

Pause

News and views from the Quiet Garden Movement

Advent 2019


www.quietgarden.org



Inspiring reflection, invigorating action

The relationship between 'doing' and 'being' - the activist and contemplative - is a dynamic that may not be immediately obvious when thinking about Quiet Gardens. Yet the original vision for Quiet Gardens was developed by a group drawn to the contemplative dimension of the Gospel, who wished to explore the creative tension between action and contemplation, between involvement and withdrawal, between work and prayer. Indeed, one of the core beliefs of the Quiet Garden Movement is that, "Time spent in the natural environment will inspire our reflection and invigorate our action".

Taking 'time out' paradoxically can be just the thing we need to 'tune in' and 'take action'. The natural seasonal rhythms in nature revolve around activity and rest. It may appear that not much is happening in Autumn and Winter, but nature is actually preparing for the activity we see in Spring and Summer. Taking time to notice this and make space in our daily lives for the structure we find in the rhythms of the seasons

can help us create a healthy balance in our life, in the 'doing and being'.

Irrespective of where you stand in the debate about methods, it has been heartening to see the importance given

to meditation during the recent climate demonstrations by Extinction Rebellion and the School Strikes. These actions have often been fuelled by moments

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Photo: Annie Spratt on Unsplash



Focus on nature - a simple practice using nature as an 'anchor', for contemplation...

Close your eyes and take three mindful breaths, in and out – then open your eyes and look for something natural around you that attracts your eye. Place your attention on that object, for example, a tree, a flower, a rock, leaf, shape or pattern in the landscape. Spend 5 minutes like this, coming back to focus on the object each time you are distracted.

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of calm and meditation, with protestors taking time out in the heat of protest and confrontation with police to enable peaceful protest to be maintained.

In addition to the peace and energy we find in moments of calm in nature, we can also find it creates the space we need for inspiration, which may lead to those 'aha' moments that create new approaches to life and action.

Not only does research show that being outside is good for our souls and can make us happier, it also seems that we are moved to act by nature. All of which are vital for inspiring creative acts, and when looking at how we respond to the climate crisis, we surely need to be inspired to think creatively.

Quiet Garden spaces are there to help fuel and inspire you in your 'doing' as well as your 'being'. We must remember the quiet and calm found in Quiet Garden experiences lead to action and hope beyond the boundaries of the garden.

Matt Freer, Projects Manager /

Continue exploring these themes at www.quietgarden.org/advent2019

"Silence and solitude are precursors to service. They can seem to be escapist, but in fact a true silence and a true solitude lead to a full expression of care and love; so the call to love and heal is integrally bound up with the call to be hidden and alone."

Philip Roderick on the *Encountering Silence* Podcast, episodes 70 & 71
Listen at quietgarden.org/advent2019



Photo above: View from **Scargil House, Yorkshire**, on the recent *Exploring nature and silence* retreat.



Photo left: Quiet Garden Patron, The Rt Rev Graham Usher, was made **Bishop of Norwich** in the summer, and we are delighted he has affiliated the **Bishop's House Garden, Norwich**, as a Quiet Garden. This historic 4 acre city centre garden is one of the oldest in Norfolk and features woodland, lawns, a rose garden, a kitchen garden, a wildflower labyrinth, bee hives, and sculpture. It is open six times a year for quiet days, as well as for groups by arrangement.

book review

Stillness is the key by Ryan Holiday

Written by an American 'marketer and entrepreneur', this isn't the most traditional author to find in a Quiet Garden, yet this small book creatively presents a range of simple universal practices for finding peace in 'modern life' and will be relevant and engaging for many readers, perhaps especially those not accustomed to being in a Quiet Garden.

In three sections, Mind, Soul and Body, the book uses historical anecdotes and figures from politics, commerce, sports, and history, as well as religions, to explore 'stillness' and how it can be

"Be here. Be all of you. Be present. And if you've had trouble with this in the past? That's okay. That's the nice thing about the present. It keeps showing up to give you a second chance."

cultivated in our lives. It is an engaging and accessible resource for those new to contemplation and the practices of stillness and silence, making it a great gift for someone in need of finding calm, and also a worthy addition to a book shelf for visitors to a Quiet Garden to dip into.

Matt Freer / Stillness is the key – An ancient strategy for modern life is published by Profile Books (2019)

THERE IS EVERYTHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO

Tessa Holland reflects on 20 years of sharing **Wild Fortune Quiet Garden**.

It all started with a problem which became an opportunity. Twenty-five years ago, we moved with our young family to a spacious home at the edge of woodland near the South Downs in West Sussex. A plot of derelict land beside our home became available for purchase and we took the opportunity with a view to restore it to its former life as a woodland garden. And we had two questions. How do we do this? And how do we share it?

The cycle of the seasons and time spent in all weathers listening, looking and working with the lie of the land, the trees and plants answered the first question. A friend's question offered an answer to the second; have you heard of the Quiet Garden Movement?

