



# THE FRIENDS OF JULIAN OF NORWICH Christmas Newsletter 2023

*A message from the Chair, Shirley Buxton CJN*

**Dear Friends & Companions,**

**As our calendar year draws to a close, the Church's New Year has already begun. We wait with expectation and hope, eager to celebrate afresh God's LOVE manifested in the world through His Son. Julian, pondering on the meaning of all that has been revealed to her in her 'shewings', comes to the understanding that 'LOVE IS HIS MEANING.'**

In this last month I have been privileged to spend many hours in the 'LOVE IS THE MEANING' exhibition, surrounded by contemporary works of art inspired by Julian's words. Praying whilst surrounded by these exhibits, created with vision, dedication and love, has led me to know that I am truly 'Enfolded in God's Love' and bathed in the love he pours out into this hurt and fractured world.

2023 has been an amazing year featuring a wide range of celebrations. While many events have been centred in Norwich where Julian received her revelations, others were happening in far locations. Social media has allowed worldwide participation in many of these. Read on and you will find reports on a selection of Julian events.

As well as lectures, discussions and retreats there have been events reaching



*'Enfolded in the Cloth of Kindness'  
presented during the Julian May Festival*

out to those who had not heard of Julian before, including the Julian Garden Festival during which the Julian650 Bench generously given by you, the Friends, was unveiled. Visitors read words from Julian's 16 Revelations as they walked through floral displays in St Julian's Church and Garden.

Many people have made a pilgrimage this year. Congratulations to Godfrey Meynell (89 years young) and his son on completing the last leg of their 150 mile walk from Derby to Norwich in honour of Julian, in October.

A Historical Julian Walk starting at Julian's Cell, compiled by a Friend of Julian,

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR (continued...)

the historian Dr. Nick Groves was launched during the Julian week. Sadly Nick died just a couple of months later. We will miss his engaging conversation, vast knowledge, enthusiasm and support.

Worship has been central to our celebrations with many special services. Julian Week started with a day of silent prayer. The following day, during the Coronation of King Charles III 'All Shall Be Well' featured prominently on the Anointing Screen. There was a surprise in store at the Julian Festal Evensong in Norwich Anglican Cathedral when a letter from Pope Francis was read out, stressing the importance for the world today of the message of God's mercy and compassion revealed to Mother Julian.

May I offer thanks on your behalf to all those who have enabled the success of this year's vast programme of events. I would particularly like to thank all those on the Julian650 Committee, the Julian Partnership and the Trustees of the Friends of Julian of Norwich, with special thanks to Howard Green our Secretary and Fr Richard Stanton, Priest Director

of the Julian Shrine. Also thanks to the congregations of St John's Timberhill and St Julian's for their help and support. The Trustees would like to thank you, Friends of Julian, for all your prayer, participation and generosity making Julian650 such a wonderful celebration.

As 2024 approaches, we look forward to celebrating 40 years since the Friends of Julian began. You can find details of next year's online Julian Lent Course and the notice of the Julian Festival Lecture towards the end of this Newsletter.

May you all experience God's Love and Peace this Christmas and in the fourth coming year.



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## TO COMPLETE OUR JULIAN 650 CELEBRATIONS

On New Year's Eve, Sunday Worship on BBC Radio 4 at 8.10am will feature Norwich Cathedral Choir leading a Reflection on the Life of Mother Julian, marking the end of this 650th anniversary year of Julian receiving her sixteen showings.

The recording for this service will be made on Tuesday 19th December in Norwich Anglican Cathedral. All are welcome but everyone must be seated by 6.45pm for a 7pm start. (No tickets are required.)

The programme will also be available, after the initial broadcast, on BBC Sounds.



# THE 650 LECTURES

By Sarah Law

**In May, Professor Barry Windeatt's lecture, *'Julian's Mind's Eye'*, explored religious art and imagery in Julian's time – including the *Despenser Retable* in Norwich Cathedral.**

Julian interpreted visionary echoes of such art in ways that emphasises Christ's compassionate motherhood. Windeatt showed how Julian also conveys her immeasurable insights through the use of domestic measurements (hazelnuts, pellets), and pointed out how her persistent imagery of welling blood, and of enclosing and being enclosed, are, in his view, distinctly female.

