Living Spirituality Connections
Resources for deeper living

Autumn 2026 Newsletter

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The new Feast Day of Creation on 1 September

By Deborah Colvin



In 1925, a jubilee year of reconciliation and forgiveness, Mussolini became Prime Minister of Italy, Hitler published Mein Kampf, and Stalin was consolidating control in the Soviet Union. The world was once again teetering on the edge, less than a decade after the horrors of the Great War. In response, Pope Pius XI, a prolific writer of encyclicals (particularly on social justice and the dangers of rampant capitalism) pitted the weight of the Roman Catholic church firmly against dictatorship – and established a new feast day. The Feast of Christ the King, celebrated on the Sunday before Advent, was the centrepiece of church resistance and the first significant change to the liturgical year for 250 years. It strongly asserted that 'Christ has dominion over all creatures, a dominion not seized by violence nor usurped, but by his essence and by nature' (so says Cyril of Alexandria).

I have never paid one iota of attention to the Feast of Christ the King until this year. I knew nothing about its history and context, it seems remote, anachronistic, and I'm not good at processing 'dominion' language. But a century after its inception, I'm beginning to get it. A sign of resistance, hope and faithfulness, a profound statement of identity in the global context of the time, was embedded in the church year. And now, in 2026, as another jubilee year ends (this one themed as a year of pilgrim hope), in the midst of crisis on a scale never before experienced by humanity, the worldwide family of churches, east and west, has read the signs of the times and together established a new feast. This one is variously called the 'Feast of Creation in Christ', or 'Feast of Creation' or simply 'Creation Day' and is henceforward celebrated on the first Sunday of September.

The churches have done this together, asserting that we have more in common than divides us, most especially our one common home. This has not happened out of the blue, nor has it been simply tacked on to an already heavily-encrusted calendar (a charge sometimes levied against the Season of Creation). Patriarch Bartholomew in the Eastern Orthodox church has been calling the world to wake up for over 35 years. Pope Francis published 'Laudato si' in 2015, spawning a movement of ecological conversion. There have been numerous ecumenical conferences, appropriately held in Assisi, home of St Francis, whose Canticle of Creation we often sing. Reams of theology have been written and argued, sustaining conversation across difference. And in July 2026, accompanied by significant theological effort, the Church of England General Synod formally adopted the feast day. As in 1925, a sign of resistance, hope and faithfulness, a profound statement of identity in global context, has been planted in the church year.

So what does this mean, for individual churches, denominations and a worldwide faith? There is a special colour assigned for the altar cloth and clergy apparel (it's green, so that helps!) but we'll need more than that if the feast is not to roll on by each year, gathering theological dust and a few specialist prayers, like Christ the King for many of us. Sometimes

at St James's we talk about being the early church, Christianity being a mere 2000 years old, making it clear that we have a job of growing and especially maturing to do. Faithful maturing in an era of ecological breakdown that impacts us all, but the most vulnerable, human and other-than-human, first and worst. This Season of Creation we leant into liturgy, pilgrimage and conversation as ways into this growthfulness, affirming that creation is ongoing and that we are intimately bound up in its flourishing. Our framework was 'Encounter at the Wellhead', reflecting this year's international theme of Living Water, and growing out of the 'Wellspring' project which we are exploring this year.



Wells have been places of renewal, the centre of communities, sites of encounter and changing-of-minds for centuries. At the Sunday eucharist on 6th Sept, we listened to our parish wells themselves, through a sound installation based on their resonances, as interpreted by composer Sze Ying Chan. Imagine columns of air and water held in the well shafts vibrating as water rises and falls in response to oceans and the moon, or the feet of millions of Londoners in the streets above. Each well has its own pitch and harmonics, and so is able to sing.

Acts of pilgrimage everywhere are opening up new horizons and relationships in response to a suffering planet, whether it's a 500 mile walk to a COP conference, or a short stroll to sit with a local river. In the past, rogation pilgrimages have delineated boundaries, marking the edges of the parish. This season we have walked beyond our boundaries in search of coalitions and friendship with our neighbours in the diocese and the Thames watershed. We followed the trail of wells and their associated churches to St Martin in the Fields (which has a secret modern borehole!) and east to St Olave's Hart St (with its medieval well in the crypt). How can parishes and communities respond together as our common home is ever more damaged and traumatised? Come along to join the conversation.

