

Quiet Places

The Newsletter of The Quiet Garden Movement

Jesus said: "Come with me by yourselves and get some rest" (Mark 6.31)

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Breathtaking in the Garden

Do you wonder how best to deepen your sense of the presence of God? A combination of beauty and breath can work wonders. Breath and the simple process of breathing is an extraordinarily accessible and rich vehicle for drawing near to God and allowing God to draw near to us. 'Ruach' is the Hebrew for breath and Spirit. In Greek 'pneuma' also signifies both breath and Spirit. So, the rhythm of the drawing in of breath and the letting go of breath can truly become inspiration. The energy of the Holy Spirit is as close as our own breathing, as quiet as Sabbath rest, as powerful as practical wisdom.

A garden exercise to be breathtaking for God!

The wonderful, but also the challenging thing about being in our bodies is that we can only work with what we've got! The delight of a physical garden, however small or large, kempt or unkempt - with its sights, sounds and fragrances - is that we can be fully embodied there. So, in stepping quietly out and then pausing frequently, let's offer our very breathing to God.



Walk into your garden, or to a public garden or green space not too far from you. Take conscious steps, being fully aware of your feet (with or without shoes) moving across the ground. As you move and as you pause, move and pause, be aware not only of the drawing in and releasing out of breath, but also of the flow of the Spirit. This is a sanctifying of your body, mind and soul in the simple act of being here now in the presence of the Giver of Life.

The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, is the invisible yet life-giving link between the profound and the personal, the divine and the human. Jesus clearly knew that the Holy Spirit would be given to his followers of every generation. As with all gifts, this bestowal comes only with our willing consent. God stands at the door of our being and knocks, seeking permission for entry into our inner sanctum. There is a gentle rhythm, a naturalness of good breathing that provides the grounding for grace to be given. Breath and grace are given to us in the very first moments of life. Their presence and quality are to be treasured as we move through the stages of the ageing process.

Philip Roderick
Founder-Director of The Quiet Garden Movement

"Silence means setting aside thoughts about things, whether of the senses or of the mind... Let the memory of Jesus combine with your breath - then you will know the profit of silence." St John Climacus

The primary vision of The Quiet Garden Trust is to initiate and resource a network of local opportunities for prayer, silence, reflection and the appreciation of beauty; for learning about Christian life and spirituality; for experiencing creativity and healing in the context of God's love.

Quiet Garden Arrays God in Natural Finery

"I've always regarded nature as the clothing of God."
 Alan Hovhaness, 20th century American composer

"When I first gazed on the acre of pasture," Del Morgan recalls, "I was inspired to create a garment for the Lord." That was in 1995, when Morgan and his wife joined the congregation of St. Augustine of Canterbury Episcopal Church in Elkhorn, a western suburb of Omaha, Nebraska. Morgan enjoyed working outdoors and soon became responsible for tending to the yard work around the church.

But the adjacent land remained unused except for grazing by the neighbour's horses. Church members considered designating the land for farming or ranching, or for industrial or botanical use. After visiting Quiet Gardens in Kansas, Del suggested that St. Augustine's develop its own garden, to provide a sanctuary of beauty and peace.

With the congregation's hearty approval, Morgan set about finding the proper individuals to create the Quiet Garden. "I was frustrated by my lack of horticultural training," Del reveals, "and relied on Divine Guidance to help me find the designers and landscapers who would properly tailor our landscape."

Financing the Quiet Garden's construction was problematic. St. Augustine's had recently built a new sanctuary addition and finances were strained. However, grants were obtained from the Hitchcock Foundation (a philanthropic institution) and from the Omaha Public Power District. Sartorial parishioners also made contributions to assist with expenses.

Construction of the ensemble began in the spring of 2001. A local contractor hauled in soil, at no charge, to create six berms, for flower beds. A pond contractor built a waterfall as a demonstration unit, charging only for materials. Water and electric lines were installed. Garden contractors planted trees, shrubs, and flowers. The parishioners donated accoutrement of benches, crosses, birdhouses.

God's new raiment was dedicated in October of 2001 and became a registered affiliate of the Quiet Garden Trust as the first, and still only, Quiet Garden in Nebraska. In 2005, a concrete walk was added to the garden, a necklace winding gracefully from berm to berm. A variety of trees have since been added to vesture the garden-including three Canadian cherry trees, an Autumn Blaze maple, a pin oak, and - most recently - an English Oak and a Japanese maple. In the fall of 2010, over 1,500 crocus, hyacinth, and jonquil bulbs were planted to bedeck the berms in the spring.

