



GUILD NEWS

April to June 2017
the Quarterly from

The Guild of Health and St Raphael



Welcome to the April - June 2017 edition of *Guild News*. In this edition:

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Director's Thoughts



Dear Friends,

Welcome to your *Guild News* – the magazine of the Guild of Health and St. Raphael. As I write in this season of Lent, with the daffodils in full bloom, it is wonderful to feel that better weather is on the way and the year is unfolding with new life and new projects. Not least in the Guild – don't forget to sign up to some of our events over the next few months, including the Compassionate Care conference, and, looking much further ahead, our lecture preceding the AGM on the 16th October. This event will have a focus on disability, and will include a national speaker and a healing mass.



This *Guild News* is packed full of articles and I hope that you find something of interest. A few themes have emerged – firstly, healing and the physical body, with an article on yoga and a book review of a recent publication about one woman's journey through cancer where running provided a deep healing experience. We have an article from north of the border where the Guild is planning our annual Denis Duncan lecture later in 2017. And two very different articles about the church and healing – one a unique collaboration following the Ealing riots in 2011, and the other describing a modern day incarnation of a very ancient role: the hospitaller.

The trustees would really like to hear from you about your involvement in healing, and what the Guild can do to support you. Perhaps you run a branch, or have come across a new initiative in your area? Do get in touch, and we can kick start our "Letters page" in the next *Guild News*.

Gillian

Revd Dr Gillian Straine, Director

Report on the 2017 Northern Conference



Revd Prof Helen L Leathard, one of our trustees and a consultant to Holy Rood House, reflects on the Guild's 2017 Northern Conference

Storytelling and Healing was the theme of the Guild's 2017 Northern Conference, which was held on Saturday 4th February at Holy Rood House in Thirsk, North Yorkshire. Many of those involved, including several of our trustees, arrived on the Friday afternoon and enjoyed the relaxed hospitality of the house as we anticipated the events of the next day.

After a warm welcome by Revd Elizabeth Baxter, Executive Director of Holy Rood House and Northern Associate of the Guild, the first speaker was Revd Dr Gillian Straine, our Director, whose theologically-reflective account of her own pilgrimage through cancer into sustained remission was newly published. Gillian was very open about her own encounter with advanced cancer of the lymphatic system: about the distress caused by the diagnosis soon after graduating; about the severity of the side effects of her chemotherapy; and about the fact that being in remission for fifteen years is not of itself "healing". She spoke of three types of illness narrative that are used in connection with cancer:

- The "chaos narrative" which she felt was inadequate because, although it could be used to describe the state in which she found herself in the early days of struggling with the devastating consequences of a chance mutation in her DNA, it could not incorporate her Christian belief in resurrection.
- The "restitution narrative", in which the patient strives to "beat" cancer, was unsatisfactory because it describes cancer as a battle in which the only positive outcome is the defeat of cancer.
- The "quest narrative" was Gillian's preferred option, because this takes suffering seriously, and views it as part of a journey through an experience of cancer.

Gillian was emphatic about the importance of caution in the use language and metaphor within the narrative because symbol give rise

to thoughts; for example, the use of a war narrative risks turning a sufferer against the cells of their own body. New metaphors which can “open the doors of hope” are very much needed. It is important, therefore, that people tell their stories so that others can be better informed to help them cope. In the afternoon, Gillian gave a brief explanatory talk to launch her newly published book: *Cancer – A Pilgrim Companion* (SPCK 2017; ISBN978-0-281-07502-7)

The second main lecture was by Revd Canon Peter Kenny who is Adviser in Pastoral Care and Counselling and Ministry Development Officer in the Diocese of Newcastle. His talk *Stories, Storytelling and Meaning Making* drew on his ongoing study at the Jung Institute in Zurich. He started from the basis that people are meaning-making creatures, concerned with the significance, shape and purpose of life. For many people the meaning of their life feels positive, but for others it is not, and the therapeutic task is to help people create a meaningful narrative – to love and/or to accept what is. He cited recent neurosciences research indicating that humans intrinsically have a “storied brain” that relates lived experience to archetypes that reflect the culture from which they emerge; using fairy tales as an easy-to-understand example. Reflecting on a personal example of working academically with a fairy tale as a coincidental route to self-discovery, he went on to discuss how fairy tales can relate to mental health issues, “working magic”, leading to engagement with the transcendent or numinous and thence to healing. In therapy, therefore, it is important to help people to tell the whole (or most) of their story and have it listened to. Healing then occurs by grace in the space between the speaker and the listener.

Healing comes from what faith calls “God” – mysterious, fearful and inspiring at the same time. Furthermore, healing lies in yielding, a concept that links with the life of Jesus Christ who lived beyond himself – an utterly transcendent existence – as symbolised by his death on the cross leading to resurrection. This is surely the most persistent of healing stories, one in which we need to inhabit the passion narrative in order to experience fully the joy of the resurrection.

After a delicious buffet lunch, the afternoon session was devoted to update of the ongoing stories of the Guild and of Holy Rood House, an opportunity to share stories, and the book launch mentioned above.



The Guild of Health and St Raphael

Lecture and AGM

Monday 16th October 2017

St Marylebone Parish Church, London, NW1 5LT

10 am Lecture: ***The Idea of Perfection***, The Revd Tim Goode, General Synod member and disability advisor in the Diocese of Southwark

£10 (£5 concessions, free to Guild members)

To book a place at the lecture, please email
director@gohealth.org.uk

The lecture will be followed by a healing Eucharist.

2pm The Annual General Meeting of the Guild of Health and St Raphael will be held in the crypt of the church

All members are invited to the AGM

The Breadth, Depth, Length and Height of Healing Ministry...

