

Spaceforsoul

www.spaceforsoul.org.uk



Newsletter September 2023

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our September 2023 newsletter. We hope that you managed to enjoy the summer. We have already started our exciting autumn programme with a Soul Space session on Visio Divina and a Zoom Soul Space discussion with guest speaker Heather Whyte on Quantum Theology. Next Sunday we have our patron, Dave Tomlinson, coming to share in our Soul Space session. Our October Zoom Soul Space also welcomes a guest speaker where we will discuss issues on gender identity and sexuality.

Please note that the Old Library in Eastville, our usual Soul Space venue, has not yet reopened and so we will be meeting at **St Werburghs Community Centre** in October. More on all this below.

Soul Space October 1st 11.00 - 1.00

St Werburghs Community Centre, (Room 12) Horley Rd, St Werburgh's, Bristol BS2 9TJ

Dave Tomlinson needs no introduction: Author of "How to be a bad Christian and a better human being", "Black Sheep and Prodigals", "The post-evangelical", to name but a few, and host of the weekly "Holy Shed" YouTube talks, we are privileged as a group that he is also our patron.

Dave will give a presentation on

"Is there hope in a world that is falling apart? Against the background of climate crisis, war, culture wars and an epidemic of social media hatred, can we have any hope?"

There will be refreshments from 10.50 and again mid way through the session. After Dave's talk there will be plenty of time for questions and discussion. At St Werburghs we are not able to make drinks with our own supplies but have to pay for each person for each refreshment break so we will be asking if you would kindly make a donation to help cover these costs, plus room hire and Dave's expenses. We look forward to seeing you. It would

be **really helpful** if you would reply to this newsletter to let us know that you are coming so that we can give the venue an idea of numbers for refreshments.

Soul Space on Zoom Wednesday October 18th at 7 p.m. Revd Jane Taylor will give us a presentation related to human sexuality, gender and the bible. (The final title for the presentation will be sent out with the Zoom link. This will be sent to all those on the Soul Space meetings list nearer the time.)

How our Zoom Soul Space sessions work:

A link is sent to all those who have asked to be on the list of those wishing to attend Soul Space in person or Zoom meetings. If you are not currently getting these emails and would like to join the Soul Space sessions, please email us and let us know.

One of the CG members, usually Kate, will host the Zoom meeting and when you click on the link, you will enter a virtual waiting room. Kate will then admit you to the meeting. Everyone introduces themselves. If you can have your name on your zoom screen this is helpful. Nirma will read our ethos contemplation and we ask all present to abide by this ethos of respecting others. The usual format then is an introductory talk followed by a discussion. It's helpful if you have a microphone and camera so that you can fully participate. Participants can use the chat function for typed messages.

A donation of £3 each helps us to pay for the Zoom account (bank details below).

A look back and reflections on our September Soul Space discussions:

Visio Divina: On September 3rd members met at our booked venue, Network in Filton. Unfortunately someone had locked our entrance door from the inside. Ugent telephone calls went unanswered. Catherine came to the rescue by offering her home, which turned out to be a lovely setting for the group, and the discussion was enjoyed by all.

Reflection by Vicki: "It was lovely to be in Catherine's living room and especially with the doors open onto the garden and sunshine. There was a lot of light in the room.

I wasn't sure about which object to choose to focus on for my Visio Divina and then my eyes alighted on a colourful pitcher/vase inside Catherine's cupboard with glass doors.

I allowed myself to feel into the sense of this pitcher with its rich brown and orange colours and it came to me that this represented something very ancient, something that has been carried by people for hundreds of years. It also spoke to me of the feminine with its round shape and I pictured in on the head of a native woman carrying water or some other precious liquid. It then helped me to contact with the ancient feminine side of myself which I don't often feel and its round shape and curved colourful handles enhanced this feeling. All of this brought a reassuring and connecting feeling inside of me.

It was then lovely to hear everyone's experiences - all unique and fascinating in their own way.

A rich and inspiring experience and thank you Meryl for leading us so clearly and gently in this process."

Reflection by Sarah: "Hello Soul Spacers!, Thanks to all and especially Meryl, Nirma and Catherine for the Soul Space meeting recently and all the efforts you made. Lovely to meet in your home Catherine. Thanks for inviting us all round to yours. Personally I wasn't at all disappointed at the failure to gain access to the centre in Filton.

Silver was the colour that came to mind in the meditation period -(which to me represents light) -and I saw it in most of the objects I focussed on . Made me think about light generally and how much it adds interest and beauty to everything.

