

Far from the madding crowd: Quiet Days

By Margaret Wooding-Jones

We often lead very busy and stress-filled lives, causing us to feel as though we are on a constant treadmill of never ending activity, for whatever varied and good reasons. To enjoy a hobby, read a book of our choice or simply just to sit can then feel like a luxury that will simply have to wait until we are less busy.



No one, it seems, had a more pressurised ministry than Jesus. Everywhere he went the crowds followed him, demanding his attention and hanging on his every word. Add to that the undercurrent of constant sniping by the authorities and the pressure of just three years to train a mixed bag group of disciples to take on world changing-strategies for mission, and it seems even more amazing that he nevertheless consistently found time to “get away quietly” by himself to pray (eg. Mark 1:35; 6:46). But this was a necessity: each

time Jesus took this time out, it prepared him for what lay ahead.

If Jesus felt this need, how much more do we need to make time to come away from our own situations to be still and quiet, to reconsider what our priorities need to be, to let God speak into our own lives? We may of course already take a little time every day to pray, but there is great merit in spending a longer stretch of time away from our home or desk, away from all that so easily distracts us.

It is our vision in STREAM that all who recognise this desire in themselves should be able to have this ‘quiet space’ when they need it: an opportunity, whether alone or in a group, to spend an extended period in silence, to reflect and hear what God has to say to them. Such a ‘retreat’ can take various forms to suit different preferences and requirements, ranging from simply a room for the day to a more structured and guided retreat, where some input is given and experiences may be shared.

And if your need is for something more active and (re)creative, to enable you to express yourself in ways other than words or silence, there are Quiet Days with an art or music theme. St Benedict’s Centre in West Malling and the Sisters of St Andrew in Lewisham, for instance, often organise such opportunities.

So whatever your preference, time away from the relentless busyness of life, even if it is just half a day, will reap huge rewards, refreshing and re-energising you so as to better cope with the demands on your time.

The Current, the newsletter of the Rochester Diocese Spirituality network, lists events taking place at various venues across the Diocese, Kent and London.

Why not get some days marked out in your diary right now?



Margaret Wooding Jones, LLM, joined STREAM, the small group tasked with growing the Diocesan Spirituality network, in 2019, taking special responsibility for developing the Quiet Days programme within the Diocese. She is well-placed to take the lead on this: not only is it an area of special interest to her as a way of encouraging personal spiritual growth, but Margaret also heads up the Rochester Clergy Spouses' Network and jointly led the Diocese's response to Thy Kingdom Come in 2020. Previously she headed up the Volunteer Programme at Ashburnham Place, where she became particularly engaged in setting up a journey towards continual gathered prayer at the Ashburnham Prayer Centre.