

# Spaceforsoul

[www.spaceforsoul.org.uk](http://www.spaceforsoul.org.uk)



## Newsletter June 2023

Dear Friends,

We hope that this newsletter finds you well. Finally we have some warm and sunny weather (but if you are a hay fever sufferer, you have our sympathies!)

Over the past month we have enjoyed a couple of great sessions at our Soul Space gatherings and you will find write-ups below.

Just to remind you we have our **AGM on July 2<sup>nd</sup>** at the Old Library in Muller Road, Eastville. Due to other bookings at the venue we have had to change the time to **10.30 a.m.** We do hope you can join us, that you will use your member vote for electing a new Chair and Secretary, and enjoy a sociable time with others and nibbles to share.

This coming **June 4th** we have our Soul Space session at 11.00 a.m. in the Old Library which will be led by Catherine and will be on **Clowning**. More details below.

### **In this issue:**

- 1. Some thoughts provoked by the Soul Space session on Focussing**
- 2. Write up on the Zoom session "Do I stay Christian?"**
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### **Soul Space session on Focussing facilitated by Vicki**

#### **A response to the session by Fran**

Vicki was talking about focussing, about listening to your body and the traumas and hurts of the past expressing themselves in your body. That these things can be passed down through generations. Also societal trauma.

This made one person feel like we are just prisoners of our past and our present environment.

Over the last couple of years, I have found a transformative idea that germinated when reading **Paul: A Biography by Tom Wright**. Through the power of knowing

God's unconditional love for us, we are freed to choose our own reaction to whatever is happening around us. Christ is an example for us in this - not a unique one - accepting that preaching love and forgiveness was going to get him killed in a particularly vile way but this did not stop him doing it. They can't touch you inside, whatever they do. This is clearly far from trivial to achieve in many situations, but it remains true in principle.

I never really got the message of the gospel tracts largely because I don't relate strongly to the sense of feeling sinful and release of forgiveness that you sometimes hear people testify to. Not that I am perfect or anything, but I am also not a murderer or something that carries such a heavy burden of guilt to be released from. I am however very conscious of things that have a controlling effect in my life including fear of disapproval, food, feeling not good enough - which, someone pointed out to me very insightfully, is a form of ego. These things and many others can exert a control over how I react to things and I am not free to choose the response I think is right.



Heb 13: 6 So we can confidently say,  
"The Lord is my helper;  
I will not fear;  
what can man do to me?"

Matt 10: 28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

Picture from Charlie Mackesy: The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse.

*Fran has written an extensive review of the book she mentions on **Paul** by **Tom Wright**. If you would like to receive a copy please let us know.*

### **A response to the session by Linda**

I had no real idea of what "focussing" meant and was probably expecting something cerebral. It was interesting therefore to learn that it was about connecting with what our bodies can tell us about ourselves. I imagine it takes time and practice to become comfortable with it and to really tune in what the body is communicating but it was very helpful to have a demonstration.

### **A response to the session by Peter**

Very much enjoyed this last Sunday 'Soul Space' 14/05/23.

It was, for me, good to consider and value non 'religious' approaches to 'spirituality' - I don't actually like either word, they both have a hint of 'control' to me despite their every effort to declare otherwise - but that's an aside.

I found it refreshing to consider alternative views as equally valid rather than tentatively pointing to a path that one or any of us considers to be suitable. Thanks - and thanks for the mention of 'woodwork' in the same context (I think it was Nirma). I do think any interest, hobby, study, even occupation (job) can entail elements of 'spirituality'.

## **A response to the session by Sarah**

Dear Coordinating team

Thank you ! All the efforts that goes into these sessions are greatly valued. Very interesting subject.. always happy to look at our inner being apart from the 'religious' perspective and learn more about different ways of healing.

I appreciate those prepared to be vulnerable by leading and taking part in the demonstration on Focusing, knowing they were a bit nervous. It was good there. It was a kind and supportive atmosphere and they were aware of that. Thanks again, hoping we can continue to look at spirituality from an ever widening perspective

**Editors note:** Thank you so much to **Vicki** for facilitating this great discussion and for these thoughts shared by some of those present. It's great to have others contributing to the newsletter. Please keep them coming! *Anne*

Also please see Meryl's book review below which is relevant to this session on Focussing.

### **Write up on the May Zoom Soul Space session "Do I stay Christian?"**

We were discussing Brian McLaren's book "Do I stay Christian?" in which he helps us reflect on the pros and cons of holding onto a Christian identity and, more importantly, what kind of human beings we want to be.

One member of the group was currently reading the book and the rest of us had listened to an interview with McClaren about his book in a podcast.

The first half of his book gives all the reasons why you wouldn't stay Christian! It talks about many of the evil things that have been done and continue to be done in the name of Christianity. He used a term that we had not heard before "Christo fascism" to describe some of the hateful and even murderous activities of some people in the name of Christianity. For example, some US anti-abortionists and homophobic Christians in various parts of the world promote the use of violence against doctors, nurses and even the women involved in a termination of pregnancy or against LGBT people.

