



Starting a Julian Meeting

The Julian Meetings

*F*oster the teaching and practice of contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition

*E*ncourage people to practise contemplative prayer in their daily lives, and to explore ways of doing this which are appropriate for them

*S*upport the individual ecumenical Julian Meetings - groups whose members meet regularly to practise Christian contemplative prayer together



What is a Julian Meeting?

A Julian Meeting is a group of three or more people who meet regularly for silent Christian contemplative prayer, and who belong to the network known as **The Julian Meetings (JM)**.

A Julian Meeting welcomes people of all denominations — Meetings aim to be ecumenical — or none, so long as they accept that the meeting is for Christian contemplative prayer. We acknowledge the value of other ways of praying at other times, but a Julian Meeting has the one focus, and is solely for contemplative prayer.

JM encourages people to find:

- * ways of prayer that are right for them, at this time in their life
- * how they can integrate contemplation into their daily prayer life
- * how personal and group contemplation can enrich each other.

The Julian Meetings is a network of all the separate Julian Meetings world-wide. Each Julian Meeting registers with JM to be a part of that network and benefit from the support, experience and contacts of other people committed to contemplative prayer.

JM has no offices. In Great Britain a Council of a dozen volunteers work from home and they:

- * deal with enquiries about Meetings etc.
- * run a website with full details of JM
- * maintain a computer database to keep in contact with individual subscribers and with each Julian Meeting
- * produce and distribute JM booklets and advertising materials
- * produce and distribute the JM Magazine three times a year
- * organise occasional events
- * administer JM finances.

We encourage Julian Meetings and Members outside Great Britain to form national / regional groups to resource and promote JM in their region. Our website, database and social media can facilitate connections between Meetings / Members, and provide the JM Magazine and publications as PDFs to download. We welcome suggestions on how we can improve our international services.

Julian Meetings begin in various ways:

- * A member of an existing Meeting moves to an area without one.

- * Two or three people hear about JM and decide to start a Meeting
- * It develops out of another group. eg a different sort of prayer group; study group; house group; Lent course; fellowship group.
- * A campaigning group may want a shared contemplative dimension to balance their active involvement.
- * A prayer group is so like a Julian Meeting it decides to be one.
- * People share a time of silence together, and it grows from there.
- * A Meeting that grows too large may split geographically, or start having two meetings on different days, or at different times.
- * Members whose Meeting is some distance away decide to set up a new Meeting close to where they live.

First steps

We can provide a free starter pack of JM booklets and publicity items. This, and any further publications you would like, can be ordered via our website, or by post from JM Publications, (address on inside back cover). Outside the UK postal area they can be provided on-line as a PDF. Do read 'The Ideal Julian Meeting' as a starting point.

There's no substitute for *doing* contemplative prayer! If you are new to JM it may help to go to an existing Julian Meeting, if one is near enough to visit. Each Julian Meeting is unique, and autonomous, so don't assume they will all be the same.

Ideally a Julian Meeting, from the start, has members with various church affiliations, or who do not belong to any church. A first step can be to chat to other local Christians about contemplative prayer, and JM in particular. This could be one-to-one, or to a group such as Churches Together, a Minister's Fraternal, a Women's Fellowship, a prayer group etc. It is good to involve any local ecumenical groups.

First meeting

Once a few people are interested, arrange a meeting in a home or a suitable community or church room. It is best if people can sit in a circle, in a warm space, with as few noises / distractions as possible. In a church choose as neutral a setting as possible. People may find an evening more suitable than daytime for an introductory meeting.

The articles on pages 10 and 11 can be copied, or downloaded from our website, and adapted for your situation or publications. We have JM posters and noticeboard cards, with space for your information.

