

⌘ EXPERIENCING LENT ⌘

What's Happening at Stillpoint

You haven't been to Stillpoint in a while? Next time you call in you will notice a few changes.

Firstly, as you walk in you'll see there have been some changes to the layout of the House. Meredith's desk has been moved to provide more space around the door as you enter and most notably, we now have an extra room. As I have moved into what was Ann's office, this has provided us with another retreat room (my old office) where we can offer spiritual direction, where people can come for a time of quietness and where we now house the library, making it more accessible.

If you were to be a 'fly on the wall' at our Board meetings on a Thursday morning you would notice we have three new Board members. We thank those who have served faithfully on the Board for many years: Joan Kelly, Rev. Ian Price and Ann Siddall all served the Board well offering their support, encouragement and wisdom. We welcome our new members. Rev. Rod Dyson, the new EO of the MRN, Neville Hargrave, a member of the Stillpoint Faith Community and Mandy Harvey, a member of Eden Hills UC and a candidate for the ministry of Deacon. We are grateful for their willingness to contribute to the life of Stillpoint in this way.

The Ministry Team has met a number of times already this year as the program for 2011 kicks off. It too is looking to expand its representation as we seek to respond to God's desire for Stillpoint and to bring a broader range of gifts and talents to the ministry we offer.

The new year has commenced as the old year ended, with a good number of people, both groups and individuals, making use of the facilities and programs at Stillpoint. It has been a joy to welcome some who have used Stillpoint for the first time. We trust it won't be the last.

The Stillpoint Faith Community was delighted to welcome a new member in March. Di Shearer who is a member of and has a part time pastoral charge at Pt Elliot has also taken out membership here. Di is well known to us having been involved with Stillpoint since its inception. We look forward to her involvement.

And speaking of new, the Stillpoint Centre has undertaken a new venture - last Saturday, 26th March, Denise Griffen, Lynona Hawkins and myself led a Saturday afternoon elective on 'Quiet Prayer' at Kid's Camp Out at the Barossa Valley Tourist Park, Nuriootpa. We had over 220 children and leaders attend our session over the course of the afternoon, which was well received by the children and greatly appreciated by the adults! A very worthwhile venture.

Finally, I would like to again thank you for your support in the past which has helped bring Stillpoint to where it is. I look forward to your support into the future as we seek to follow where God is leading us.

Peace
Gary Stuckey (Rev)
Minster/Director, Stillpoint Spirituality Centre and Faith Community

IN THIS ISSUE

1 WHAT'S HAPPENING AT STILLPOINT - GARY STUCKEY

2 A LENTEN THOUGHT FROM HENRI NOUWEN

2 A MONASTIC LENT - SISTER JOAN CHITTISTER

2 SUGGESTIONS FOR A LENTEN PRACTICE - FR JOHN CATOIR

3 EXPERIENCING LENT - GARY STUCKEY

3 PLACES FOR ONLINE PRAYER AND REFLECTION

3 NOW IS A GOOD TIME - ANN SIDDALL

4 AUTUMN WISDOM FOR LENT - GARY STUCKEY

5 THE ROAD TO JERUSALEM AND BEYOND

5 WE NEED YOUR HELP!

6 OUR CONTINUING PROGRAM FOR 2011

A Lenten Thought from Henri Nouwen

For most of my life I have struggled to find God, to know God, to love God. I have tried hard to follow the guidelines of the spiritual life - pray always, work for others, read the Scriptures - and to avoid the many temptations to dissipate myself. I have failed many times but always tried again, even when I was close to despair.

Now I wonder whether I have sufficiently realized that during all this time God has been trying to find me, to know me, and to love me.

