

# Still Waters News

28th May 2018



Welcome to the May Still Waters Newsletter.

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How quickly the months go around and the seasons come and go. Winter is just around the corner and the mornings are now crisp and cool. It seems only last week I sent the last newsletter. It seems too that underneath the changes and chances there is a deeper rhythm. I read once that the universe hums in B flat. It is a B flat way below the range humans can hear but it is there nonetheless. Sound is rhythm. Perhaps silence itself is deep rhythm.

On Saturday the 19th of May we held a Still Waters Quiet Day at St Joseph's Spirituality Centre, Batehaven. It was a peaceful, prayerful day with

times of silence, meditation and conversation over the midday meal. We also used the text about Elijah and the sound of sheer silence from 1 Kings 19, as a resource for lectio divina - contemplative reading. It was also a time when some folk who had been meditating together on the phone for the last 4 months actually meet each other in person! Our thanks to the generous sisters of St Josephs.

In this newsletter is an article that one of our email list people sent me on how silence is good for our health. Instead of simply giving you the link to the on-line article I have copied it in full. The link is also given. There is also a short reflection by Linda and another piece that came from another Still Waters friend. This one comes from the Centre for Action and Contemplation. It is about how we understand God and creation and how that effects are treatment of the natural world. With any contributions or content of this newsletter please *take what you liked and leave the rest.*

As I mentioned in the last newsletter I will add the contact details of those who are happy for their details to be made known more widely. Please see the section at the end of the newsletter. It is small at this stage, I suspect because people still have not let me know or if they have I have mislaid the information! If anyone is happy to share their details please let me know and I will add you to the contact list.

I also draw your attention to the changed prayers for morning meditation via conference call. The Monday, Wednesday and Friday 6.30 am rhythm continues plus there is the Wednesday 7.30 pm prayer and meditation. The prayers, the times and how to log-in are in this newsletter.

Our book study has begun. Please see the section below, on page on the book including questions for reflection for your own private reading or if you are going to join the study groups either in person or on-line.

Vision

To be a community of Christ totally attentive to seeking God

Intent

To create space for silence and attention in daily practice and communal life  
 To be an inclusive community of fellowship and formation  
 To serve others and creation in simplicity and gentle care

three core commitments

listening,  
 stability  
 conversion of heart

Our next quiet day will be on the 28th of July. We have had to make a change to the November quiet day. Instead of the 10th of November it will now be the 24th. My apologies but it was unavoidable. Please change your diaries! I will send out reminders etc for these days when needed. Linda is organising the Potato Point Retreat and that is coming together. Also, I know it is early stages but I will be booking another weekend retreat at the Abbey for early next year. We need to book a long way ahead to be assured of the venue. More information to follow.

Thank you so much to everyone for your presence, prayers and practice. Although we do not meet regularly the rhythm of God's silence and your openness to God's spacious and embracing grace strengthen and makes possible this community.

If you have anything you would like to contribute to the next newsletter, including suggested resources, your contributions can be sent to: [stillwaterscommunity@gmail.com](mailto:stillwaterscommunity@gmail.com).

With blessing, peace and love

Rebecca

ph 0450 960089

*The human heart is a capacity for God. Prayer, then, is the development of the art of communion. We are called to develop the disciplines required for loving and open communion with God, the world, others, and ourselves. We need to recover the art of communion and so recover the universe as God's, and rediscover our roots in God, in the world, in one another, and in our inner selves.*

- from Living in the Spirit by Rachel Hosmer and Alan Jones

*He calmed the storm to a silence: and the waves of the sea were still.*

*Then they were glad because they were quiet:  
and he brought them to the haven they longed for.*

Psalm 107

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## Don't Hang Up...

Linda

It takes a certain kind of faith when the line goes silent to trust that there is still someone there!

Linking up for prayer by phone is an innovation of the technology era that's enabling us to come together whilst remaining in our own homes. The phone hook-up though can feel tentative when the time for silence comes. And perhaps this is also an analogy for those stages in our faith life when it feels like God is absent or we've lost our connection. The journey of meditation will see us through many stages including that of *acedia* which describes a time of dryness in prayer; a time when we might easily believe that we've lost the connection for good and may as well hang up. It takes faith to stay and to trust that we will eventually be led through this stage of growth. We may look back with longing to a time when our initial enthusiasm has energised our prayer. In *acedia* however we know only dryness. This is when it is so vital for us to persevere; to trust that the line has not dropped out. When we stay we may find that we have lived into a connection that trusts silence more than words.