In June, author Veronica Mary Rolf's lecture *"Alle Shalle Be Wele": Living Resurrected Lives* explored how this well-known phrase from the *Shewings* offers a clarion call to personal transformation. Knowing that God will make all well encourages us to 'begin to live in the divine dimension even now'. Rolf pointed us to Julian's 14th revelation to learn how Christ himself is in the ground of our prayer.

July's lecture, *'Ways of Seeing: Julian's Parable of a Lord and a Servant'*, was given by Professor Philip Sheldrake. Looking closely at chapter 51 of the Long Text, Sheldrake explained how Julian's insight that it is human sinfulness – 'our capacity to fall into ditches' as he put it – obscures our knowledge of God's infinite compassion. This parable is rich with

layered meanings, developed by Julian over 20 years.

August's lecture by Dr Juliana Dresvina, *'Julian of Norwich's Shewings: A Book That Nearly Failed'* explored how Julian's extraordinary book was a failure in its day, finding resonance in the early modern period.

Novelist Mary Sharratt discussed Julian's spirituality alongside that of her younger contemporary, Margery Kempe, in the September lecture, *'When Margery met Julian: Writing Visionary Women back into History'*. Sharratt explored how these two medieval visionaries' stories intertwine and complement each other, each offering profound insights into Christ's compassion. Together they offer what Sharratt described as a 'Via Feminina', a sometimes subversive female path to the Divine.

Finally, Dr Sarah Salih's October lecture, *'Feminism, Scholarship & Medieval Women's Writing'* not only presented a fascinating range of critical and cultural interpretations of Julian's *Shewings*, but also made a case for Julian as an early non-binary writer, noting how she uses far fewer references to her own gender in the Long Text than the earlier Short Text. Salih's presentation drew together many of the threads from this year's previous lectures while inviting a new range of readings of Julian's text – a text which is both historically situated, but also timeless.



# THE JULIAN SHRINE

Throughout 2023 the Julian Shrine has continued to go from strength to strength, with hundreds of guests and visitors joining us from around the world. In the last year All Hallows Guesthouse has hosted more than four hundred people from twenty different countries and with the help of local volunteers. The Julian Centre has reopened two days a week and recently for three, as well as by appointment and for group bookings.

While staying busy as a guesthouse, I have been dedicating spare time to expanding the range of books and gifts stocked in the Julian Centre. In addition to our core range of books on Julian, we now offer titles on topics including medieval women, life in medieval England and a growing section on other mystics. Anyone with an interest in Julian will find plenty of material to read around the subject for a greater appreciation of her life and times. There are also exciting plans in development for commemorative items featuring Julian, so stay tuned for more information.

Finally, as ever, we are continuing to recruit volunteers so that the Julian Centre can open more often so if you are local and would like to help us out, please get in touch!

Josiah English (Resident Steward)



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## THE DIFFERENCE THE FRIENDS MAKE...

The annual financial contribution from each Friend enables Julian's insights into God and His endless love to be made more widely available.

Lectures, retreats, books and tweets are a few ways we engage with people. Being an active part of the Julian Partnership is an exciting step with many new opportunities ahead. If your subscription is due soon and you're happy to set up a regular yearly payment it will help us for the future.





# THE COMPANIONS' RETREAT 2023

By Gill Butterworth, CJN

**Over three days in September there was a Retreat for the Companions of Julian lead by Lay Canon Professor Emeritus Brian Thorne on Julian: the Quiet Revolutionary.**

The retreat was attended by some Companions in person in St Julian's Church, and by other Companions on-line. Many thanks to Margaret-Mary McFadyen who organised the technology which made this possible.

Brian was instrumental, with others, in envisioning and setting-up the formation of the Companions so we knew we had a retreat leader who had a deep understanding of what we are about.

Over five addresses and readings of extracts from the Revelations, Brian encouraged and challenged us to consider how Julian saw her vocation and how we might 'assess anew the seriousness and the practice of our companionship.' He suggested that, like Julian, we embrace paradox, learn

to live more deeply within the love of God and in the exigencies of our present times, broadcast the message of Julian's visions 'in the market-place and proclaim it from the rooftops'.

Brian reminded us that 'Julian's Companions are called not only to a life of personal prayer, devotion and love but to become messengers of hope beyond despair.'

A wonderful aspect was being together as Companions, sharing the Eucharist, prayer, meals and some communication with those who sent messages from afar. During our time together we celebrated Holy Cross Day and hoped this might be a good time for the Companions to mark each year with a similar time together.