In Norfolk recently I spent time in the parish of Reepham which abuts 2 other parishes at a 3-way corner. In medieval times all three chose to build their churches and churchyards hard up against each other rather than in the middle of their respective lands. They literally

had each other's backs and I am enjoying the metaphor very much. Today two of the churches still remain with a solidly built connecting room between them. And yes, there were wells to facilitate conversation.

Deborah Colvin was born 318ppm. (This number signifies the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The current concentration is 417ppm, a staggering increase over my lifetime.) Deborah is part of the Earth Justice team at St James's Piccadilly, and is an educator and environmental activist.

This article was first published as a blog on the Earth Justice website: https://earthjustice.sjp.org.uk/

"We understand Earth Justice at St James's as rooted in inter-relationships with the whole world and all its human and more-than-human inhabitants. We aim to live and act from a place of belonging, honouring all our fellow-beings. We value contemplation and encounter as we continually discern how we as a community, in partnership with others, are called to respond in this time of climate and ecological crisis."

Living Water – an address for the Feast of Creation

a potential turning point for Christianity

By Diane Pacitti



This is the first **Feast of Creation.** The first new Church feast since Christ the King was instituted in 1925. Just as that was a response to the power struggles during and after the First World War, this comes at a significant time, a time of ecological crisis.

That is the grim context. But I see this as a potential turning point for Christianity. For centuries, the church, certainly in the global north, has pointed heaven-ward, separating us from the earth.

But now there is this new feast, which is part of a groundswell of change: new science, new theology, new ways of living and seeing.

Let us focus on living water, the theme of this year's Season of Creation. I would like to take the wonderful passage from *Ezekiel,* and reverse it, suggest a counter-flow. The *Ezekiel* passage shows water flowing out from the temple to irrigate, nurture and create life. But suppose we imagine the energy and properties of the river flowing into the church to renew it?

The theological document accompanying the Season of Creation states that the created world is like a 'book' offering knowledge: 'everything and everywhere is full of God's immanent and repletive presence.' We can learn about God from a moss. A bird can inspire our Christian worship. So what can we learn about God from the properties of water? How can we let this life-source flow into our hearts and minds, cleansing and renewing our spiritual practice?

First let us wonder at this amazing substance. Let us glory in its 'any-angled light' to quote Philip Larkin.

What is this substance that that has no shape but takes many shapes, that is part of us but runs through our fingers? This substance that reflects the faraway moon, yet draws our minds into unseen depths. Just a trickle can wear away rock or give life to a plant. This substance that seems to play with light, to delight in creating sounds. Once we become aware of water, we see a tree as a fountain; a flower becomes a stunning sculpture, mostly shaped from water. And our own bodies, are tributaries of the huge water-womb that originally covered the earth. All life depends on it, but it doesn't even have its own colour.

What could the properties of water teach us as a Church?

Water is movement. We never look in the same river twice.

It is often said that God is not a noun, but a verb: a dynamic process of entering and transforming. God as Trinity is a life-giving flow of energy that flows through the earth and cosmos. This creative act is continuous, as the theology underpinning the Season of Creation makes clear. Evolution has shown us that everything on the earth, including us, is in a state of becoming. As a church, we need to embrace that movement, that continual openness to being transformed.

So how does this relate to water?

Let's take one example: the path of a stream as it widens and deepens to a river, like Ezekiel's river. It is in intimate contact with the terrain, deeply responsive as, inch by inch, it adjusts to an obstruction, changes course and speed, responds to a rock and tree. You cannot say that either the river or the land has made this water-path: it is a dance of co-creation. So where does the river begin and end?

I think of how Jesus walked the land, his feet in contact with dusty track and wheatfield and city street. He met people on the way and understood their quirks, their stubborn individuality. He responded to each differently. And their lives and identities changed: he became part of them, and they became part of his story.

