



## PROVINCIAL RETREAT AT NETHERURD HOUSE April 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> 2015

### 'United in Prayer' led by Fiona Fidgin

The Provincial MU Retreat held at Netherurd House, the Guiding Centre in the Borders from 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> April.

*'When a believing person prays, great things happen'*

*In her Welcome! Fiona told us that through her mother, Lavinia Fidgin, she had been brought up in MU and also knew Doris Bilton, who had been Diocesan President of*

*Edinburgh Diocese MU and much involved at MU headquarters, Mary Sumner House. Fiona said, "The theme for our 2015 retreat is 'United in Prayer' - this is partly because it's the Mother's Union theme for 2015 but also because prayer should be at the heart of what we do as Christians, but I suspect that many of us think that we are probably not very good at it!*

*I don't think there is a 'right' way to pray. But I know there is a variety of ways of praying that can make prayer a richer experience and I will share some of these ways of praying with you over the next couple of days. So it's about taking a breath and reflecting on where you are on your prayer journey. To be refreshed and be still. I will offer you some reflections which will be very simple and unheady. I hope there will be something for everyone – words, pictures, music, Scripture, silence. Do what you are comfortable with but maybe take a few risks as well. If there is something you have used or seen before, I ask for fresh eyes. The invitation is to open hearts and minds and*



*let God be God."*

Afternoon tea was at 4<sup>pm</sup>,  
Evening Prayer 4.30<sup>pm</sup>  
and dinner at 6.30<sup>pm</sup>.

There was loads to chat about, catch up with friends and no hope of silence until after dinner which took us to:

### Reflection 1:

### 'Prayer a Well Trodden Path'

– which led to several questions that you may like to think about and which may help you in your prayer times.



Group picture taken by Paul after the Thursday morning Eucharist.

Fiona reminded us of our first experiences of childhood prayer –

Have we lost our easiest ways of approaching God as we grew up?

*The following are extracts from the Retreat Booklet:*

What is your earliest memory of prayer?

Who has helped to shape your life of prayer?

Are there places that have been significant for you in your life of prayer?

What has hindered you in prayer?

How has your prayer changed or evolved and why?

What else was going on in your life at the time?

Has prayer ever seemed impossible or nonexistent?

What is prayer for you in practice now?

How could you deepen your prayer life?

The Reflection was followed by Compline and so to bed.

Interspersed during the 2 days were the usual daily services of Morning Prayer, Eucharist, Evening Prayer & Compline accompanied by lots of inspiring hymns/songs including some unaccompanied songs, Thuma Mina from South Africa/Zulu, Jesu, tawa pano (*Jesus, we are here*) from Zimbabwe, Mungo Ni Mwena (*Know that God is good*) from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

After Morning Prayer on Wednesday came **Reflection 2: – Praying with the Imagination**

Sometimes God speaks to people in prayer through the imagination. In imaginative contemplation of Scripture, we enter into a Bible passage by way of imagination and using our senses. As we contemplate particular events in Jesus' life, he is present with us. This way of praying can help us get beyond what we feel we *ought* to think or say or what is the *correct* thing to do.

- We spent a few moments coming to relaxed attentiveness. Becoming still and quiet and inviting God to work through our imagination and praying the passage. Extracts from the booklet follow:
- Trust that it is OK to come as you are and whatever happens is alright.
- Be open and generous to what God might want to touch in you.
- Read or hear the passage read and become familiar with it.
- Then let the scene gradually unfold in your mind's eye.
- Take time to see in your imagination the place, the buildings, the countryside. What kind of day is it? Listen to sounds. Use other senses if it is helpful.
- Picture who else is present in the scene. What are they doing or saying?
- Where are you? Take your place in the unfolding story. You may be a central character, a bystander, or simply enter into the action as yourself. You might feel you are drawn to see things through Jesus' eyes.
- Slowly picture the scene unfolding. Maybe you are drawn into conversation with Jesus or one of the characters. Say whatever you want. Allow a chance for response.
- You might find yourself moving between conversation and silent observing as the prayer continues.
- Stay in the scene for as long as you have chosen and then slowly come back to the present space.
- Spend some time at the end being with God. Be with God as with a good friend, sometimes talking, sometimes listening, sometimes silent.
- Review the prayer time – what happened? What was I drawn to in the story? How do I feel at the end of this time of prayer? What has particularly struck me? What gave me energy/comfort/peace? What challenged me? What am I taking away from this time of prayer? Is there something you may want to return to at another time?

Some suggested passages for imaginative prayer:

John 1:35-39	Come and See
Mark 10: 46-52	Bartimaeus
Luke 5: 1-11	Call of four disciples
1 Samuel 3: 1-10	Call of Samuel
Matt 8: 23-27	Calming of the storm
John 13: 1-17	Washing of the feet.
John 21	Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples - Jesus and Peter

Do you love me?

