



Living Spirituality Connections
Resources for spiritual journeys

Newsletter Spring/Summer 2020

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Introduction

By Petra Griffiths

In this newsletter we offer a range of topics relating to two of LSC's core themes: The Creative Spirit and The Flourishing of the Earth and All Life. Articles such as *Daily Bread* and *Earth our Original Monastery* cross over both of these themes.

In *Green Strands in Contemporary Christianity* I draw together the work of theologians and the practical outworking of those in projects in the UK today, concluding with the example of the Eco Church work at St James's Piccadilly. Following on, *Daily Bread: Grain of Hope, Slice of Heaven* details this wheat growing project which has been ongoing since the start of the lockdown, at St James's and in the homes of its members across London, illustrating that nature is not in lockdown, and that we can work together when separated, to tend the growing wheat.

We then introduce the new booklet from Spirit of Peace: *Pathways for Human Flourishing*, which draws on many years of partnership work in the field of peace-making in the UK and the Middle East.

Our review of *Earth our Original Monastery* by Abbey of the Arts Abbess Christine Valtner-Painter shows how a right relationship with Earth will naturally lead us to act to correct the dangerous ecological imbalances that we are experiencing today. Sageing International's article *An Era of Awakening* suggests the possibility of seeing the transition we are living through as offering a Way of Blessing, a Way of Yearning, and a Way of Beingness.

In *Musicking the Cosmos* Rev Professor June Boyce-Tillman describes the origins of her recent initiative to form an interfaith online choir for peace, that is a creative development to meet the times we live in. We close with Lynn Ungar's moving poem *Pandemic*, which emerges from a spiritual vision of the current global transition.

Our third core theme of **Spiritual Journeying for individuals and groups** is being taken forward within online activities. Our **Journeying Together** and **Living Conversation** groups have moved successfully to Zoom, as has the Soul Space group in Stirling, Scotland. If you are looking for a structured online group activity, please be in touch since there may be openings in the Living Conversation group. Details of these groups can be found at: <http://www.livingspirit.org.uk/local-group-activities/>

An activity that is open to all on a drop-in basis is the monthly **Eco Contemplative Liturgy** which I host on Zoom for St James's Piccadilly, which is attended by people from various parts of the country, including members of LSC. Please email me if you want to be invited to the next liturgy. They are held on the fourth Sunday of the month at 9.45 am. Email: petragriffiths@livingspirit.org.uk

Along with our next events listing (July- September) we hope to give updates on what is happening with some of the centres that we work closely with. One of the centres we work with, **St Bede's Pastoral Centre** in York, will be offering an encouraging programme of online summer events from mid June to the end of July. Take a look at their website at the end of May to see what is on offer. <http://www.stbedes.org.uk>

May you find blessings within these times of restriction and gestation.

With warm regards from our Working & Discernment Group,

Petra

Petra Griffiths
LSC Newsletter editor

Working & Discernment Group: Linda Courage, Petra Griffiths, Heather-Jane Ozanne, assisted by Bridget Cambridge.

Green Strands in Contemporary Christianity

By Petra Griffiths

Christianity has spent much of its life in theological and spiritual modes that separate us from the web of life. This has sadly played a considerable role in the damage we humans in the West have done to our eco system.



The creation-centred tradition

It was a joy in the 1980s to discover from prophetic voices – particularly Matthew Fox – the presence of another creation-centred spiritual tradition, which has been integral to the Hebrew Scriptures as well as Christianity itself from the beginning. In Britain and Ireland the Celtic form of Christianity that was prevalent prior to the Synod of Whitby (664), is our main homegrown repository of a spirituality that was in touch with Nature, and its saints often lived in wild places such as Skellig Michael, a rocky island off the coast of Ireland.

The creation tradition knows humanity's place within the cosmos and understands salvation as blessing rather than deliverance from a state of sinfulness. "The universe itself, blessed and graced, is the proper starting point for spirituality", as Mathew Fox puts it in the introduction to *Original Blessing*. The term Original Blessing has become widely recognised within Christianity since that time. Matthew Fox and many other theologians put forward panentheism as the best way to understand the relationship between humans and the sacred. In panentheism the world is seen as being within God, and God seen as being immanent in the world though not limited to it – different from pantheism in which the divine is seen as entirely within Nature. Katharine Jefferts Schori, former Presiding Bishop in the American Episcopalian (Anglican) Church has said that many Episcopalians are panentheistic.