Invitations to the meeting may be by:

- * word of mouth
- * notices in local church and community newspapers/magazines/pew sheets/weekly notices
- * posters in churches, health centre/surgery, library, school, shops, post office and community noticeboards
- * circulating local church groups
- * inclusion on any websites or social media that cover your area

Have a good supply of our free introductory leaflet *Waiting on God* to give out. Also at least one copy of each of our booklets, and the JM Magazine, for people to see - these come as part of your free introductory pack. Our pew card or bookmark is helpful to give to people at their first meeting. (Order online, or from JM publications)

At this first meeting, contemplative prayer and the Julian Meetings can be explained and discussed and people's questions answered. You may be happy to do this yourself. If not, someone from another Julian Meeting might come and talk to the meeting. You are welcome to ask us if we know of anyone available in your area. One Council member's role is to advise and encourage Meetings, new or 'old'.

People should then experience contemplative silence, using a suitable lead-in with advice on relaxing, centring down, and dealing with stray thoughts by returning to your focus. For those not used to silent prayer, 10-15 minutes silence is long enough. Then give time for people to say how they felt, and share any problems – or good things – they experienced. Follow this with a second silence, when you could use music as a lead-in and lead-out, lasting about 20 minutes. Our booklets *Going Into Silence and Coming Out* and *Your Turn To Lead* may be helpful.

Then, over coffee/tea, people could discuss if they'd be interested in a regular meeting. If some are, they can consider when, where, and how often to meet, what name to use, and any other practicalities. Even if no one wishes to continue, they will know about another aspect of prayer and spirituality and experienced prayerful silence.

Regular meetings

Regular Meetings can be held at any convenient time. Daytime is not easy for most people in paid work. Evenings can be difficult for some elderly people, those with family responsibilities or those who have to work in the evening. A Julian Meeting can alternate daytime

and evening meetings, to allow for these restrictions.

In a town centre a Meeting may be at lunch time, or late afternoon/early evening, for people who work in the town but live elsewhere.

Meetings can alternate on two different days, to avoid excluding people with prior commitments on one day.

Meetings are usually held weekly, twice monthly or monthly. With the weekly or twice-monthly meetings it is easier to alternate day/evening meetings, or different days, as intervals between them are not too long. A regular date – eg every second Tuesday – saves uncertainty but limits flexibility. Each Meeting must decide for itself.

At each Meeting one member will need to lead the silent prayer time on that occasion – and we hope this role will be shared amongst all the members in turn. A Julian Meeting belongs to *all* its members, and shared leadership of the meetings is an expression of this.

If a Meeting is large, or has a complicated pattern of meeting times and venues, the contact person, or someone else, may act as co-ordinator for these. Some Meetings provide a list of dates / venues / leaders every few months.

Where to meet

This is important. The atmosphere of a church or chapel may be very helpful for silent prayer. But if it has fixed pews, gathering in a circle may be difficult. Intrusive denominational symbols can be unhelpful. The informality of a member's home may make it easier to get to know each other, and there are refreshment and toilet facilities which may not be available in some churches and chapels. But few homes can accommodate a large number, which might limit participation.

Besides houses, churches and chapels, Julian Meetings have met in an Abbey, a Priory, a hospital chapel, a college chaplaincy, and a Cathedral. Consider what might be available in your area.

Structuring the Meeting

A typical meeting has a short devotional reading, and/or a centring exercise, to lead into silence for 30 minutes. Music may be used to lead in instead. Usually a visual focus such as a cross or candle is placed in the centre of the circle.

The silence is ended with a brief passage, or a prayer, or music. The Grace or the Lord's Prayer may also be said together. The silence is

usually 30 minutes, though some Meetings have longer. It should never be less than 20 minutes, to allow people to enter it fully. The JM pamphlets *Going Into Silence ... and Coming Out* and *Your Turn to Lead* provide lots of suggestions for those who are leading a meeting, so we hope every Meeting has copies to lend to people.

Generally tea/coffee and conversation follow the silence. People may simply enjoy each other's company; share insights or difficulties in prayer; give or receive support and encouragement. Some groups have a box of books on spirituality for members to share. At some Meetings members leave in silence after the shared silence, taking it with them into their daily life. Each Julian Meeting decides for itself.

Being ecumenical

We hope Meetings include members of more than one denomination. Contemplative prayer has no denominational barriers. Language is not a problem if music - a universal language - is used instead of words for a lead-in and a lead-out.