# Science Says Silence is Vital for Our Brains

By Azriel ReShel

## The Proof that Noise Hurts and Silence Heals

The value of silence is felt by everyone at some point in their life. Silence is comforting, nourishing and cosy. It opens us up to inspiration, and nurtures the mind, body and soul. Meanwhile, the madness of the noisy world is drowning out our creativity, our inner connection and hampering our resilience. Science is now showing that silence may be just what we need to regenerate our exhausted brains and bodies.

Studies show that noise has a powerful physical effect on our brains, causing elevated levels of stress hormones. Sound travels to the brain as electrical signals via the ear. Even when we are sleeping these sound waves cause the body to react and activate the amygdala, the part of the brain associated with memory and emotion, leading to the release of stress hormones. So, living in a consistently noisy environment will cause you to experience extremely high levels of these harmful hormones.

Interestingly, the word noise is said to come from the Latin word *nausia*, (disgust or nausea) or the Latin word *noxia*, meaning hurt, damage or injury. Noise has been linked to high blood pressure, heart disease, tinnitus and loss of sleep. We've all experienced the detrimental effects of noise pollution. Excessive noise can be a major affront to the physical senses and today, more and more people are identifying as highly sensitive and unable to function in chaotic and noisy environments. But now science has the proof not only that noise hurts, but also that silence heals. Noise and stress studies show that noise causes stress hormones to be released in the brain.

## The Effects of Silence

In 2011, the World Health Organisation (WHO) examined and quantified its health burden in Europe. It concluded that the 340 million residents of Western Europe (about the population of the United States), were losing a million years of healthy life every year, due to noise. WHO also said that the root cause of 3,000 heart disease deaths was due to excessive noise. A study by Professor Gary W. Evans from Cornell University, published in *Psychological Science*, charted the effects of airport noise on school children near Munich's airport. The study showed that children exposed to noise developed a stress response which actually caused them to ignore the noise. He found that the children ignored both the harmful noise of the airport, along with other more everyday noises, such as speech.

This study is among the strongest, probably the most definitive proof that noise—even at levels that do not produce any hearing damage—causes stress and is harmful to humans. – Professor Gary Evans. Scientists didn't actively set out to study the effects of silence, but instead discovered its benefits by accident. Silence first began to appear in scientific research as a control or baseline, against which scientists compare the effects of noise or music. Physician Luciano Bernardi studied the physiological effects of noise and music in 2006, making a startling discovery.

When the subjects of his study were exposed to the random stretches of silence in between the noise and music, they experienced a powerful effect. The two minute pauses were far more relaxing for the brain than the relaxing music or the longer silence that was in place before the experiment started. In fact, Bernardi's 'irrelevant' blank pauses became the most important aspect of the study. One of his key findings was that silence is heightened by contrasts.

### The brain responds to silence

The brain recognises silence and responds powerfully.

Many meditation teachers and practitioners can attest to this, and spiritual teachers advise students to take frequent meditative pauses throughout the day. Though we may think of silence as a lack of input, science says otherwise. The brain recognises silence and responds powerfully. Later research by a Duke University regenerative biologist, Imke Kirste, discovered that two hours of silence per day prompted cell development in the hippocampus, the brain region related to the formation of memory, involving the senses.

### Taking Time to Switch Off

According to the Attention Restoration Theory, when you are in an environment with lower levels of sensory input, the brain can 'recover' some of its cognitive abilities. With our digital world, our brains get less time to switch off. We are constantly processing enormous amounts of information. Research has shown the constant attention demands of modern life is placing a lot of stress on our prefrontal cortex—the part of the brain responsible for making decisions, solving problems and more. When we spend time alone in silence, our brains are able to relax and release this constant focus.

Researchers found that silence helps new cells to differentiate into neurons, and integrate into the system, and that when we experience silence, our brains are able to work at better understanding our internal and external environments. We can make sense of our lives and gain perspective, something that is vital for our overall wellbeing.

### Silence relieves stress and tension in the brain and body.

While noise creates stress, silence relieves stress and tension in the brain and body. Silence is replenishing and nourishes our cognitive resources. Noise makes us lose our concentration, cognitive powers and causes decreased motivation and brain functioning (as backed up by research into the effects of noise), but studies show that spending some time in silence can amazingly restore what was lost through exposure to excessive noise. The ancient spiritual masters have known this all along; silence heals, silence takes us deeply into ourselves, and silence balances the body and mind. Now science is saying the same thing.

