The newsletter of The Quiet Garden Movement

Quiet PLACES

The Quiet Garden Movement

www..quietgarden..org

Finding calm, connection and renewal in the colder months

Winter invites us to slow down and notice the quiet beauty of the natural world.

A crisp walk through a park, the gentle rhythm of bare branches in the wind or the soft light of a winter afternoon can provide moments of calm and help us feel more grounded.

Spending time outdoors, even briefly, can support our wellbeing by encouraging movement, fresh air and a welcome break from busy routines. By embracing the season rather than resisting it, we can create space for reflection, rest and a renewed appreciation of nature's resilience.

Many of our hosts continue to run quiet days throughout the winter – offering soup and silence, or quiet mornings within church buildings. We wrap up warm and still savour the tranquil prayer filled moments.



Sarah Godson, Editor



The Quiet Garden Movement is a network of beautiful gardens and outdoor spaces for prayer, stillness, contemplation and an appreciation of the natural world.

A New Role, a Blessing and an Opportunity
Patrick Swan, Quiet Gardens Trustee

Most of us have probably asked ourselves, "How have I ended up here?" — for better or worse. In November it was for the better: I found myself sitting in Chapter robes, newly installed as a Lay Canon by the Dean in my own reserved stall in Worcester Cathedral, looking up at the painted gothic vaults as the choir crescendoed into the evensong anthem. I had to pinch myself. How could I, who came to worship here as a slightly disinterested child fifty years ago, have ended up in a position of senior leadership?

I have lived through several life-changing experiences: many wonderful, some challenging, one thoroughly traumatic. Each was a catalyst for change, and looking back I can see how life's twists and turns have made me who I am. Age has taught me there is nothing to be gained in analysing what-ifs about the past or present — instead, to trust in the guidance and support of God. Accepted in faith, where I am now is surely a good and right place to be, even if the road here has been bumpy.

The last two years brought an immensely tragic family event, followed by redundancy from a loved role with the National Trust. The tragedy drew me into two years of deep conversation with God, exploring the philosophy of faith and existence; the job loss left me with time on my hands. Cue an advertisement for new members of Chapter at Worcester Cathedral, with heritage conservation expertise particularly sought. Would I have felt I had something to offer without those two years of inner conversation? No. Would I have been scanning job advertisements had I been in work? Clearly not. The timing was far more than coincidence: my bumpy path had been training me for and leading to this point. Applications and interviews followed, and earlier this year I was appointed to the Chapter of Worcester Cathedral as Lay Canon and Trustee — formally installed by the Bishop and Dean a couple of weeks ago.

What does this mean in reality? The revised Cathedrals Measure 2021 sets out how all Church of England cathedrals are structured, governed and regulated. Chapter is now effectively the board of governors, led by the Dean, with oversight of everything involved in running a cathedral: mission, heritage, visitor engagement, staffing and finance. How modern business practice wraps around a cathedral's medieval modus operandi is a fascinating combination — much to understand, and much opportunity. Many cathedrals face similar pressures, juggling finances while redefining their role and purpose to society. Worcester has loads to offer — just voted one of the top ten visitor attractions in the Midlands — and much more that could be done. It already leads among cathedrals for Eco Spirituality, with a new garden space for worship and activities, and it would be good to see a Quiet Garden as part of the regular daily visitor offer… watch this space… We can also speak of faith through the thousand-year history of pilgrimage to this place. So much opportunity — while also keeping a massive 900-year-old building upright and money in the bank!

I am certain I would not be at Worcester without the experiences of the last two years and those deep soul-searching conversations with God — conversations enabled and stimulated by quiet time in my garden and out in the countryside. I have been led here. Being a Canon at Worcester is a calling and a blessing I am deeply honoured to hold, and one I will devote myself to.

Canon Patrick Swan, Worcester.

Quiet Gardens
Annual Gathering 2027

Celebrating 35 years of Quiet Gardens in a noisy world: offering sanctuary, stillness and peace.