Sometimes the church strands itself in a superior high position, dispensing dogma and judgement from above. But the path for the Church is to walk with, to interact with sensitivity, to be open to being changed ourselves. An example would be how the Church, having ruthlessly suppressed indigenous peoples, seeing itself as the teacher, is now beginning to learn from them about the gifts and the sacredness of the earth. And, attentively and prayerfully, we need to encounter, not just fellow-humans, but other beings in the earth and cosmos, and to be open to being changed by them.

In the *Canticle of the Creatures*, St. Francis speaks of Sister Water, so very useful and humble. Unlike fire, which rises, water gravitates to the lowest places. Ezekiel's river makes fresh, and produces leaves for healing. Water cleanses and purifies and serves. No wonder St. Francis speaks of Sister Water, because women traditionally have done the caring roles.

It is significant that on the night before his death, Jesus performs a humble act of service with a bowl of water. He surrendered his role as teacher and leader and bent low, washing away dirt and sweat, choosing to do the task of a servant.

The church has recognised the need to serve and nurture other humans, but has continued to treat the natural world as if its purpose was to service us. Our next step is to surrender our false role of dominance and, humbly and patiently, to tend the earth we have desecrated.

Finally, returning to Ezekiel's river, we can learn from it because it is generative, life-giving. It is a whole inseparable community: river, fish, trees, humans.

If we let the properties of the river flow into our lives and worship, we also will be generative and life-giving within our communities. We will touch so many lives that it will be impossible to say where the church community begins and ends. Worship will flow outside the walls of the church. It will feel natural, in every sense of the word, to encounter God

with trees and water and sky, as we do in Eco Contemplative Liturgies at St. James's. And, to paraphrase the prophet Amos, "Justice will roll on like a river, and righteousness like a never-failing stream."



Sara Mark's image of living waters flowing out of the Grinling Gibbons font where William Blake was baptised.

This article was an address given on 1 September at the Sanctuary service at St Pancras Euston Road. For more writing by Diane, go to https://earthjustice.sjp.org.uk/

Diane Pacitti was Poet in Residence during Bradford Cathedral's Centenary, producing the collection *Dark Angelic Mills.* She contributes poetry and other writings to Earth Justice projects at St. James's Church, Piccadilly. A Trustee of the William Blake Society, she is planning for the 2027 bicentenary. *Divided: how we separated ourselves from the earth*, the first book of a new poetry trilogy, will be published next year.

Staying Human in an Age of Acceleration

A Meditation by Rev. Cameron Trimble

"How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives." — Annie Dillard



One of the first things pilots learn during turbulence is not to overcorrect the aircraft. When the air gets rough, new pilots often react to every bump and sudden movement. They hold the controls too tightly and make quick corrections. But the more they fight the turbulence, the less stable the plane becomes.

Experienced pilots handle things differently. They make small, steady adjustments. They trust their instruments, stay focused, and do not let fear take over. This part of my aviation training came to mind this week while I was in Maine, working with a group of leaders who were trying to figure out how to lead well right now. Our conversations kept coming back to the same point: the biggest challenge we face is not just about strategy. It is also spiritual, psychological, and relational.

How do we remain steady in a world engineered to keep us reactive?

How do we stay human in an age of acceleration?

Modern life rarely rewards taking time to reflect. Instead, it values speed, instant results, productivity, being seen, outrage, and always being available. The faster we go, the more valuable we seem. Even our attention is bought and sold by systems that benefit from keeping us overstimulated and off balance.

Today, many of us take in more information in one day than people used to see in weeks or months. Our minds and bodies were not made for this. We live at a speed that scatters our attention, makes it hard to reflect, and slowly pulls us away from our inner lives.

The desert mothers and fathers knew something we are just starting to remember. Almost seventeen hundred years ago, they left behind the fast pace and ambition of the Roman Empire, not because they hated the world, but because they feared losing themselves in it. They saw that constant noise makes it almost impossible to find clarity.

Thomas Merton once wrote, “The rush and pressure of modern life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence.” I think he was right.

Violence is not always physical. Sometimes it shows up as feeling scattered, worn out, constantly distracted, unable to rest, or missing silence. Over time, we can lose our ability to feel beauty, grief, compassion, or wonder. That is why taking time for reflection is so important right now. It is not about escaping or putting on a show of being spiritual. It is about resisting the pressure to become like machines ourselves.

