



NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2020

EDITION 97



“Sometimes in the waves of change we find our true direction”

CONTENTS

PAGE

1.	Letter from the Chair	3 & 4
2.	Lockdown - An Unexpected Gift	5
3.	Lockdown and Me	6 – 7
4.	Flowers in Bloom	8
5.	Sister Sheila Julian’s 90th Birthday	9
6.	REPORTS: - Referrals Secretary Report - Accountant’s Report - Membership Report - Supervision Report - Newsletter Report	10- 12
7.	Journeys in Hope	13- 14
8.	Responding to the Pandemic	15
9.	The Loving Earth Project	16
10.	Locked Down Looking for ?	17
11.	A Reflection	18
12.	The Diary 2021	19
13.	SPIDIR Committee Members	20

NOTICE

Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, our 2020 AGM and Annual Lecture will now not take place as planned.

Our next AGM and Annual Lecture will be on

Monday, 28th June 2021 at 10am – 3.30pm

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Friends,

What strange and frightening times we have all been living through these past few months.

I do hope that you all have kept safe and well and have managed to get through the worst of the lockdown restrictions without too many difficulties. We are beginning to see a slow return to a more normal way of life but it will still be many months before we can feel confident that the worst is really over.

Sadly, we have had to cancel many of our planned events this year, but the good news is that the speakers for the March Refresher Day and for the Annual Conference have very kindly rescheduled for 2021. We are very grateful to Rev Andrew Goodhead and Liz Watson for agreeing to do this. The new dates are 22nd March and 28th June 2021 respectively.

The SPIDIR Training Course which was due to start in September this year has also been postponed until September 2021. Interviews will restart as soon as is possible. The decision whether to go ahead with our Autumn Refresher Day on 19th October 2020 (information on the website and in this newsletter) has not yet been taken. It may be possible to hold it via Zoom but we will let you know the details in good time.

Soon after the quarantine was imposed, SPIDIR decided to halt all new applications for spiritual direction and Spiritual Directors were asked not to hold face-to-face direction sessions until further notice.

Many directors have kept in touch with their directees by phone or Zoom and we sincerely hope that they felt connected and supported during this period of isolation. We plan to resume business as usual very shortly.

Looking back to last year, Chris Chapman, John Woodhouse and Nim Njuguna headed up an excellent three day Refresher Workshop starting in September and continuing in January and March this year.



We hope to run further Refresher Workshops in the future. Kate Singleton from Southwark Diocese ran a very good Refresher Day for us last autumn on Safeguarding, which was very useful and informative.

There are plans to hold a SPIDIR Retreat led by Rev Barry Preece at St Michael's Convent, Gerrards Cross on 19-21st October 2021. The Community of the Sisters of the Church moved from Ham Common to Gerrards Cross a few years ago and continue their ministry of hospitality in their comfortable new home set in a beautiful garden.

This retreat will be held instead of the Autumn Refresher Day 2021. More details will be posted on the website and in the newsletter when they become available.

As the AGM was cancelled this year due to the Corona virus, all Annual Reports normally presented at that meeting will appear elsewhere in this newsletter.

I would like to thank the members of the SPIDIR Committee for their hard work and dedication over the past year and look forward to meeting up with them all again in person very soon.

We were unable to publish a Spring Newsletter this year due to the restrictions of COVID-19 but this Bumper Summer edition will more than compensate, I am sure you will agree. Our grateful thanks to Revd. Hannah Neale for regularly putting together our excellent newsletters; her skill and creativity are much appreciated.

I look forward to seeing many of you again at one of our SPIDIR gatherings, virtual or otherwise.

In the meantime take care and keep safe.

With warm wishes and God's blessing on us all.

Biddy

LOCKDOWN – AN UNEXPECTED GIFT

Lockdown has brought me an unexpected gift. My prayer life tends to be informal, not to say haphazard, and over a lifetime I'm aware of having had very few overtly "religious" experiences. (The one I recall most clearly happened 12 years ago and lasted all of 5 seconds.)