Thomas Berry: The Universe as a communion of subjects

Thomas Berry was a Passionist priest, geologist (as he named himself in preference to theologian) and cultural historian. Thomas Berry's work was key in developing a new

spiritual paradigm for our times, speaking of the continuing revelation that takes place in and through the Earth. He is known for articulating a “new story” of the universe that explores the implications of the evolutionary sciences and cultural traditions for creating a flourishing future. John F Haught, Larry Rasmussen and Mary-Evelyn Tucker have taken forward the work on the journey of the universe and the connection with ecology, with help from evolutionary cosmologist Brian Swimme (see booklist for details).

Thomas Berry put forward the idea that there are four sources of wisdom:

- * indigenous wisdom with its intimacy with and participation in the natural world;
- * the wisdom of women, joining the knowing of the body to that of the mind;
- * revelatory experiences of a spiritual realm both transcendent and immanent;
- * the wisdom of science.

Feminist and liberation theology

The vision of Christianity being fully embodied on this Earth rather than centred in a future heaven is now recognised by many theologians and spiritual writers, and has been a significant theme within feminist theology and in liberation theology in South America. Sallie McFague in *The Body Of God: An Ecological Theology* argues that new metaphors can help give more adequate models for the ethically urgent task of caring for an ecologically fragile planet. Feminist and liberation theologians have made significant contributions to the development of green Christianity. See the booklist for examples.

Pope Francis on care for our common home

In 2015 Pope Francis, in his encyclical *Laudato Si* (Praise Be to You) brought these concerns right to the centre of Catholic engagement with the world:

“God has joined us so closely to the world around us that we can feel the desertification of the soil almost as a physical ailment, and the extinction of a species as a painful disfigurement. Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society...”

The full article discusses strands of the Green Christian movement in the UK today, and embodies this with the experience of the Eco Church work – spiritual, liturgical education and practical – at St James’s Piccadilly. Click here to read the full article

https://www.livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/green_strands_in_christianity.pdf

reproduced with kind permission from Greenspirit www.greenspirit.org.uk who commissioned this article for their magazine.

Petra Griffiths is Coordinator of Living Spirituality Connections, and was formerly coordinator of the Centre for Creation Spirituality in the UK. She is a member of the Eco Church team at St James’s, and now hosts the eco contemplative liturgies on Zoom.

Daily Bread

Grain of Hope: Slice of Heaven

Nature is not in lockdown

Community wheat-growing at St James's Piccadilly

“ Now the green blade riseth...”



Rising: *Wheat seedlings springing in the courtyard of St James's Piccadilly on Day 23 after planting.*

We are growing Spring wheat as a community project, connecting city-dwellers to food production and exploring humankind's 10 000 year relationship with wheat. Wheat is grown on more land area than any other food crop and the world trade in wheat is greater than for all other crops combined. Yet we know little about how it becomes our "Daily Bread."

Artist Sara Mark commissioned a 1.2 m² planter, approximately the area needed to produce enough wheat for a large loaf of bread. The planter was installed in the middle of the courtyard at St James's, filled with a mix of soil, compost and manure, then left 'fallow' for a time, until we blessed and sowed the wheat during the service on Sunday 15th March. Many community members took seed home and planted it there. Coincidentally, this was the last day we met as a gathered community before the Covid 19 lockdown. Rev'd Lucy Winkett remains in residence and has rapidly had to become expert in watering, thinning and generally caring for the wheat. Lucy celebrated the Easter Sunday Eucharist in the courtyard, next to the growing wheat.

The Daily Bread blog looks at a range of themes in relation to the growing wheat through film, poetry, science, photography and more. To date posts have explored Fallow, Scatter, Germination, Springing, Rising, Heaven and Earth, Tillering, Breath, William Blake, and Rogation. The whole St James's community is invited to contribute by photographing their own growing wheat, and contributing to art and writing projects.

Easter wheat poem:

Rising

A tiny shoot
Bursting out of a seed, beginning to probe
Through heavy earth, to push towards the light:
It is soft and pale;

Yet science says its force
Exerted on an apple would lift that fruit
A full metre: a miracle so common
We tread it underfoot.

But what on earth could gauge
The love-force
That burst out of the Cross, that broke free
From the dragging weight

Of the Roman death-machine
Whose every power-act and jeer was designed
To pulverise the identity of this Jew,
To crush his God-self?