By **Revd Les Ireland**, Rector of St Cyprian's Church, Lenzie and Diocesan Advisor for the Healing Ministry for the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway

“The Healing Ministry” is one of those phrases which evokes a huge range of responses from a huge range of people! There is, as one would expect, a range of emotional responses. Many embrace the idea of, “The Healing Ministry.” Others are cautious. Others are fearful, perhaps because of experience they have had with healing in different parts of the church. That range of emotional response is as one would probably expect. However, the variety of response can be much more fundamental than that. The variety of responses on what “The Healing Ministry” actually is varies hugely, often dependant on our own experience, or own traditions. Sadly, talking to many people, it can be very difficult to get people to think beyond their

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preconceptions of healing.

For some people, perhaps from the more charismatic end of the church, they have a particular picture of healing being offered in informal and unstructured worship. Perhaps offered by a team of people, perhaps offered by the key figure within the worship. For others, healing would be offered after worship, or after receiving the Eucharist, perhaps in a side chapel, offered by a team of people trained for the role. For other people, healing ministry may be offered at a separate occasion – perhaps at a special service (or programme of services), perhaps in one of the less prominent times of worship within the life of the church. On the other end of the spectrum, “The Healing Ministry” takes on a much more sacramental style, often associated with anointing with oil, sometimes in a private event formally recognised by the church, sometimes associated with confession. For some “The Healing Ministry” can feel much more like a “counselling ministry,” where the healer perhaps tries to help someone in the context of a praying relationship. For others “The Healing Ministry” is much to do with, and associated with the breadth of medical care, often seen in terms of chaplaincy ministry, perhaps within hospice or hospital, and increasingly within dedicated healing centres.

The sad thing is, that too often people are “welded” to their understanding, or tradition, or “way things should be done.”

As healing advisor for our diocese, and in the workshops I run, I see part of my role as bringing together the insights from the different traditions, different styles, different ways of understanding and practising the healing ministry, to help individuals and particularly churches to move forward to offer healing as part of their ministry as appropriate to their context, tradition, history, opportunity.

Within the life of the church, all the many different strands of healing tradition, there are, I believe, some principles which apply, and is part of “The Healing Ministry.” I believe, and I believe the Bible tells us, that the healing ministry should be fundamental to the life of the church, the life of an individual church, and as widely and openly available as possible. Paul tells us quite simply: “If ANYONE is sick, let him call the elders.....”

For some, there is little opportunity to be prayed for. For some the tradition of the church makes it available to some, and not others. If healing ministry is done elsewhere than the local church, then that

can be excluding for some because of cost, time, fear. For others the local church may offer healing prayer, but the way it is done can exclude some through their own fears, or perhaps the public way it is done.

My point is, that each church has to work on this, on how to offer prayer. It is not about doing it the way I think it should be done. It is about offering it in a way that is appropriate to the context, the history, the local theology, the building, so that as many people as possible feel able to receive prayer.

“As many people as possible” is my phrase. “Anyone” is the biblical phrase. Neither of those phrases says “Christian,” or “Church member.” For me personally, offering prayer for healing is part of our mission, part of our evangelism – it is something we offer not just to the Christian community, it is something we offer to the whole community. No greater mission – to offer healing, a dynamic encounter with God to someone who has not as yet become open to Christ being in their life.

As a second principle, I strongly and absolutely believe that a healing ministry has to be carried out within the discipline of the church, within the “oversight” of the church, however that oversight might be perceived. The healing ministry has complex pastoral issues associated with it. There are issues of power. There are issues of confidentiality. There are issues of how the healer responds within a healing relationship, what the healer should know, and what they could do with that. There are issues of who we pray for. Prayer for healing is an intimate activity – how do we manage that? These issues should always be kept in the process, and reflected on within a community constantly.

As a third principle, “The Healing Ministry” has to be held within the mystery of God. There are, potentially, many question which begin to arise as we begin to pray for people. Some people are healed. Some are cured. However some aren't or don't appear to be. Sometimes one person is healed, but not another. Of course we hear many answers to the questions. “Not enough faith in the one prayed for, or the one praying.” Or perhaps “God has chosen to heal in a different way.” “God will heal at a later date – we just need to wait.” None of these answers are in any way adequate, and some of these answers are downright wrong and bad and hurtful.

If we are involved in “The Healing Ministry” then we have to be able to say “God is God, and in Him I trust.” If we have to have, or give, or seek answers to the questions, then we need to ask if we can be

The Guild of Health and St. Raphael in Scotland

The Guild is the UK's leading organisation supporting and promoting the ministry of healing across a broad range of church traditions. We are excited to announce that we are setting up a network of those involved in the ministry of healing in Scotland. This network is for sharing resources and providing support for one another.

If you would like to be kept up to date with events in Scotland, then email director@gohealth.org.uk



involved in “The Healing Ministry.”

I believe “The Healing Ministry” in one way or another should be part of the life of all churches in some way, in ways that are appropriate to each church. Not in a spectacular way, but as part of the day to day worship and life of the church. I believe we need to constantly talk about the ministry, walking with God in this ministry.

On a practical level? Within Scotland the Guild of Health and St. Raphael provides a fellowship/support group for those involved in “The Healing Ministry.” I can give details of that group. I am the healing advisor for ministry in Glasgow and Galloway and love running open workshops and workshops for individual churches, as well as helping a church to reflect on how they could offer healing in their context. I'm happy to travel to run workshops, if I have the free space within the diary. Send me an email! [Les949@btinternet.com]

Most importantly – I hope it is a time to start to think – how can we offer the opportunity to receive prayer to more and more people in both our churches and communities.