The healing benefits of nature and stillness are well documented, but now we can add to this quest for health and wellbeing, the nourishment of our brains. The simple yet ancient experience of silence could be just the healing balm we need to quell our crazy modern lifestyle.

*Silence is an empty space. Space is the home of the awakened mind.* – Buddha

[https://upliftconnect.com/science-says-silence-is-vital-for-our-brains/?utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_medium=link&utm\\_campaign=uplift](https://upliftconnect.com/science-says-silence-is-vital-for-our-brains/?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=link&utm_campaign=uplift)

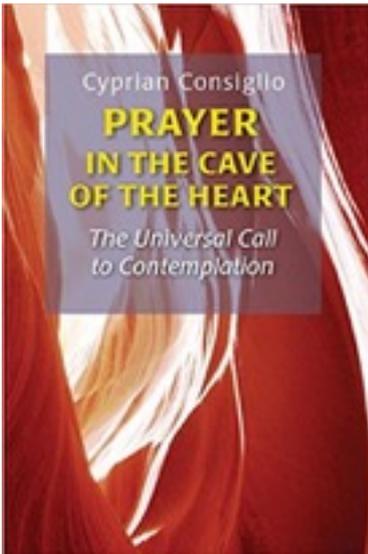
## Book Study

For those studying or reading the book....

Some quotes from the first chapter:

*"...the interior way goes against our grain as human beings. I often like to think of it as swimming upstream."* p1

*"We dispose ourselves, we stop, we listen, we wait, we watch, we make ourselves available, and we put ourselves in situations and environments that are conducive to prayer and meditation. And then we wait for the working of grace, like the bride awaiting the bridegroom"* p12



Questions for Reflection and sharing:

1. Was there something in the chapter that spoke to you particularly, in a helpful way?
2. Was there anything that jarred or you struggle to understand?
3. Does this chapter draw you closer into the cave of your heart? If so, how?

Please let me know if you would like to access the book study web page to either read or contribute. and I will give you the information and log-in details.

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## The Substance of God

From the Centre for Action and Contemplation - link below

*Many indigenous spiritualities, Franciscans, and Celts saw creation as good, as a theophany or revelation of God's very being, just as Genesis taught. How did Christianity come to be so divorced from nature? John Philip Newell (b. 1953), a poet and scholar known for his work in the field of Celtic spirituality, traces the roots and impact of the doctrine creatio ex nihilo. He offers an alternative, still orthodox, view of creation based on the writings of Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon:*

Irenaeus [130-202] taught that the whole of creation flows from the very "substance" of God. [1] All things carry within them the essence of the One. Irenaeus signaled his concern about the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo, creation out of nothing. This was to become the standard of Western Christianity's approach to creation. Creation would be viewed not as coming forth from the substance of God but as fashioned from afar by a distant Creator, made out of nothing from on high.

Irenaeus intuited that this would be a disaster, that to neutralize matter, to teach that creation does not come from holy substance, would lead to the abuse of creation. It was a convenient "truth" . [meaning] that the empire could do whatever it wished to matter. Matter was not holy. It had not come forth from the womb of God's Being. Rather it was made from nothing.

It was essentially devoid of sacred energy. So, every imperial mind could ravage the earth's resources with impunity. It could disparage the rights of creatures and subordinate the physical well-being of its subjects. Religion had become the accomplice of the state's subordination of the earth. It had sanctioned the separation of spirit and matter.

Irenaeus passionately taught that the substance of the earth and its creatures carries within itself the life of the Holy One. God, he said, is both "above us all and in us all." [2] God is both transcendent and immanent. And the work of Jesus, he taught, was not to save us from our nature but to restore us to our nature and to bring us back into relationship with the deepest sound within creation. In his commentary on the Prologue to St. John's Gospel, in which all things are described as spoken into being by God, Irenaeus sees Jesus not as speaking a new word but as uttering again the first word, the sound at the beginning and the heart of life. He describes Jesus as "recapitulating" the original work of the Creator, as articulating again what we have forgotten and what needs to be repeated, the Sound from which all life has come. [3] Jesus re-sounds the beginning. He resounds with what is deepest in the matter of the universe.

The Christ story is the universe story. The birth of the divine-human child is a revelation, a lifting of the veil to show us that all life has been conceived by the Spirit in the womb of the universe, that we are all divine-human creatures, that everything that has being in the universe carries within itself the sacredness of Spirit.

References:

[1] Irenaeus of Lyons: The Early Church Fathers, ed. Robert Grant (Routledge: 1997), 150.