What Spirit-flow
Was required to forgive and through this soar free
Of the hate that nailed him
To a torture-spot?

What life-power
Was needed to be buried in a cave
That seemed hard and closed, like a winter-cold seed,
And to crack it open?

To rise, bearing
The marks of nails as a shoot can carry dark
Clinging specks of the earth
Through which it has travelled.

Continued.....

Surely a love-energy
Equal to that which burst through space creating
The universe was needed to return
To that place of betrayal

And to rise, lifting
All our muddling darkness, all our hope,
Lifting each one of us in fear and wonder
Into the light of God.

Diane Pacitti, 2020

The crop will be harvested at Lammas-tide in August and dried in the church. After threshing and winnowing the intention is to mill it at the historic windmill in Brixton before baking bread for our Harvest Festival in October.

The **Daily Bread: Grain of Hope; Slice of Heaven** project combines artistic vision, scientific knowledge, and the deep interconnections between spirituality and nature. It is providing inspiration for community members now meeting only online and by phone, and is stimulating hope for the future.

The project developers are:

Sara Mark is an artist and placemaker. <http://www.saramark.uk/>

Diane Pacitti is a former Poet in Residence at Bradford Cathedral. See:

<http://www.culturaldocuments.net/contributor/diane-pacitti/>

Deborah Colvin is Sustainability Champion at St James's Church, and formerly a wheat breeder.

All material from this project, including Sarah's video, is on the website:

<https://www.sjp.org.uk/daily-bread.html>

Pathways for Human Flourishing

**- a programme to equip and inspire people
to work together for the common good**

The charity Spirit of Peace has produced a new overview booklet entitled "**Pathways for Human Flourishing**" **Heather-Jane Ozanne** introduces the booklet here. Work carried out over a couple of decades has fed into the booklet's contents.



Working together for a world where all can flourish

Pathways for Human Flourishing is a programme based on 'HeartWisdom' with the goal of creating a culture of peace and human flourishing for all. Its ideas, tools and learning are applicable to interpersonal, family, community, business and global relationships. They have been developed drawing on ancient wisdom and contemporary grassroots experience in the UK, experience gained in social and community work as well as from collaborative work with peacebuilders in The Middle East. Whilst the main thrust of the Pathways is on Human Flourishing there is a recognition of the importance of both Earth and Human flourishing, together.

To travel fast travel alone – to travel deeper travel together

There are various iterations of the above phrase and it's important to note that sometimes you can also travel fast together and go deep by travelling alone!

Working for peace and the flourishing of all in the charity Spirit of Peace, and with renowned interfaith and non-faith peace builders who shared a similar alignment to the work, highlighted for me the need to develop an inclusive framework, which could be shared. The Pathways were also developed in response to questions about the ways in which we worked and what lay at the heart of it all, attempting to put in words the reasons for the qualitative difference people said they experienced in the work. It was also important that a programme would nurture and better equip us and others to continue that which is most important - working TOGETHER!

Wisdom of the heart

As mentioned before, at the core of this programme is what is referred to in the pathways as 'HeartWisdom'. Without the power and intelligence of the heart the pathways themselves could be used in less or even counter-productive ways. It was working from the heart that inspired and continues to inspire our work in Spirit of Peace and the work of our many partners.

It's better to light a candle than curse the darkness.

As many of the people and organisations I worked (and continue to work) with are from different faith backgrounds, for me, coming from the Christian tradition, I felt that I needed to develop a positive framework (i.e. better to light a candle!), one which was inclusive, drawing on wisdom and teaching from the Christian and other faith traditions as well as insights from psychology and sociology. The result is the Pathways programme and in developing it I am deeply grateful to the many inspirational people and groups I have met, with whom I have worked, shared and exchanged learning.

Response to the new booklet

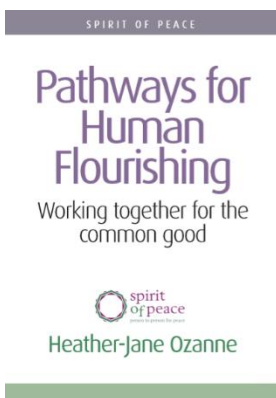
Change Agent and Coach Maggie Whitley has said “There are a multitude of seemingly insolvable problems facing humanity, from climate change to the many guises of social injustice; from the endemic violence suffered in those countries torn by war to the huge and increasing distance between the hungry and the deprived, and the greedy and senselessly excessive. It is all very difficult.