Can the Parish care?

A Day Conference of the Guild of Health and St Raphael

10am – 4.30pm on Tuesday 20th June 2017

St Marylebone Parish Church, London, NW1 5LT

The compassionate care movement has been making significant progress in energising and equipping people to serve their local community. Our churches occupy a vital position within every community in the UK and have a long history of serving in the name of Christ. As public services continue to suffer cut backs, the effects of which disproportionately hit the poorest in our community, this day conference seeks to ask what can be learnt from practitioners, theologians and compassionate care experts, in helping churches serve their communities, whether that is through offering friendship and neighbourliness, healthcare, education or housing. Drawing on a firm theological foundation, our expert speakers will bring into conversation both theory and praxis, alongside examples of where these projects have been a success, to look at generating a movement that can enable and equip our churches to serve the people in the creation of healthy and healing communities.

Confirmed speakers include:

Revd Prof Alison Milbank: Alison is a parish priest, theologian and academic, teaching in the theology and religious studies department at the University of Nottingham. She recently co-authored *For the Parish: a critique of fresh expressions*.

Revd Dr Helen Wordsworth: Helen is a Baptist minister, Registered Nurse, and Founder of Parish Nursing Ministries UK

**£50 (£40 Guild of Health and St Raphael members,
£25 student rate)**

To book, please visit www.gohealth.org.uk or email director@gohealth.org.uk for a booking form and payment details.

Yoga and the Christian Faith



Revd Ian Spencer discusses how Yoga helps his Christian faith

What has yoga to do with Christianity?

The answer: nothing and everything.

Dealing with the first part of that answer: Yoga is a highly evolved and complex practice that arose out of the life-experience of the people of the Indus Valley area of India over the course of several thousand years. It's a philosophy and practice that draws on years of deep consideration of the relationship between matter and spirit, and the human predicament, that is the human desire not to suffer but suffering none-the-less. It is its own system of philosophy and practice, and over the years different strands have developed, focussing on different aspects, much like the Christian experience of dividing into denominations. Hence we have Raja yoga, Kriya yoga, Hatha yoga, and the like. In terms of a belief system, it is its own thing, and stands apart from Christianity. No-one needs yoga to be a Christian, and no yogi needs to be Christian in order to practice their tradition.

Dealing with the second part of the answer: we might begin by reminding ourselves of what was said above, namely that yoga is a philosophy that has arisen out of thousands of years of deeply considering the relationship between spirit and matter. *Samkhya* is one of the oldest philosophical systems of India and the foundation of the practice of yoga. Very simply, *Samkhya* proposes that there is spirit (*Purusa*) and matter (*Prakriti*). *Prakriti* evolves (changes) whereas *Purusa* doesn't (it is eternally the same). *Prakriti* has no "life" in it unless it is "lifed" by *Purusa*, and so the great philosophical work is the quest to understand the relationship between these two, spirit and matter. "Yoga" is the work of putting *Samkhya* into practice.

In the Christian faith we have a similar quest, do we not? Our faith begins with the story of God becoming human (Spirit embodies itself in matter), or in St John's Gospel, "the Word became flesh". This is the very source or foundation of our faith, for if the Word didn't "become flesh" then the Christian faith is emptied of its essence, and we're left with a story of a good man, loved by many, hated by some,

treated cruelly and eventually murdered. No different to the story of countless thousands of humans. And in this context, any talk of resurrection becomes little more than superstition.

So Christianity and Yoga are not so very different at ground zero, but they do take very different courses, as they explore what the relationship between matter and spirit could be, and what it is to be human.

What can Yoga offer Christians?

Yoga is often referred to as the “science of religion”, that is, its primary concern is not about belief (ie not the question “why?” but more the question “how?”). How might we understand and experience the relationship between spirit and matter? How does our mind work? How do mind and body work together, and what does this say about the experience of being human? If we want to explore this in the context of a particular faith tradition, then we can.

Yoga’s “home” tradition is of course Hindu, but there’s no need to become a Hindu or adopt that belief system in order to practice yoga. Yoga isn’t dependent on any belief system, and therefore it can be practised by people of any faith, or people who have no particular faith tradition. Yoga has many gifts to offer, but perhaps the one we’re most familiar with, and the one which we’ll briefly talk about, is that of body-work / postures, or *asana* in Sanskrit (the language of Yoga).

We’ve all seen pictures of impossibly good-looking people performing crazy feats with their bodies, twisting and bending them into all kinds of increasingly elaborate shapes. We see those in the magazines, smile and pass by – “that’s not for me”. But that’s “cat-walk” yoga, and has little to do with the authentic practice. The practise of *asana* is to do with becoming attentive to, and appreciative of, *your* body as it is “right here and right now”. *Asana* practice is about discovering for yourself how your body is today.... where is it stiff? Where does it ache? Where is movement limited and where is it easy?

Asana encourages us to be very attentive to the gift of our embodiment, to take notice of it, and to nurture it. *Asana* is about taking seriously that which lies at the centre of Christian faith, namely Incarnation – the relationship between spirit and matter. The difficulty Christians have is that we’ve very little traditional help to get

to grips with the reality and the gift of having bodies. We tend to ignore them until they get sick, and only then do we recognise a relationship between spirit and matter, petitioning God to intervene and help.

Asana practice, particularly when we combine it with being attentive to our breath, can be a deeply profound way of experiencing what it is to be alive. Practicing within the context of thanksgiving to God can only deepen our love and our worship, and our commitment to follow Christ who also had a body, just like ours – with its aches, pain, stiffness and ease. Yoga can help us truly proclaim with the Psalmist “I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.” (Ps139)

For this reason and for others too, I have found the practice of Yoga to have a wonderful contribution to my life and my Christian faith. I practice daily in conjunction with meditation and prayer, and I teach yoga primarily because I’ve experienced its transformative effects in my life. Do please get in touch with me at Holland House if you would like more information.

