



Quiet Places

The Newsletter of The Quiet Garden Movement

www.quietgarden.org

Spring/summer 2023

SPRING REFLECTION

“... Sometimes when you think you’ve been buried, it’s a planting ...”

So writes the author Christine Caine, in a line which always helps me. We know spring is *gorgeous*, but it can be hard, too, for those of us whose winter ground has yet to thaw, or who feel left behind as the world skips off like a spring lamb (I remember it well, from long COVID).

It’s happy that Easter coincides with spring - reminding us, yes, that the inexorable pull of God’s kingdom is toward life, colour, vibrancy, texture, fragrance, melody ... Yet its path, each year, passes through the Valley of the Shadow. The seed must fall to the ground and die. Indeed, the roots of the soul need darkness, even while you reach toward the light as one more expression of life in God’s amazing garden, breaking ground.

If it doesn’t feel like spring, there are ways to welcome the season, as we know: weeding, clearing, planting. We can put ourselves in its way, too, as soulful practice: take off your shoes to feel the holy ground of God’s good earth beneath your feet; rise to let the melody of the dawn chorus flood your soul with song; smell the bluebells; taste the first fruits of the season, rhubarb, strawberries - such a mouth-watering prospect!

We might well feel mixed about new life bursting all around us as we ache or creak or crack or break; yet see how lovely a new leaf appears on even the most ancient, lightning-stricken of oaks, as it welcomes another go at being part of spring.

We are part of that spring, too. Trust the process, Creation seems to whisper. As Richard Bach put it so memorably, “What the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the master calls a butterfly.”

Brian Draper

<https://www.briandraper.org/> and Patron

ON THE CUSP

A new start for spring. That means for awakening and unfolding and new colours and shapes and thoughts and sunlight shining and rain clouds storming and animals coming alive with passion and foolishness in all their mating rituals.

We are at the beginning of spring now so we are on the cusp. The nights can bring frost and the days warm sunshine. We are like deserts, like mountains. The crocuses have gone, and primroses, violets and celandines take their place while the bluebells are just opening. It is quite glorious. The lawn is newly mowed and is a carpet of bouncy green to walk upon. It invites your feet and your heart into its open space. The trees are still bare but the buds are bursting. A bird is singing.

This is the time to take internal skis or surf boards and launch off on the swells that are all around. It is time for trimming, tying and mending so our feet and our heart are ready. New dreams are waiting to be born, new friends to be found, new pathways explored, new ways of living lived out. It is time to open the cupboards and bring out the good and sweep out the stale and the old. And it is a communal dance, gathering together under friendly skies, working together in the gathering days.

This is taken from *Where the Birds Sing: Wild Places for the Soul*. By Jane Upchurch

Mediation is such an important part of one’s Christian life and so I am delighted that Quiet Gardens now exists in so many places to encourage us towards a more prayerful and thoughtful faith.”

Professor Sir Gillian Prance—Patron

BEAUTY AND BREVITY

Musings in the garden - by Helen Randall Rosedene Quiet Garden

It is a sunny morning in June, and I sit looking over the meadow. I notice the long grasses before me waving in the breeze; a mass of green with purplish tints, dotted with white ox-eye daisies. A wren calls an alarm; a robin makes a fluid waterfall of sound; a chiff-chaff chiff-chaffs; and swallows chatter overhead as they swoop overhead. The wind sounds in the surrounding trees.

Suddenly, I hear a cuckoo calling off-stage left. I enjoy its tone, sounding loud and soft, at intervals. I rejoice that it survived its long migration journey. Then a realisation follows: for this cuckoo to flourish – which I want it to do – other birds must die, which I do not want. This pulls me up short. It is shocking. What am I to make of it? How can I accept it? I hold the tension before God ... I cannot resolve it. It is too complex for me. I can only accept that this is how it is, and trust to Something greater than my reckoning.

Later, in high summer, I'm sitting in the orchard garden amidst glorious colour. Bright pink echinacea mingle with the vibrant purple of a dahlia, while all around there is the green of fruit trees and grassy paths. Butterflies bask, and bees are busy on the flowers. They catch my attention. I muse ... they prompt some more Bs to spring to mind: both beauty and brevity. This small patch of paradise is bringing me face to face with a very painful aspect of life – that it is beautiful, harmonious, fruitful and, but also fragile and brief. How can I come to terms with this? Again, I hold the tension before God. Something read earlier that morning comes to mind; it doesn't resolve the problem, but it is wisdom enough for today:

Life, lovely while it lasts, is soon over.