The Pathways allow us to negotiate and explore these difficult territories. They are like raised walkways above the mire, firm under our feet as we navigate our way into understanding what we need to do to become channels for justice, peace and healing, however difficult the situation that faces us.

Treading the Pathways means we can move into the most difficult of territories without getting bogged down in the mire.”

At the end of the booklet various ways are mentioned in which people can further engage with the pathways. During this time of social distancing we are developing new lines of engagement and if you are interested in hearing a bit more or wish to have a conversation about any aspect of the programme please do not hesitate to contact Heather-Jane via the following link <http://www.spiritofpeace.co.uk/contact-form/>

Buying the booklet



The 27 page booklet can be purchased from Spirit of Peace at a cost of £3 (including package and postage).

If you would like to obtain one please email via this link: <http://www.spiritofpeace.co.uk/contact-form/>

At LSC we suggest offering £5 for this booklet in order to help Spirit of Peace with a small donation in these testing times.

Spirit of Peace www.spiritofpeace.co.uk

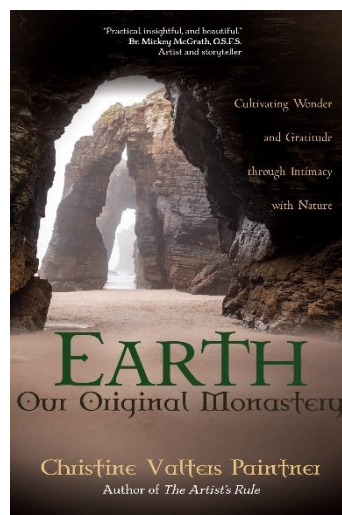
- Brings people together across religious, ethnic, cultural and national boundaries
- Fosters harmonious relationships and connecting people with the aim of working for the 'common good'
- Forms partnerships and networks which enable people and organisations to work together
- Supports peace and community builders locally and globally
- Supports and energises local initiatives through connecting them with projects and leaders abroad
- Develops and delivers training in working for the common good and promoting a culture where all can flourish

"The biggest obstacle to this is fear. To promote a world of flourishing for all, we need to overcome fear, starting with ourselves so that we can work from a place of inner harmony."

Heather-Jane Ozanne is Chief Executive of Spirit of Peace and a member of Living Spirituality Connections' Working and Discernment Group.

Earth our Original Monastery

By Christine Valters Paintner,
Reviewed by Linda Courage



This book helps us to find and know our rightful place in relationship with Earth. Each chapter engages our senses to penetrate, sink into, and rest in this finding and knowing.

Using her extensive knowledge and practice, Christine shows us how Earth is the origin of our ideas of Cathedral, Scripture, Saints, Spiritual Directors, Icons, Sacraments, and Liturgy.

Each chapter looks at how Earth gives in meaningful ways. By slowing down to engage with the transformative, creative, and inviting practices, we have the opportunity to draw closer to this giving, and to receive. Earth can speak with us if we learn to listen.

Chapter by chapter, Christine lays before us expansive reviews and analyses, weaving activities to engage the senses in surprising and delightful ways. John, her husband, brings new insights to familiar texts, opening us further to how things might be. Contemporary and ancient mystics, saints, legends, and practices are accompanied by herbal teas, balms and body scrubs!

The subtext of this book might be Earth saying, “Hello, come on in, you belong here, and you’re welcome”. Christine explains how a right relationship with Earth will naturally lead us to act to correct the dangerous ecological imbalances that we are experiencing today.

An **online retreat** based on the book will be held from July 6th to August 23rd. Go to:

www.abbeyofthearts.com *Do you long to deepen your intimacy with nature?*

Are you seeking a set of Earth-cherishing practices inspired by the mystics?

Have you experienced Earth as your primary place of connection to the divine?

Do you want to immerse yourself in a revolution of love to help transform ourselves and our communities?

Christine Valtner-Paintner is a Benedictine Oblate, and Abbess of the virtual global online monastery, The Abbey of the Arts. It offers pilgrimages, online classes and retreats, reflections, and resources which integrate contemplative practice and creative expression.

Linda Courage is Coordinator of the Arts and Spirituality Special Interest Area of Living Spirituality Connections, where she is a member of the Work and Discernment Group. Her primary spiritual home is in the Abbey of the Arts. She runs contemplative creative events and is a semi-retired nurse.

Era of Awakening

A Way of Blessing. A Way of Yearning. A Way of Beingness.