The riots that led to a joint healing mission

In this article **Revd Chris Fox**, Associate Pastor of St Paul's Northfields, and **Fr Simon Cuff**, Associate Curate of Christ the Saviour, Ealing, present a profound mission to heal which not only restored a community torn apart by the riots in summer 2011, but led to radical ecumenical action that healed the internal fractions in the church.

“Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.”

James 5.16

Healing, real healing, is always holistic. It has not so much to do with healing this or that particular ailment but the whole of ourselves. It is not only individuals who are afflicted and are in need of healing. The same is true of the Church. The Church as it is, is not only individuals who are afflicted and are in need of healing. The same is

true of the Church.

The Church as it is, is not the Church as it should be. The Church is torn and divided and in need of healing. But just as in the case of individual healing, real healing for the whole Body of Christ is not found in the cure or patching up of this or that affliction or ailment. Christian unity is not just about reconciling or coming to an agreement over this or that bone of contention or ecclesiastical divide, as much as integrating and coming to terms with divides and disagreements that may never go away. The united Church of the future is not a return to a healthy and united Church of the past, but a reconciled Church of the future who has integrated divisions, which may be permanent, into her understanding of who she is ultimately called to be before God.



As authors, we come from very different traditions within the part of the body of Christ which is the Church of England – from the charismatic and Catholic traditions respectively. Despite this, the ministry of healing jointly offered has allowed us to discover a unity of purpose and mission, and a chance to reaffirm our shared membership of the body of Christ and partnership in the Gospel.

The context in which we minister is key here – Ealing, in west London. Ealing, a diverse and in parts affluent suburb of west London, was a scene of the riots that swept across the city in the summer of 2011. In response, diverse Christian communities came together across ecumenical boundaries, under the leadership of Fr Andrew Davis, a traditionalist Anglo-Catholic of the parish of Christ the Saviour, Ealing, and Linda Ward, the pastor of Bless Community Church in the free charismatic tradition.

With shared purpose, they utilised existing ad hoc relationships to see where they could work together in the proclamation of the Gospel. Rather than focus on what divided them denominationally, they sought to do as much as they could together as Christians. In this way, they hoped, the united body of Christians could be at the forefront of working against the conditions which gave rise to the

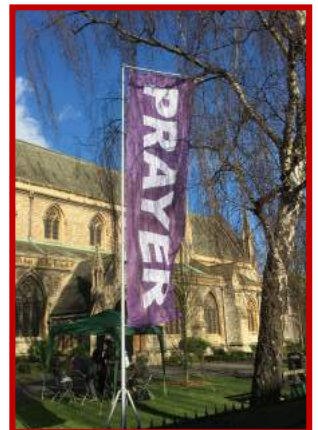
riots that summer.

From this came the ministry of *Prayer on the Streets* – a ministry from within the charismatic evangelical tradition yet operating out of the grounds of an Anglo-Catholic church within the centre of Ealing. The team is made up of Christians across denominational and traditional boundaries. Since its foundation three years ago, hundreds of people have received prayers for healing, simply through the public offer of prayer – those outside the walls of an established church community being offered the gift

of prayer for healing. This ministry is focused on demonstrating the presence of Christ in the marketplace of Ealing. Through this we are offering both to those of faith and those without faith an opportunity to enter into and experience something of the presence of Christ in the midst of the world.

Within the walls of an established church community, to embrace and support this ministry, those within the catholic tradition offered a Mass of healing with anointing. A pastor from within the evangelical tradition was invited to offer the same prayer as on the streets in the form of laying of hands, the prayer offered outside of the church for those with no church relationship, being offered inside the Church across traditions.

What has this to do with healing? This sort of collaborative ministry is itself healing for a church divided on tradition and practice. More importantly, the healing ministry of the Church has reminded us all that where we can collaborate we should. So many of traditional qualifiers of “successful ministry” are (wrongly) competitive – who is getting more on a Sunday, who is baptising more, marrying more, teaching more...



Healing isn't one of these. This frees it from the competitive baggage of the past as a marker of success and enables it to be an area of collaboration – as much healing for those individuals, as for the Church as a whole. Healing ministry offers one example of where Christians can work together for the proclamation of the Gospel, the unity of the Church and the building-up of the body of Christ, which is surely His intent.

What does success in the ministry of healing look like? This isn't for us to say; but what our experience of healing ministry teaches us is that there are under-developed areas of ministry, such as healing, that we can engage in as a united Church – praying for healing for ourselves, for others and for the Church catholic – and there must be others. We pray for the insight to discover what these might be so that all may be one, and all may be healed.

Hospitality and Healing: the Hospitaller of St Bartholomew's the Less

Fr Jeremy Davies, the current Hospitaller at St Bartholomew's the Less, reflects on the history of the Hospitallers of St Bart's

“Hospitality” is a friendly word. It evokes an image of a ready smile as the door is opened to friend and stranger alike. From hotels to youth hostels to pilgrim hostels, the weary traveller can find in them a welcome rest before continuing their journey.

Back in mediaeval times, if a traveller fell sick hospitality was initially found in monasteries where monks were purported to have the best remedies while also offering a space of peace and rest and a bite to eat. Monks attended to the sick within their monastic walls but when they had run out of space, they built separate hospitals, hence the link between “hospitality” and “hospital”.