Ecumenism is one reason why a Julian Meeting meets only for contemplation, and avoids anything else. It is a sensitive area. To include specific practices such as Bible study, intercession, prayer for healing, any liturgy, the rosary or Hail Mary, or speaking in tongues could alienate or discourage members who are not at ease with them, so please do not use them. These may all be commended in their rightful place, but that place is not a Julian Meeting.

Joining the JM Network

Your Meeting may join the JM Network by registering with us. *Either:*

- * go to www.thejulianmeetings.net and follow the instructions *or*
- * complete and return a paper registration form. Download one from the website, or send an sae to:

Pat Chandler, 15 Mill Lane, Manningtree, Essex, CO11 1DQ

The registration fee helps to pay for the JM Magazine, Newsletter, database, website, publicity and working expenses.

Every registered Meeting receives the Magazine and Newsletter in April, August and December, to keep members aware of the wider JM network and encourage their contemplative prayer life. Any new Meeting, regardless of when they register, will receive all the issues for that calendar year.

Your Meeting needs a name. Usually the place name (town / village) where you meet. You also need a person to be the Contact for your Meeting: someone enquirers can contact for information about your Meeting. Increasingly enquiries come via e-mail, so it is helpful if you can provide this, in addition to a postal address and phone number. You also need to give details of a second person as your alternate contact in case we cannot get in touch with the first contact. Illness or tragedy can strike any of us, hence the need for a second contact.

Your information will be held on our database and only used to:

- * Mail the magazine and newsletter to you
- * Mail information to you or keep in touch with your Julian Meeting
- * Provide contact details for enquirers about Meetings in your area
- * Provide contact details for other Julian Meetings in your region, wishing to advertise or organise an event.

An individual can join the JM network by joining their local Meeting and/or by subscribing to the JM Magazine. We hope many members of Meetings will take their own copy of the Magazine. Our website allows you to subscribe on-line, or download a paper form, or you can send an sae to Linda Potter, 32 Knaresborough Road, Harrogate, N Yorkshire HG2 7LU.

Belonging to the JM Network

We ask every Julian Meeting to renew their registration each year. This keeps our database up to date, and is also a check that each Meeting still exists. Renewals may be made on-line: a renewal form will be included with the December Magazine.

We hope the JM Magazine and Newsletter sent to *your Meeting* are circulated around the members who do not subscribe personally. The Magazine has articles, book reviews etc on prayer and spirituality and JM worldwide. The Newsletter has local news and information. They are an important way to give every Julian information about the wider JM network, so we'd like *everyone* to see them.

A Magazine Subscription renewal form is sent with the December Magazine to individual subscribers, or they can renew on-line.

From the JM database we can provide contact details for:

- * other local Meetings if an enquirer is unable to join your Meeting.
- * nearby Meetings, to advertise a Quiet Day, Juliantide celebration or other local event

- * local Meetings for mutual support, sharing and encouragement.
- * Meetings elsewhere if a member is moving away and wishes to join a Meeting in their new area.
- * Meetings in areas where a member has friends or family who would like to contact a local Meeting.
- * Meetings in holiday locations, many of whom welcome Julians on holiday to join them.

You can obtain these contact details by

- * following the instructions on the website
- * e-mailing: meetingsinfo@thejulianmeetings.net
- * *in the UK postage area* sending an sae to:
The Julian Meetings, 2 Margaret St, Derby DE1 3FE

Finances

Running a Julian Meeting should cost very little, and each Meeting decides how to finance itself. Likely expenses are:

- * Annual registration fee
- * JM booklets, posters etc.
- * Postage, phone calls, perhaps photocopying
- * Refreshments - should be borne by the whole membership
- * Rent, or contribution to heating and lighting, if meeting in a church, chapel or hall.

Members may pay a small contribution annually, or per meeting. This money may meet all the minor expenses of the Meeting.

If you organise a Quiet Day, or similar event, the JM Bursary Fund can make a loan and/or donation towards the cost, as when a venue requires a deposit before anyone has paid for the day.

Getting known

People can only come to a Julian Meeting they know about! It may be – almost certainly is – what some people are seeking, so please advertise your existence as widely as possible. People will travel a surprising distance if they are really interested.