We are excited to share with you the details of our Gathering which will take place on Saturday 26th June 2027 from 10.30am to 3.30pm at The St Anne's Church, Kew Gardens in London. We are delighted to have 2 inspirational speakers joining us for the day. Rev'd Richard Carter, for more than twenty years, has been a priest at St Martin-in-the-Fields, a church with an open door on the edge of Trafalgar Square. He is founder and leader of its Nazareth Community whose members gather from everyday life to seek God in contemplation and to learn to live simply and generously welcoming all. He is author of the best-selling The City is My Monastery, Letters from Nazareth, In Search of the Lost and 100 Reasons for Living - his latest book.

Brian Draper is a writer, speaker and retreat leader who loves to run seasonal walking retreats. He's co-author (with the botanist Howard Green) of Soulful Nature: A Spiritual Field Guide – and his other books include Soulfulness, Spiritual Intelligence and Less is More. He's a regular on BBC Radio 4's Thought for the Day, associate faculty of the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, and was formerly editor of Third Way magazine.

Ticket price is £45.00 and this includes morning coffee, lunch and afternoon tea.

More information will be available when tickets go on sale on Eventbrite early in 2027.



New Gardens

The following gardens were recently welcomed to the movement. Click the links below to find out more:

Soul Shelter, Kent
Visit the garden here

Livingstone Homestead, Cumbria
Visit the garden here

St Michael's & All Angels, Somerset
Visit the garden here

St Faiths Church Garden, London
Visit the garden here

Transfiguration Gardens Retreat Centre, Ohio, USA
Visit the garden here

What's On

There's always lots going on, so don't forget to check out all our upcoming events on our website. And did you know we have a Facebook page too...

Upcoming events

Facebook

Become a Friend

Regular support through our Friends Scheme ensures the charity can maintain and develop the Movement, meaning people of all ages can discover and experience the benefits of time in nature. **Click here to join.**



On Being A Quiet Garden

When our home in Sussex became affiliated to the Quiet Garden movement in 1999, we were grateful for the wisdom of local friends with whom we discerned the direction and form our ministry might take.

Over twenty-five years later, now in Wales, three aspects continue to guide this gentle and vital ministry. We offer them to you as cairns on our shared journey.

The first is, cultivate silence. Jesus invites us to 'come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest' (Mark 6:31). We become what we practice, just as when there is quiet in a place, then it becomes a quiet place. When contemplative silence becomes part of the rhythm of our lives, then it becomes our gift to others.

Secondly, listen to your garden. Celtic spirituality sees all creation as God's big book. Take time to be still, to look and listen, to spend time outdoors without the distraction of 'gardening' and to enjoy the space. Allow yourself to be gardened, to become the garden of the Beloved (St. John of the Cross).

Finally, this is a movement of the Spirit, one of availability and vulnerability, of welcoming Christ disguised as a stranger. It does not require a large garden or home and numbers are not important. It sows the seeds of divine silence in the lives of guests and nurtures our stewardship of creation as that which reflects the glory of God. And remember, 'neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth' (1Cor.3:6-7).