By members of Sage-ing International

Around the world, we now are immersed in the rigors of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we follow mandates to “shelter in place” in our homes, where can we go to grasp deeper meaning?

This precarious time can be likened to watching the repetitive cresting of ocean waves. One wonders what is in the crest before it hits the shore, and then after it rolls back leaving the sands shifted forever in ways that can never be the same.

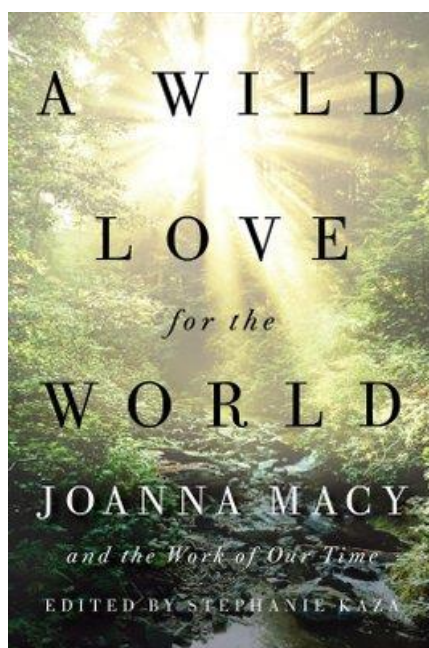
People are questioning the narrative of our previous ways of living. Many people are looking inward as well as outward, examining inquisitively and contemplatively. We are searching for answers that will hopefully radically shift humanity.

We are continuing this reflective time for expressing personal impacts from the COVID-19, and considering an awakening to choices of empowerment during our regular online Wisdom Circles. Joanna Macy teaches, "The Great Turning is a global awakening to the disease of our planet, our love of life and the revolution that can heal our world." She offers personal guidelines for the Great Turning. One of the guidelines Joanna Macy shares is "Dare to Vision" which is powerfully relevant. She explains:

"Out of this darkness a new world can arise, not to be constructed by our minds so much as to emerge from our dreams. Even though we cannot see clearly how it's going to turn out, we are still called to let the future into our imagination. We will never be able to build what we have not first cherished in our hearts."

Macy further encourages us that "to be alive in this beautiful, self-organizing universe—to participate in the dance of life with senses to perceive it, lungs that breathe it, organs that draw nourishment from it—is a wonder beyond words."

[https://www.Enliveningedge.org/views/personal-guidelines-great-turning,](https://www.Enliveningedge.org/views/personal-guidelines-great-turning)



Joanna Macy's latest book, available soon from www.wordery.com/#oid=1900.

The pervasive intensity over past weeks has provided the groundwork to trigger an awakening—a Phoenix Rising—as we begin to see life through a whole different lens of possibilities.

Is it possible that we can see this time of pandemic as an *Era of Awakening*? It is arduous to perceive this life-taking virus also offers life-giving opportunities—awakening within each of us a new path forward. It is certainly an invitation to pause, listen, reflect and perhaps discern the question of how we can free ourselves from the past—the old systems that led to this point in time. What have we learned, what are we willing to let go of, and what actions will we take to help us thrive on planet Earth?

A Way of Blessing: In the midst of it all is a worldwide opening to discern greater blessings. Conceivably, one of the great blessings of the pandemic is for a chance to consider what makes us feel alive, and what gives us renewed purpose. What is it that is taking place deep within each of us during this time—deeper than our thoughts, our feelings or emotions? Our cells have been and continue to be affected by this stunning event. There is an emerging invitation within this expansive intercontinental occurrence in ways that are beyond fear, beyond gratitude for safety and comfort, and even beyond hope. What hidden blessings wait to be recognized, and perhaps will inspire us to take positive action?

<https://youtu.be/e5WBfpL3sUM>

Question: What blessings do I identify now that I didn't realize even two months ago?

A Way of Yearning: There is a palatable “yearning” rising at this time. The virus is a *wake-up call* to deeply understand our interrelatedness. This requires us to deepen awareness relative to *union* that must not be ignored. Clearly, this relates to our relationships with nature as well as humanity. It underscores urgency to cease the destruction of the natural world which is directly destroying humanity as well. Its crisis is our crisis. While the immediate priority is to protect people of the world from the virus and control its prevalence, an imperative response must address issues i.e. climate change and biodiversity loss. Careless and greedy acts against nature must end. <https://youtu.be/2rr7u04m5Nc> We can say “Yes!” to a new world and move from an age of separation to an epoch of union. While we live distanced from each other, we can use this time to begin deprogramming from various stresses and values that prevent us from attuning to deeper insights that can help us on our way forward.