At St Bartholomew's in West Smithfield, where I am based, a priory and hospital were founded separately by Prior Rahere in 1123 with the hospital having its own seals and income. It would have been

relatively small with up to 100 beds divided into two halls separating men from women. A hospitaller was placed in charge whose primary role was to welcome in the sick, and meet their spiritual and, where possible, physical needs. An altar was visible to all patients at one end of each hall at which the Mass was celebrated daily. This consolation



St Bartholomew's the Less

would have made a hospital stay preferable to being sick at home. Prayer was the primary source of healing. Few would have received medical help for it was very expensive but at least there was the possibility of being fed and watered. I say “possibility” for there is an entry in the records of the neighbouring church of St Giles, Cripplegate of the hospitaller having to walk down to the Shamble at Newgate every morning and beg for meat for his patients. Money was tight, even in those days.

After the closure of the monasteries in the 1530's there was a crisis in hospital care. It is thought that for around ten years there was virtually no provision for the sick at all. St Bart's was among those

marked for closure but was given a stay of execution presumably because of its separate financial status. Instead, the hospital became a parish in its own right with one of the chapels becoming its parish church and the hospitaller becoming its parish priest. Plaques on the walls of the church (named St Bartholomew the Less to distinguish it from its larger near neighbour) give the names of a few of the hospitallers who have served in the role that has necessarily changed over time. In the records of 1592 there is written a demand for extra payment by the hospitaller for his work in “setting the bones and joints of eleven persons,” something I have yet been asked to do!

Nowadays, of course, the hospitaller is simply a chaplain, a bit part player in a huge government institution filled with high tech equipment and highly trained staff. The altar has been replaced by the operating table and patients are more anxious to see their consultant and hang on her every word than those of the priest.



Fr Jeremy Davies

It can sometimes feel lonely walking the corridors and wards with nurses, doctors and ancillary staff busily going about their work around you. And yet, at the same time, I see modern medicine as nothing short of being a miracle and medical practitioners as exemplars of the Holy Spirit at work in the world. When I watch a nurse attend to a patient in the chemotherapy suite or sit in on a patient's conversation with a doctor, I am reminded of episodes of hospitality found in the pages of scripture. I think of Jesus going to the home of Simon Peter's sick mother-in-law and to the home of Jarius where his daughter lay lifeless in bed. I think of that beautiful parable Jesus told of the Samaritan tending the man who had been beaten up, taking him to a nearby inn, and

both he and the landlord looking after him. But maybe the most poignant story of hospitality is in the book of Genesis, where we read of Abraham and Sarah welcoming three strangers into their company and entertaining them. The consequence of their hospitality is the aged Sarah becoming pregnant with Isaac. These examples remind me that hospitality is not only central to the foundation of the Judeo-Christian religion but also creates a profound change at a deeper level of consciousness in those who are engaged in it. I read evidence of this in the intercessions book in the "Less" every day where patients and families write heart-warming words of thanks for successful operations as well as pleas for prayer.

St Bart's has survived both political and religious upheaval (as well as the Great Fire and Hitler's bombs) and stands today as a testimony to what happens when Christians answer Christ's call in welcoming friend and stranger. Hospitality is a defining characteristic of Christian discipleship. We may have handed over the



Windows at St Bart's the Less

hospitality of the sick to professionally run hospitals and care of the dying to hospices, but that doesn't mean we can abandon our vocation to hospitality. The Church is at its most relevant when it throws open its doors and offers hospitality to all who seek rest on the pilgrimage of life, friend and stranger alike. For when we are genuinely hospitable, something truly miraculous occurs in us, for in welcoming the stranger we welcome Christ, and when we welcome Christ our lives are transformed: every parish should have its designated hospitaller.

Peak Experiences: some reflections on Jesus' transfiguration

One of our trustees, **Revd Prof Helen Leathard**, offers her reflections on the Transfiguration.

The story of Jesus' transfiguration is one of my favourite passages in the New Testament, and it is especially helpful to reflect on it once again as we are on the threshold of Lent. But first, let me set the scene with my own misty mountain-top experience, an experience that colours my thoughts on this profoundly moving event that is described in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, and in the second letter of Peter.

Many years ago, when I was young and fit, I had a friend from university staying for a few days and decided to take them fell-walking. There was one Pennine peak above the Upper Eden Valley that I had never climbed before. Mickle Fell forms part of the Warcop Training Area, a Ministry of Defence firing range; and access is prohibited when red flags indicate that military exercises are in progress. On the sunny day in question there were no red flags, so it seemed a good time to try this new route.

All went well until we neared the top and a cloud descended, reducing visibility to a few yards. There was no path but we had map and compass, so we kept walking in roughly the right direction. After about an hour we realised that we had missed the peak, and decided that the only safe strategy was to descend.

Before long the mist thinned, and we scanned the scenery for landmarks, seeking to identify where we were on the map but, having

over-estimated the distance we had walked in the mist, we could not work it out. We could, however, see a path and some signage about half a mile away downhill. It was an obvious target, and we set off striding gleefully from tuft to tuft of grass, carefully avoiding the larger clumps of heather that were potential ankle breakers.

With a sense of elation, we reached the path, and then what had looked from the distance like a signpost – but it was not! It was a notice board, blank on the side from which we approached. The warning on the other side was disconcerting, to say the least: “WARNING! BEWARE OF UNEXPLODED SHELLS”; and it referred to the patch of moorland across which we had just bounded so light-heartedly. So much for worrying about twisting ankles in the heather! We could have gone out in a blaze of high explosive.

A jumble of confusing emotions flooded though my mind: incredulity, relief, and retrospective terror all rolled in to one; and recalling these enables me to empathise with Peter and his awe-inspired but impractical offer to build dwellings for Jesus, Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration.

