

Growing Roots

Spirituality and Prayer in Suffolk



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich

Welcome to the eleventh e-newsletter on prayer and spirituality in Suffolk, in which we consider **prayer and music**.

Some people listen to music or have music in their heads all the time. Others struggle to pick up a tune. But music is around us in life, and music and song are often woven into our prayer.

In church, hymns and songs are frequently part of thanksgiving (Eucharist) and worship. And, even for people (like me) who learn very slowly by hearing, the words and tunes may stay in the memory for days. These can express something of our mood, or capture something about God. In fact music and song can give us a way to say to God what we are thinking and feeling... and to remind ourselves of what God is like. And for many, taking part in making music brings joy and can give perspective on life and on God.

In this issue someone shares how different kinds of music are part of his prayer (page 2) and someone else describes how he enables worship through playing the organ (page 3). Another describes how songs give her a way to pray on all kinds of days (page 4), and then a musician explores how music gives a language to say the unsayable (page



5). The wind instruments and half-size viola in the photographs have been used by Neil Clayton in worship and at home.

You can still book for the Exploring Prayer day (2 July). Details on this, a retreat and some updates are on page 8.

Sadly the Spirituality Advisor post is coming to an end in July. On pages 6 – 7, Bishop Mike gives the background to the role and shares what is being planned to help encourage prayerfulness in the future.

Until the end of July 2016, you can contact me, Anne Spalding, Spirituality Advisor, on anne.spalding@cofesuffolk.org or 01394 610065. It has been a joy to work with you and meet many of you. May we all continue to grow in prayer and in the life of God.

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Prayer and Music

All kinds of music for prayer

Carl Melville finds music takes him deeper into prayer:

Music has always been used in the prayer and worship of the Church. The Bible is full of examples of music being used in prayer to draw closer to God. The Psalms are the classic example. Hymns



of praise and cries of sorrow: 'How long, O Lord', or 'Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!' Set to music, chanted in processions or sung to the beat of instruments, the Psalms, as with most music, can draw us deeper into God's presence.

I like to think of our God as a musical God. That doesn't mean he is constantly noisy or that he doesn't like silence. Rather, it means that whenever I approach God I trust that he has the right piece of music for me. He adds my song and prayer to his own masterpiece.

Taizé chants allow time to rest in the music and be carried by it deeper and deeper into prayer. Youtube can provide this for you! If ever I want to know what to pray about for the world, I listen to pop music which often provides the answer. If ever I need to prepare myself for a time of silence, I often listen to some Gregorian chant. What is even better is humming or singing my own song or tune, often improvised or something I've picked up in church recently. Music is all around us and is engrained in creation. Using it to spend time with God is his gift to us!

In my experience, wherever there is good music for praise, contemplation and prayer, the Church has flourished and grown. Ephesians 5:19: 'speak to each other using psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.'

Above all, using music to pray can change us as we journey through life and learn more about who God is. As the Chorister's Prayer puts it:

*Grant that what we sing with our lips,
we may believe in our hearts,
and what we believe in our hearts,
we may show forth in our lives.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.*



An example of Taizé music on Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f51n-yb11dY>

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Enabling others to pray with music

Don Taylor plays the organ as an offering to God:

I have been playing the organ at St Francis since the 1980s. I arrived at church one Sunday to be confronted by the Vicar who said, "If you don't play this morning no one will!" I could just about play the piano, so it turned out to be what one member of the congregation described as chronic!



Very encouraging. I was, at that time, Church Warden. Anyway one thing led to another and I took the diocesan 12 session training with Peter Clarke (and later played at the wedding of one of the others on the course.) And here I am, twenty-odd years later, still at it.

So how does spirituality come into it? When I was first warden I eventually came to the conclusion that the only thing so far as I was concerned was the duties had to become my offering to God; and it is the same with organ playing. In the main service I am usually praying that He will guide my hands and feet to play accurately and sensitively... and the constantly waiting for cues doesn't leave much time for personal stuff. So you will

appreciate the mid-week communion is FOR ME, I don't want to read just to soak myself in the service which is held in our very special Holy Cross chapel.

We have a small choir who are very loyal and, with one whose father is a priest in the Russian Orthodox Church, we are nothing if we are not cosmopolitan. The vicar chooses the hymns VERY carefully, however it's me that gets the flak!

My favourite hymn is How Great Thou Art.



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Worship songs as prayer

Laura Etheridge finds worship songs give her a way to pray on all kinds of days:

As someone who has regularly led worship in my church for the last four years I find myself constantly listening to worship music. It is a huge blessing to be able to spend hours listening to worship music in preparation, reflecting on what the words of the songs are saying and carefully matching these to the message the preacher is going to be giving.

