



Newsletter Summer 2014

Is the End a Beginning?

This Newsletter will be the final one from Bristol Spirituality Network. Following much discussion the current Steering Group has decided that, in spite of two members offering to join us, the Group is still too small to undertake the tasks needed to maintain the Network. This is a cause for some regret and sadness but as more than one person has remarked, "it is often when one thing ends that something else is able to begin."

As TS Eliot wrote in *The Four Quartets*,

"What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from."

The Network has been in existence for nearly fourteen years and has achieved much since it was set up. In our last Newsletter, Rachel Newton reflected on how the experience of the ecumenical groups set up for the Millennium Year of Reflective Prayer led to the formation of the Spirituality Network in Bristol. Catherine Richards, a key person with vision and energy in setting up BSN, sent us some of the comments from the participants in the Millennium groups and here is a selection:

It has shaken our perceptions and preconceptions, it has enabled us to value and to feel valued

It has taught us to listen without comment; we have learnt that silence can be an affirmation.

We have learnt to value living in a deeper space.

I am more relaxed in my approach to God....more aware of the spiritual dimension in myself and in others.

Over the fourteen years of existence the Network has provided two days of Reflection a year. There is not space to list the speakers and topics of all 27 days and the majority of readers will be aware of the most recent ones. In earlier years we explored the Desert Fathers, St Francis, The Bible: Friend or Foe, Thomas Merton, Art and Spirituality and much much more. Leaders of our days have included Angela Ashwin, Tina Beattie, Fiona Gardner, Melvyn Matthews, Richard McKay, Margaret Silf and many other inspirational speakers. People attending these days have expressed their appreciation of BSN and its programme – a few examples below:

The chance to come to things I'm concerned about and value in a way that doesn't happen in churches.

*It gives wonderful opportunities to discuss the things that matter most in life
A precious breathing space to reflect and receive.*

The Network was also involved in setting up Open Door Retreats in the area and these will continue. If at any time you are interested in attending an Open Door Retreat or enquiring about one being organised with your church contact Catherine Richards 0117 9744062

email: cathrichards@blueyonder.co.uk

Details of the final Day of Reflection are provided below and a flyer is enclosed.

Bristol and surrounding areas have some rich resources to support our Spiritual journeys. Niall Briggs a member of the Steering Group and our webmaster has kindly agreed to maintain the Bristol Spirituality Network website with its helpful links to various resources.

Do explore the website if you have the opportunity and haven't done so already.

The address is at the bottom of this Newsletter.



Thin Places

'Thin places' is a metaphor that can be traced to Celtic Christianity with its emergence in the late fourth century. As Marcus Borg writes, "...places where the veil momentarily lifts, and we behold God, experience the one in whom we live, all around us and within us."

Thin places are sometime geographical spaces often associated with pilgrimage.

Different people may find different places and experiences lifting the veil. For some the glory of the natural world, for others it may be art, poetry or music. For Thomas Merton a street corner in downtown Louisville became a thin place.

Our inner eyes or ears which connect us to the other reality that permeates our world may be opened by varied opportunities and are affected by our mind and emotion.

A Hasidic story tells of a rabbi's son who used to wander in the woods. The rabbi asked his son, "I wonder why each day you walk in the woods?" The boy replied, "I go there to find God." "That's very good, son. But, don't you know that God is the same everywhere?" "Yes," the boy answered, "but I'm not."

Below an extract from 'Music of the Heart –New Psalms in the Celtic Tradition ' by David Adam
We cannot restrict our God to one building:

The very earth and heaven could not contain him.

God cannot be captured in books, for he is too mighty;

He cannot be pressed between pages like a flower.

He roams freely and comes to each one of us.

God hides within each of us, waiting to be found:

Our God waits to be discovered within his creation.... (From "God Waits")



The final Reflection Day organised by the Steering Group promises to be very good. The date for your diaries is **Saturday October 11th from 10.30 to 3.30pm** at Sea Mills Methodist Church (*NB this is not the same church as St Edyths where we have held some other meetings but it is close by.*)

The day is entitled "**Balance – human being on a living planet. An interactive visual meditation**".

The day is designed, created and facilitated by **Anne Topping**, who works on transition, change and transformation with individuals, groups and organisations. Throughout the day there will be choice of story, photographic images, text and creative activities, enabling reflection on a variety of themes, including: attention, beauty, community, connectivity, empathy, generosity. Such themes it is contended are essential for individuals and communities to co-exist mindfully as a transforming global community , on a living earth which is struggling to survive.



The Steering Group appreciates all the work done by our predecessors and also thanks all who have supported the Network during its existence.



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