In such awesome circumstances, the desire to stay a while, to absorb and come to terms with the extraordinary situation, is almost overwhelming. But on misty mountain tops there are no comfortable dwelling places to linger. We must move on psychologically, spiritually and physically. As our faces shone with elation at having reached the path safely, my friend and I came back to earth with a bump, when we realised what a long walk still lay ahead of us after our unintended detour.

For Peter, James and John there were even more daunting experiences in store before it was time for them to descend from their “peak experience”. Near the summit of their mountain, they had already seen a dazzlingly-transfigured Jesus, talking with figures who were recognisable as Moses and Elijah, the servant and the prophet of God, with whom they were familiar from their Scriptures; reinforcing their faith in an extraordinarily powerful way. Yet more illumination was to follow as the bright cloud overshadowed them, and they heard the voice of God reiterating those words that they associated with accounts of Jesus’ baptism: “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; Listen to him!” Little did they realise at the time that this divine encounter was, in fact, spiritual fortification for the approaching ordeal of Jesus’ arrest, persecution and crucifixion – a fortification that

Peter recalled as he was writing to prepare his followers for his own death (2 Peter 1).

I can't help feeling it is significant that it was Moses and Elijah who spoke with Jesus on the mountain at that auspicious time; and this might hold the key to why the Jewish leaders failed to recognise Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah, because they assumed their salvation would come through a warrior king like David.

Yet it was Moses who had ascended the cloud-topped Mount Sinai where “the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire”, as witnessed by the Israelites below; and he received God's commandments (Exodus 24). Later, Mount Carmel was the location of Elijah's faithful calling upon God to defeat the priests of Baal (1 Kings 18); and it was on the top of that mountain that God showed Elijah the growing clouds that signified the end of the terrible drought that Elijah had prophesied. And that was not Elijah's only encounter with God on a mountain. After fleeing the wrath of Jezebel, Elijah was guided by God to take refuge on Mount Horeb, and there he experienced the presence of God in the “sound of sheer silence” (1 Kings 19).

It seems there is something of a pattern of mountain-top encounters preparing God's chosen ones for daunting duties ahead. Moses had to lead the recalcitrant Israelites through the desert towards the promised land. Elijah had to anoint God's choice of new kings of Aram and Israel, and Elisha as his successor, to rid Israel of Ahab, Jezebel and their ungodly supporters.

So how can we be fortified by pondering Jesus' transfiguration, as our thoughts turn towards Lent, Holy Week and Easter? Is there a place, on a mountain top or elsewhere, where we can spend some time glimpsing God's glory and having our faith strengthened by that experience? Might we glimpse God's glory in a spectacular sunrise over a nearby mountain, and be strengthened spiritually. Could that turn our thoughts to concerns over climate change and what we need to do to preserve our beautiful planet?

As the natural world re-emerges from the dormancy of winter, so may our faith undergo a resurgence as we use Lent to seek a closer encounter with God and, like Jesus, to be fortified by God's Holy Spirit for whatever might lie ahead.



Awake my soul



“As a person who has suffered chronic illness the whole of my adult life, it has not been easy for me to believe in healing. Doctors have not been helpful, people find it hard to understand and I often feel adrift. Nonetheless, God continues to speak words of hope into my heart - often this is through my regular practice of singing but the Psalms. In this case it was the words “Awake my soul” which immediately struck me and continue to resonate through my inveigling fears and tender hopes.”

James Ashdown: singing Psalm 108

Awake my soul

Awake my soul

Can I, Do I trust these words?

Is the darkness coming to an end and is it time to welcome the day, to rise from sleep and greet a new dawn?

Who am I?

What is this consciousness, this feeble hear, this fragile flesh, this changing and changeable human being? What can I do now? What can I become when I release myself into God’s strong arm?

Is something stirring, is life welling up?

What is this new energy, this hope, this sense of shift and change? What is this uncertainty and certainty, this disequilibrium and this upsurge of joy? Is it, can it be my soul awakening?

By **James Ashdown**

Reflections from Holy Rood House



A Holy Rood House reflection from **Revd Elizabeth Baxter**,
the Guild's Northern Associate.

It is always encouraging to meet people from churches offering a specific healing ministry, and one of the areas we are asked about both in the Guild and at Holy Rood House, is about touch and the laying-on-of-hands. Touch has been, and continues to be, an emotional and charged area, and has been part of the conversations about gender and priesthood, the sharing of the peace, and safeguarding issues. I think it is important therefore to tread carefully as we look together at what lies at the heart of the healing ministry. The theological, physiological and psychological aspects of touch are important to address, as part of this engagement. For now I just offer some reflections and hope they stimulate conversation towards these broader aspects.

Touch lies at the heart of the sacramental life of the church, and becomes part of the ministry of all believers, with a specific focus through those who are ordained, and others who are recognised and set apart for the healing ministry. There may be a member of the church who has a specific healing gift and will need to be welcomed to a conversation about that gift and how it may be offered with the healing ministry of the church. When we touch another person, with compassionate care at a time of sickness, despair or at a joyful occasion, we touch Christ. Our touch is received and blessed. When we touch in an inappropriate way we also touch Christ, creating wounds and pain.

I like to see the laying-on-of-hands as a caress, a reassurance of the presence and love of God, and an embracing of the person within that love. When given with absolute attention and grace this ministry can be profoundly healing. Removing our hands from this action is all part of it, and to be sensitive to how this may happen is important. There may be an immediate release of both hands or a gentle release of one hand at a time. Sometimes this helps the person to integrate the experience at a deeper level.

There are many different views about words said at the time of laying-on-of-hands. I know what I prefer for myself – and that is a

gentle, attentive ministry with very few words and my name spoken and inclusive language when someone offers me a blessing.