# LOVE IS THE MEANING

***Love Is The Meaning*, an exhibition, curated by ceramicist Lucy Care, saw 34 artists celebrate the 650th anniversary of Julian of Norwich. It took place across three Norwich Churches: St John's, Timberhill, St Stephens, Rampant Horse Street and St Julian's, Rouen Road.**

Churches are not the easiest of venues for artists to grapple with. They are already saturated with sacred tradition, impressive architecture, awe-inspiring adornment and thought provoking tributes (many of which have of course already laid claim to the best of wall space). They exude a great serenity of purpose born out of the many, many thousand prayers they have enfolded. In other words these are churches that have already refreshed the parts that artists may find hard to reach.

So they are a challenge, but it was a challenge well met by *Love Is The Meaning*. A wonderful variety of painting, ceramics, sculpture and mixed media were carefully sited across the three Churches reflecting the myriad ways in which Julian's shewings continue to inspire and reveal truth to us in the modern age.

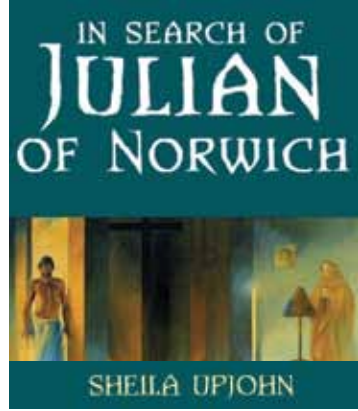
Perhaps unsurprisingly, some of the most successful pieces were those that were site specific and drew on the power of their surroundings. In the Our Lady of Walsingham Chapel

at St John's, Nicky Stainton's and Sian Croose's cloak and musical installation, *Enfolded in Love*, literally enveloped us in the words of Julian in a powerful sensory experience.

In Julian's Cell at St Julian's Church, Julia Van Griensven's projection *Falling into Light* (top right) gently washed the sitter with a calming palate of colours and wise words whilst Jill Korn's audio piece *The Glad Giver* was perfectly suited to its surroundings.

**Andrea Cornes**





## NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA

### **Sydney from Barbara Lumley, CJN**

On a perfect Autumn day, on Saturday 6th May 2023 about forty people made their way from all directions, to St James Church consecrated in 1824, the oldest church in Australia. We were all here to spend a Quiet Day with God and Julian of Norwich, directed by Rev Catherine Eaton. She referred to Julian's 'seeing': "See, I am God. See, I am in everything. See, I do everything." and indicated that we can be responsive to Julian's vision of all creation and longing for God. The day was greatly appreciated.

### **Victoria from Janet West**

On 13th May members of the Australian Friends of Julian met by Zoom and contributed to a rich and varied programme on Julian's 'Revelations of Divine Love' with brief reflections, studies, meditations, songs and prayers. Contributions included talks on 'Goodness, Joy and Awe', 'Two Extraordinary Women of Norwich, Mystic Julian and Martyr Edith Cavell', 'Julian's Dilemma - how God deals with our sins', 'The Candleflame - Light', and 'Window of Welcome'. Overall it was a time of richness and deep sharing, not soon forgotten by those who took part.

### **Perth, Western Australia**

Rev Bec Bydder, Chaplain to the Women's Prison organised and directed a Retreat which was held in a suburban church. Despite the rain, over thirty people attended. It was so much appreciated that Bec was subsequently invited to other parishes in the diocese, to give Quiet Days on Julian.

And so the seeds of Julian's Revelations of Divine Love continue to be sown.

### **Sydney comes to Norwich:**

Using the wonders of technology, Sheila Upjohn joined a sizable gathering in the Julian Centre for the re-launch of her popular book '*In Search of Julian of Norwich*'. Following her video talk, Sheila entered into conversation with Felicity Maton and many friends watching on the 'big screen' and from their homes. We had drinks together with 'kangaroo' and 'crocodile' biscuits to celebrate the half century of support that Sheila has given to promoting Julian. Thank you Sheila.



# JULIAN PUBLICATIONS

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## I SAW HIM AND I SOUGHT HIM: JULIAN OF NORWICH & THE HOLY ICONS

by John-Michael Mountney

There are many images of Julian, but the first icon of Julian apparently was written only in the late 1980s by Anna Dimascio. This icon, commissioned by the author of this book, is featured on the cover. Words from Julian and the liturgies of Western and Orthodox traditions are placed alongside full page colour icons.

