

Quiet Niche

A Prayer-Poem

Quiet niche out of wind,
what a find!
invited to pause in nature and in God.
Green and grace.
How much of me is here and now?
Deep seeing of the beauty of God,
of the roots of wisdom,
the friendship of others.
Learning the hard way
how to be attentive
to the forgiveness and abundance of God.

Perhaps the learning is that,
with Christ,
the more that I can melt and disappear
as ego, as lesser self,
the more open I shall find myself to be
to the colours and textures
of God's peace.

Each Garden of quiet is a place of journeys;
adventures of faith, hope and love,
tentative paths of unknowing and knowing,
of uncertainty and assurance.
Here, in a momentary stilling of the anxious mind,
we can ask for God's releasing love
in the patterning of our past
and the anticipation of our future –
both drawing close
in the gift of the now.

What can I learn?
Humility, lament, delight;
being real with God and the truer me,
stepping into fuller life.
Christ knocks at the door of my heart.
Dare I respond and continue to respond,
day in, day out, moment in, moment out,
with the "Yes!" of Mary?

Philip Roderick
Founder-Director of The Quiet Garden Movement



Chatswood Quiet Garden,
New Zealand

Celebrating 25 Years of Quiet Gardens on Saturday 20 May 2017

A day, at St John's Church Waterloo London, to include speakers Dr Rowan Williams and Revd Lucy Winkett. We will also be saying farewell to Philip Roderick as he retires after 25 years as Director

For full details and to book, visit www.quietgarden.org or contact the Quiet Garden office. Anyone interested in Quiet Gardens is welcome.

Early bird booking discounts available during 2016.

Mindfulness and Quiet Gardens

Revd Tim Stead, author of Mindfulness and Christian Spirituality reflects on the use of Mindfulness in the Christian tradition.

I was drawn into mindfulness practice 5 years ago partly because, in many ways, it looked so much like the Christian contemplative prayer I had been practising for 30 years. I have reflected quite a lot on how this all relates to my own Christian tradition of spirituality and prayer.

Let me try to summarise my own approach to Mindfulness and Christianity. Mindfulness trains us to be present in this moment in a non-judgemental way. If I want to know God, I need to develop a certain kind of attention: one which stays present, whether it is comfortable or uncomfortable to do so (i.e. whether God's word to me is comforting or challenging) and also one which hesitates to judge what I am experiencing. If this is God here, then it is not appropriate to judge - but only to gaze with wonder and curiosity as Moses did with the burning bush.

So, this is our starting point in our life with God. It may sound simple in a way but actually it is so difficult to train ourselves in this way of paying attention – this way of being. Which is why an eight week course, or a book containing a course is what is most helpful. Then practice, practice, practice!

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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.

A Quiet Garden with a Difference

This past week I had to wonder how many Quiet Gardens share their space with large animals. The Quiet Garden at St Peter's Church in Churchhaven has the privilege of sharing the space with large Eland and other animals. It is situated in the heart of the West Coast National Park in South Africa and so has a range of birds and animals that share in this "little piece of Heaven". In the dry summer months the animals gravitate to the areas that are inhabited by people in order to find the more succulent food and water.



The Quiet Garden meetings take place at the church of St Peter, the Fisherman, every month on the third Thursday of the month. The quaint church was built by the local community (mainly fishermen) in 1905 so has just celebrated 110 years of ministry in the community. This church is a Diocesan Ministry within the Diocese of Saldanha Bay and the Anglican Church of Southern Africa and is set aside as a place of solitude, silence, prayer and rest.

Many have found rest and restoration as they have stepped aside from the busyness of the city life and have enjoyed a day of silence and prayer.

*Ann Currie
Churchhaven Quiet Garden, South Africa*

Award for Beverley Minster Garden

The Quiet Garden at Beverley Minster garden won an award in Beverley in Bloom in 2015. It was a lovely recognition of all the work done by Judy Smith in creating the garden with Frank Gray 10 years ago and maintaining and developing it ever since.

This small walled garden beside the Minster provides a tranquil space in the town centre which can be visited during daylight hours.