Life as we know it, precious and beautiful, ends.

The body is put back in the same ground it came from.

The spirit returns to God, who first breathed it. (Ecclesiastes 12:6-7; MSG.)

Now, it is early autumn and I'm walking among the trees that fringe the meadow, sad that all the pleasures of warmth, sunlight and long days outside are over. Acceptance seeps in as I remember that this is not the end but a transition, and that it will bring its own treasures: the late afternoon medley of pheasants calling as they roost across the orchard; birds at the feeders; snowdrops and scented winter shrubs; and fluffy new pussy-willow buds bursting along bare twigs in delicate, intricate detail.

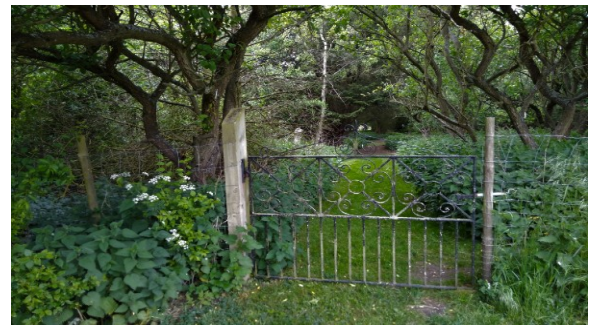
Emerging into the meadow, I pause to admire an alder tree's outline. I notice a white, downy feather drift past me on the breeze. Then a second, and a third. This last lands on a broken stem of dead grass nearby. Gradually I notice that there are many similar feathers scattered all around me, caught on the tussocky grass. There has been a sparrow hawk kill. Once more, this patch of paradise shows me beauty and brevity, life and death. I am jolted by the recognition that, nearly always, one creature lives on another for food in the interwoven network of dependency among all plants and creatures. I revolt against this injustice and question God again. This time, the Hannah Hurnard allegory, *Hind's Feet on High Places*, comes to mind. For her, the rivers and waterfalls, plants – all creatures – give of themselves freely and gladly, spending themselves in song as they live their brief moments gloriously.

I am stirred by the idea of joyful self-giving, woven throughout Life.

So, where do my musings lead? I'm still unhappy with this life's brevity and brutality (another B!), but that need not eclipse beauty, vivacity, the 'Isness' of all things, and joyful self-giving. I recall that Jesus walked through 'this troublous life' himself. That makes a difference. God made all things Very Good and has plans on an eternal scale.

I'll keep returning to him, even with my complaints and questions, and trust quietly in his strength.

He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God." (Ecclesiastes 3:11-13, NIV.)



Rosedene Quiet Garden



St Oswalds Quiet Garden

I love to open up inspiring space in which you can make soulful connections.

The Quiet Garden Movement has been gently cultivating and tending an organic network – a flowering! – of set-aside, sensitively curated spaces in which anyone can come, without agenda, to be still. And to be restored. And to be enlivened.

Brian Draper—Patron, author and retreat leader

NEW GARDENS

We have welcomed many gardens in the past year; our most recent are:

Old Kea in Cornwall <https://quietgarden.org/gardens/old-kea/>

St Peter's Church, Warwickshire <https://quietgarden.org/gardens/st-peters-pebworth/>

St Oswalds Quiet Garden Somerset <https://quietgarden.org/gardens/st-oswalds-quiet-garden/>

Deborah Fielding Individual Affiliate, Milton Keynes <https://withnarrative.com/>

We have over 260 gardens worldwide; if you are interested in becoming a host or individual affiliate please call or visit our website

<https://quietgarden.org/become-a-host/affiliate/>

+44 (0)1494 578909

ANNUAL GATHERING Saturday 20th May 2023

10am –1pm (BST)

For a variety of reasons we will be holding our gathering online this year. Not such a bad thing as it means that more folk can join us; especially those who support us who live abroad. If you do live abroad please be mindful that we will be in British Summertime.

Our speakers will be Andrew Rudd, Poet in Residence at Manchester Cathedral and Simon Parke, author, speaker and retreat leader.

The day will begin at 10am (you will have the opportunity to log in from 9.30) and will consist of a series of short talks, some poetry, prayer and music - with an opportunity to chat with others in small groups. There will be a small charge to cover expenses; hosts and friends £10.00 and all other participants £12.50

We hope that you are able to join us. To book a ticket please click the link [here](#) or visit The Quiet Garden Trust and Movement on Eventbrite.

