

## Daily prayer At the heart of the journey



The community and friends...

The St Peter's Centre for Meditation and Peace may seem a bit out of place amidst the colourful night-life for which Vauxhall is renowned. However at about 7:03am every weekday morning, six bleary-eyed people tumble downstairs to sit on the floor of the meditation room, Celebrating Common Prayer in hand. 'The night has passed, and the day lies open before us', is the welcoming affirmation the Community makes together, even if one or two of them might still be rubbing sleep from their eyes.

The Community consists of three men and three women, from their early twenties to mid thirties, who work in various professions across the city - each with their own reasons for being there - an

expression of commitment, a hunger for spiritual sustenance, an exploration of individuality and the communal...

Morning prayer forms the centre of a daily rhythm of life which includes normal working days, dinners together, gardening, baking, and a bee hive. The prayer holds at its core traditional patterns of liturgy, with emphasis on meditative silence, and space for personal intercessions.

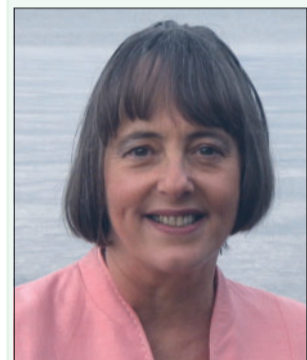
The community seeks to hold true to the Christian faith whilst living authentically in the world and pioneering fresh ways of being Christian in a global city. Living in the tension between tradition and

**Prayer is something which some find easier than others and we all need to find the way of praying which best suits our temperament and situation. We have gathered together a few ideas concerning ways which others find helpful and hope that you might find something of help in your journey of faith.**

modernity, religiosity and the secular, individualism and the communal, is not always easy or idyllic. Prayer with, and for, each other is at the heart of this journey.

To find out more about coming to Morning Prayer, and regular Compline (Tuesdays at 9pm), Meditation and Taize prayer, please visit [stpetersvauxhall.wordpress.com](http://stpetersvauxhall.wordpress.com)

## Guided Prayer Sharing with an understanding listener



Prayer is the core of our personal relationship with God, but it does not have to be private. It can be liberating to share on a deep level with an understanding listener.

**Penny Bird**

The benefits of an Individually Guided Retreat are available in the context of our daily life through a Week of Accompanied Prayer (WAP). Prayer companions who work as guides at retreat houses are also available to come to parishes. A WAP may be organised ecumenically through Churches Together or by a group of parishes. Each day participants

(pilgrims) meet individually for half an hour with their companion, who will listen, affirm and encourage. The week begins with a service at which a scripture passage is suggested as a focus for prayer. A pilgrim will pray for half an hour each day and then meet their companion to talk about what happened in prayer. Companions who are trained and experienced, having listened, may make suggestions drawing on a

Penny Bird is a Reader at Sanderstead, All Saints

wide range of traditions of prayer ranging from Benedictine Sacred Reading to stepping into the story in the Ignatian way. Each of us is encouraged to pray as best suits us and enriches our experience of the Lord. In my own parish

many people experienced real blessing from the WAP which focused on Ephesians 3:17 "Rooted and grounded in love".

At the closing service each wrote on a leaf their abiding memory of the week and we created this tree.

- God is good
- Guidance and peace
- Restoration and reconnection
- Deep joy in being human and alive today
- Moving towards wholeness in God
- Comforting • Time out • Homecoming
- Reawakening and opening to God
- Precious • Awe • The love of God
- Listen to the music of your soul
- Finding myself in the presence of Christ receiving the Living Water
- Healing and wholeness through love
- Laughter • Lean-to God • Companionship
- Trust in the Lord and He will strengthen your heart
- Spend time with a good friend.
- Abundance of God's grace
- Helped me very much to get back on track as I had slipped very badly
- Place all your trust in the God of love
- Stillness in the presence of God
- Moments of stillness to discover God at work and present in our life
- A sense of calm and peacefulness
- Churning and stilling
- A door has been opened for me
- Understanding
- Grace and favour from the hand of God
- God hears us when we ask for help
- A most wonderful journey I will never forget
- Amazed by God's graciousness
- The abundance and the surprises of God's love
- Seek and choose
- Need
- Trust
- Jesus said, "Do you love me?"
- Trusting stillness in a busy life • Jesus, the water of life
- "Rooted and grounded in love" Ephesians 3:17



## Praying for love and justice

# Isaiah comes to London?

Every Tuesday evening at 6 pm, people gather at St John's Waterloo to pray for love and justice. Since we began, on the first Tuesday in Lent, between 20 and 40 have come each Tuesday for a simple service of Taize chants, psalms, a reading and a homily.

**Canon Giles Goddard**

The focus is on justice in the city, friendship and love. We've called it the Isaiah Community because the writings of the book of Isaiah stress the love of God for ALL people - widow and orphan, alien, stranger or friend. We're sure that now more than ever the message of God's justice for all people needs to be heard and prayed for.

You are welcome - it's an easy service to join in with, and lasts for about half an hour, followed by refreshments.