While we were together in Maine, we talked openly about how we need to change our lives. We need to bring back regular habits of prayer, meditation, study, meaningful work, friendship, play, and rest. We need to stop seeing exhaustion as a sign of importance and remember that wisdom rarely comes from a frantic mind. As I get older, I am more and more sure that these habits are not just nice extras. They are ways to survive.

The Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh often warned that without mindfulness we become carried away by our fears, anger, and despair. Howard Thurman similarly wrote that we must learn to center down because there is “something in every one of you that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine in yourself.” That line has stayed with me for years. The sound of the genuine.

Under all the noise of the world, under the constant push to react, and beneath the swirl of headlines, technology, and worry, there is still a deeper wisdom inside us that wants to be heard. But we cannot hear it unless we get quiet enough to listen. Maybe this is part of what we are being called to do now, not just decide what we believe, but change how we live so that wisdom has space to grow in us.

We do not have to react right away to every moment. Not every rough patch needs a big correction. Sometimes our job is simply to stay steady, to breathe, to pray, to rest, and to move slowly enough to notice the beauty in the world that God has given us. Maybe that is a kind of courage, too.

We are in this together.

Rev **Cameron Trimble** through writing, teaching, and strategic guidance, helps leaders, congregations, and institutions find their footing when the ground is shifting. https://camerontrimble.com/ and https://convergenceus.org/

The Work that Reconnects –

an activism rooted in regenerative practices

By Lynne Iser



With my back to the trees I looked up at an enormous bulldozer, whose job was to harvest the rainforest, wondering, "Who do I think I am?" – when I heard a voice from within, "I am a part of the rainforest, recently emerged into the form of a human protecting my trees." These words by John Seed have inspired me to imagine that I too can inhabit my eco-self as I expand my consciousness building resilience to confront our world.

I began to notice our world unravelling in my early 60s when the impacts of climate change, racism, wealth inequality, and other issues became impossible to ignore. Having grown up in the socio-economic boom and security of the 1950's, I was confused – until I encountered **The Work That Reconnects**, rooted in the wisdom and practices developed by Joanna Macy.

To "reconnect" is an ongoing, life-long practice to undo the "cultural marinade" of the industrial growth society, that has trained us to prioritize our individual needs over those of the community – our kinship bonds, safety nets and the web of life - "the inescapable network of mutuality" spoken of by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. Joanna Macy conceived of the Great Turning as a movement of people turning towards ways of doing, thinking, and being that support the flourishing of life and away from behaviours and ways of doing that can cause harm.

Living through this time of unravelling, I find myself attracted to an activism rooted in regenerative practices that will support future generations. The chaos and destruction that I am witnessing is calling me to deepen my commitment to "shift in consciousness" and to prioritize nurturing life, merging my doing with a deeper sense of who I am – my being.

Our Earth is alive and interconnected. The kinship systems understood by indigenous cultures are now being affirmed by new scientific research. Suzanne Simard describes the underground mycorrhizal fungal networks that support the life of the forest, connecting the plant roots, enabling communication, the exchange of nutrients and the resilience that is needed so that trees can adapt their behaviours, recognize neighbours, remember the past, elicit warnings and cooperate to care for each other!

Like the trees in the forests, we are interconnected beings – dependent upon each other and our Earth to live and to thrive. My consciousness shifts as I imagine being a part of the human mycorrhizal network, a node in my social web, communicating, caring and sharing with others to create a thriving and just world. As I sit in my garden, I inhale the oxygen that the plants breathe out, and the plants breathe in the carbon dioxide that I breathe out. We are in partnership – creating the "breath of life" that sustains us both.

I practise breathing in the deep blue of our atmosphere, the gases and life forms that extend into space, remembering that I am made of stardust and placing myself in the ongoingness of time. Breathing out, I connect with the other beings with whom I share this planet. I breathe in through the crown of my head, and breathe out through my heart space – sharing my bounty, my blessings, and even my pain – remembering that I am not alone in my pain or confusion, my creativity, generosity or love for this beautiful life that I am experiencing.

Reb Zalman taught that our extended life span demands an expanded consciousness while Joanna Macy gave us the gift of seeing with new eyes how we are interconnected beings within the web of life. We are blessed by their wisdom and these practices that can help us develop a wider sense of self and bring forth a future that is just and thriving for all beings.