This year is our 20th anniversary of being an affiliated Quiet Garden and through all the joys and sorrows that life brings, we continue to be deeply thankful to be part of this very gentle, vital and often hidden ministry of prayer and welcome. The quiet vibrancy of 'God's big book' of creation has taught us so much,

as has the presence and friendship of fellow pilgrims who have joined us over the years in response to the invitation of Jesus to 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest'.

Currently, we are living with a new challenge and the opportunity it presents. What to do with a large family home now that our children have moved away? Also, there is the prospect of neighbours either side of us beginning building projects in the next year or so. Where and how can we continue to live prayerfully as contemplatives and offer a quiet space of welcome to others? We are living these questions and challenges at the moment, both in Sussex and also in rural Wales, where we are listening afresh to the quiet raw beauty in the landscape and the rhythm of life of the people and place. The Welsh poet, R S Thomas in his poem 'Arrival' says, 'there is everything to look forward to'; and the mystery that is God beckons us forward in the quiet.

Tessa Holland /
wildfortuneblog.blogspot.com

book review

Sabbath – The hidden heartbeat in our lives by Nicola Slee

Wendell Berry's sequence of Sabbath poems inspires this deep reflection on the practice of Sabbath. Weaving her own words alongside Berry's prose, Nicola invites us to move away from our regime, our drivenness, our striving for success and embrace the Sabbath as a 'sanitizing, temporary reprieve'. She encourages us to see that we all need a buffer – time out – to create an alternative space for our sanity and spirituality to recover. Finding this space in nature is reflected in Berry's poem, 'I go among the trees':

*I go among the trees and sit still
All my stirring becomes quiet around
me like circles on water.*

The invitation into the woods – takes us into a place of not-doing, not-pursuing where we lie fallow, helping us to see that it is a gift, not an empty space. We are not machines – Nicola writes – just as mammals hibernate during the cold months and fields are left fallow to restore their nutrients, so we too need dormancy and rest. A review does not do this beautifully composed piece any justice – read it and be inspired to pause and take care.

Sarah Godson /

Sabbath – The hidden heartbeat in our lives is published by DLT Books (2019)



Photo: **The Secret Garden, Northallerton**, has recently been awarded "outstanding" by RHS Yorkshire in Bloom "it's your neighbourhood" category. The judges noted the garden was good for the spiritual health of individuals as well as their mental and physical health.

ANNUAL QUIET GARDEN DAY

We were delighted that the first **Annual Quiet Garden Day** in July was marked in many different ways by Quiet Gardens, with lots taking the opportunity to try something different. Instead of a sermon **Sue Nightingale**, invited her church to wander round the church garden in silence, looking at a particular leaf or flower as they did so. Since then she has been asked to run similar services and possibly create a Quiet Garden at the church. **Yew Tree House Quiet Garden** told us they are usually very low key on summer afternoons, with maybe six to ten people coming, but this year they advertised the day locally on notice boards, shops and in windows, opening from noon until 6.00 pm. As a result, they had a steady stream of people throughout the afternoon, around 40 people in total, offering good feedback and several having asked if they can come back. Next year the date will be **Sunday 19 July 2020**.

News...

We are grateful to **Sue Nightingale** who **retired as Chair of Trustees** for Quiet Gardens in November. She said, "I have held the post for the last eight years, a real privilege. You have all taught me so much. I have seen gardens in the USA, Australia and of course, here in Yorkshire. We became involved over 20 years ago when we opened our garden in Sheriff Hutton, N Yorkshire. Now retired, we plan to start a Quiet Garden at our church."

The garden at **St Mary's Church, The Boltons, London**, has reopened as a place of quiet and rest for many people who visit the church and for

many more passers-by who simply want to sit in a green space, to read, reflect, eat their lunch. Garden designer Non Morris followed a brief to include biblical plants where possible and to provide cut flowers. The Revd Jenny Welsh said, "*this project has achieved far more than the work we were initially considering. This is a significant milestones in the life of the parish... The garden is the only publicly accessible garden in the area.*"

Holy Rood House, N Yorkshire, have been given a once in a life-time opportunity to purchase the house and gardens from their landlords. Find out how to support them at www.holyroodhouse.org.uk.

New Quiet Gardens

Welcome to the following new Quiet Gardens affiliated in the last 6 months:

Africa

Forest Garden, Nairobi (Kenya)

The Story Garden, Prince Albert (S Africa)

England

Bishop's House Garden, Norwich

Breathing Space Coventry, Warwickshire

The Fellowship of Meditation, Dorset

Fulligrove House Garden, Bristol

St Barnabas Church, Woodford Green,

Essex

Warmth and Wonder, Herefordshire

Wales

Cae Mair Garden, Anglesey

For a full list of Quiet Gardens visit:

www.quietgarden.org/find-gardens



Quiet Garden Movement

sharing outdoor space for wellbeing and the inner journey

We nurture access to outdoor space for prayer, reflection and rest in a variety of settings, such as private homes, churches, schools and hospitals. Each space opens differently but is made available for everyone, wherever they find themselves. There are hundreds of locations around the world. Please support us to enable us to expand this work: www.quietgarden.org/donate


The Quiet Garden Trust is a UK registered charity – No. 1038528

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Printed on FSC certified paper using vegetable-based inks.