Julian was given her Showings because she asked for 'a bodily sight' and this book finds surprising links between Julian and the rich tradition of Orthodoxy's 'holy gazing' on icons. Sheila Upjohn contributes *'A Brief History of Orthodox Time'* and the author, John-Michael Mountney, a former Warden of the Julian Shrine, now is an Orthodox Reader, iconographer and expert guide to praying with icons.

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## JULIAN OF NORWICH & THERESE OF LISIEUX

by Elizabeth Ruth Obbard

Robert Llewelyn, when in St Julian's Church, used to tell anyone who was interested that Therese of Lisieux was the closest modern saint to Julian. Carmelite Doctor, Sr. Elizabeth Ruth Obbard, a valued advisor to the Friends of Julian, has published a book holding these two great women side by side. Subtitled *'Two anniversaries, Two women of love, peace and mercy'*, its publication coincides with the 650th anniversary of Julian's Showings and the 150th anniversary of Therese's birth, as well as the 100th anniversary of her beatification.

Both books are available from the Julian Centre, Norwich for £16.99 or by post via our website: [www.julianofnorwich.org](http://www.julianofnorwich.org)



# JULIAN OF NORWICH: FOUR ESSAYS

The book *'Four Essays Commemorating 650 Years of the Revelations of Divine Love'*, contains four papers read during the Julian Online Conference held in February 2023 at the start of the Julian650 Celebrations. Each essay explores how Julian reaches people today in many ways: Sr. Elizabeth Ruth Obbard OC examines the place of compassion in today's harsh world; Fr. Colin CSWG considers how living in the monastic tradition today relates to Julian's writings; Mother Hilary Crupi OJN draws on Julian's text for help concerning personal issues especially impatience and despair; Bishop Graham Usher looks to Julian for inspiration concerning the present threat of biodiversity loss and climate change. Containing so much wisdom and insight, this is a book to inspire and get us all thinking.

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## BOOK REVIEW

By Sally-Anne Lomas

It's been a bumper year for literary responses to the life and writing of Julian of Norwich.

In *'for thy great pain have pity on my little pain'* Victoria Mackenzie vividly recreates the voices of Julian and fellow East Anglian mystic Margery Kempe. Shortlisted for the Scottish First Book Prize, this beautifully written concise book contrasts the lives of the two women and dramatically recreates their meeting in Norwich; a compelling page turner.

Claire Gilbert's *'I, Julian'* is a passionate account of Julian's life told in the first person with carefully researched historical detail and great spiritual sensitivity. Gilbert describes Julian's mental and physical suffering and her joy in a nuanced portrait that is utterly convincing.



Finally, *'All Shall Be Well: Poems for Julian of Norwich'* brings together over fifty poets with a thoughtful introduction by Sarah Law who's own poem *'As I the Cat'* imagines God regarding the soul as Julian does her cat. This is one of many sparkling gems. It's a delight to dip into this treasure chest of poetic responses.

I can highly recommend these books as they bring contemporary sensibilities to a medieval text and demonstrate the enduring relevance of Julian's visions to our lives.

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All the books mentioned are available to purchase at the Julian Centre, most are also available through our website: [www.julianofnorwich.org](http://www.julianofnorwich.org)

# 650th ANNIVERSARY SEAT

A lasting memorial to this year is the specially commissioned oak and slate seat situated by the cell's east wall. The seat was unveiled and blessed by the Bishop of Norwich, at the Garden Festival in July 2023.

Hand carved by craftsman Martin Cook, the text from the Revelations cut into the slate reads 'Our soul rests

in God its true peace'. Into the oak is carved '1373: shewn to an unlettered creature: 2023'.

On behalf of all the trustees, I would like to thank everyone who has contributed so generously towards its cost.

Lesley Mitchell



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## CELEBRATIONS IN DORSET

On 8th May 2023 the Feast of Julian of Norwich was celebrated with particular joy here in the Golden Cup benefice, West Dorset, with our own celebration in Saint Candida's Whitchurch. A healing Eucharist was celebrated and then we had a seminar exploring 'Julian and the Challenge of Chronic Illness.' One of the participants, Caz Jefferies, illustrates the continuing impact Julian can have on people today - truly Julian is "A Woman for Our Time".