In 2008, Del's grandson Matt Morgan envisioned, designed, and constructed a new berm - the Pet Memorial Garden - endeavouring to provide healing to those suffering the loss of a beloved pet. Engraved bricks which commemorate the animals surround the berm, a suitable chapeau for God's attire.

The garden habiliments require a great deal of time and effort to remain in full regalia, and a cadre of St Augustine's volunteers keeps the individual berms trimmed



and watered. Haberdasher Del Morgan is still Grounds Steward and spends much of his time mowing the rolling fabric of lawn. Parishioners as well as neighbours from near and far enjoy visiting the Hitchcock Memorial Quiet Garden – a place for respite and reflection on the beauty of God's finery.

Del Morgan
 The Hitchcock Memorial Quiet Garden in Elkhorn, USA

Take a moment's pause

Maria Alm in Salzburgerland, Austria is an ancient place of pilgrimage – many people used to come here in the past to recharge their batteries for their everyday lives.

At the beginning of the 21st century, more and more people are seeking spirituality. That's how the project "take a moment's pause" came about, a co-operation of the local government here together with some committed people.

In addition to the parish pilgrimage church of Maria Alm, the Chapel of Peace has been here for over 20 years. It was built to create a place of quiet, of contemplation and of prayer. It is ecumenically oriented, in the spirit of Taizé. The chapel is only accessible by foot.



Downstairs in the "Haus der Begegnung" ("Meeting House" near to the church) there is an inter-religious Room of Quietness. To evoke quietness, there are symbols from nature (stone, a disc of wood, a water bowl, a candle). On the way to the Room of Quietness there are 12 display boards about world religions, world peace and world ethos.

For centuries mankind has been fascinated by the idea of a labyrinth. Labyrinths crop up in almost all human cultures. The labyrinth in Maria Alm was created in 2003 and was inspired by a labyrinth at the Kathedrale San Vitale in Ravenna. It is a Gothic labyrinth and has seven paths.

Walter Rinnerthaler
 Maria Alm

Burrswood Gardens

Burrswood Hospital in Groombridge, Kent, UK is set amongst 220 acres of stunning grounds. Surrounded by woods and fields, the ten or so acres of cultivated garden is on a south facing slope. Looking at it now it is hard to believe that after the war, when Dorothy Kerin bought it as a place of healing, it was a “lost” garden because the estate had been requisitioned by the army. Some of the mature trees from the original planting in the 1830s – 40s remain, bringing shape and structure to the present colourful garden.

As the needs of patients, guests and visitors are recognised, changes are made, but always with the views and the general peaceful atmosphere in mind. Seating is placed in appropriate places for quiet contemplation, to be alone with one’s thoughts, or simply to enjoy the colour coordinated flower beds.

One is conscious of birdsong much of the time, a sure sign of peace and safety as both native and migratory birds make it their home.

Wild flowers abound in the less formal parts of the gardens, and in season it is a delight to come across several varieties of orchid, carpets of bluebells in the wooded parts, not to mention drifts of daffodils and patches of fritillaries that were planted forty years ago, in addition to primroses and masses of snowdrops. The clay soil gives rise to many springs which feed five ponds; most one can walk around, and one is also a haven for great crested newts. Dragonflies grace the lily pads; bees rush around busy pollinating the wild flowers .

As a Christian hospital, provision is made for prayer walks. Three prayer huts are placed off the beaten tracks, and at the St Francis pond suggestions may be found for contemplation. On the lower lawn is a large paved cross set into grass; originally it was a rose cross but the local herd of deer enjoyed the roses too, so it never looked as it was intended.

The gardens are open for seven days a week for most days of the year.

Anna Fox
a volunteer at Burrswood



Siochain Quiet Garden

Cynthia Moran gives an overview of her Quiet Garden in Ireland: “We have been meeting monthly in Siochain since 2000. It has evolved from a rather structured introduction with the rest of the day in silence to a short, prayerful, opening with very few words to lead us into the silence together. We use scripture themes with poetry; or lines of prose from spiritual writings, often of mystics or modern authors. We are all profoundly grateful for our Quiet Garden where the Spirit is alive and well in that contemplative space with a tangible sense of Presence – always. We are on average a group of six or seven and we meet from 10.30 am with a cup of tea and a chat for about half an hour and we gather around 5pm to share our thoughts, to offer prayer, or to remain silent. The Garden is aptly named “Siochain” which means “Peace” in Gaelic.”