THOUGHTS FROM A TRUSTEE

Our QG trustees 'overnighter' was a time of work and relaxation, with a short time of reflection too, in this beautiful ancient church just a short drive from the home of the trustee Jill Smith where we were based. After a full afternoon's work poring over plans and policies we spent a short time here in quiet reflection; it turned out to be based on one of the passages I'd used in the Q D I'd led at Foxhill last week and I very much appreciated time to be a 'listener' rather than the director. **Gilly Morgan Trustee and Host**



Patrick, Sarah, Kate, Jill, Gilly Chris at teatime. This pretty little Norman church, St Bartholomew's, Lower Sapey was a fitting place for our time of reflection.



DO YOU HAVE TIME TO SUPPORT US ?

Become a volunteer Trustee or Advisor to the Quiet Garden Trust.

Have you got a passion for Quiet Gardens and our values, and time to help lead and guide the Movement and charity? Might you know someone that might be interested?

There are opportunities for people who are committed to the vision and values of Quiet Gardens to join the board of Trustees of The Quiet Garden Trust. We are in particular looking for folk with IT skills.

If you are interested please call Sarah for an informal discussion

01494 578909 or email sarah@quietgarden.org or visit our website [here](#)

A garden can be strong medicine to nurture and shape the soul. Gardens have a way of seeping in to your soul and you find yourself enjoying the air and watching for miracles. In a hurried and distracted world we need garden sanctuaries, places that ground us. We need Quiet Gardens."

Terry Hershey—Patron, author and speaker

NEWS

We were so pleased to hear from a Prison Chaplain, who, with a colleague had acquired funding to create a Quiet Garden for the use of prisoners, their visiting families and staff. We are fortunate to have a very talented garden designer on our board of trustees and he has created a garden that will be peaceful to sit in. A space has been set aside for vegetables that will be used for daily meals. A poly tunnel will provide a facility for growing plants and as an indoor seating area when wet.

We hope that this is the start of a new initiative and that engage with others in time.

There has been much already written about the new website. It has been hard work but certainly worth the time.

Thank you **Hugues Audouard of EHAWEDESIGN.**

We would love more hosts to join us so if you are interested in becoming a host or Friend please visit our website. There is plenty of information available to assist you in making a decision about which membership is best for you. Please, as well, call the office if you wish to have an informal discussion.

Our volunteer Michelle has been working on a variety of projects—mostly engaging with other organisations to see how working together might fit our needs. We have had made progress with Small Pilgrim Places and continue to collaborate by connecting Quiet Gardens to the existing network of paths

Thoughts from our Quiet Gardeners

Feedback is helpful—it means we can re-evaluate how we do and what impact spending time with our hosts has. Here is a small selection of comments from recent visits to some of our gardens:

Kindness and wisdom of the hostess & being given plenty of time of quiet reflection time in the garden.

Lovely surroundings, very hospitable, well directed and carried out, perfect for reflection and peace.

We visited your church and maze on Sunday, in the pouring rain. It was a haven of peace.

Space/time to enjoy an opportunity to reflect quietly. Very warm hospitality that wasn't intrusive. Sensitivity to needs of participants. Opportunity to reflect together.

PATRONS

Rt Revd John Pritchard | Professor Sir Ghillean Prance | Richard Foster | Terry Hershey | The Revd Lucy Winkett | Shane Connolly | Brian Draper

A GOOD READ...

For thy great pain have mercy on my little pain' by Victoria Mackenzie. *A novel depicting the lives of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe.*

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Through Wood by Alison Swinfen- *Prayers and poems reconnecting with the forest.*

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A Good Year by Mark Oakley *an anthology with reflections from Rowan Williams, Justin Welby and others.*

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Open Mind, Open Heart: Contemplative Dimension of the Gospel by Thomas Keating *an overview of the history of contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition, and guidance in centring prayer.*

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How to Pray: A Simple Guide for Normal People by Pete Greig

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The Wild Places by Robert Macfarlane

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Where the birds Sing by Jane Upchurch

<http://janeupchurch.co.uk/where-the-birds-sing/>

Office contact details

The Quiet Garden Trust

The Rectory, Dark Lane,

Ewyas Harold,

Herefordshire. HR2 0EZ. UK

Keep in touch

Twitter and facebook @quietgardens

info@quietgarden.org

<https://quietgarden.org/>