

Growing Roots

Spirituality and Prayer in Suffolk



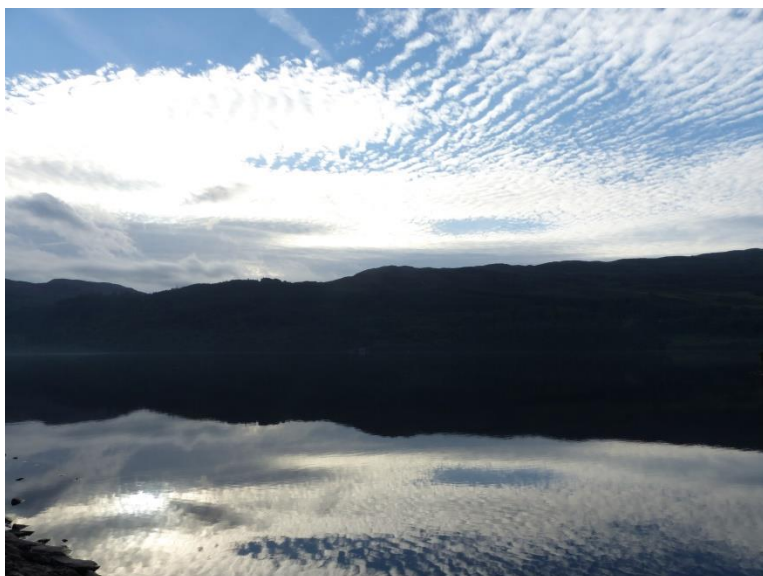
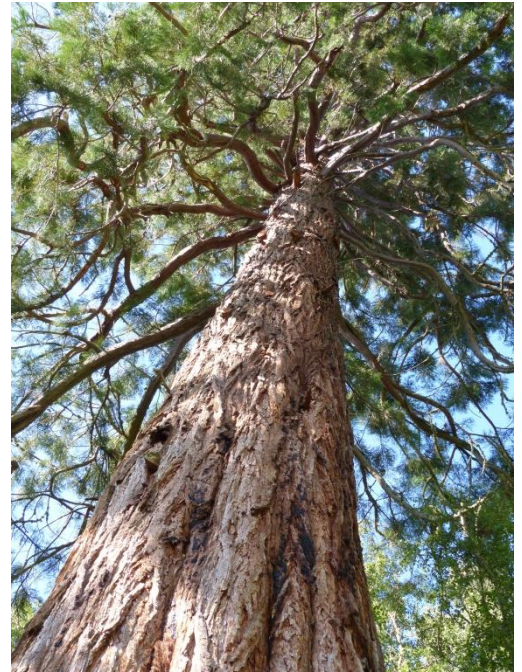
THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND
Diocese of St Edmundsbury
and Ipswich

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

Many of us spend a lot of our week working, whether paid or not. Some of us may work among people who share Christian faith and our values but often this will not be so. The challenge, especially if there is no one at work to encourage us, is to find God's presence for ourselves and to recognise God in the midst of our work and the busyness that often goes with it.

How we approach this challenge varies because we are different people and we work in different ways in different settings. But, to give us a taster, in this issue someone shares her experience of balancing activity and prayer working in the NHS (page 2). Two others share their experiences of busy office-based work, one on finding God in the office (page 3) and another of finding God's rest in the midst of work and other activities (page 4). Then someone else shares his experience of being a visible 'God-person' in the Army (page 5).

In many times and places, prayer, study and engaging with God's activity in the world would have been rooted in a communal life. Today people are rediscovering this monastic tradition and connecting it to contemporary life. The possibility of such a community is being explored in Ipswich – details on page 6.



Reminders of Jane Williams' workshops (2 March), the Exploring Prayer day (2 July) and information on an opportunity for creative reflection are on page 7.

As usual, if this e-newsletter was passed on to you and you want to receive it directly please contact me, Anne Spalding, Spirituality Advisor, on anne.spalding@cofesuffolk.org or 01394 610065.

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Prayer and Work

Prayer and Activity

Ann Maw describes the mixture of 'doing' and 'being' she finds necessary in her work:

I work as a nurse in a busy cardiac unit in the local hospital. My role includes the welcome, preparation and care of patients before, during and after various procedures to diagnose and treat an assortment of heart conditions. We are fortunate to have access to hi-tech equipment, using x-ray-guidance or 'imaging'. Many patients and their relatives come to us in a state of anxiety at the thought of having wires, balloons and catheters (narrow tubes) inserted into arteries or veins. It is hard to imagine ahead of time how this can be done safely, comfortably and with a positive outcome!