About 400,000 people go through or visit the parish of St John's, Waterloo every evening. St John's is at the south end of Waterloo Bridge, close to the National Theatre and the South Bank Centre, opposite Waterloo Station. Some who come to the Isaiah Community are commuters on their way home - others live or work locally.

We've modelled it on the Sant'Egidio Community, which started in Rome in the late 1960's and is now world wide. Its focus is on friendship with the poor. Members of the community provide support for homeless people, refugees and others in need across the world, and they also support peace



talks and campaign globally against the death penalty. At the centre of their work is a beautiful, communal evening prayer. We'd like the Isaiah Community to be like that. At the moment we're getting to know one another and praying for guidance about how we should develop.

Chris Skilton, the Archdeacon of Lambeth, gave the address on 13 April. He compared the original Isaiah Community with what we're trying to do. He finished by saying "The original Isaiah community focused not just on one of the past, present and future but on all three in creative tension for the potential good life of the people they addressed. So too for us: to attend only to the present is to be a social observer - which is interesting; to focus exclusively on the past is to veer towards fundamentalism, which is dangerous and to gaze only into the future is to be an idealist - which may be irrelevant. God guard us from being only interesting or dangerous or irrelevant. When following the example of the first Isaiah community may we have the resources and the potential to make a difference today."

Come. You'd be welcome. For more information feel free to contact me - visit [www.stjohnswaterloo.co.uk](http://www.stjohnswaterloo.co.uk) for contact details.

## Contemplative Prayer

# Allowing the space in which to encounter God

I was out walking with a close friend. We had known each other for years. We were walking through countryside. It was a lovely day, the meadows were in bloom, the birds were singing, the sunshine made everything come alive.

**Canon Andrew Nunn**

We walked. After a while I realised that we hadn't said anything to each other for ages - we had simply been in each other's company. And yet it felt like more than that - it felt as though we had had a shared experience at a profound level. We had been communicating but through the silence of shared experience.

Contemplative prayer can sound very frightening, very off putting, especially when we live in a very noisy, busy environment. But it isn't and we shouldn't imagine that it is. St John Vianney (1786-1859), often known as the Curé d'Ars, told the story of a farmer who visited his church every day.

## 'The Silent Revolution'

"The Silent Revolution" was a Lent course at St John, Waterloo attended by about 20 people. It linked a fresh understanding of what it means to 'be still and know that I am God' with at least 17 centuries of Christian contemplative prayer.

**Rev. Richard Craig**

We plunged into two strong currents springing from American Roman Catholic monks (Fr John Main and Fr Thomas Keating) in the 1970s. Helping us to swim in these silent waters were Liz Watson (The World Community for Christian Meditation) and Jill Benet (Contemplative Outreach). Both helped us to experience the difference between left brain doing mode and right brain being mode. The left brain loves words, logic, distinctions; the right brain is comfortable in the openness and mystery of silence. Thomas Keating

After a while the Curé wondered why he came and what he was doing. So one day the opportunity arose for him to ask him. The farmer said that he came to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament (the reserved sacrament in the tabernacle). Then he told the priest, "I just look at Him, and He looks back at me." That farmer was a contemplative.

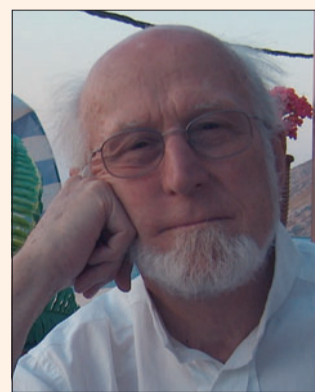
Contemplative prayer involves allowing all thoughts, all words to simply fade into the background. It isn't meditation on a word or a phrase or a picture. It is different to that.

It may begin in meditation but contemplation is simply allowing the space to develop in which an encounter with God can take place.

We are told that Mary, the mother of Jesus, 'treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.' (Luke 2:19). She meditated on the word of God but she also pondered and it is in that pondering that she is a model of contemplation for us.



Of course, not all of us are called to be contemplatives in our prayer life and that should not worry us. St Francis de Sales (1567-1622) in his classic 'Introduction to the Devout Life' says, 'there are various other kinds of devotion well-suited to lead those whose calling is secular, along the paths of perfection.' It is discerning what kind of prayer is right for us that leads us into the adventure of knowing God - and that may well be in contemplative silence.



the Celebrant and the priest was the President.

You can read more about the course in the February and March postings of my blog at [www.spacesilencestillness.blogspot.com](http://www.spacesilencestillness.blogspot.com)

Richard Craig retired in 1996 after ten years in the Diocese as Team Vicar in North Lambeth Parish and Diocesan Ecumenical Officer. He now lives in a housing co-operative in North Lambeth.

## Christian Meditation

# Stillness, Silence, Simplicity



Prayer engages our whole being. But our experience shows us to be scattered and restless beings.

**Brij Waterfield**

Christian Meditation is a form of prayer, deeply rooted in our contemplative tradition, that offers us a way to both integrate and empty ourselves so that, as Meister Eckhart says "God can be God in us". It is a way of stillness, silence and simplicity.