In the course of daily exercise I've discovered a field not far from here which I'd occasionally walked past on the way to somewhere else but never explored. It's an undulating 10 acres, and there's nowhere from which the whole is visible, so the view is constantly changing. From one part there's a panoramic view of the North Downs, from another you can't see them at all. Throughout the spring it's been ablaze with a succession of meadow flowers, and purple orchids have now started to appear. What I'm getting as I walk there is a sense of God's presence. Nothing spectacular, just a feeling of presence and companionship. If that's prayer, then I'm finding this field more conducive than being in a building, however sacred. Perhaps I've been shown my equivalent of RS Thomas's "Bright Field"?

During Lent I was immersed in Mark Oakley's new book on George Herbert's poems. Despite all the vicissitudes of their relationship, a recurring theme for GH was his sense of friendship with God – perhaps God has been giving me a similar message? Books are vital to me - and music, poetry, silence, the natural world and certain people all bestow essential sustenance. However, I have a diminishing taste for churchy wordiness (EM Forster's "poor little talkative Christianity"). It's come as a surprise to realise that I haven't missed Communion all that much. I zoom into my parish church for the live Mass and the Rector does the priestly thing on behalf of us all. In the fullness of time it'll be good to return in person to the worshipping community, but this is different, feels real, and for now I'm content to enjoy the blessings that are available.

I hope lockdown has brought you unexpected gifts too.



Sally Lowe

LOCKDOWN - MY DIRECTEES AND ME

We asked our Spiritual Directors to give us an insight into how their sessions have gone since they could no longer see each other face to face, except via the wonder of technology of course. Here's what a number of them had to say:

"I hadn't heard of Zoom until this lockdown and now feel rather zoomed out! What a challenging time this is in so many ways and it has tested the way we accompany people. The main challenge for me was taking on two new directees during this period, one from SPIDIR and one from the London Centre. We have met on WhatsApp video so at least we could see one another - in my case, I am conscious of white roots and straggling hair! I have missed the face to face interaction; observing body language and silences seem more difficult. We talked from time to time about using different ways to communicate especially with those who cannot get to see a directee and this time has challenged me to come out of my comfort zone and try new approaches and as always, I have been blessed by the insights of those I accompany."

Rosemary Shaw

Ken Woolhouse to his Directees

"Silence

To 'hush the spirit' (as the Quakers say) is an indispensable part of the disciplined life. Without this deliberate withdrawal one is buffeted by pressures which evoke immediate emotional responses. The pressures are as frequent and varied as the people one meets, the news one reads, the situations with which one is confronted. Do not be afraid of silence or of being alone. The regular practice each day of a period of silence will help a sound patient judgment to grow. "Be still, and know that I am God". (Psalm 46.10)

Love solitude, but loathe isolation.

“Sadly, as an over 70 I haven't been able to have directees round during the lockdown. I did suggest anyone wanting to, could phone; but have had no take up. Am thinking of suggesting they all come for group meet-up when that is allowed. Then we can do some catching up. In the interim, I would welcome suggestions for ways of keeping in touch that don't involve Zoom.

I am reading 'Seeing in the Dark' by Christopher Chapman. It is excellent. The subtitle is 'Pastoral perspectives on suffering from the Christian spiritual tradition'. I'll keep reading.”
Jane Wenlock

“I have had two 40 minute zoom sessions with my directee and all went well. I think the shorter time helped to concentrate our minds and I found it helpful. My other directee found a new companion online so that's fine by me. . One of the benefits of a huge clear out is discovering some gems I had forgotten about including Evelyn Underhill. I now have all my spirituality materials together in my study. I have at last written the basis of my life story something I have been trying to do for years. Some painting, reading, playing the piano and singing.”

J. Woodhouse

“At the start of the lockdown I contacted my seven directees by telephone to see how they were facing the prospect of lockdown. It was feeling very strange not to be able to have face-to-face contact with directees. For some of them I had dates to meet already set so we agreed to have a telephone meeting instead of face-to-face contact. For the other directees where we had not arranged a date I left it to them to contact me. I have had telephone conversations with some of my directees and was able to have a distance walk, with one directee to some Gardens close by which worked well. Although I have mastered Zoom and WhatsApp, I felt telephone conversations were more satisfactory. I have left directees to contact me regarding any further ‘telephone meetings’ or distance walks.”

Cynthia Jackson

'The Amen of nature is always a flower.'