I am Gaia, emerging in the form of Lynne. What does Earth, my mother being, need me to be and do to honour my roots?

Lynne Iser, CSL, is a prominent activist, teacher, and leader in the field of conscious aging and environmental justice and **Certified Sage-ing Leader**, a credential designated by Sage-ing International https://sage-ing.org/ for professionals trained to facilitate spiritual eldering and conscious aging programmes. Working alongside Rabbi Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, she was the founding Executive Director of the Spiritual Eldering Institute—the foundational organization that later evolved into Sage-ing International.

A Way of Wisdom for Today

Developed by CANA, Christians Awakening to New Awareness

Spiritual teachings have an underlying wisdom, which becomes expressed in different terminology at different times. A Way of Wisdom seeks to re-language the traditional religious teachings into terminology more suited to the 21st century, drawing on more scientific and psychological understandings. The underlying wisdom hopefully remains the same. In our busy daily lives, we tend to forget there is an unseen dimension of Spirit emanating from the Source of all Life. It is the main teaching of most religions. This Life undergirds all that exists, holds it in being – it could even be called 'Being-ness'. Many call this Beingness or Source by the term 'God'.

Science now tells us that all is energy and everything is deeply interconnected. There are patterns to existence that run through the whole universe at all levels. Insights from quantum science tell us that foundational to it all is consciousness. Our individual consciousness is part of a greater whole, like drops of water are to the ocean. This greater universal consciousness is called the ground of being by some, which links to spiritual understandings of the Source. Raising our awareness of this One Life Source is the main thrust of all spiritual paths, and our potential for creativity and collaboration are far greater than we often realise. We live within an intelligent universe of consciousness and we can align ourselves with a collective movement within humanity, trusting that a new era is possible and working with others to bring this into being.

We are all expressions of that One Life, and so there is a unity linking us all. Knowing this, we can look at the human being to see the essence of that One Life expressed in humanity. We see that essential to our humanity is to love and be loved. This love is something deeper that gives us value and brings us alive. We need first to love ourselves in order to enter the fullness of who we can be, and then we can love others more fully. This is not a narcissistic act, it means have a healthy respect for our own life, without which we cannot fully enter into loving others. This love manifests in acting with kindness, compassion and goodwill, which is the golden rule, enshrined in every faith tradition- 'Do unto others as you would have them do to you'.

Our awakening to that One Life, that Source, which many of us call God, is a major step for any human being. It opens the path to transformation, to changing the way we think, to healing past traumas and emotional wounds, and to a freedom that can bring joy and peace. The Spirit or energy of the One Life within us moves our consciousness to a higher

vibration, and more compassion, understanding and kindness begin to flow. We discover new potentials within us. Each of us as individuals then helps to raise the consciousness of the whole of humanity, little by little. We may make mistakes, we may mess up, but knowing forgiveness can help us to move on and persevere. Slowly, we learn to listen to our inner awareness and intuition, and we begin to see that the way forward is through living with good-will towards all, wanting the best outcome in any situation. We build hopefulness and optimism for the future.

We, as humanity, are all on a journey over aeons, gradually evolving into a higher way of being. This journey is guided by the evolutionary force of Love, drawing and attracting, bringing higher and deeper connections. We are all part of an immense cosmic dance in time, ebbing and flowing, but gradually nurturing us onward. Awakening to this universal process, guided by Love and Good-will, is the Way of Wisdom ingrained in this One Life in which we live, move and have our being.

CANA Core Group, 2026, www.cana.org.uk *"For 30 years CANA has been exploring our journey of awakening to a new understanding of the original teachings of Jesus. Now science, planetary wide connections and the mystical traditions are converging to bring us recognition of both our unity within a rich diversity and the essential underpinning of love as the basis for all life."*

Summary of the above article

While the teachings of Jesus the Christ were made in the context of his time, there were also messages for us today. Examples of this are below. Each of these is rooted in the New Testament and teachings of Jesus the Christ.

1. All life is a vast oneness sourced by the Creative Source of all, so all expressions of this one life are deeply interconnected.