Often we may know the person to whom we are ministering, and our full attention is a way of them knowing that we understand their prayerful thoughts and longings, so an acknowledgement of that, and a blessing, is a simple, yet profound way of responding through this ministry. For those we do not know, I often find that a prayer for them and for those for whom they pray, is helpful. Often someone is holding someone else in their hearts.

I do think it is important whenever possible to have a man and a woman available for this ministry, although it is not necessary to have two people ministering at the same time. At Holy Rood House, I prefer to sit alongside a person who comes for healing. It seems to be a more gentle way of engaging in this ministry of compassionate care.

The question is sometimes asked “Does it work?” Some of us may have experienced a form of healing ministry which we have felt uncomfortable with, especially when expectations of immediate healing have been heightened. Nevertheless, I would always want to answer yes, because healing is a process, and part of a person’s journey towards wellbeing. Offered with prayerful and sensitive compassion, this action becomes significant as a sacramental healing ministry. Sometimes there is an immediate effect, often there is a gradual psychological and physiological change, and always there should be a sense of re-assurance of the love of God. The following piece, written by a guest at Holy Rood House, expresses something of what this healing ministry may be about.

“I received significant physical healing during my visit. For months prior to my visit I had been experiencing pain in my head and neck...During one of the services at Holy Rood House I came up to you for prayer. You put your hand on the back of my head and prayed. I was very touched by this because I hadn’t said anything about the pain, but you put your hand just where it originated. Since that time the pain has gone away completely...God has healed me. I was expecting it to come back for ages, but it hasn’t. So I thought it was important to share that testimony with you.”

Whilst we recognize that Jesus ministered within the thought forms and practices of his own day, there is no ambiguity about his

ministry of teaching and healing as being at the heart of it. We are now seeking to do what Jesus did, but in our own day, and our developed understandings of our bodies and the social and environmental effects on our wellbeing. Our call to be healers is within the context of the wider needs of the world, the healing of the earth and our personal need to be healed. The laying-on-of-hands for healing is one way we can move forward in this call. It is simple, gentle and sacred, and one of the most valuable gifts the church can offer. We will seek to express this ministry at Holy Rood House, and I know that the community would value your prayers for this ministry.



The Science and Religion Forum Conference 2017

in association with The Guild of Health and St. Raphael

Mental Wellbeing, Neuroscience and Religion

31st August – 2nd September

Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln

Speakers include:

- Dr David McDonald (Consultant Psychiatrist, Vice-chair of the Guild)
- Dr Roger Bretherton (Lecturer in Psychology, University of Lincoln)
- The Revd Dr Fraser Watts (Theology and Natural Sciences, University of Cambridge)

Early bird booking now open. Reduction for Guild members.

www.srforum.org

Meet the Trustees



Our vice-chair, **Dr David MacDonald**, tells us a little about himself

I was born in 1945 on 27th September - the feast of St Vincent de Paul, as I learned much later, understanding perhaps whence my passion for the care of poor and disadvantaged people came. My mother had me christened on Epiphany Sunday 1946; I was confirmed at Pentecost 1961, and she bought me the 4-volume *Footprints of Jesus*. But mother never spoke “Religion”; she had a

quiet solid faith but was not a churchgoer. When she died in hospital, I found a bible by her bedside at home open at Isaiah 25: “the Lord of hosts provides a banquet for all peoples and destroys the veil that veils all peoples, and destroys death forever, and wipes away the tears from all faces; the reproach of his people he removes from the whole earth”. Her clock had stopped at the moment of her death.



Dr David MacDonald

My vocation as a medical doctor primarily sought improved mental (and, I came to realise, also spiritual) health for people – including myself as I explored my own psychic depths in personal therapy and training. A transforming moment came in 1972 through work when I suddenly recognised my spiritual sonship in God, and felt even more

appreciative of the love and care given by my parents. In a modest quietly witnessing family, I had fortunately grown up on Christ The Rock.

Spiritual “rebirth” at 27 years led me into the healing ministry and fuller understanding of the “footprints of Jesus”. In my work with mentally unwell people – so often the poor in spirit – among cherished times have been training seminars with clergy, much in the spirit of Vincent de Paul. For several years I served on the Churches Council for Health and Healing with the Reverend Stanley

Baxter, culminating in contribution to the House of Bishops' publication *A Time to Heal*. At that stage, a sangoma in South Africa, who knew nothing about me, discerned that I had a great healing guide, whom I took to

be St Raphael; and my MA studies in the theology of interreligious dialogue opened an entire new vista. I was delighted in 2014 to become a trustee for the Guild of Health, soon to re-unite with the Guild of St Raphael under the guidance of Stanley, and I now take up the vice-chairmanship sadly vacated by his death. The "guild" concept is so warming as a co-gender fellowship; a non-hierarchical society of companions (literally meaning those who take bread together) but it is no time now for a quietly witnessing family: We will be a loud voice for God, proclaiming his-and her divine eternal love and compassionate care breathing through all creation. Healing is collective and relational, not simply an internal individual event, and carries the responsibility of correct theological understanding. Our task is both widely practical and academic within a matrix integrating mystery and science.

A huge challenge within Christ's healing ministry is the inclusiveness of all peoples, of all faiths, and the upholding of justice and wellbeing throughout the Earth. A favourite mantra is St Theresa of Avila's "He has no hands but our hands to do his work today", and it is an honour to work through the Guild with other members of the Body of Christ to remove the veil, and the reproach of all peoples, towards fulfilment of the promise of total salvation: The True Healing indeed.