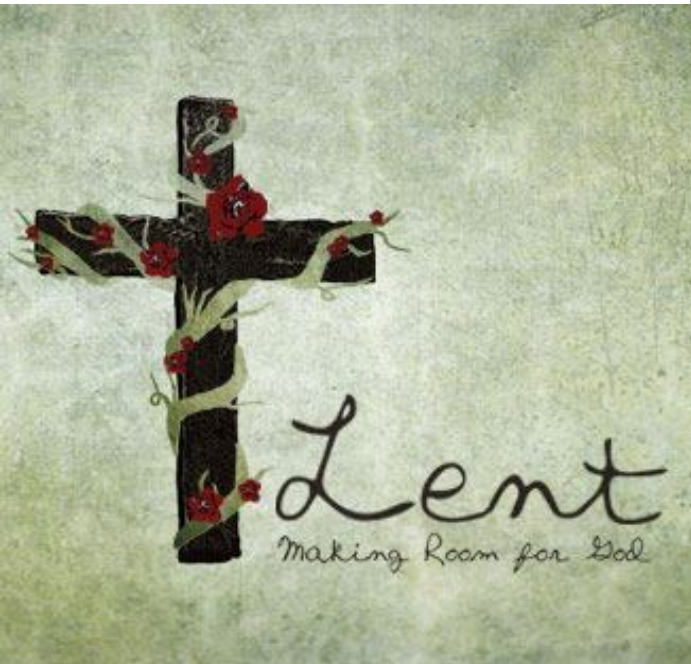
The question is not "How am I to find God?"
but "How am I to let myself be found by him?"

The question is not "How am I to know God?"
but "How am I to let myself be known by God?"

And, finally, the question is not "How am I to love God?"
but "How am I to let myself be loved by God?"

God is looking into the distance for me, trying to find me, and longing to bring me home.

From *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming* by Henri J. M. Nouwen (New York: Image Books, 1992).



A Monastic Lent

St Benedict in his Rule says, "*The life of a monastic ought to be a continuous Lent.*"

Sister Joan Chittister comments on this statement: "A monastic Lent is the process of emptying our cups. Lent is the time for trimming the soul and scraping the sludge off a life turned slipshod. Lent is about taking stock of time, even religious time. Lent is about exercising the control that enables us to say no to ourselves so that when life turns hard of its own accord we have the spiritual stamina to say yes to its twists and turns with faith and with hope. Benedict tells us that Lent is the time to make new efforts to be what we say we want to be."



Suggestions for a Lenten Practice

Why not increase your capacity for joy by giving up the things that force joy out of your soul?

- Give up resentment and become more forgiving.
- Give up hatred and return good for evil.
- Give up complaining and be more grateful.
- Give up pessimism and become more hopeful.
- Give up worry and become more trusting.
- Give up anger and become more patient.
- Give up pettiness and become more noble.
- Give up gloom and become more joyful.

Lent: Discovering Joy in a Solemn Season
Fr. John Catoir



~~ Experiencing Lent ~~

by Gary Stuckey

The church/churches in which I grew up didn't really observe what we now call the Christian Year or the Liturgical Year. Christmas was observed of course. It was the big event. Easter came fairly close behind. Not much was made of Good Friday though. After all who wants all that 'down and dark' stuff. And children, I was told, did not go to Good Friday services. They were for adults only.

And Lent? It was pretty much a non-event. I don't even recall hearing much about it in the churches of my early years. I think the impression I did gain of Lent was from Catholic friends. It started with the awareness that on a particular Wednesday they would have little black smudges on their foreheads. This would be followed by the talk of, "What have you given up for Lent?" So Lent, I assumed, was a time of restrictions, rigidity and regulation. It became a battle of our will verses our desire. A time to forgo certain things for a while to increase our spiritual stamina and impress God with our voluntary, albeit minimal, suffering. Then, after six weeks, life could return to 'normal'.

But is this what was intended by the early church when Lent became part of the Church calendar? Was Lent to become a six week period of inconvenience in an otherwise plentiful year? Is it a time to be deliberately dreary in order that we may appreciate more intensely the joy of Easter?

It seems to me, that for the early church, Lent was quite the opposite of a dreary season of abstinence. Rather, it was a time for human life to return to normal, life lived in deep communion with God. The giving up of things was not meant as a temporary measure. It was a time to reflect on those things that have crept into our lives that have become barriers in our relationship with God, and then to discard them permanently. It was a time to reflect on the practices that sustain our relationship with God, and then to embrace them whole- heartedly and not just for Lent.