*Beverley Minster Quiet Garden,
East Riding, Yorkshire, UK*



Gleadless Church, Sheffield

Our Quiet Garden was blessed by Bishop Steven Croft on October 11th 2015. It was a joyous occasion & marked the culmination of much hard work on the part of our quiet gardener Liz Hercun. Because of winter we got off to a slow start but we held an inaugural quiet morning on Saturday 19th March 2016. We plan to have bi-monthly quiet mornings now.

*Barbara Wadsworth
Gleadless Church Quiet Garden, South Yorkshire, UK*

Mindfulness continued

Another way of thinking about mindfulness is the idea of learning to wake up from our sleep and become fully aware of where I am, who I am and what choices lie before me. This is what happened to the prodigal son in Jesus' magnificent story. And it was this waking up moment, or 'coming to his senses' as the NIV puts it, which was the beginning of his path back to his true home – back to God. Mindfulness, I want to suggest, is one of the ways of cultivating this waking up – recognising that God is here and what will be involved in following God's way for me. Mindfulness can help me to be present and so to experience God in the here and now. Mindfulness can make space for God in our lives.

Secondly, nature... One of the big 'wake ups' in recent decades is our gradual realisation that our traditional attitude to nature, one of dominance and exploitation for the sake of humanity is, in fact, in danger of destroying our very own habitat and the habitats of thousands of other species. Our analytical judging minds are so quick to see everything as either useful or not according to my own needs at the time. Well, this is one kind of paying attention which has, indeed, had a part to play in human survival. But what is needed now is this altogether different kind of attention which I have been describing above. This is the kind which persistently suspends this kind of utilitarian judgement specifically in order to create the space to come to know, appreciate and value the object of our attention in its own right – to come to recognise intrinsic value and beauty and not just its value in terms of human need – even human need for beauty!

Many involved in the Quiet Garden Movement may feel they are already engaging in this kind of attention when they walk slowly round the garden itself.

*Rev. Tim Stead, Anglican priest,
accredited mindfulness teacher,
author of Mindfulness and Christian
Spirituality*

Mindfulness - Paying Attention Exercise

Next time you are in a Quiet Garden, if some plant or tree or section of the garden catches your attention, try this short practice. Either stand or sit and see if you can really pay attention to this object.

First, simply see the shapes, the patterns, the colours and the shades. Notice how quickly the mind starts to think about other things like its biology, whether I like it or not and the associations it has for me, and simply keep coming back to exploring shapes, colours and patterns. Then look harder – is there anything more to see which you hadn't noticed up to now? See if you can keep looking beyond the boredom point and then keep looking some more. See if it is possible to allow yourself to remain curious as you gaze with respectful awe. Then you could bring other senses to bear: smell, touch and possibly, if you know what you are doing, taste.

Then there is one more thing to notice about nature here: you. What thoughts, feelings or even body sensations do you notice in your own self in response to this experience of noticing this object? Again, no need to judge or analyse – just notice what is here in nature – in you. Perhaps stay here exploring this one object for just a tiny bit longer than feels comfortable. And then walk on. No need to come to any conclusions or write anything down. What you have done, though, is take a tiny step towards re-uniting two parts of God's creation; the way that it was in Eden before humans decided that it was all there just for them – and began the tragic separation of humanity and the rest of nature.

Revd Tim Stead



Quiet Garden Retreat for Busy Youth Workers

As a busy youth project in Wakefield, The CROSS Project, which works in schools, finds termly retreat days absolutely vital. I found Summerscales Quiet Garden via the national website and, because it was in Skipton, it was far enough away to be a refreshing break - but also close enough to visit for a day.

There were only three of us on our team so we spent the morning in solitude with our journals and Bibles, meditating on John 14: how Jesus is the vine and we must stay connected to him. I sat on a garden seat beneath a trellis covered in greenery (it might have even been a vine?) and enjoyed the peace and tranquillity and silence. The garden house had facilities for making tea and, after a lunch in town with the team, we spent the afternoon listening to teaching on the scripture from a guest speaker.

