptures, prayer, visual imagery, and arts and crafts activities, enabling us to engage more deeply in the presence of God, and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

**Fear not, for I have redeemed you;  
God calls each of us by name.**



**September 23<sup>rd</sup> to September 25<sup>th</sup>**

**Led by Louise Ellis and Chris Chapman**

This weekend retreat will focus on the theme of calling and discernment, offering participants the opportunity to explore their own journey of faith. This retreat is provided by the Southwark Diocesan Vocations Department at a significantly reduced cost (just **£50**). Places are limited and participants will be asked to complete a registration form giving brief information on why they wish to take part.

**Everybody's got to be somewhere**

*Reflecting on and celebrating  
the places we inhabit.*



**Tuesday October 18<sup>th</sup> 10am to 4pm**

**Led by Chris Skilton**

During the day we will reflect on the importance of place in our lives and how place shapes our being, our prayer, our relationships. We will also enjoy being at Wychcroft as a special place.

**Wychcroft**  
*Resource & Retreat Centre*

**Dark Valleys and Green Pastures**  
*An Individually Guided Retreat*



**Tuesday November 22<sup>nd</sup> to  
Thursday November 24<sup>th</sup>**

An individually guided retreat is largely silent but with an opportunity to meet each day, one to one, with an experienced guide. The emphasis is on attentiveness: we have time to catch up with ourselves – with our hopes, fears and desires. We pay attention too to the Word of God as it meets us where we are. And we seek to discern the movement of the Spirit within our experience, drawing us in to fullness of life. Cost £125

**Holding the Light in Advent**

*‘The people who walked in darkness have  
seen a great light’ [Isaiah 9:2]*



**Tuesday December 13<sup>th</sup> 10am to 4pm**  
**Led by Jane Hoskins and Susan Oakes**

The day offers an opportunity to explore the themes of darkness and light as we journey through Advent. There will be times of input, personal space for and a creative space with art materials.

**Seeking Stillness 2016**



Take a step aside from the busy-ness of daily living. Seek a space for contemplation, prayer and just being.

**The Well of our Wanting**

Seeking the living water

Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February 7pm – 9pm

Venue: St James, Riddlesdown, CR8 2DL

**The Tree of Life**

Seed, root, branch, and leaf

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> March 7pm -9pm

St Swithuns Church,

Grovelands Road, CR8 4LB

For more information and to book your place for any of these please e-mail [j.hoskins233@btinternet.com](mailto:j.hoskins233@btinternet.com)

**Exploring the Labyrinth**

We are making journeys all the time. Each day is a new journey. The prayer labyrinth offers an opportunity to journey without leaving the space in which it is laid. Walk , pray, think, explore!

**Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

Venue: St James Church, Riddlesdown

St James Road, CR8 2DL

Welcome and coffee/tea at 10am

10.30am to 12.30pm

Offered by the *Ways in to Prayer* group. Please let us know you're coming! There is no charge, but donations towards expenses welcome.

Contact :

Jane Hoskins [j.hoskins233@btinternet.com](mailto:j.hoskins233@btinternet.com)

Susan Oakes [susanoakes@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:susanoakes@hotmail.co.uk)

**Sisters of St Andrew,**  
99 Belmont Hill, SE13 5DY London  
[www.sisters-of-st-andrew.com](http://www.sisters-of-st-andrew.com)  
**2016 Programme by themes**

**Meditative evening prayer  
with Taize Chants**

Every last Wednesday of the month (except July and August) 7.30—8.30pm (no booking required)

**Evening Lenten Course  
Gaze upon the Lord:**

*Walking in the footsteps of Jesus*  
Sr Diane Reynolds

A series of 4 Monday evening meditations on the Way of the Cross, with image, word and music. Bookings can be made for the whole series, one or several evenings.  
Mondays 15<sup>th</sup> February, 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 7<sup>th</sup> March, 14<sup>th</sup> March. All 7pm to 9pm

**Morning Lenten journey  
Nourishing my prayer  
using art and creativity**

Sr Marie-Christine Berg

A series of 5 Tuesday mornings in Lent. 11am to 1pm No artistic skill required. Bookings can be made for the whole series, one or several mornings.

Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> February: Colouring my prayer  
Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February: Praying with clay  
Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March: Doodling my prayer  
Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March: Pray with blessing stones.  
Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> March: Cut and paste.

**Holy Week Quiet Evenings**

Concluding with evening prayer with the community. Join for one or several evenings. No booking required. 5—7pm  
Monday 21<sup>st</sup> March  
Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March  
Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March

**Silent retreats**

*with personal accompaniment*

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> February  
Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April - Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> May  
(3 to 6-day)  
Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> July - Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> August  
(3 to 8-day)  
Friday 28<sup>th</sup> —30<sup>th</sup> October

**Group supervision for spiritual directors**  
Mondays 11am—1pm.; 29 February; 4 April;  
9 May; 20 June; 19 September; 24 October;  
21 November; 19 December.