Peace be with you
Tessa and Mark Holland

About the garden:
Hirfron Quiet Garden



Book Review: Nurturing the Beloved Community

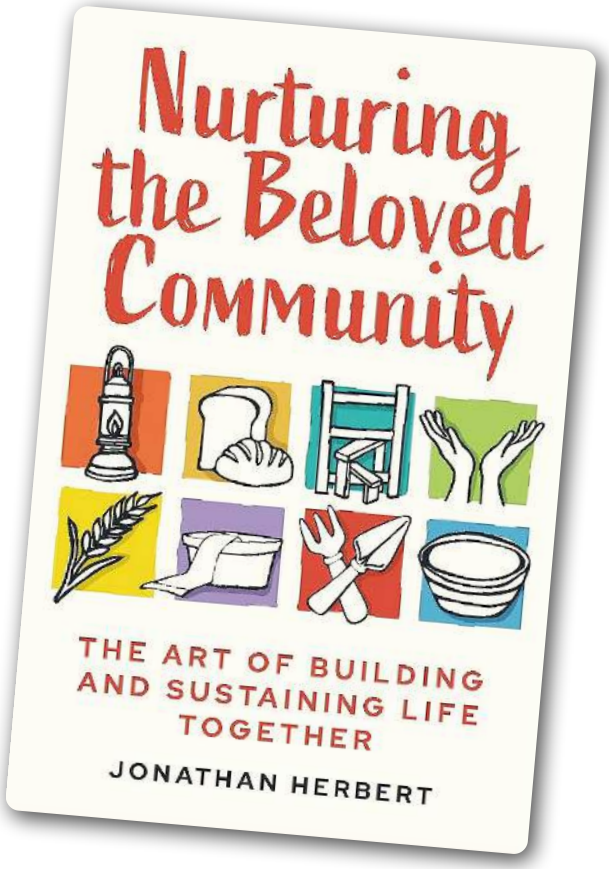
Chris Holmes

Jonathan Herbert is an Anglican priest and lives in the Hilfield Franciscan Community, set in the beautiful Dorset countryside between Dorchester and Sherbourne. Hilfield is a member of the Quiet Garden movement. While rooted in the contemplative traditions, Jonathan is very much an activist, particularly in Christian Climate Action and as Chaplain to Gypsies and Travellers in the Diocese of Salisbury.

His latest book is a fascinating guide to shared life in Community. Its eight chapters – Community, Vision, Boundaries, Humility, Trust, Need, Work and Gratitude- are full of wisdom, stories, personal experience and generosity. They demonstrate how life in community can be tough, requiring rules and much patience; Jonathan certainly tells it how it is but with a profound sensitivity and deep compassion. Running through the book is a critique of the dominant individualistic, consumer driven ethos of contemporary society and while Jonathan pulls no punches his commentary is fair and rooted in Gospel values. Also running through the book is a profound love of nature and the importance of 'hands on' physical work, embedded in the Hilfield experience.

The closing chapter 'Gratitude' contained a sentence which caught my eye. 'What living in community continually teaches me' he writes 'is that there is always enough if we are willing to share it'. Amen to that.

(Click the image below to view on Amazon)





Could you host your own Quiet Garden?

Our hosts are the hub of the Quiet Garden Movement, providing space for thousands of people to benefit from the natural environment and the opportunity to experience rest and spiritual refreshment away from an increasingly busy world.

Each Quiet Garden experience is unique and has its own identity, rhythm and charm. You may have an idea for enhancing use of an existing outdoor space, creating a beautiful garden space in a city or designing something from the ground up.

Maybe your garden would be a 'drop-in' space, or a place for led day retreats or quiet mornings. Whatever your thoughts or plans, your garden will be a very welcome addition to our global network of Quiet Gardens.

We have two Quiet Garden Schemes, an Affiliate scheme for those individual hosts or host organisations who would like to open a garden for public use, and an Associate scheme for gardens within organisational settings such as schools, hospitals, places of work and community gardens.

To learn more about starting your own Quiet Garden, please click on the scheme most relevant to you by visiting **https://quietgarden.org/become-a-host**



Lord, in the midst of Winter, when the days are cold and wind can pierce remind us of the warmth of your love. In the midst of Winter, when days are short, dawn comes late, and dusk arrives early remind us that in the darkness your light still shines. In the midst of Winter, when the flowers of spring still lie hidden in the earth, when leaves are off the trees, and the world can seem bleak remind us that Easter is but a short time away.

And when in our lives we feel as if we are experiencing a season of winter, reach out to us with the power of your resurrection so that we may feel the warmth of your love and see your light that alone can take away the darkness of our soul.

Cal Wick - *from jesuitresource*

The Quiet Garden Movement

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