A Flower

© Aldora Sparrow

Have you ever heard
of a flower that never needs
Water, soil, or sunshine?

A flower that stays in full bloom
Through summer and winter
Through good times and bad

A flower that rarely gets smaller,
growing endlessly.
A few lost petals,
A little droop,
but, without a doubt,
it will always regrow
into something more beautiful.

I have one of those.
I call it Love.



“They have no mouth, but
seem to speak A thousand
words so mild and meek”.

© Pearlyn

“Tis my faith that every flower
enjoys the air it breathes”.

William Wordsworth

Grow a few and then you'll
know how your life is fresh
and new.

© Pearlyn

SISTER SHEILA JULIAN IS 90 YEARS OLD!

Sister Sheila Julian has been a long time member of SPIDIR and an active Spiritual Director for many years. We have pleasure in celebrating her extraordinary life and are pleased to publish part of her speech at her birthday party at St Michael's Convent.

“Thank you each and everyone of you for being here today. I can't believe its happening in spite of the evidence before my eyes! I've heard many people ask for the secret of a long life so my answer could be Marmite but I believe it is due in part to each one of you. We all contribute to each other. I am who I am because each one of you is who you are. We are all interconnected – a letter now, a smile then, a flask of soup when I was poorly- just little things but they mean or meant so much on the receiving end. I have been very fortunate to have had such supportive, long standing friends who've kept me going, often unwittingly.

Many of you wrote to me when I was overseas – initially with USPG and then in Community, sometimes in very tricky situations- many wobbly ones too when I had to cross rivers on floating tree trunks or jump from boats to canoes ! Sticky ones when I had to climb up muddy banks from boats to land – I hated sinking into mud up to my knees. I has snakes to contend with too but won't go into details or I won't sleep tonight! Several times I was the only European in the situation I found myself so I was really appreciative of all the support I had from you and all the churches whose people prayed for missionaries.

USPG sent me to Burma, to a small island in the Solomon's. Apart from the school there were no other people living on the island- just goats- so once again, I was on my own apart from the staff and children. However, I discovered that I could go by boat to the nearest main town on the nearest large island in the school holidays. There I met CSC in the form of Sisters Beryl, Frances and Helen Jane and thus found my way into CSC.

The sisters here had no idea who they were getting. I'd been out of the country for about 20 years and when back, I spent most of my time catching up with family or giving talks to USPG. I must have been a very odd character. Some of my sisters probably think I still am !

You will have seen a cloth with many names on it. For me, it is a symbol of our interconnectedness,. We all touch each others lives and make a difference. It reminds me of all the love and support I've had over the years without which I wouldn't be here today.”

REPORTS

These would normally be presented at the AGM but with no physical AGM members will be able to scrutinise the documents here and send in their searching questions via the medium they choose. Or that is the idea.

2019 was a good year in terms of the financial numbers. Our overall income was £6542 and our expenditure was £4764, giving an overall surplus of £1778. This contrasts with 2018 when we had a very small deficit of £15 for the year.

Our membership stood at almost exactly the same as in 2018. We had our now-normal Spring refresher day, our AGM combined with the annual lecture and a refresher course in October.

We also finished off a two-year course for Spiritual Direction. This latter meant that both the income and the expenditure on the course was less than in 2018. There is no course running at the moment, and the current plan is to start one in the Autumn of 2021.

Our expenditure has been to support those activities, and also to maintain our website, advertising in The Bridge and newsletter production, which are paid for by the membership subscriptions.

The lack of expenditure on the referrals doesn't mean that no referral work has taken place – only that it didn't cost us anything. In 2019 we took the decision to ask someone to maintain the website on a regular basis – but that seems to have cost us about the same as the previous year. The expenses are mostly for travel.

Yes, SPIDIR is in quite good financial shape, which probably means that we shall be able to afford to spend a little more on providing supervision and other things that are deemed to be essential for our main mission of encouraging spiritual growth.

I would be happy to answer any questions you have about the accounts – my contact details are at the back of this newsletter.