Thanks again , see you soon!

Sarah 😊”

Reflection by Nirma: The morning didn't start well for me because of the disappointment and frustrations of not being able to gain access to Network as I was given the instructions of how to use the door key code.

However by the end of the session the pleasant homely environment of Catherine's home and Meryl's calm way of skilled facilitation, I was able to be myself.

My reflections on a purple flower with long broken stem led me to a place where I felt hopeful for the world and my family. I was affirmed of all that I was doing and how I was looking after myself. I felt loved and understood. I came away in a better place.

I felt a real connection with each one present and learnt something from their reflections on the practice of Visio Divina.

Many thanks to Vicki, Sarah and Nirma for their super contributions

Quantum Theology on September 20th via Zoom, facilitated by guest speaker, Heather Whyte, a URC minister who said she happily accepted the terms used by others of her as ‘a rebel’ and ‘a radical’.

Heather gave us a fascinating presentation and focussed on the way in which this perspective has profoundly changed her view and experience of prayer. She has very generously given us a written copy which is available to anyone in Space for Soul who would like to read it. (Attached to this newsletter)

Here is a snippet of her presentation to help understand the idea of Quantum Theology:

“I expect that for many of you the term Quantum Theology is a mystery so let me try and explain briefly. Over the course of the 20th Century scientists have discovered things which change the way we see the world and our own humanity. Atoms which were once depicted as a sort of mini solar system are now understood as fields of energy, energy which changes in response to observation, and which can exist in more than one place at the same time. We have discovered that everything is connected and cannot be disconnected, and that far from there being empty spaces between ‘things’ they exist within a web of connectivity. Quantum Theology explores how we understand our humanity, God and our relationship with God, within this new framework for creation. In many ways it is science fiction become fact, and opens up new possibilities for many things including how we practise and understand prayer. It has become important to me to find ways that help people to engage in corporate prayer in a different way.”

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“In 1944, Max Planck, the man many consider to be the father of quantum theory, shocked the world by saying that there is a "matrix" of energy that provides the blueprint for our physical world. In this place of pure energy, everything begins, from the birth of stars and DNA to our deepest relationships, peace between nations, and personal healing. The experimental proof that Planck's matrix is real now provides the missing link that bridges our spiritual experiences of belief, imagination, and prayer with the miracles that we see in the world around us.”

Heather's talk was fascinating and thought provoking and there followed a very interesting discussion.

Reflection by Anne: “As someone who loves science, even though my understanding of scientific knowledge is very limited, but also someone who has had experiences that cannot be explained by current scientific knowledge and which can only be described as ‘spiritual’, it was refreshing to learn of an approach that can actually make sense of this apparent dichotomy. I have always felt that, with regard to science on the one hand and theology on the other, there is no real conflict; it is only our human limitation of knowledge that prevents us from understanding how it all connects together and makes sense. Quantum theology, it seems to me, is definitely an important step on this road.

Many of us in Space for Soul have undergone, are still undergoing, a process of deconstruction of the faith handed down to us, and which in the past we may have readily accepted. Whilst this process can feel liberating, sometimes it can lead us to feel dislodged somehow, lost even.

Prayer is for me an example of this. How do I pray when I don’t know who or to what I am praying? Or what its nature is? But it’s something that has been important to me. Sometimes it’s the only thing you feel you can do when you hear of others suffering and you feel so useless to help them. At times, like when we were told our son was going to die from a catastrophic head injury, it’s all I had left. At the time I could have been described as an atheist or certainly an agnostic, but nevertheless, I prayed. I think everyone around him prayed in their own way, whatever their beliefs. And he did survive. The brain surgeon who’d told us he would either die or be in a vegetative state, described his recovery as a miracle. Our ‘prayers’ were so strong they created an energy, a healing energy, is all I could think. So Heather’s perspective on prayer resonated with me. I feel it has helped me to see a meaning and a real purpose to prayer which I have been lacking for a while.

I have lots more to read and lots more to get my head round, but the discovery of quantum theology has been a wonderful contribution to that lifelong journey of puzzling, contemplating and, I hope, a growing understanding.”

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All donations gratefully received. Regular contributions by Standing Order are especially helpful. Thank you.

Feedback on the newsletter is always welcome.
With warmest wishes,

Anne

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On behalf of Anne, Julian, Linda, Meryl and Nirma,

Space for Soul Co-ordinating Group