Meditation is not a thinking about ourselves or our religious beliefs or God but rather in meditation we "verify the truths of our faith in our own experience" as the Benedictine monk, John Main expresses it. John Main

uncovered, in the wisdom of the early church, a practical way of doing this and taught this simple practice of meditation that has transformed people's lives.

- By learning to sit still in prayer we enter the stillness at the heart of every movement.
- By letting go of our chattering minds and hearts we taste the silence of God.
- By attending to the one thing necessary we participate in the simplicity of God's oneness.

The World Community for Christian Meditation nurtures and teaches the way of meditation. It has a presence across the globe but is rooted locally in small groups that meet regularly. The groups are open to all.

If you would like to find out more about Christian Meditation and the work of the community contact the Surrey Coordinator on 07980 581351 or by email [brij.waterfield@gmail.com](mailto:brij.waterfield@gmail.com) or visit [www.christian-meditation.org.uk](http://www.christian-meditation.org.uk)

Brij Waterfield is a mother and works in the business world. She has a life-long interest in the Christian contemplative tradition and enjoys leading retreats.

## Contemplative Rhythms

# Space for God in the busy city

Contemplative Rhythms is an alternative form of gathering which provides a safe space for busy people to think, pause, stop and worship.

**Canon Michael Hart**

For the last couple of years Contemplative Rhythms sessions have been held monthly at Southwark Cathedral. Each one hour session contains silence, ritual, meditation and reflection. Words and visuals are used to aid those attending to move from everyday stresses and concerns to a depth of stillness enabling them to worship and contemplate. Each session reflects the seasonal rhythm or a particular theme. Three or four times a year there is a Contemplative Eucharist using sign and symbol and with few words. The aim is to help all



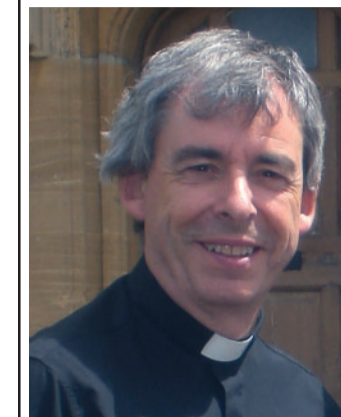
who are seeking for balance, stillness, focus or direction in their lives to encounter the loving and enriching presence of God.

The sessions at the Cathedral came to an end in December. However a new series will begin at St George, Borough High Street, on Monday 28 June at 7pm.

More details from Fr Ray Andrews (020 7407 2796).

## Praying for and with people

# An 'immense sense of God's presence'



Having spent a sabbatical a few years ago observing how different churches conducted prayer ministry - and having noticed that very few people actually receive it - I returned and floated the suggestion that we might try something different at the Good Shepherd, not something that I had seen anywhere else.

**Canon Christopher Wheaton**

The aim was to make sure that everyone left church knowing that they had been blessed - and physically touched. Our 9.30am service is always Eucharistic. So immediately after people have received communion, or a blessing, at the altar rail, we have two people standing at both ends of the altar rail who are willing to lay hands and pray a blessing over them.

The blessing is very brief and is prepared by the person preaching to fit in with the theme of the sermon, for instance; "The Lord bless you and keep you, and give you

grace and courage, so that you may take up your cross, deny yourself and follow Christ."

My second aim was to encourage more and more members of the church family to feel confident in praying for and with people. And so rather than choose the obvious candidates I asked God to bring to my mind those whom He would want to conduct this ministry. I found myself being directed to those I probably wouldn't have chosen myself and in almost every instance, to my surprise, they agreed.

In the first few weeks my colleague, Peter Turrell, and I, shared our aims with the congregation and every week more and more people accepted this 'blessing'.

These days almost everyone waits to be prayed with, either alone or with their family or with friends.

It's so moving seeing a whole family with their arms around each other, being prayed for, and older people for whom it is possibly the only time in the week that they are physically touched - and universally this ministry is now greatly appreciated.

Perhaps the greatest blessing has been to those exercising this ministry who say they consider it an incredible privilege to pray for others and have spoken of the immense sense of God's presence as they have prayed.

The beauty of the prepared 'blessing' is that I can ask those who have probably never prayed aloud in a group before.

I'd recommend it to others as a wonderful source of blessing.

## The Isaiah Community

Prayers for love and justice  
St John's Church, Waterloo,  
Every Tuesday at 6pm.

The Isaiah Community is a new initiative modelled loosely on the Sant'Egidio Community in Rome and the Jerusalem Community in Paris.

It's a weekday opportunity for prayer with an emphasis on God's justice in the world. A simple Evening Prayer (including Taize and other music) is followed by a chance to chat, ending around 7 pm.

You are welcome. For further information contact Giles Goddard  
E: [gileswgoddard@googlemail.com](mailto:gileswgoddard@googlemail.com)  
[www.stjohnswaterloo.co.uk](http://www.stjohnswaterloo.co.uk)

*'Enlarge the site of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; do not hold back, lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.' Isa 54.2*