However, for me, the most precious times that I listen to worship music are when I'm in my car on my long commute every day, or finding a few moments of stillness and using these songs as prayer. Worship music means that I have words to use when I just don't have any. When I don't know how to pray to God at the end of a hard day, when I'm so tired I don't know how to express what I'm feeling, worship songs give me the inspiration and the words to offer up to God.



As a mental health occupational therapist I use mindfulness daily, which is the practice of focusing and paying attention to the here and now. I can apply this to worship music. Really listening to what the words are saying, what the music is trying to convey, and this draws me into God's presence where I can focus on what he is communicating to me. So when I'm worship-leading I try to leave space, encourage the congregation to offer up their own song whether out loud or in their hearts. Because, to me, worship music isn't just about making a nice sound, it's about saying something to Jesus, praising his name, reflecting on what he's done, being inspired by the words of the songs and then having the space to listen to what he is saying back to you and resting in his embrace.



So, when you pray in your private prayer language, don't hoard the experience... Pray for the insight and ability to bring others into that intimacy... I should be spiritually free and expressive as I pray, but I should also be thoughtful and mindful as I pray. I should sing with my spirit, and sing with my mind. (1 Corinthians 14.13-15, *The Message*).

A worship song on YouTube:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nR-N_Oh4uNg

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Music for connecting with God

Richard Hubbard reflects on music as a language:

I have been fortunate to be able to spend the majority of my working life earning a living through music, both as a teacher and a performer. It might be tempting to think that this is a relaxing approach to life, but as any professional musician will tell you, it's demanding work with long hours that leaves little time for anything else. Practising it, planning it, composing it, performing it, writing about it... there's always something to be done.



But for me the reward of this job is that music is a language that enables me to connect with God. When you take the raw material of sound and organise it into patterns and shapes that we call music, something remarkable happens that transforms the end result into something much greater than the sum of its parts. Who would have thought that scraping horse's hair over gut, blowing down a tube or hitting inanimate objects could produce works of art that have the power to move us, even transform us?

God incarnate chooses to reveal himself to humanity in so many ways. In the art of music, we find a language that enables us to communicate with him, and, because language is a two-way thing, music becomes a means by which God communicates to us. It enables us to say the unsayable, to express the inexpressible, to get a glimpse of the mystery and majesty of the God we can never fully comprehend in our earthly state.

In church we tend to think of music as a tool for expressing words. It can do this very well - as the best hymns and worship songs show, a well-crafted melody can add a new dimension to the text. But the language of music itself - music without words - can often be the means by which we can best express ourselves to God and hear his voice. It matters not whether we are creating the sound ourselves or listening to others creating it - as we engage with the music, so too, if our minds are fixed on him, we can engage with God.

"He who sings prays twice" is a quote attributed to St Augustine. We might widen its scope beyond singing to include all forms of music-making, for if we use it "with skilful hands and integrity of heart" (Psalm 78:72), then music becomes a means of prayer that can transform us.



Richard is Parish Music Development Researcher for St Edmundsbury Cathedral, a Lecturer in Music and Worship at London School of Theology, and Artistic Director of Cantus Firmus Trust.

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Prayer and Spirituality in the Diocese

Bishop Mike explains the current situation and plans for the future:

Spiritual Advisor's role

The Spirituality Advisor's role was created three years ago following prayer and discussion between Bishop Nigel Stock, then diocesan bishop, and the Spirituality Group about how best to encourage and support the development of prayer and spirituality at the heart of all we do as individuals, clergy, and church communities.

The post has been half-time and voluntary with expenses funded by the Lord Belstead Charitable Trust and Anne agreed to work under these terms to the end of July 2016. Regrettably, in the current Diocesan financial situation, there are no funds available to make this a stipendiary post at the present time, so Anne will be concluding her time in the role at the end of July.



We are enormously grateful to Anne for all she has done in these past three years, particularly with this *Growing Roots* newsletter, which many have found so helpful, and the Exploring Prayer days at the Cathedral as well as her valuable input on prayer to Living Faith in Suffolk. There will be a liturgical farewell to Anne at the end of the Exploring Prayer Day on 2 July and we hope as many people as possible will be there to show their gratitude at the service even if unable to be there during the earlier part of the day.

The Future

Prayerfulness and Growing in God remains at the core of the Diocesan vision – to foster and develop an awareness of & attentiveness to the loving presence of God in all we do. As such we will be looking at ways of resourcing this awareness and attentiveness, with particular alertness to the four dimensions of Growing in God.



Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

I will be the Bishop working with the Diocesan Spirituality Group and together we aim to provide ongoing activities & resources to continue to encourage prayerfulness.

- **Friday 11th November 2016 – Lord teach us to pray** – a day led by Bishop Martin. Venue to be confirmed.
- **Thursday 16th March 2017 – The Sermon on the Mount: a spirituality for today** – a day led by Bishop Mike. Venue to be confirmed.
- There will be another **Exploring Prayer** day in 2017.

- There will be an invitation from the Bishops to join in a **Diocesan week of Prayer** in the late spring of next year.
- There will be day on **"The use of art in Prayer"** in early 2017.
- Support for the ministry of **Spiritual Direction or Spiritual Accompaniment** continues – both for those offering that ministry and for those seeking it. Details are available on the website under prayer and spirituality.

Although this is likely to be the last edition of *Growing Roots* for the near future, details of all the above events, together with any other relevant information, will be circulated to all those on the current mailing list.

Lastly – a question for all of us.....

- What next step can **you** take to grow confidence in awareness of God's loving presence, strengthening prayerfulness as realisation of relationship with God and grow in recognising how God is at work in your life, in your Christian community, at work, at home and more widely in Suffolk.

Grace and peace

+Mike



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Events

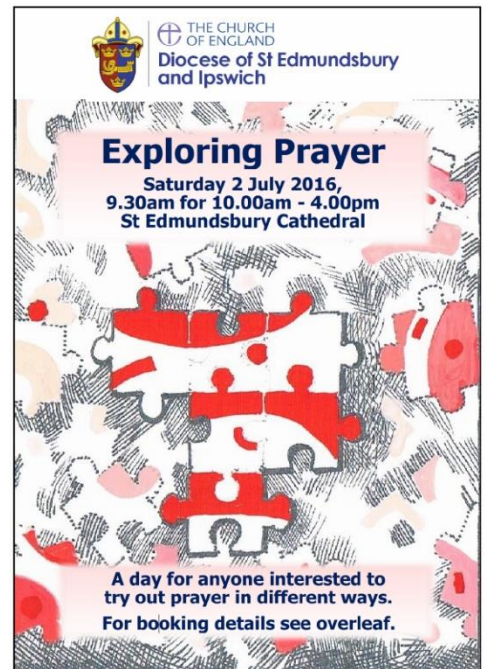
Exploring Prayer 2016

Saturday 2 July 2016

9.30am for 10am – 4pm

St Edmundsbury Cathedral

- Workshops to try out particular ways of praying
- Prayer stations and space in the Cathedral to pray on one's own
- Labyrinths to walk and reflect
- Midday and final prayers together
- Full details and booking form at [http://www.cofesuffolk.org/uploads/Exploring Prayer 2016_e-version_%281%29.pdf](http://www.cofesuffolk.org/uploads/Exploring_Prayer_2016_e-version_%281%29.pdf)
- Book your place and choose your workshops in advance via Jayne Whiteman (01284 748722) JayneWhiteman@stedscathedral.org



Summer Silence: A Day Retreat with Brian Draper

In this gentle but purposeful day retreat, Brian Draper will ease us into some much needed space to pause, to relax, and to let life settle – and there we'll make time for contemplation, stillness and silence. Weather permitting, we'll get outside as much as we can, to enjoy the season's light and warmth, to reconnect with God, and also to walk the Wigwam Centre's delightful grass labyrinth (you can try it barefoot, if you fancy it!).

The Wigwam Retreat Centre, Riddlesworth, Norfolk IP22 2SZ

Thursday 14 July 2016, 10.00am to 4.00pm

Cost: £28 (concessions available to those on a low income)

For details and booking see www.wigwamretreats.co.uk

Christian Community at St. Thomas, Ipswich

A community with residential and non-residential members is coming together twice a month to listen to each other and to the Scriptures, and to explore what being part of this community means. For more information, contact The Revd Jutta Brueck, St Thomas' Vicarage, 102 Cromer Road, Ipswich IP1 5EP. Tel: 01473 743341, email: jutta.brueck@cofesuffolk.org

Diocesan website: www.cofesuffolk.org

For those of you who haven't discovered it, the Diocesan website has been updated. The information on the old spirituality pages can now be found under 'For Parishes', then 'Prayer and Spirituality'.

So if you are looking for quiet days, retreats, information on events, prayer resources, or earlier issues of *Growing Roots*, click here: <http://www.cofesuffolk.org/prayer-and-spirituality#/>