**The Meditatio Centre**

St Marks Church, Myddelton Sq  
London EC1R 1XX  
020 7278 2070 [meditatio@wccm.org](mailto:meditatio@wccm.org)  
[wccm.org/content/the-meditatio-centre](http://wccm.org/content/the-meditatio-centre)  
*More details of these and other events through 2016 can be found on the website*

**A Grief Like No Other:** *Surviving the Violent or Sudden Death of Someone You Love*  
Led by Kathleen O'Hara  
Saturday 5 March 1.30 pm - 4.30 pm  
Cost £25 Concessions £15

**Marginal Christianity:**

*Three witnesses to the God of the edges*  
Led by Mark Burrows  
Saturday 23 April, 10.30 – 4.30 pm  
Cost £30 Concessions £20

**Being Well and Being Good**

*Mental health & meditation*  
Led by Jim Green and Edmund Giszter  
Saturday 12 March 10.30 am – 4.30 pm  
Cost £30 Concessions £20

**From Silence into Song**

Led by Delyth Cresswell  
Saturday 20 February 10.30 am – 4.30 pm  
Cost £25 Concessions £15

**T.S.Eliot's Four Quartets**

Led by Ashley Ramsden & Flora Pethybridge  
Thursday 10 March, 6.30 pm – 9.00 pm  
Cost £15 Concessions £10

**An Introduction to Christian Meditation**

Facilitated by Stefan Reynolds & team  
Wednesdays 6.30 – 9.00 pm  
10, 17, 24 February, 3, 9, 16 March

## Reflection

### Made from clay and breath [Genesis 2]

In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,<sup>5</sup>when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no one to till the ground;<sup>6</sup>but a stream would rise from the earth, and water the whole face of the ground—<sup>7</sup>then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

Here we have a beautiful and intimate image of our making. God bending down to take humble earth in his hands, working the clay until form began to emerge. And then cupping his hands and breathing on what he had created. And so humankind has its beginning. We are made, the story-teller suggests, of clay and breath. Even the Hebrew word '*Adam*' has its roots in '*Adamah*' – from the clay. We are earth, formed from the dust of the ground, and we are also air, spirit, breath since God has bent down to breathe his life into us. God took what was before him and desired that it be something more – full of being and beauty. He valued and used the simple, humble earth of the ground and he made it what it could never be but for his breath – a living, loving mirror of himself.

The passage is part of the earlier of two creation stories in Genesis. In the first God creates through the spoken word: 'let there be light' God says, and light comes to be. But here God creates by touch and by breath; there is no distance between God and creation. The gestures are intimate, almost reverential. The earth is handled and shaped; cupped hands bring it close to the mouth. The warm breath permeates the clay and it lives. The physicality of the language suggests the closeness of the relationship between humanity and God; we bear the imprints of the fingers that have moulded us. Our breath is the very breath of God.

What then is this clay that is being worked into shape? It is the raw substance of our lives: our personality, our history and our context.

The all of our history: the rough and the smooth, the sorrowful and the joyful.

The all of our personality: the gifted and the flawed; the delightful and the difficult.

The all of our context: the chosen and imposed; the limits and the opportunities.

I stop to ponder that truth: God's hands holding the 'all' that we are: not discarding the earth but using this raw material – honouring it. Seeing it can be made into something useful and beautiful.

Prayer is where we co-operate with the creative touch of God. Whilst Adam was entirely passive in his shaping, we have a choice whether or not to allow God's hands to cup us and his breath to inspire us; and we have this choice not once but over and again; the question is there in this moment. Clay cannot place itself in the creator's hands, but we can and must. And even in the shaping he invites our necessary co-operation. Placing ourselves in the hands of God in this way can be comforting but also challenging and sometimes painful. It involves facing our reality and acknowledging our need of God. But we are in good hands.

Today the Creator stoops to pick up, hold and form this 'all' of who we are. The gestures are intimate and loving. The hands are firm but sensitive to the clay. The breath is from the Creator's very being. Our making and shaping goes on

## Tools for prayer

### How to pray when we don't want to pray

There are times when we don't want to pray. We find that we are too busy to stop – but somewhere recognise that our activity is a way of avoiding the pain of silence where we might meet our own raw emotions or unresolved history.

Underneath all, we might not be sure we can trust this God with what matters to us most. We don't want an answer that isn't our answer

Or perhaps we are fed up with sitting there in the place of prayer and not getting anywhere. For all our efforts we remain distracted and restless, so far from the place of peace and understanding we desire.

How to begin to pray when we don't want to pray? Here are some suggestions:

1] Begin from where you are and how you are: So, perhaps your prayer starts 'I am sitting here unwillingly' or...'I am not able to trust you' or ...'I am angry with you'...or 'I wonder whether you really care about me'...or 'I am afraid of what you want from me'.

2] Acknowledge that part of you that doesn't want to pray...look without judgement at this side of your being. Now seek out that part of you that does feel drawn to pray: a sense of invitation that arises somewhere from within, an impulse that comes not as an 'ought' but as a longing that perhaps you are not used to listening to. Listen to that desire now.

3] When are you most relaxed: walking, cooking, gardening, knitting, or losing yourself in a book? Imagine yourself sharing this time with God. You are not so much looking at each other face to face as being side by side, comfortably sharing the experience. Perhaps some words flow one way or another, but being alongside might be enough of a beginning.

4] Let go of trying too hard. So, rather than summoning up your concentration, fighting distractions that come, or trying to squeeze wisdom from bible verse that mean little to you...relax. Prayer does begin with intention, and with choosing to place ourselves in a listening, attentive place, but the rest belongs to God. Leave what comes or does not come from your time of prayer with God. Everything is gift.

5] Use you body to help you to pray. Hold you hands closed to make fists. What is held inside there...feelings, experiences, repetitive worries or thoughts? Now open your hands and turn them palm upwards. All those things are still with you but now there is air around them...now you are open to God who cares about you and about what you carry. Keeping your palms open, turn them so they face down. Now you allow what you carry inside to fall away.

6] Be present: When we step into the present moment we also step into the 'always' of God. Look up from your work desk and watch the moving clouds. Open your window in the early morning and listen to birdsong. As the sun gathers strength enjoy its warmth on your back. Give thanks for what you receive in that moment.