



*Going Into  
Silence*

*... and  
Coming Out*

## *The Julian Meetings*

*F*oster the teaching and practice  
of contemplative prayer in the  
Christian tradition

*E*ncourage people to practise  
contemplative prayer in their  
daily lives, and to explore ways of  
doing this which are appropriate  
for them

*S*upport the individual ecumenical  
Julian Meetings - groups whose  
members meet regularly to practise  
Christian contemplative prayer  
together

## *The Julian Meetings*

There can be no set patterns for going into and coming out of the silence at a Julian Meeting. There may be as many ways of leading small groups of people into silence as there are members of the groups - or indeed more, for we each have within us a variety of resources. These resources are the raw material of our silence.

Each Julian Meeting is a unique experience, for it depends not so much on the method, or even on the leader, as upon the members. Little depends even on them, for all they can do is wait. The initiative is with God.

It is perfectly possible for members of a group to come to their chosen place of contemplation in silence, to maintain their silence for the agreed time and to leave as they came, without a word; this may be the chosen way for those who are well practised in contemplative prayer and who often meet together at other times.

Most Julian Meetings, however, benefit from some type of lead-in, as well as a gentling out of the silence. This pamphlet tries to suggest tools which may be used in any way appropriate to a particular group. There are more ideas in the JM pamphlet *Your Turn To Lead*.

## *The setting*

Because we are physical beings the physical setting is important. The chosen place should be quiet, without distractions and conducive to prayer. It should be warm and comfortable, though not soporific. This is a counsel of perfection and many Julian Meetings have to make do - often a church is the best place even if it is cold - but we need to be aware of the ambience and to be prepared to search for the right place.

Ideally the group should be in a circle, or as near as possible, gathered round a focal point.

Atmosphere can be created. Symbols have the power to reach deeper than words. Traditional Christianity has recognised this as much as any religion.

Lights may be dimmed at the beginning of the silence.

A candle may be used, symbolising fire; light in the darkness; the spirit; or simply as a focus of attention.

The candle may be scented, or a stick of incense may be burned, or scented oils vaporised (*best avoided if any members are asthmatics or sensitive*).

Many people find music helps to set the scene if it is well done [we are so used to high quality sound reproduction that the second rate - noisy switches



included - can irritate and distract]. Some who use music to lead in and lead out 'record' thirty minutes of silence in the middle of them.

### *Going in .... relaxation*

Relaxed, yet receptive. This attitude of prayer comes with practise. But just as we try to create the atmosphere for silent contemplation, so we can set the mood for our bodily state. Many Meetings use a centring exercise to bring their bodies into stillness. Relaxation exercises are most helpful to some, or simply standing for a while, stretching and relaxing with deep breathing. Taking notice of each other, by saying the name of one's neighbour round the circle, is one way of getting started.

### *Going in .... focus*

Silliness of mind and body can be hard work. Most people need a focus. Individuals may have a mantra - a word or phrase which is repeated silently; they are free to use it as they wish in the silence. But there are other ways of focusing the attention while leaving the spirit free.

Looking is helpful and many simple objects may be evocative, especially when coupled with a suitable phrase or sentence: a candle, water, earth, fruit, leaf, a flower, a stone, bread, wine, a wedding ring, any beautiful object or picture, a crucifix, an icon.

The sense of touch is important too. An object can be passed around or shared; each person in the group might hold and feel something throughout the silence - a hazelnut, a stone, a shell, a cross.



### *Going in ... lead in*

The aim is to still the mind as well as the body, so the lead in should help people to relax and to focus mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. A short passage from the Bible, or from a modern or classical writer on prayer or recollection, or a suitable poem, can enable members to let go of the busyness of the day and to settle down together. Or a short talk may be appropriate, if it is a simple story, or something personal, about prayer and contemplation, that the leader wishes to share with everyone. This is not the occasion for a lesson or a sermon: the reading or talk should be devotional, leading to God. It should concentrate not on ideas about God but upon how God is revealed in words, in the world, and in me. It should be simple and brief. Some Meetings like to hold hands during the talk or reading.

## *The Silence - the heart of every Julian Meeting*

In the Julian Meetings we have no set length for the silence. Many have about thirty minutes of uninterrupted silent prayer. Some have longer, up to one hour. A silence of less than twenty minutes may not be enough.

One Meeting has members scattered over a wide geographical area. They make the most of their meetings, after their long journey to the venue, by having three silences of twenty minutes, separated by short readings. Nor do we have any set way to use the silence. While this is a matter for each individual, we wrote our pamphlet *Some Basics of Contemplative Prayer* to offer guidance on using the silence.