The Advent Journey with reflection, rest and retreat

1st - 3rd December 2017

A Guild retreat in partnership with Holy Rood House

Led by Revd Elizabeth Baxter and Revd Dr Gillian Straine

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Book Review

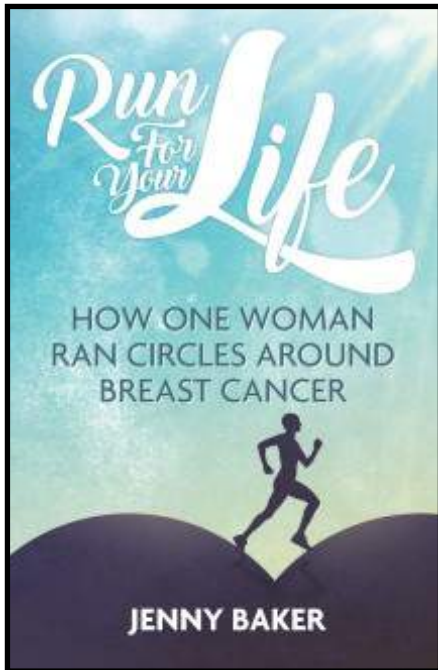
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Run for your Life: how one woman ran circles around breast cancer

Jenny Baker

Published 2016 by Pitch Publishing –
www.pitchpublishing.co.uk

Although ostensibly about an encounter with cancer, this is a love-letter to running, and this passion is the golden thread



throughout the narrative. It will appeal to those who find their meaning in sport, not just those reflecting on the experience of cancer. Baker thoughtfully offers her story, without suggesting there is a 'right' way, sharing simply what worked for her.

Jenny Baker works in the charity sector, is a blogger and a Christian but finds her greatest fulfilment in running. The book recounts her experiences in 2015 of planning to run a marathon in Palestine, through to cancer diagnosis, treatment, and coming out the other side. What marks Jenny out is that throughout her running gives her purpose and positivity, and she enthusiastically recounts how it kept going through

adversity. Remarkably, she ran to all her chemotherapy and radiotherapy sessions, and as well as experiencing physical benefits from this (for example, it meant nurses found her veins more

accessible), it also gave her the mental inspiration to garner some positivity each time, and something to aim for and to monitor her state of health. This holistic approach and awareness, on which she briefly philosophises, gives the most food for thought for those more interested in healing. Considering interconnectedness of body, mind and soul, she observes the separate names are mere convenience, and are actually intricately intertwined:

“What happens to my body has an impact on my mind and touches my spirit. To have the surface of your body cut by a knife is a violation... the impact goes deep and the wounds it leaves are many.” (pp 135-6)

Baker’s style is measured though more passionate on her beloved topic of running. Interestingly I experienced her more warmly and vividly in her blog extracts. She also clearly has a heart for social justice, evinced by her involvement in the Gaza marathon (though she wisely stays out of the politics). Her ties to Palestine arise from a work connection, but the book is the story of one year and has no opening chapter giving an introduction to her background, so the reader simply has to piece together information about her career, interests, family and situation. Personally I would have appreciated a little more for some context.

Baker is also a woman of faith. She wears this lightly. The first direct reference appears in chapter 4 when she honestly describes how she struggled to pray, post diagnosis. However, alongside the holistic musings, this underlying fact is subtly present. Baker has a quiet self-worth, a passion for equality and thought through beliefs (e.g. on feminism and justice). She is secure in her infinite value to God, and still wisely and humbly recognises that cancer discriminates against no one. It would be interesting to know how evident this would be to a non-believing reader. Yet maybe its subtlety is best. Actions not words seem most powerful in all the spheres of experience of her life. And what is most fascinating is the perspective, health and wholeness her running gives her. Early on she says she has “always been a better evangelist for running than for Jesus” but at the end, when in remission, she runs the Gaza Half Marathon, it seems fitting that she allows her run, “the rhythm of my feet... to be a prayer of gratitude”. So too, perhaps, is this book.

Jo Winn-Smith, Counsellor, Local Ministry Tutor in the Diocese of Guildford and Triathlete



HOLLAND HOUSE

in harmony with creation

“St Humanity - all are here, all are welcome”: 17th - 19th November, Friday 5pm to Sunday 4pm. Cost: £175.

A ground-breaking retreat for any who feel excluded from mainstream Church or who yearn for a more inclusive Church. Centred on Christian tradition, inspired by other faiths, moved by personal experience, participants will together create “St Humanity's” during the retreat - a unique opportunity to put ideas into practice.

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It's an individually guided retreat (one-to-one) that lasts for three days during which time the Warden of Holland House (Revd Ian Spencer) “sits” with you as your companion.

"Re-membering the past, learning to become present, preparing for the future" form the framework for time “on the hill”. Contact Ian to arrange dates and times. **Cost £260, limited bursaries available.**

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To book any of these: 01386 860330 or email reservations@hollandhouse.org or book on line <http://www.hollandhouseshop.org>

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12th-18th April

Seasons of the Soul

A creative, reflective and healing space following the Easter
Ceremonies,
and sharing festivity and trips across the Yorkshire Moors
with Revd Elizabeth Baxter and members of the community

Women Clergy Retreat

9th-11th May

Empowerment, Embodiment & Enchantment

with Revd Dr Carla Grosch-Miller (URC) and Revd Elizabeth Baxter

Living Spirituality Connections Retreat

9th-11th June

Creative Conversations

Creative arts, liturgy and reflective engagement
with Holy Rood House Community and members of the Steering Group

25th Anniversary Summer School

7th-10th July

An Ecology of Health

The Rt Revd Dr Rowan Williams

(Master of Magdalene College and Patron of Holy Rood House)

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