Many people do feel uncomfortable with calling themselves "Christian" or even being a Christian, because of what has been done in the name of the faith.

We discussed how we each felt, some of our own experiences within the church, and how we feel about being Christian.

In the second half of the book McLaren presents a much more positive approach in which he gives reasons for staying Christian. In a sense, what he's saying is that Christianity has been hijacked in many ways (*my interpretation*) so those who believe that Jesus was giving a really important message of love for humanity need to stay within the faith in order to continue to represent and live out that message, rather than "abandon ship" and leave the faith to those promoting the very opposite message.

*Anne*

Here's the podcast link again in case you'd like to listen to the interview.

<https://www.nomadpodcast.co.uk/brian-mclaren-do-i-stay-christian-n277/>

## **Book Review by Meryl**

### **Re-Building the Ruined Places: a journey out of childhood trauma.**

**By Lorraine Cavanagh 2022**

**Ameo Books**

'If our experience of trauma is to be healing for others, it has to be owned and worked through again and again through the medium of what I would call grace.' In this book Cavanagh shows how, through grace, she has worked through her own trauma to bring healing to others.

Lorraine Cavanagh is an Anglican Priest. A writer and theologian, she has written books on Spirituality and the Church. An artist, she previously hosted solo art exhibitions in London. She has served as Chaplain and tutor of Spirituality in various universities.

Cavanagh shares her story of growing up in a wealthy family in high society whilst experiencing emotional poverty. She writes of the negative impact that her parent's life choices had on her and her siblings and of the emotional, psychological and sexual abuse that she suffered at various hands. Safety was provided by their housekeeper who served above and beyond to shield the children from the worst excesses of the ever-changing household.

Later she explores her abusers' traumatic experiences which shaped their personalities and behaviour. She does not excuse it, but she does try to comprehend it saying, 'If we allow ourselves to deconstruct our stories, we can transpose from one kind of understanding to another'.

Reading about abuse was difficult but the story was well told, not sensationalising but offering understanding and healing grace. Readers may appreciate insight into the long-term effect of childhood abuse and its possible redemption. For abuse survivors, it could offer an avenue to processing the past in a way that gives back control and 'offers light through the darkness'. Cavanagh offers hope, 'In God's economy there is no such thing as wasted suffering'.

*Meryl White*

**Upcoming programme** including what to expect at our **Soul Space session on Clowning**

**Sunday June 4<sup>th</sup>, Old Library, Muller Road, Eastville, Bristol**

**Clowning**, facilitated by Catherine who writes:

"Come and taste the spirit of clown, as we search for creative expressions of our authenticity. Play, laugh and allow your shy, scared, awkward, open responses. Discover enjoyment in being your spontaneous self, touching parts that may lay hidden just beneath the surface, longing to be seen!

Connect warmly with each other in a safe space, freeing your imagination with your feet firmly on the ground. Join in as much, or as little as you wish, or just come and watch. All of this is welcome!

**Wednesday June 16<sup>th</sup> 7. 00 p.m. Soul Space Zoom  
"Afterlife?" What do you believe?**

If you've been brought up in the Christian faith the message about afterlife is very simple: there are two places to go to after death, heaven or hell. Through believing in Jesus, and only through believing in Jesus, a person can get to heaven. Otherwise they go to the other place! It is interesting that the Jewish faith does not share in this belief.

Some Christians argue that you have to be "born again" and have "accepted Jesus into your heart to lead your life" to be "saved" and get to heaven. What do you think and feel about these ideas? Have your views changed over time? Have you grown up in a different faith that has a very different idea of afterlife?

Do you have any experiences of sensing that deceased people you loved are not far away? Or that you have had communication from them in some way? Perhaps you know of others have told you about such experiences.

The 2021 UK census showed that the number of people identifying as Christian has fallen to less 50% for the first time since his records began; however many people still expressed strong belief there is a spiritual aspect to life. Do you watch the programme, the Repair Shop on BBC? In this programme treasured items, usually belonging to people who have passed away, are brought to the repair shop where specialists use their skills to bring those items back to how they once were, to how they were remembered when the person they lost was still alive. Never a programme goes by without at least one person saying that their loved one will looking down on them smiling (or similar words) to see the beautifully renovated item. I think this gives an indication of how very many people believe that when you die you have not gone to nothingness and that those who have passed are still around us in a different type of non-physical existence.

Space for Soul is a place for open and nonjudgemental discussion where we can be honest about our experiences with these things, unlike in the church where you might be regarded as blasphemous or heretical for saying that you have had such experiences. I hope you can join us for this discussion. If you would like to share knowledge of the beliefs of other faiths that would also be really welcome.

*Anne*

**AGM Sunday July 2<sup>nd</sup> 10.30 – 12.30 Old Library, Muller Road, Bristol.  
Please bring finger food to share**

We hope that you enjoy this newsletter. Feedback always welcome.