The only thing Julian Meetings always have in common is commitment to silent prayer in the Christian tradition. The silence in the Meetings is enriched and deepened if the individual members regularly use silence in their own prayer life. And, in turn, each member will be strengthened by the corporate silence and be encouraged by the assurance that others are travelling the same road.

## *Coming out*

Coming out of the stillness is as important as the lead in. Some people go very deep during the silence and need to come out gradually. They can experience too swift a surfacing almost as a physical blow.

The lead-out should be as carefully prepared as the lead-in and should include some element of taking notice of others in the room. Very quiet music, slowly increasing in volume, can gently people out of the silence. Words should generally guide people back to the original focus and, through that, to each other. Having ended the silence, people can begin a gentle opening of the eyes and moving of fingers, with a growing awareness of the body and of each other. It may be helpful at some point to say something aloud together - perhaps the grace. One Julian Meeting passes the peace at this point, as in some Communion services.

## *The whole experience*

Ideally the going into silence, the coming out and the re-adjustment to the tangible world should be integral parts of the whole experience. After all, God is not more present in the silence than at other times. We choose silence in order to become more aware of his presence, to try to know his will. Each time we come out of the silence we bring into the world a little more stillness, a little more awareness, a little more of the love of Christ.

*Suggested readings for  
Going Into Silence ...  
and Coming Out*



*Biblical Passages*

Genesis	28.13-15	Matthew	6.33
Exodus	15.26		12.28-29
	3.1-6		18.20
Deuteronomy	1.29-32		28.19-20
1 Kings	19.11-13	Mark	4.35-41
Job	33.33b	Luke	24.28-32
Psalms	27.1	John	4.7-14
	46.10		6.35 or 6.51
	51.6		8.12
	63.1		9.5
Any of the Praising Psalms			10.14-15
Isaiah	12.2		12.28-29
	43.1-4		12.32
	49.15		14.6
	54.10		15.5
Ezekiel	37.4-7		18.20
Hosea	11.3-4	Galatians	2.20
	11.9	Hebrews	11.1
	14.8	Revelation	21.6

*Non-Biblical - Going In*

A certain brother went to Abbot Moses and asked him for a good word. And the elder said to him, "Go, sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything."

**The Desert Fathers**

Contemplation is nothing else but a secret, peaceful and loving infusion of God, which will set the soul on fire with the spirit of love.

**St John of the Cross**

I said to my soul, "Be still and let the dark come upon you"

**T.S.Eliot (East Coker)**

Abandon yourself for a little to God and rest in him. Enter into the inner chamber of your soul and shut out everything save God and what can be of help in your quest for him. Having locked the door, seek him out. He yearns to see you ... and is eager to seek you out

**St Anselm**

In this endless love we are led and looked after by God and never shall be lost. For he wills that we should know our souls to be alive and that this life - through his goodness and grace - shall continue in heaven without end; loving him, thanking him and praising him.

**Julian of Norwich**

One act is required - and that is all. For this one act pulls everything together - and keeps everything in order ... This one act is to stand with attention in your heart.

**Theophan the Recluse**

Step out then and resolutely apply this sovereign remedy. Just as you are, lift up your sick self to God as he is - our God is good and gracious.

**The Cloud of Unknowing**

## ***Non Biblical - Coming Out***

Our soul rests in God its true peace; our soul stands in God its true strength and is deep rooted to God for endless love.

He wants us to know that he will come suddenly and joyfully to all who love him.

He wants us to see and enjoy everything in love.

**Julian of Norwich**

I looked at him,  
not with the eye only,  
but with the whole of my being,  
overflowing with him as a  
chalice would with the sea.

**R.S.Thomas**

Forth in thy name, O Lord I go  
My daily labour to pursue:  
Thee, only thee, resolved to know,  
In all I think, or speak, or do.

The task thy wisdom hath assigned  
O let me cheerfully fulfil:  
In all thy works thy presence find,  
and prove thy good and perfect will.

**Charles Wesley**

Drop thy still dews of quietness  
Till all our strivings cease;  
Take from our souls the strain and stress,  
And let our ordered lives confess  
The beauty of thy peace.

**John Greenleaf Whittier**

Many people think that living and dying for God is one thing, living and dying for each other another; but the Christian truth is that our love of God is contained in our love of men.