We felt refreshed and refuelled and brought closer to our Lord by the spiritual disciplines of solitude, silence, Bible study and prayer and we would recommend this Quiet Garden to anyone needing that space. I, for definite, will be returning.

Becky Hunter-Kelm

Visitor to Summerscales Quiet Garden, North Yorkshire, UK

Quiet Garden at St Mary's School, Kingswinford,

After a visit to the Quiet Garden at Malvern RHS show in 2014, the children were involved in helping garden designer Kristina Fitzsimmons design and create a Quiet Garden at their school. Bishop Graham opened the garden in July 2015. The children's enjoyment of the occasion is reflected in some of their comments below:



Photo: Sam Setchell

"Our Quiet Garden was going to be special but now you've blessed it, it is even more special."

"When Worship Committee drew a cross with your staff it showed us that God is in our Quiet Garden".

"God is with us in our garden."

"People are going in our garden to enjoy the peace."

"Your blessing has made it a calm and spiritual place for all."

"I liked saying prayers with my friends."

"I loved your outfit and your pointy hat was amazing."

"I have never seen or spoken to a Bishop before."

St Mary's School, Kingswinford,
West Midlands, UK

The Transformative Nature of Beauty

An extract from a Reflection by Revd Michel Dubord as he appreciates the power of beauty and gardens to 'make a difference'.

Several weeks ago I saw a YouTube video that had gone viral taken by a Russian drone flying over parts of Syria showing miles and miles of collapsed buildings - grey stone rubble – stark and depressing. This week my imagination went wild for a few minutes after reading the latest “Quiet Garden Newsletter” and I could visualize this absolutely amazing garden in the very midst of the devastation. Given the power of beauty and nature I saw humanity coming to its senses – humanity being restored - a transformative moment from bloodshed to an enduring peace – a living metaphor of the story, “Beauty and the Beast”.

In a way, a similar thing is taking place in our post Easter Gospel lesson from St John – instead of a “garden” – it’s “Jesus”. Jesus is “selling” hope to his little band of followers who have not only locked the doors where they are staying to prevent those sent to arrest them from entering but also unknowingly to prevent themselves from “leaving” because of the paralyzing nature of fear. Jesus meets them where they are and liberates them from their own tombs of despair empowering them to rise above their fears

in order to journey forward in hope and purpose - which as we know they courageously did.

“Living as we do in a world that suffers so much, two opposing possibilities can easily tempt us: either to turn our backs and live oblivious to the pain or to allow the pain to overwhelm us and despair to take up residence in our hearts. The truly faithful option is to face the pain and live joyfully in the midst of it. Those who suffer most remind us of how tragic and arrogant it would be for us to lose hope on behalf of people who have not lost theirs. They are teachers of joy”. (Joyce Hollyday)

Revd Michel Dubord
St John's Quiet Garden and Labyrinth, Richmond, Canada

Visit our new website at www.quietgarden.org

- * for details of Quiet Gardens and some Quiet Garden Quiet Days and events
- * for resources including a fuller article on Mindfulness and Quiet Gardens with additional exercises
- * for ways of joining and supporting the Quiet Garden Movement

PATRONS OF THE QUIET GARDEN MOVEMENT

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| Metropolitan Kallistos of Diokleia | The Rt Revd John Pritchard |
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FOUNDER DIRECTOR: Revd Philip Roderick

Welcoming New Quiet Gardens to the Movement

England



- Northampton Quaker Meeting House**
- Peter's Garden**, Swanick, Hampshire
- Sandymount House**, Blundellsands, Merseyside
- St Andrew's Quiet Garden** Stewton Lincolnshire



- The Old Vicarage**, Worcester
- Upton Cheyney Chapel**. Gloucestershire

Scotland



- Wellgate Garden**, Morebattle, Kelso

South Africa

- All Saints Anglican Church**, Durbanville, Western Cape

Our New address from

1 August 2016 will be
The Quiet Garden Trust
Copse End, Copse Lane,
Jordans, Beaconsfield
Bucks, HP9 2TA, UK

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