2. The Creative Source is life itself and is all loving. So love is the foundation of all life and is the glue that connects us all.

3. Hence we are asked to hold love in our hearts for all. We can express that in goodwill and positive regard.

4. Each of us is an expression of the divine, enclothed in a body.

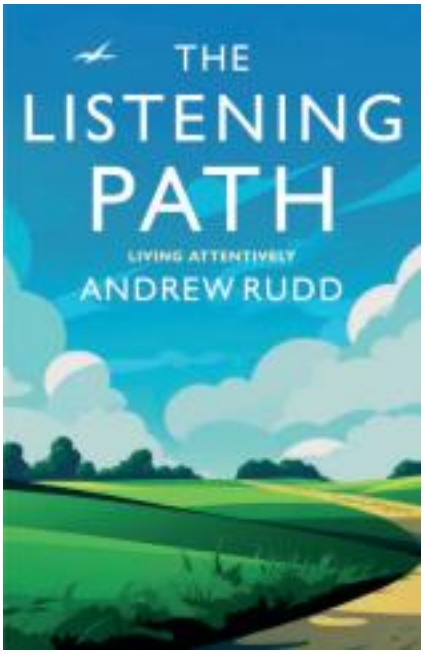
5. Thus we too have the creative potential of the divine and can undertake and become more than we can possibly imagine.

6. As we now know, all life is energy vibrating at different frequencies and beyond this dense third dimensional realm there are many dimensions to explore and many to experience.

7. We live in the Divine flow by forgiving and releasing grudges and by healing our inner hurts.

The Listening Path.

Living Attentively



The Listening Path is a book for the attentive companion, the thoughtful observer, the restless seeker, or the curious soul. Blending reflection and poetry, it reveals how the simple, everyday act of listening can be a spiritual practice, and become a path of connection and presence, and how moments of stillness can open us to wonder and deeper meaning. It explores how the ordinary practices of pausing and hearing, welcoming and reflecting, can help us discover a richer spirituality in our relationships, in the world around us, and in the sacred silence that holds all things. This book is not about loud declarations, grand plans, or sweeping narratives. It's about the quiet byways, the whispers, pauses, echoes, and the spaces between words. Every page is an invitation to listen more deeply—to yourself, to others, and to the still, small voice of God.

'Andrew Rudd writes with openness, wisdom insight, and with practical humility. He is a great listener himself and very attentive to the smallest details of the natural world which become signs of God's presence among us. This is a book which through short beautiful reflections helps us to enlarge our own souls and to really listen again.**' Richard Carter,** author of **100 Reasons for Living.**

Dr. Andrew Rudd is a poet, spiritual director, retreat leader, and lay worker in the UK church.

Personal reflections on Christian prayer

By Penelope Turton



In the ‘Lord’s Prayer’, Jesus responds to his disciples’ question as to how they should pray by offering a framework which seems to centre around certain key principles:

--Relationship (approaching God as a loving "Father").
--Reverence: (honouring God’s name and will above human desires).
--Provision: (asking for daily needs and sustenance to be met)
--Forgiveness (seeking pardon for sins while committing to forgive others)
--Protection (asking for deliverance from temptation and evil).
--Praise (glory, power and majesty)

Elsewhere Jesus taught that prayer should be grounded in unwavering faith: trusting God’s goodness allows one to overcome obstacles and see prayers answered. He promised that the power of belief is such that: “Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.” Jesus also stressed the importance of sincerity, warning against using empty, repetitive phrases, reminding his followers that God already knows what they need.

Paul amplifies some of this teaching, seeing prayer as the ultimate way to connect with God and urging believers to pray constantly and in all circumstances, maintaining an ongoing, connected awareness of God throughout the day. He promises that this practice results in a peace that guards the heart and mind. Recognising that we often do not know how or what to pray, he reassures us that the Holy Spirit intercedes to help us align our prayers with God's will.

Common ground with other faith traditions.
There is a great deal of common ground between this teaching and that of other faith traditions, e.g.

In Hinduism, prayer (*prarthana*) is seen as fostering a relationship with the divine, serving as a spiritual bridge between devotees and God, helping them to surrender their worries and align their actions with cosmic duty (*dharma*).