I am so thankful for the Julian talk and reflection that James Ashdown led on the following Sunday. We learnt about Julian of Norwich, before and after she became an anchoress, within the context of living with chronic pain. Julian lived in what

some historians have described as the worst century to be alive! She lived through the Black Death, a time of huge political turmoil and the start of the 100 year's war. It was strangely encouraging to hear that in such traumatic circumstances, she was able to accept the reality around her and still allow God's love to flow out of her. She spent a lot of time reflecting on sin and suffering. James spoke about woundedness and gave us space to reflect on our own woundings. It is difficult to find words to describe what actually happened to me during this time but I felt as if a weight that I had been carrying inside me had lessened when I came away from Whitchurch that afternoon.

Thank you Julian and James!



# CELEBRATE 2024

## 40 YEARS OF THE FRIENDS OF JULIAN

**The naming of the Friends began at a dinner party in 1984, hosted by Fr. Michael McLean.**

I was delighted to be invited along with Sheila Upjohn, now a renowned author, Sr. Violet CAH and other well-known Norwich community leaders. Michael wanted to spread knowledge of Julian's writings and her message of Divine Love.

After introductions and a winter warmer we were served a wonderful meal. A memorable discussion

resulted in a general agreement to promote this woman and her ancient writings, offering people a tangible link to more information. One way was to gather all-comers to a group. It needed a name. Why not 'The Friends of Julian'? It sounded warm and welcoming and so it is!

How about throwing a dinner party or having a barbecue to introduce some of your friends to Julian in our 40th year?

Felicity Maton, Trustee

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## FRIENDS OF JULIAN 2024 EVENTS

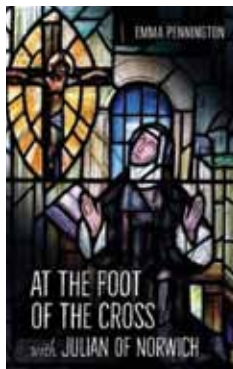
I hope that Friends and Companions have enjoyed some of this year's events. The Trustees are now planning how to commemorate the 40th year of the founding of the Friends.

Currently we have two dates for your diaries. The online Lent Book Group will be held over six consecutive Fridays, beginning on 16th February from 3pm-4.30pm. We will be using Emma Pennington's book *At The Foot Of The Cross with Julian of Norwich* (available from the Friends at [www.julianofnorwich.org](http://www.julianofnorwich.org) and the Julian Centre).

Emma's book invites close attention to the images of the Crucifixion, which, using Julian's insights, may help us to understand how Jesus's death on the cross can speak to us and our suffering world.

The Annual Julian Lecture will be given by the former Archbishop of Canterbury, the Right Reverend Rowan Williams, at Norwich Anglican Cathedral on Saturday 11th May at 10.30am. The lecture will form part of a festival around this time.

Lesley Mitchell, Trustee



# CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

From the Priest Director, Fr Richard Stanton

Dear Friends,

'All is calm, all is bright,' say the first class stamps issued in the UK this Christmas. It's hard to think of our world as calm or bright as we draw near to our keeping of the Saviour's birth; hard particularly to think those things of the war-torn land where for us and for our salvation he was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man. 'All is calm, all is bright' - it can sound like another pious platitude, to be consigned to the dustbin of reality along with 'All manner of thing shall be well.'

But what we proclaim at Christmas is the invincible love of our God which endures all the worst that the world can do to it. Beside those words on the stamp, 'All is calm, all is bright', is the image of a female figure with a child - God's answer to a hurting world, to be received with faith alongside the second profound image of his love - that child, grown to manhood, crucified for us that we might die to sin and live in him. Herein is the love of God made visible, says St John: not that we loved God but that he loved us. To this Julian of Norwich bears powerful witness.

As I give thanks for all that we have shared together as Friends, Companions and pilgrims in this 650th anniversary year, I pray above all that it has renewed our dedication to God's mission of love, a love which calms the world's fears and may yet make its darkness bright.

I wish you a joyful Advent and, when it comes, a blessed Christmas.

**Fr Richard**



*Photo: Holding the letter sent by Pope Francis*

## MERRY CHRISTMAS!

The Trustees of the Friends of Julian of Norwich would like to thank you for your support during 2023 and to wish you all a safe, healthy and blessed Christmas and New Year.

### THE FRIENDS OF JULIAN OF NORWICH

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