Chris Dowlen
Honorary Treasurer

REPORTS

Referrals Secretary

Once again it has been a real joy and privilege to serve as Referrals Secretary. Whilst it can sometimes keep me rather busy, it is a very rewarding role and has a distinct pastoral role in addition to the obvious administrative one. I would also like to thank all the other members of the Referrals Committee who have been such a support to me this last year.

Taking into consideration the situation with COVID-19 and the fact that we have suspended taking on new referrals, the number of people contacting us to seek spiritual direction has remained largely the same as last year.

Taking the AGM as our 'new year', up until this suspension we had 64 referrals which compares with 78 from last year. The number of enquiries for spiritual direction from outside the diocese, who need to be redirected to somewhere closer to home or to their own diocese, has slightly increased. This is mostly due to referrals from Chichester Diocese who no longer offer this service. The number of directees who do not get in touch with their proposed director has also remained very low.

We have 75 directors on our database, of whom 62 are active and 13 who have asked to be removed temporarily. We are very grateful to those new directors who have come on board since the last AGM. Please do remember that it makes it a lot easier to match directees with directors if we have your up-to-date details which you can send to me at any time.

Thank you to everyone who offers their time and skills in this very important ministry, especially at this time when the situation is so difficult.

Christopher Serbutt

Membership Secretary's Report

Sally Lowe reports that there are currently 186 names on the membership list, approximately the same as a year ago. 18 of these are complimentary.

Supervision Coordinator's Report

You will all be aware that at the end of July we will all need to have a Spiritual Director and to be in supervision in order to continue receiving referrals. We are very grateful for all you contribute and some of you have extensive experience. However, none of us know everything and we all need to be challenged. Just as the saints are those most in need of recognising their own shortcomings, so Spiritual Directors with the most experience, are among those who know the need for on going supervision in the same way that the most talented musicians carry on practising and developing.

If any of you want some advice about group or individual supervision then please do get in contact.

Rosemary Shaw

Newsletter Editor's Report

I would like to thank colleagues for the encouraging feedback on the Newsletter. We have had some fresh insights into how Spiritual Direction looks like in the 21st century. Training sessions, ranging from the protection of vulnerable people within society to our unconscious bias which can sometimes influence the way we treat others, have been captured in articles and reports you have sent in.

As you are aware, we could not publish the Spring edition due to the lockdown measures ordered by the government. This edition, will hopefully make up for that.

There has been a marked shift in the distribution of the Newsletter over the past year, from mainly posting to emails. This has made savings both in reduced hard copies printed and on postage. A number of people receiving email copies have indicated they would quite like a hard copy and it has raised the issue of whether those members would like to make a donation towards production and postage costs. Please let us know.

The Coronavirus Pandemic has opened up a whole new way of carrying out our work and I hope we will continue to share our experiences through the articles, pictures and other material you send in.

Journeys in Hope

Two years ago on from the Westminster Lourdes pilgrimage the idea of an art auction was born. I duly painted my Lourdes torchlight procession.

I heard Lord Alf Dubs speak about the appalling conditions in which children were living because they had been denied their lawful right to rejoin their families in the U.K. I decided to change my painting to express what I believe in, hence "Unsafe passage".

And so we began to prepare for the art exhibition at Mount Street Jesuit centre. Seven artists joined me in donating work and the opening was a great success. We definitely got our message across to the many young people present. The three weeks culminated in an art auction which raised over £5000 to be divided between

Westminster Lourdes pilgrimage, Aid to the Church in Need and Safe Passage. My teacher Nelson Ferreira offered portraits as a lot. Jennifer Scott the Sackler director of Dulwich Picture gallery opened the auction and spoke about the beauty of the work and the profound effect of pictures like "Syrian Pieta".

She said that picture made her cry and that is what I did when I painted it. A huge thank you to all who came and bid for paintings and all who visited and took part in the exhibition.

I have learnt a huge amount about how charities operate. Next time it will be a show not an auction (far too much worry!) and the charities will organise it with my team's help.

With some notable exceptions (Oremus, Universe, Catholic Times, Jesuits in Action) publicity was very difficult to obtain and we relied on social media and our website www.journeysinhope.com where you can see all the work. I am happy that the message about the ongoing tragedies of so many trying to reach Europe have been highlighted.