Way of the Wolf Quiet Garden



Ron and Karen Poidevin of Way of the Wolf in Texas, USA remember a significant visit to England: “It has been many years since we joined the Quiet Garden Trust. We were on the way to Oxford to attend an Exploration of Celtic Spirituality workshop with Esther de Waal and Philip Roderick. We arrived early and stayed at a B&B whose owner being a member of the Trust, suggested we attend a gathering of the groups on St Patrick’s Day. Very quickly we decided that we wanted to offer what we had experienced, to those seeking a respite from the pace of the outer world.

As the many years have unfolded, we have hosted numerous retreats for individuals and groups at Way of the Wolf. Although we have not marketed our facility how we first understood the thrust of the Quiet Garden might be, somehow the spirit has been woven into the texture of all we offer. We are grateful for the inspiration we received whilst visiting Stoke Poges. The concept of The Quiet Garden Trust has taken root within us and as we attempt to nurture and nourish the seekers, we are nurtured and nourished in return. Our affiliation has enriched our journey in ways we may not even know.”

The Quiet Garden in Watersfield

As long as I can remember I have loved gardens - they are in my genes! We are blessed in West Sussex to be able to find some stunning open spaces and comparative silence. A few months ago, Rachel invited us to her Quiet Garden and immediately it was appealing.

Some years ago I was challenged to read a chapter of Proverbs each day of the month. I noticed how often the author refers to the negative power of the tongue. Here was my opportunity to experience a beautiful and extensive garden during a prolonged period of quiet - no talking! How would I fare?

Everything about our environment seemed to me to aid my contemplation and my ability to listen. I felt that the Holy Spirit was speaking to me, bringing me comfort and encouragement.

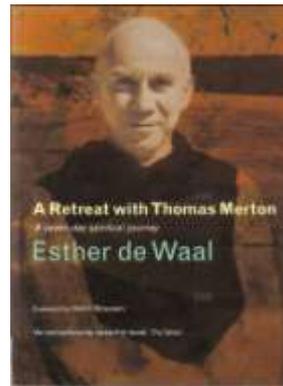
Our second visit in November last year was particularly helpful. My daughter-in-law had just been diagnosed with breast cancer, aged thirty six and with two small children. We started the morning by listening to the music from Taize, "My peace I leave you, my peace I give you" This was so appropriate and stayed with me for many days afterwards.

Our modern life-style so often encroaches on our ability to listen. It's almost as if there is a need for constant music or dialogue. Is it because we are sometimes afraid of where our thoughts might lead, afraid to consider the passing of time, the value of our actions and work, and what the future holds? Sometimes we need to carve out time in busy lives, to listen for "that still small voice". There is no better place than a quiet morning in a "quiet garden", thank you Rachel.

A Grateful Quiet Garden Visitor



Book Review:



A Retreat with Thomas Merton By Esther de Waal

Canterbury Press, 2010
(3rd Edition)
ISBN: 978 1-84825-066-6

In this book Esther de Waal draws on the life and writings of Thomas Merton to accompany her on a seven day spiritual journey. And so, in setting out on their own journeys, readers not only have Merton's insights but also the personal experience of the author for assistance.

Each one of the seven days of retreat covers a step towards greater harmony with God – from "the call" (day one) through to "integration" (day seven). Monochrome photographs taken by Merton are included at significant stations in the journey which complement the words and help the reader to achieve a more focused contemplation.

While reading a chapter at the start of each of the seven days, this reader at all times felt that he was not alone – there was a strong sense of being accompanied and supported throughout.

This is a beautiful book. Simple in structure, brief in length and pleasing in presentation. And yet it contains such a rich source of inspiration which will be of benefit to anyone who feels the call to retreat but perhaps does not have the luxury of time or money to spend away from daily life.

Foreword by Henri Nouwen and updated introduction by the author, the book also contains a brief overview of Merton's life, explanatory notes and references and a comprehensive bibliography for further research if desired.

George Dow
Trustee, Christian Ecology Link

Friends of The Quiet Garden Movement

Do you value and share our vision?
Would you like to deepen your links with us?
Friends support us in several ways such as through prayer, finance and volunteering.
Further information available from the office.