I often find myself silently praying in and for my workplace, colleagues and patients, particularly when I become aware of troubling or challenging situations and when perseverance or patience is required. (It's hard to be a patient patient, nurse, doctor or consultant at times!)

I need to balance the busy-ness and demands of my work (like Martha) with the wisdom of Mary who sat at our Lord's feet. My personal, often silent, prayer and meditation is the key to being willing and available – 'the right person in the right place at the right time'.

I'm far from perfect but my caring Higher Power loves and accepts me just the way I am. The challenge is to trust that there is 'that which is of God in everyone' and to allow His love and care to flow through me to those who need it.

'I can't, He can, I'll let Him'.



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Finding God in my working day

Caroline Redman has a demanding job:

For me, prayer is about the whole of life and so my paid employment, which occupies a major part of my waking hours, is also part of my prayer. It is important to me that I recognise God's presence in the workplace, in the people I work with and that, in the way I behave and relate with them, they recognise God's presence too.

"What is God's glory if it is not God's presence and God's grace made known".

Work is part of the landscape of my journey and it can be very draining and wearying. Finding space to draw breath, to turn briefly to God, to regain energy can be hard. These are some of the things which work for me:

- *As I arrive in the car park at work each day I try and take just a few moments to both offer the day to God but also to receive it as gift, asking Him to help me to see the giftedness in it and also asking for the resources to live it.*



- *I often need to go to meetings on the 3rd floor and these days I need to take the lift. This has become for me a sacred space – I am almost always alone in it, it is an uninterrupted space and one where I can just take a moment to breathe and pray. My spiritual director once suggested that perhaps I should install a candle and a prayer stool – and that I could, of course, go in the lift even if I wasn't actually going anywhere!*
- *There are other ways I find useful which just serve to remind me of God's presence – a prayer stone on my desk, to others just a white stone, to me something symbolic – a postcard of an icon – a screensaver which either has a word or phrase or a photograph (currently a sunset) to remind me of God's presence, God's glory, God's grace.*
- *Sometimes as I sit in meetings (which I often do) I find myself reflecting "Where is Christ in this meeting?" "Where is His presence in each person?" "What is He making of what is going on here?"*

There is a quote I came across ages ago which I have also kept in my office diary...

"Don't seek God as an alternative to the busy day. Instead seek God through the busyness of the day. Let the events of each ordinary day be the actual way in which God is speaking to you.

Train yourself to notice God in all that whizzes past you... Don't let God's work loom so small in your life as to assume that he will only speak to you when you are not busy." Peter Graystone, *Detox your spiritual life in 40 days* (Canterbury Press, 2004).



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Resting in the midst of busyness

Phil Stollery works for a multi-national company and seeks to serve the local church. He is busy...



I am sure that I am not alone when I say my natural tendency is usually to press on with trying to achieve things in my own strength and with my own understanding. This usually leads to 'busyness' from which I then seek rest – if I time it right, just before I crash out! What I have learnt in this is to try and turn that around – work from a position of rest – a rest that is focussed on God – that is rooted in conversation with him – even in the midst of busyness!

Rest in this way can come in unexpected moments – through long drives across the country, short 'time out' moments to reflect and breath – even in the middle of meetings! It is as much about listening to what He would say in the moment as it is to look for guidance and even divine intervention! It is about realising that He has asked me to be a light in my work place – with whoever I meet – to work with integrity – whether it is quietly with individual relationships or boldly in expressing opinions that affect decisions.

I don't always get this right, but He is gracious in the extreme – encouraging with words from Christians who I work with, or even through positive feedback from other colleagues. I have come to realise that this is as important a part of my walk of faith as any directly church-related work may be, and that the only way to keep this focus is to do it with a sense of God at the centre – with a purposeful rhythm of prayer woven through this secular part of my life.



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Praying in the Army

Antony Wilson shares something of his life and prayer as an Army Chaplain:

Having worked for 10 years in Parish Ministry, including 5 in Ipswich, I have spent the last three years as an Army Chaplain. I've worked with the Cavalry and now the Infantry, the Grenadier Guards. Chaplains in the Army are known as Padre, which comes from the Spanish word for Priest or Father. We do indeed play a sort of a Father-like role to the soldiers, most of whom are young men.