The Internet. Today the internet is where many people look first. If you are a registered Meeting, your Meeting name and county will appear on our **website, www.thejulianmeetings.net** and enquirers can get your contact details. We are also on **Twitter** and **Facebook**, and some Meetings are included on their parish or village website.

Word of mouth. Be prepared to speak on a one-to-one basis at any time when the opportunity offers. Offer to speak to other local Christians about contemplative prayer and JM: Mothers Union or Womens Fellowship groups; local prayer groups; lay ministers meetings or clergy fraternals; Churches Together. Many groups are only too pleased to find a new speaker and a new topic. Two people doing a 'double act' can be easier and less daunting for them, and more interesting to the listeners.

JM noticeboard cards and posters can be displayed on local church noticeboards. Community information is often allowed on noticeboards in health centres, surgeries, libraries, hospitals, schools and colleges, small shops or post offices.

Magazines and News-sheets. Local churches often welcome items for their magazine or news-sheet/diary of events. A short item on your Julian Meeting can reach many people. Look wider for deanery, diocesan, circuit, district, ecumenical or village magazines, any of which might include a short article about JM and contact details of Julian Meetings in their area. The articles on pages 10 and 11 can be copied, or downloaded, and adapted as necessary.

Church Handbooks. Some RC and Anglican dioceses include details about JM in the Diocesan Handbook. Other denominations and dioceses might do so if they were asked, so try asking

Newspapers. Don't forget the secular press, as local papers are always looking for news. One Meeting got a report of its '1st birthday party', complete with cake, into their local paper.

What's On. Is there a local 'What's On' of some sort where your Julian Meeting could be included in the listings?

Newcomers

Openness to newcomers is essential, so do think of how you would welcome newcomers once you are meeting regularly. It is helpful to talk to, or perhaps meet, the new person beforehand, to find out if they are used to contemplative prayer, and if not, to explain it. You can describe the pattern of the meeting and deal with any questions.

A 'welcome pack' is useful for newcomers, with *Waiting on God*, *Some Basics of Contemplative Prayer*, a bookmark, perhaps a back issue of the magazine, and details of Meeting time, date and venue.

Offering to accompany a newcomer to their first meeting may be

much appreciated. It is so much easier than finding a (possibly unknown) place, or walking into a new situation, on your own.

The Contact Person

Besides registering your Meeting we hope that you will:

- * Give to any enquirer who gets in touch with you the details of your Meeting, and welcome them to join it.
- * Encourage members to take their turn at leading into and out of the silence. Our booklets 'Going in ... and Coming Out' and 'It's Your Turn to Lead' can be very helpful.
- * Have a set of the JM booklets, so that your members may borrow and read them.
- * Read the JM Magazines and Newsletters you will receive *on behalf of your whole Meeting* so that you know about the wider JM network. They are sent to all registered Meetings.
- * Take the Magazine and Newsletter to your Meetings and encourage members to read them.
- * Tell your members of anything in them that they may need to know about – a local quiet day, or a request for help.
- * Explain that anyone can take out a personal subscription to the Magazine if they would like their own copy
- * Encourage members to contribute to the Magazine / Newsletter.
- * Advertise your Meeting widely. It is sad to be contacted by a person seeking a silent prayer group, who finds there is a local one they knew nothing about.

It can be helpful to:

- * Hold a list of members contact details, in case a meeting is changed at short notice. Give the second contact a copy!
- * Have details of the nearest Julian Meetings in all directions from you. An enquirer unable to come to your Meeting for any reason can be given these details.
- * Every 12-18 months discuss how your Meeting is, and/or use the JM Health Check with your Meeting.
- * Agree, before it arises, what to do in the event that you, or the host(ess), or the venue, are unavailable at short notice.
- * Encourage your members to provide feedback (good or bad), and make suggestions

What some Meetings also do, or have done:

- * Provide a paper copy of the lead-in and out, for those who may be hard of hearing.
- * Some have a 'book box' of spiritual books, which members may browse and borrow. Or members bring along books etc. that they have found helpful and wish to share.
- * Organise a Quiet day / morning / afternoon / evening. The Retreat Association has a very helpful leaflet about this.
- * Organise a JM event that includes both silence and sharing
- * Have an annual meal together, or go on a day pilgrimage.
- * Go on retreat together
- * Arrange a Juliantide celebration at a local church / cathedral

Examples of Articles on Julian Meetings.