Tend my Sheep

Follow me

Praying with the imagination helps us to notice feelings and desires inspired by our encounter with Jesus. We spent some time reflecting on our feelings, our desires, our conversation with Jesus, sitting quietly or writing our thoughts or drawing a response .....

### Wednesday Afternoon free: **Optional extra!! Walking the Labyrinth**

There is a Labyrinth in the grounds and several people spent some time walking this ancient path of Prayer. A labyrinth is not like a maze – there are no dead ends and no shortcuts – it has one path that leads to the centre and the same path back out again.



The path winds back and forth and becomes a mirror for our lives – sometimes we walk with others and sometimes we are alone; sometimes we feel like we are going one way and the rest of the world is going another; sometimes we feel flung to the edge and sometimes we feel safe in the middle



After afternoon tea at 4 pm we were surprised to find the Fire Service in attendance – but no panic – it was a training practice!

After tea came **Evening Prayer followed by Reflection 3: Where is Christ's Message Alive? Praying with images. - Space to write your thoughts, reflections, or to draw.....**



Fiona had provided a large selection of A4 images. We were invited to select the ones that appealed to us. On the back of each were questions concerning the image. Common to all was - What is this picture saying to you? The one that particularly

appealed to me was above left - Meeting Jesus on the road to Emmaus. Who are the people who have shaped your faith? Who has walked beside you?

In what way has Christ revealed himself to you through bread, wine, hospitality?,

Another image I liked was of The Good Samaritan with the questions:

In what way do you help those in need? In what way do you help those in trouble?

Another was Jesus on the Tube –

Where is Jesus alive in our circuit?

Then it was time for dinner followed by Compline and bed. The photo on the left shows the room prepared for



Compline with Paul on the right and on the left, Moira Jamieson, who was our priest for the Retreat.

All too soon it was breakfast time on a crisp sunny but frosty Thursday morning followed by Morning Prayer and the final Reflection:

#### **Reflection 4 : Praying with an Awareness –**

*(Fiona had said earlier, that she did not think there was a 'right' way to pray, Below are more extracts from the Retreat Booklet with Examen suggestions to use at home.)*

#### **What is Prayer?**

Often we do not label as prayer those experiences which put us in touch with the Mystery, although they are prayerful experiences.

We need to understand prayer in much wider terms than only 'talking to God.'

Prayer is about relationship – relationship with God, but also our relationships with others and the world. Any good relationship is built on listening as well as talking.

So we need to develop our listening skills in prayer – to be receptive to the nudging of God. We need to learn to listen with our heart rather than with our head.

Heart looking, heart seeing happens when we develop an awareness of the world around us/ through being present to the things that are happening in our lives, God is revealing Godself to us. Through reflection and practising an 'awareness of the present moment' we will more easily be able to live in a prayerful relationship, noticing the 'graced moment' of our daily lives.

We will become more aware of God's footprints in the High Street'.

*Margaret Silf*

#### **EXAMEN At the end of the day (or just before I start the next day if I am a 'morning person')**

- I stop and quietly sit with my loving God.  
I consider all the good that has happened in the day: everything I have done that I'm proud of.  
Then I give thanks for all this good.
  - I then ask for God's grace to see what I might have done wrong, my sins and faults.  
I consider too how I might have hurt others unintentionally.
  - I become aware of my moods and feelings. Overall how would I describe my day.  
I then go over my day: all my thoughts, words and actions.  
What are the good things that have brought me joy, consolation and a sense of being alive?  
What has disheartened me, made me uneasy, unhappy, bad tempered and dispirited?
  - I ask God's pardon for my faults, for hurting others, for not using my own time and gifts wisely.  
I give thanks for using my gifts well, for loving others, for all that brings me joy and consolation.
  - Looking back on the day; are there good things I need to repeat and other things I need to avoid?  
I ask God's help to live a more fruitful and joyful life.
- I (*Fiona*) finish my examen prayer by speaking to God in my own words or using a formal prayer.

#### **EXAMEN 2**

- Light a candle
- Take a moment to let God look at you. Breathe in God's love.
- With your hand on your heart ask Jesus to bring to your heart the moment today for which you feel most grateful.
- Recall what was said and done in that moment. Enjoy the gratitude you feel again now. Breathe in its life.
- Ask Jesus to bring to your heart the moment today for which you feel least grateful. What was said and done in that moment? Let it be. Breathe in God's love just as you are.
- Speak to God about what you have noticed.
- Give thanks to God for the day. Ask help for tomorrow.

After the Eucharist it was time for the votes of thanks, especially to Fiona to express our appreciation of the way in which she had led us, to thank Moira for being our priest and to express our appreciation to the staff who had made our stay so comfortable. All too soon, after lunch, it is time to leave these delightful surroundings and return home. I found this Retreat to be one of the best and came away with lots of ideas to put into practice.

*Jean Hindle*