Question: What yearning do I feel developing deep within during this time?

A Way of Beingness: Now more than ever, we need heart-based teachings and heart-centered experiences to help us through this unprecedented time.

<https://youtu.be/JOELaQWxyjE> Investing in self-care, spending more time in nature, connecting in creative ways with family, friends and neighbors are restorative behaviors to nurture. Moving from systemically violent behaviors—many times ever so subtle, toward behaviors supportive of wholeness—is critical. On a huge collective level, self-in-care behaviors will have positive effects on our collective consciousness which operates as a unifying force within society. Slowing down our “body temple” over the past weeks has positively impacted the “temple” of our planet. We do have power to activate positive transformation by connecting with what we truly desire in our lives and for our world, by contemplatively reevaluating our values, prioritizing what is genuinely important to act on,

and by dreaming new visions—no matter our age. Every step we take in creating a constructive path forward helps us to reorient our compass for a personal and collective life-giving “North,” as we discover how to be a powerful presence that facilitates healing in our world.

Question: How will I choose to “be” in this present moment?

Collectively pausing encourages the advent of cherishing that even one thought and one action will shift the collective. The early work of Masaru Emoto, a Japanese author and scientist, proved that human consciousness has an effect on the molecular structure of water. There is a hypothetical translation to be considered here. The pandemic will leave its mark in the collective consciousness of humanity, no matter what happens after mandates are released. We are in the midst of an era of opportunity to move toward a future with renewed connections, new values, and new passions. We are currently on a grand bridge of transition. Transitions foster realization that we are not where we were, and not where we will be. Will we be brave enough to discover what is happening in our hearts, minds and souls while on this bridge of transition? Where will we go collectively with that discovery?

Here at Sage-ing International, we are truly grateful to uphold life-affirming transformations that will emerge during this Era of Awakening. May we all courageously attend to our dreams for a thriving world and lead forward nurturing those dreams. We are valued visionaries as well as the wisdom-keepers of the safe harbor for each other and our precious planet.

We invite you to continue gathering as a global community in one hour of silent meditation to uphold our collective well-being and the healing of our planet Earth at this crucial time - every Thursday, at 8:00 pm, in your time zone (at the same time that we in the UK are applauding carers). May we continue to be strong together. May we all love ourselves and our world into healing.

We send love to you—around the world,

The Executive Circle of Sage-ing International

Marilyn Loy Every, Co-Chair, Jerome Kerner, Co-Chair, Nancy Gray-Hemstock, Secretary, Cindy Siemers, Treasurer, Katia Petersen, Member-at-Large.

Sage-ing International <https://www.sage-ing.org/> is a community of elders and elders-to-be who are ready to explore new ways of aging. SI reaches out to everyone approaching or in the second half of life. Our vision includes teaching/learning, service and community as three vitally important aspects of the sage-ing journey. Online events such as Wisdom Circles are offered which can be joined from the UK.

Musicking the Cosmos.

Using the Zoom platform for peace-making.

By June Boyce-Tillman



The idea (Boyce-Tillman 2011) for this new form of peace-making choir originated in an event done for over nine years in Winchester Cathedral and the university and other faith venues including a Hindu temple in Southampton and St John's church in Hackney. It was based on creating a piece for peace by chance/choice methods. Each time had different participants from different faith and spiritual traditions with differing responses and outcomes. These participants included a rabbi singing Jewish cantillation, school choirs, community groups, university choirs of different kinds and the Islamic call to prayer. Each participant was free to use the 'performance' in whatever way they thought it would contribute to peace. The context draws on Levinas' and Buber's notion of the valuing of difference in the Other. It sees performance as process rather than product.

Unity without uniformity

It originally contained a variety of sections but started with a collection of chants that fitted together because they were based on a single chord and a candle lit peace procession on a single note. It was designed to reflect a new model of peace-making based on choice and not overall control. It showed the creativity of a diverse group of people given freedom to exercise their own choices - unity without uniformity.

With a new cathedral dean, the event could no longer be hosted in the cathedral and with the COVID shut down, I became fascinated by the possibility of the ZOOM platform for peace making. Faced with the complex time of COVID awareness, there are many virtual ensembles that are often recorded individually and put together by a single person.