In Islam, prayer *(Salah)* also aims to maintain a constant connection with the Creator. As the second pillar of faith, it serves as direct daily communication with Allah.

While Buddhism is a non-theistic religion, prayers are still directed towards seeking connection with Buddha or Bodhisattvas (enlightened beings dedicated to helping others) in order to invoke qualities like wisdom and compassion.

Different emphases between traditions

In Hinduism, rather than merely asking for material solutions prayer aims to melt the ego and still a restless mind. The devotee seeks purification of consciousness and spiritual enlightenment. Gratitude for blessings received is also emphasised.

In Islam, devotees have a sacred duty to manifest humility and to approach God in prayer several times daily to seek spiritual growth.

Buddhist prayer is not a request to a creator deity for favours or intervention. Consisting largely of aspirations and resolutions (known as pranidhana), it functions as a psychological and spiritual tool for mind transformation. Its primary purpose is to cultivate qualities like compassion and humility, direct one's energy toward positive goals, and reaffirm the path to enlightenment.

Discussion points

- What are we seeking when we pray? How do we relate to the core principles in the Lord's Prayer?

-Petitionary prayer. The Lord's Prayer speaks only of our most basic need
- for **bread,** material (and spiritual?). How does this fit with the petitionary prayers we hear week by week in church? Do our liturgies too often slip into vain repetition or excessive requests?

- Should we be looking to God to 'fix' our problems?

- Is there a gulf between the promises of prayer (ask, seek, knock) and our lived experience?

Some personal reflections.

Suffering is 'hard-wired' into Creation. It is a normal part of the state of being, much of it without resolution. We know that fear, grief, loss, and physical, social and psychic pain are part of being alive. Witness the food chain, wholly 'natural'. God appears to be comfortable with suffering.

It seems God does not grant wisdom to those in authority, heal the warring nations, bring help to those whose lives are devastated by genocide, poverty, exploitation, brutality, or the consequences of ecological collapse – or even save Creation from the existential destruction currently being wrought by our species. God seldom grants our petitions, however urgent or seemingly worthy. Or, if a petition does miraculously seem to be granted, we are left to wonder why we should have been so blessed when others equally or more worthy are left to suffer or die.

Is it **our** job, not God's, to fix our problems and cease our destructive ways?

My present thinking is that our task in prayer is to seek to live our lives working with rather than against the grain of what we have been given by God and taught through Jesus. I can only do that by trying to still my body and mind, silence my clamorous thoughts, wait intently in the deep quiet to discern God's will, perceive God's ways and feel God's energy. And somehow to convert my petitions into opportunities to seek to bring about the resolutions we fervently seek.

Penelope Turton is a social scientist and a member of the Earth Justice Team at St James's Piccadilly, and of Living Spirituality Connections' Journeying Together group.

The above piece formed the basis for a discussion at the Journeying Together Group, which meets monthly as part of Living Spirituality Connections. A few months later, **Beatrice Hillman** added her thoughts on the topic of **healing prayer.** These resonated with me (Petra, Editor), as someone with the role of receiving and sending on prayer requests.



After our conversation about prayer today, and whether people are actually healed through prayer, I found myself thinking on the way home about the waves of loving and healing energy that prayer opens up. Of course prayer doesn't heal everything. But I do KNOW that other peoples' prayers CAN give a sense of being held, or supported or carried or of softness, of calmness, or even of acceptance. And THOSE things can be felt and can have a profound effect on the nature of the person's suffering - and then perhaps even, on the course of the disease/sickness.

Beatrice Hillman is a meditator, retired from various pastoral care roles, having taught in the Far East and in London.

A Prayer For Living in Turbulent Times

By Rev Cameron Trimble

God of still waters and steady skies,

Teach us how to live with wisdom in turbulent times.

When fear tempts us to overcorrect,

when exhaustion clouds our judgment,

when noise drowns out the deeper voice within us,

help us return to what is real and life-giving.

Give us the courage to slow down enough to notice beauty,

to rest without guilt,

to pray without performance,

to listen beneath the noise of the world.

Help us remain human

Help us remain tender.

Help us remain awake to one another and to You.

Amen.

For details about **Cameron Trimble**, go to page 9.