[2] Ibid., 151.

[3] Ibid., 169.

John Philip Newell, A New Harmony: The Spirit, the Earth, and the Human Soul (Jossey-Bass: 2011), 12-14, 16.

<https://cac.org/the-substance-of-god-2018-03-13/>

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NASA image....



# Meditation & Prayer

On **Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning at 6.30 am** and on **Wednesday evenings at 7.30 pm** the community meditates together. This happens via a conference call. Currently around 6 to 10 people phone in. All are welcome.

On the last page is a simple outline of the prayers.

How to call in:

Option 1

Call 08 95203110

When prompted enter the access code - 8265919 - and follow the prompts

Option 2

Go to the web site [www.freeconference.com](http://www.freeconference.com)

Click on the "Join Meeting" tab and enter the access code - 8265919 - and follow the prompts

NB: This only works with the latest version of the Google Chrome web browser.

Option 3

Download the "freeconference" app from your app store

It is orange with a white Asterix

Once you have installed it and set it up you can enter the call by opening the app, going to the bottom of the screen and simply entering the access code - 8265919 - and follow the prompts.

**Very importantly, if your phone plan does not include national long distance calls you will be charged by your telecommunications provider. However, using the 'freeconference' app or website only uses your internet data.**

Please be on-line by 6.25 am or 7.25 pm.

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## Administration and Support

If you would like to make a donation to the parish, in support of Still Waters, that would be very appreciated. Currently the parish of Moruya financially support the community so any contribution would be gratefully received but it is **not** required.

We have the bank details below as some people have asked that they be available.

Please give only if you feel called to and are able to do so.

The bank details for direct transfer and debit are below:

**Bank Details:**

National Australia Bank (NAB)

Name: Anglican Church of Australia, Parish of Moruya

BSB: 082 739

Acc: 509812159

Please note "Still Waters" in the note/subject line.

Thank you!



# Upcoming Dates

## Quiet Days

The quiet days will be an opportunity to be in peace and silence but to also share a meal, discussion, meditation and prayer.

Saturday between 10.00 and 4.00 pm.  
Joseph's Convent, David St, Batehaven NSW.

28th of July

24th of November

September Retreat  
31st August to 2nd of September  
Potato Point

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## Community Contact Details

Rebecca Newland  
Linda Chapman  
Mary Carse

[rdland@mac.com](mailto:rdland@mac.com)  
[opensanctuary.tilba@gmail.com](mailto:opensanctuary.tilba@gmail.com)  
[marycarse@gmail.com](mailto:marycarse@gmail.com)

0450960089  
0422273021  
0402618772



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## A Night Prayer

In this sacred darkness I sit in silence.  
Open in this moment, I trust the darkness.  
Waiting in trust, growing in trust.  
Waiting and trusting the sacred darkness.  
I surrender  
I surrender  
I surrender

*Macrina Wiederkehr*

# Morning and Evening Prayers



## *Morning Meditation*

The Spirit of the One who creates the universe dwells silently in our hearts and is loving to all.

Glory be to God, source of all being, eternal Word and Holy Spirit as in the beginning, so now and forever. **Amen**

The night has passed and the day lies open before us: Let us pray with one heart and mind.

May we listen deeply with the ear of our heart and may we attend to the present moment in peace and gratitude.

### *Reading*

#### *20 mins silent meditation*

The blessings of heaven  
the blessings of earth,  
the blessings of sea and sky.  
On those we love this day  
on every one  
the gift of heaven,  
the gifts of earth,  
the gifts of sea and sky.

We pray for the earth  
We pray for the people of the world  
We pray for those in any need, sickness or trouble  
We pray for ourselves, our friends and our families

May we be blessed with peace  
and be channels of peace  
**Amen**

## *Evening Meditation*

The Lord of all grant us a quiet night and a perfect end. **Amen**

Glory be to God, source of all being, eternal Word and Holy Spirit as in the beginning, so now and forever. **Amen**

The day is now past and the night is at hand Let us pray with one heart and mind

May we listen deeply with the ear of our heart and may we attend to the present moment in peace and gratitude.

### *Reading*

#### *20 min meditation*

Lord it is night.  
The night is for stillness.  
Let us be still in the presence of God

The night is dark.  
Let our fears of the darkness of the world  
and our own lives rest in you.  
The night is quiet.  
Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,  
all dear to us,  
and all who have no peace.  
The night heralds the dawn.  
Let us look forward expectantly to a new day,  
new joys  
new possibilities.  
In your name we pray. **Amen**