These can be copied, or downloaded from our website, and adapted as necessary for use in a local paper or magazine.

“Be still and know that I am God”.

The prayer of loving attention; contemplative prayer; the prayer of silence; the prayer of the heart – all these describe a way of praying which many people find to be the best way for them. As they pray they are waiting on God in silence, listening to Him, resting in Him.

Our words, our thoughts, our thanks and praise, our requests, our saying sorry are all important, but these need to be balanced by times of listening to God. In any conversation or relationship we need both to speak and to listen.

Julian Meetings are ecumenical groups of people who meet together regularly to practise silent contemplative prayer. Some members have no formal church links, but most belong to a congregation.

At a Julian Meeting we sit in a circle and relax in the presence of God. A short devotional reading, or some music, leads into a time of silent prayer, with a cross or candle in the centre to focus on as we open ourselves to God and wait on Him.

Local interest has encouraged us to try starting a Julian Meeting in this area. An introductory meeting will take place

on: *(date of meeting)*

at: *(time of meeting)*

in: *(place where the meeting will be held)*

Attending the meeting does not commit you to further involvement. It is to explore if, and how, we might take this forward. Please come along if you are at all interested. No notice is necessary, but if you can phone and let us know you are coming we can have enough seats and refreshments available.

Your Local Julian Meeting

A Julian Meeting is now held in *town / village /.....* following the good response to publicity earlier this year. The Meeting is held on the *first / second /..... Monday / Tuesday /.....* of the month at *.....am / pm*. Please phone *Mr / Mrs / Miss* on *01.....* for details of venue etc.

Julian Meetings are for people of all denominations – or none – who wish to join with others in contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition.

A brief reading and / or piece of music leads into half-an-hour of silent prayer. The time of prayer is followed by tea and coffee and conversation.

What we *do* is perhaps best expressed on our prayer card:

Relax your body

and quieten your mind

Be open to God in the silence

God is with you – here, now

Do not strive or be anxious

Be silent, be still

and let God reach you

Let God love you

**If you wish to know more about the Julian Meetings,
and / or details of your nearest Meeting(s) either**

Go to our website: www.thejulianmeetings.net

or write to (sae please)

The Julian Meetings,
263 Park Lodge Lane, Wakefield
West Yorkshire WF1 4HY

We have members and Meetings in many counties

Julian Meetings Publications

Waiting on God in the Silence
(*free introductory leaflet*)

A5 leaflet on contemplative prayer

Try Stillness

Some Basics of Contemplative Prayer

Going Into Silence ... and Coming Out

Approaching Silence

It's Your Turn To Lead

The Ideal Julian Meeting

Starting a Julian Meeting

The Healthy Julian Meeting

Resources List

The Julian Meetings Magazine (*three issues a year*)

A bookmark (*with helpful suggestions for using silence*)

A pew / handbag / wallet card (*with meditation suggestion*)

Promotional A4 posters (*two*) and A5 poster (*one*)

An A6 noticeboard card

**Buy publications direct from our website
or download an order form from the website
or send an sae for one to:**

The Julian Meetings, Rustling Pines, Foxwood Lane,
Woodborough, Notts NG14 6ED

At our website:

www.thejulianmeetings.net

You can:

- * find information about the Julian Meetings
- * view our worldwide meetings directory
- * find a full list of JM administrative contacts
- * find our Facebook and Twitter accounts
- * view an events diary
- * use our message facility
- * link to other resources

You can also:

- * download many of our free leaflets
- * buy our publications by post or online
- * take out a magazine subscription
- * register a new Julian Meeting
- * make a donation

Other resources for Members of JM include:

- * a discussion forum
- * Members' Area and Directory
- * online renewal of subscriptions
- * online renewal of Meeting registrations
- * online events booking
- * publicity for Meetings and JM events