I love the season of Lent, primarily for those reasons. It is a time when in prayerful reflection I take stock of my life, see where it has deviated from its true path and make adjustments to return to that path. Has my busyness kept me from nurturing my relationship with God? Then it is time to slow down. Has my eating become unhealthy not just for my body but my spirit also? Then I will benefit from a fast. Have the spiritual practices that I know nurture my soul been neglected? Then it is time to re-engage with them.

Lent is not life denying, but life affirming. That's why we celebrate it. So that we may return to normal human life lived in communion with God the life-giver.

Places for online Prayer and Reflection

The Stillpoint Prayer Chapel

The Stillpoint Prayer Chapel can be found within the Stillpoint website. It contains links to the *Uniting Church SA 'Quiet Space'*, to light a candle in prayer at the beautiful *Gratefulness 'Light a Candle'* site, to add your prayer to a lava lamp of prayers and to get daily prayers for your MP3 player . The Prayer Chapel can be found at: <http://mrn.sa.uca.org.au/stillpoint/prayer-chapel.html> .

The Quiet Space

'The Quiet Space' is an online prayer space provided by the South Australian Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia. It is a space where you are able to pray, reflect and meditate using either the weekly reflection provided or by choosing from a range of prayers on numerous topics. The site can be found at: <http://prayer.sa.uca.org.au/>

Now is a good time

On this one fine day
when routine tasks and unexpected interruptions
have already eclipsed my attempts at prayer
may I know that it is never too late:
that I am not here to perform or to "achieve" prayer,
and that now is a good time.

If I do no more than stop, focus, breathe,
acknowledge, listen, ask, ponder
then I have prayed.

Gracious God,
in life's ordinary, sacred moments
may I always be ready to open my heart and mind
and to see how You are present.
Amen.

Ann Siddall



Autumn Wisdom for Lent

by Gary Stuckey

Lent derives its name from the word meaning *spring*. This is great for those in the northern hemisphere with its connotations of new life and increasing daylight. Of course this leads up to Easter, the great feast of resurrection, life emerging even from death. But we live in a different hemisphere where life and light are receding. What wisdom does observing Lent in autumn have for us?

I think autumn has its own insights and wisdom to offer us in this season.

One of the most obvious features of Autumn is the shedding of many of our trees. This is partly why in the USA the season is referred to as fall. The vibrancy of the spring and summer is waning. But as the cooler days come, the earth transitions into a different phase - a phase of letting go and surrendering.

I think this is one of the things I really like about Autumn. It reminds me that in the circle of life, there is a time to let go, and if I don't surrender that which needs to be surrendered, new life will not come.

Perhaps that's why Autumn has usually been associated with melancholy. We know what it is to go through seasons of loss, and there can be a deep sadness in that.

But Autumn reminds us that all things are passing, and in that passing there is beauty and there is also new life. There is life in dying, in letting go. And it is when we are willing to let go that new growth comes.

This means being open to change, for new growth always means change. We can try and stay the same, try and resist change, but that is the way of death.

Learn from Autumn the beauty and art of letting go. Learn to recognize in your own life that to which you have been clinging too hard, that which is stifling new life in you. Autumn teaches us this, life teaches us this, and Jesus teaches us this.

I invite you in this Lent to spend some time thinking about things of life you might be holding on to too tightly, why it is so hard to let go of them and reflect on some of the moments of your life when you have surrendered and new life has emerged.

THE ROAD TO JERUSALEM AND BEYOND



A REFLECTION FOR LENT 2011

An invitation to book a Quiet Room in the Stillpoint Spirituality Centre at Belair for a day or half day during Lent 2011 to make a private retreat using specially prepared reflection material.

As Jesus began his ministry he started walking the road that was to lead him to Jerusalem and the cross. Indeed, the stories he told, the healing and teaching he offered and the company with which he shared meals, all helped to form the road to Jerusalem.

'The Road to Jerusalem and Beyond' is an opportunity for you to take time to be still and experience the sacred as you explore and reflect on some of the roads in the Bible that Jesus either walked or spoke about.