The problem with the ZOOM platform is that it is impossible to have a single shared pulse. So I considered whether the two sections of the chants and the single note procession could work musically without a shared pulse, combined with chance/choice methods.

So this piece explores what can be done musically without a shared pulse. The notion of a shared single note and a set of chants that are based on the same chord might address the problem, combined with the notion of chance/choice.

It starts with sitting quietly imagining a lovely hum surrounding the world – the environment, other people, yourself. This turns into an instrument giving a single note on which they sing shalom. Then there is the free choosing of the various chants or the single note or just listening. The instrument initiates the last singing of the first chant and we all gradually come to rest on a final chord. Gradually it shuts down to a hum and bring it gradually to an end where we sit in silence contemplating the planet.

We have now tried this three times – once in the context of the University of Winchester and twice using international participants under the direction of Neil Valentine, director of the University Music Centre assisted by Dr Vicky Feldwick who has helped shape the event from the beginning. It is highly experimental as it means abandoning many things we have thought central to shared musical performance – the shared pulse being the crucial one. We all have to unlearn old ways and develop new skills. The behaviour of the technology also gives interesting dimensions as to who is heard clearly and who is not. The notion of what is good and what is not is challenged and people have to claim the power by accepting their own contribution as valid.

It has given people a sense of singing together in an entirely new way. Instead of working against any time lag the internet has, this way of musicking actually utilises it to create beautiful harmonies. We celebrate each other, our connections, our music, our singing and promote peace in these difficult times. This is evident in these comments, and is indicative of spiritual practice in itself:

- *You have to abandon everything you have learned*
- *I could carry on in my own way*
- *It was challenging to work in a new way.*
- *Timing does not matter – that is the gift.*
- *Not having to worry about being with anyone else was very liberating.*
- *I was not required to produce perfection*
- *Initially it was very weird. I had to listen to my own voice. I thought I am not going to be able to make this but I became more self-confident as it went on and then I did not want it to stop. I did more improvisation. I felt connected with the rest of the world. It was a good experience.*

To read the whole article go to: https://www.livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/musicking_the_cosmos.pdf

For joining instructions for the peace choir email June at:

<mailto:June.boyce-tillman@winchester.ac.uk>

Continued....

Rev Professor **June Boyce-Tillman** is Professor Emerita of Applied Music at the University of Winchester and Extraordinary Professor at North-West University, South Africa. June has also set up the online International Network for Music Spirituality and Wellbeing <http://mswinternational.org/>

A Longer Light:

Reflections from St Paul's Cathedral

by **Dr Deborah Lewer**

This online resource contains specially commissioned reflections on art for a time of light and darkness. Each day in the sixth week of Easter a work of art was explored. Deborah Lewer commented "Along the way, we might recognize something of our own experience in this time of uncertainty and of fragile hope. Artists know the eloquence of contrasts, how the play of light and shade can make for great beauty, or for expression beyond words. Attending to them seems appropriate for our time of many stark contrasts – between safety and imperilment, enclosure and exposure, intimacy and loneliness, hope and fear."

You can see the works of art, and Deborah Lewer's commentary, on works by artists including Rembrandt, Cornelia Parker and Paul Klee

<https://resourcehub.squarespace.com/all-daily-reflections/daily-reflections-1>

Dr Deborah Lewer is Senior Lecturer in History of Art at the University of Glasgow and a regular speaker, consultant, author and retreat leader in many church contexts, including at her home cathedral of St Mary's in Glasgow.

The Most Sacred of Times

Pandemic

By **Lynn Ungar**

What if you thought of it
as the Jews consider the Sabbath —
the most sacred of times?
Cease from travel.
Cease from buying and selling.
Give up, just for now,
on trying to make the world
different than it is.
Sing. Pray. Touch only those
to whom you commit your life.
Center down. Continued....

And when your body has become still,
reach out with your heart.
Know that we are connected
in ways that are terrifying and beautiful.
(You could hardly deny it now.)
Know that our lives
are in one another's hands.
(Surely, that has come clear.)
Do not reach out your hands.
Reach out your heart.
Reach out your words.
Reach out all the tendrils
of compassion that move, invisibly,
where we cannot touch.
Promise this world your love –
for better or for worse,
in sickness and in health,
so long as we all shall live.

Lynn Ungar is a Universalist Unitarian Minister in the San Francisco area.
<http://www.lynnungar.com/>