Photo of a field service

As compared to parish ministry, where I spent the majority of my time with Christians, I am much more aware that I am 'on show' as the 'God-person' in a largely secular environment. This encourages me to spend time daily in prayerful preparation for my ministry of presence in the barracks, hoping that by staying close to God myself I will be able to make the most of encounters with soldiers to point them to Him. Working (and living) alongside soldiers presents daily challenges because I know that others are listening to my views and opinions and I need to be wise over what I say. I believe that my role in the Army falls into two parts: affirming that which is of God's Kingdom; and challenging that which runs against the Kingdom. So, a good start for my daily prayer is always 'May your Kingdom come'.

I am fortunate to work in a Garrison, alongside other Chaplains and Church workers, so getting together to pray and support one another is a vital part of my week – it's easily to get isolated without this and we can remind each other that whilst we wear the uniform of soldier, we are not in the Army to do the job that soldiers are training for, but instead to provide spiritual care for them and bring the hope of God to them.

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Christian Community

Jutta Brueck is priest-in-charge at the Church of England parish of St Thomas, Ipswich. She has experience of living in and supporting Christian residential communities. Now Jutta has a calling to develop an intentional community that would be open to Christians and seekers of all denominations, drawing on the experience of ancient and present religious communities. The aim is to create a community of prayerful presence whose members are committed to a way of life integrating faith and action.

A residential Christian Community at St. Thomas, Ipswich



- ✦ Would you like to support the process for the creation of a residential Christian community in Ipswich?
- ✦ Would you like to explore living in a small community with others who are searching for God and a way of life integrating faith and action?
- ✦ Would you like to be associated with such a community?
- ✦ Would you welcome a space to develop your prayer life, share your journey of faith with others and be active in God's loving involvement in the world?
- ✦ Are you interested in exploring God's call for you in your life?

*If your answer to any of these questions is 'Yes'
we would love to hear from you.*

The Diocese of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich and St. Thomas PCC are starting the discernment process by inviting those who are interested to come together to pray on a regular basis and discern God's will for a residential Christian community in Ipswich.



Dates: 1 March, 16 March, 14 April, 26 April, 11 May, 26 May @ 7.30-9.00pm

If you would like to know more, you are invited to the above prayer meetings.

Please contact: The Revd Jutta Brueck, St Thomas' Vicarage, 102 Cromer Road, Ipswich IP1 5EP.
Tel: 01473 743341 | email: jutta.brueck@cofesuffolk.org

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Events

Jane Williams: Praying for Others

Wednesday 2 March 2016

At All Saints Church, Park Road, Bury St Edmunds IP33 3QW

Jane Williams is Assistant Dean at St Mellitus College (see <http://www.stmellitus.org/academic-staff>). A previous day she led on this topic was much appreciated.

There will be two sessions: **2.00 – 5.00pm, repeated 7.00 – 9.00pm** (i.e. book for one session or the other, not both).

The cost is £5, payable in advance and non-refundable.

To book, contact Caroline Redman, The Cottage, Great Livermere IP31 1JG or caroline@theredmans.co.uk. Please either email and make an electronic payment to St Edmundsbury & Ipswich Diocesan Board of Finance Sort code 16-22-17 Acc No 12190090 or send a cheque made payable to "St Edmundsbury & Ipswich DBF" together with your details.

Exploring Prayer 2016

Saturday 2 July 2016

9.30 for 10am – 4pm at St Edmundsbury Cathedral

- Workshops to try out particular ways of praying
- Prayer stations and space in the Cathedral to pray on one's own
- Labyrinth to walk and reflect
- Midday and final prayers together
- Full details and booking from April onwards

Burning Bush Barn

Burning Bush Barn is a space to explore the relationship between creativity and spirituality, based in Rectory Lane, Rockland St Mary, Norwich NR14 7EY (t: 01508 537045; e: bbarn@gmail.com; www.burningbushbarn.blogspot.co.uk)

A season of 'At Home' has started: 1-4pm, **Thursdays–Sundays only until 20th March 2016** (closed Sat 27th Feb).

We hope that this will be a time for visitors to come, relax in and explore the quiet space of the barn, be inspired by and respond to what emerges from the space. There will be work on display by local artists as well as our excellent collection of books about spirituality, creativity and art.

On **Saturday 27 February** at 7.00pm the Barn will host a performance of TS Eliot's 'Four Quartets'. For details and booking, contact Burning Bush Barn.