**Mother Mary Clare (Encountering the Depths)**

### ***Also recommended***

Love is my meaning - An Anthology of Assurance

**edited by Elizabeth Bassett**

The Fire of Silence and Stillness

**An anthology edited by Paul Harris**

## *Music for times of meditation*

Choosing music for a group meditation needs consideration, for not all music is suitable. It is best to choose something which flows gently, with gradual, rather than sudden, changes of volume. Some percussive music may hinder contemplation; so piano music may be regarded with caution since the piano is a percussive instrument.

However carefully chosen, a piece may turn out to be totally unhelpful to someone. It may be a matter of trial and error, and a Meeting could find it useful to keep a list of pet hates. It is, of course, important that the music be presented without the distraction of noisy switches and tape hiss; the programming facilities and remote handset controls of modern audio equipment are ideal.

We do not claim that the list below is comprehensive or even well balanced. Julian Meetings which have a favourite piece which they think others might like to try are welcome to suggest it for inclusion in a future edition of this pamphlet. Please send the fullest possible details, such as catalogue numbers, to the address on the inside back cover.

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|--------------------------------|---|
| <b>J S Bach</b>                | Double Violin Concerto in D minor, 2nd movement.<br>Violin Concerto in E major, 2nd movement.<br>Adagio in E.                           |
| <b>Beethoven</b>               | Romance in F.   |
| <b>Brahms</b>                  | Piano Concerto No 2, 3rd movement.  |
| <b>Debussy</b>                 | La Mer.   |
| <b>Gluck</b>                   | Dance of the Blessed Spirits (from Orfeo).  |
| <b>Grieg</b>                   | Holberg Suite, Air.   |
| <b>Hildegard<br/>of Bingen</b> | A Feather on the Breath of God - a selection of<br>Hildegard's songs and sequences sung by Gothic<br>Voices. [cassette or CD, Hyperion] |

<b>Holst</b>	Neptune the Mystic, from The Planets.
<b>Mahler</b>	Symphony No 4, 3rd movement.
<b>Mozart</b>	Sonatas for violin and piano: B flat major, C major and E flat major. Symphony in E major, 2nd movement. Sinfonia Concertante for Violin and Viola, K364, 2nd movement.
<b>Pachelbel</b>	Canon.
<b>Palestrina</b>	Missa Brevis, second Agnus Dei.
<b>Schubert</b>	String Quintet in C major, D956, 2nd movement, Adagio: 3rd movement, Trio. Piano Quintet in A major, D667, The Trout, 2nd movement.
<b>Taizé Community</b>	Chants. [Thomas More Centre recordings recommended.]
<b>Tallis</b>	Motet in 40 parts, 'Spem in Alium.' Motet, 'O Lord Give Thy Holy Spirit ....'
<b>Vaughan Williams</b>	The Lark Ascending. Fantasia on a Theme by Tallis. Fantasia on Greensleeves.
<b>Vivaldi</b>	The Four Seasons: Concerto No 4 in F minor, Winter, RV297, 2nd movement.

There are many compilation CDs/cassettes with collections of music suitable for meditation, including:

- Adagio - Music for Silent Moments  
[Arte Nova Classics, 74321 37870 2]
- Meditations at Sunset  
[Nimbus Records NI 7010]

**If you wish to know more about the Julian Meetings,  
and / or details of your nearest Meeting(s) either**

**Go to our website: [www.thejulianmeetings.net](http://www.thejulianmeetings.net)**

**or write to** (sae please)

The Julian Meetings,  
263 Park Lodge Lane, Wakefield  
West Yorkshire WF1 4HY

**We have members and Meetings in many counties**

### **Julian Meetings Publications**

Waiting on God in the Silence  
*(free introductory leaflet)*

A5 leaflet on contemplative prayer

Try Stillness

Some Basics of Contemplative Prayer

Going Into Silence ... and Coming Out

Approaching Silence

It's Your Turn To Lead

The Ideal Julian Meeting

Starting a Julian Meeting

The Healthy Julian Meeting

Resources List

The Julian Meetings Magazine *(three issues a year)*

A bookmark *(with helpful suggestions for using silence)*

A pew / handbag / wallet card *(with meditation suggestion)*

Promotional A4 posters *(two)* and A5 poster *(one)*

An A6 noticeboard card

**Buy publications direct from our website  
or download an order form from the website  
or send an sae for one to:**

The Julian Meetings, Rustling Pines, Foxwood Lane,  
Woodborough, Notts NG14 6ED