Days available:

Friday April 1

Saturday April 2

Between 9.30am and 4pm

Cost \$25 whole day: \$15 half day.

BYO lunch, tea and coffee provided.

(Please ask at time of booking if you would like to spend some time in conversation with one of our trained leaders during the day).

If you would prefer, the Resources may also be purchased to enable you to reflect on them in your own time and in a location of your own choosing. Cost \$15.

WE NEED YOUR HELP ON A WEDNESDAY MORNING...

With the situation that Gary is now here alone in the Centre on a Wednesday, we are looking for volunteers who would be able to join him for a couple of hours or so to answer the phone and be a presence in the Office should Gary be engaged in providing Spiritual Direction or otherwise unavailable. Ideally we would like help between the hours of 9.30am - 12.30pm which could be shared between 2 or 3 people if necessary. This is not a difficult task by any means and gives you the opportunity for some stillness as you enjoy the quietness of the centre. Occasionally there may be some simple tasks here for you to do, and you are welcome to bring a book or other material to read or work on.

Please contact Meredith on 8178 0048 or mered.stillpoint@internode.on.net if you would be willing to help out, even if only on an occasional basis. All offers of help will be greatly appreciated.

Our Continuing Program for 2011

STILLPOINT CENTRE

LENT RETREAT DAYS

'The Road to Jerusalem and Beyond'

Self-led one-day retreat using material prepared by Lynona Hawkins. 31st March, 1st or 2nd April. 9.30am - 4pm. Spiritual conversation available if requested at time of booking. Up to six people per day. \$25 full day: \$15 half day. Also available for home use: \$15.

RESIDENTIAL RETREAT

'The Path of Happiness'

Silence, prayer, reflections. 18th - 22nd September (Sunday to Thursday). Leader: Rev Gary Stuckey. At Nunyara Conference Centre and Stillpoint Spirituality Centre. Cost: TBA

ADVENT RETREAT DAYS

Self-led one-day retreat using specially prepared material. 25th November, 1st or 10th December, 9.30am - 4pm. Spiritual conversation available if requested at time of booking. Up to six people per day. \$25 full day: \$15 half day. Also available for home use: \$15.

BE STILL & KNOW

A monthly gathering for prayer and reflection at the Stillpoint Spirituality Centre. Tuesdays 1pm - .2.45 pm. No registration required. All welcome. Gold coin donation. April 12, May 10, June 14, July 12, August 9, September 13, October 11, November 8.

FAITH COMMUNITY

WORSHIP

6.30pm in Nunyara Chapel (unless otherwise indicated):

March 27	April 10	April 24 (Easter Day, 7.30am Stillpoint Centre followed by breakfast)
May 8	May 22	June 12 (Turkindi Room)
June 26	July 10 (Turkindi Room)	July 24
August 14	August 28	September 11
September 25 (Stillpoint Centre)		October 9
October 23	November 13	November 27
December 11	December 24 (Stillpoint Centre)	

6.30pm at Lefevre UC (63 Gedville Rd, Taperoo)

May 15, July 17, Sept 18, Nov 20

A CENTERING PRAYER GROUP

7.30pm at Stillpoint, 2nd Wednesday of each month from February - November. Open to those with previous experience of meditation. Gold coin donation.

REFLECTION GROUPS

At Stillpoint, Mondays & Tuesdays 7pm - 8.30pm.

- 1) Our Lenten Study is currently running.
 - 2) A Second Study based on the writings of Thomas Merton will run for 8 weeks from 25th July - 12th September.
- Further information available closer to the time.

BENEDICTINE DAY

8.30am - 4pm Friday 3rd June.

Stillpoint Spirituality Centre & Faith Community
5 Burnell Drive, Belair, SA 5052
phone: (08) 8178 0048
email: stillpoint@internode.on.net
web: www.sa.uca.org.au/goto/stillpoint

Office Hours: Mon - Thurs, 9.30am - 1.30pm
Centre Director & Minister of the Faith Community:
Rev Gary Stuckey
Office Manager: Meredith Spangler