John Woodhouse

Paintings by John Woodhouse from his

Journeys in Hope



A REFLECTION

If this issue of our Newsletter seems to be focussed on the current lockdown restrictions, it is because the whole experience has been for many, overwhelming yet productive, while for others, it's been hugely underwhelming leading to lethargy and long periods of introspection, mostly in selective, comfortable nightwear even when the sun's rays intrude into the corridors of our minds.

For me as a person of colour, the recent global political events and the pandemic lockdown have caused me to dig deep into the wells of my spiritual being to come even close to answering the question Why ?

I pondered and pondered and pondered some more, and the words of 1 Corinthians 1 vs.27 kept coming up: "But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong". In the middle of chaos and confusion, of evil and wickedness, God chose a reformed criminal, crying out for his mother as he struggles for breath, to galvanise global action in coming against inequality and injustice. God chose, not the wise and affluent of his much loved children but the one with a blemish, with a sticky plaster covering wounds, to open the eyes of those sleeping or indifferent to the suffering around them.

I find that many times In Spiritual Direction sessions, the words of scripture seem to come off the pages and almost hit me in the face because it all becomes so clear, so real, how could I not have seen it that way before ?

The thief on the cross, a denying Peter, murderous Paul, doubting Thomas, God chose them to show that his mission is to save souls through his son Jesus Christ. He chose the things that are in human eyes considered as nothing, to shame those who considered themselves wise.

This lockdown showed me something else and it gives me some leverage when struggling for an answer to possibly one of the most often asked questions of a Christian: Why do the evil prosper, why does God have this propensity towards those who go against the very things he sent his son to remove from human existence.

You see, God is ever hopeful that his chosen people will one day come to full acceptance of all that he represents, and, by the moving of the Holy Spirit, be born again into his heavenly kingdom.

It's been said that God gives and gives and forgives, the devil takes and takes and forsakes.

For those who come to us during this time of loneliness and isolation with many doubts and fears, why not ask them to go to 1 Corinthians 1:27

God has hope for all people, hope born out of his faith in those he has created. Because he has hope, we too must continue to have hope, in a world that is continually renewing itself.

Hannah Neale

LOCKED DOWN LOOKING FOR ?



NOTICE

We now have a new Resources Page on the SPIDIR Website at: <https://spidir.org.uk>. Several contributions have been posted already. So if you have some suitable Spiritual Direction material (or a link to another website) that you think may be of value to SPIDIR members, please send it to me at: philpotthoward@aol.com or 80 Charlton Road, London SE7 7EY

Responding to the Pandemic - a workshop for Spiritual Directors

Thursday 9th July 10.30 am -12 noon by Zoom

So much has changed for us since March! Many people are experiencing a range of new challenges and the future remains more uncertain than ever. Our regular rhythms and social contacts have been disrupted, including in our worship and spiritual direction, and there are also new gifts.

How has this affected us? What have we found particularly challenging? Where have we found strength, gr^âce, or new opportunities? Where might we need extra support?

Linda Murgatroyd will lead this workshop, providing an opportunity for us to explore some of these issues together online. It will include some guided personal explorations on paper and sharing in small groups as well as reflecting together on what we are learning and how it might impact on our service as spiritual directors.

Linda has been a SPIDIR director for some years, and is a Quaker with an Anglican background. She is also an experienced facilitator of workshops using simple arts and crafts for spiritual purposes, for people of different faiths or none.

This is a free workshop, but numbers are limited.

Please book your place before 3 July - preferably by emailing John Philpott-Howard at philpotthoward@aol.com or alternatively by texting (or WhatsApp) or phoning him on 07789 985415

Early booking is advisable and also helps the organisers.

To join this meeting downloaded Zoom to your computer/laptop or smartphone in advance of the event; you can also go to <https://zoom.us/join> on any computer and enter the Meeting ID and Password numbers John will send to you.

In addition, you can dial in by phone (Land lines are OK). Obviously, you would not be able to see people if you are participating by traditional telephone, but this should not prevent you from participating in the workshop. If this is your first experience of using this technology, please let us know when you book and John can help you with this.

Additional material to 'Responding to the Pandemic'

Linda Murgatroyd

A lot of people have also commented on the opportunities brought by slowing down during lockdown, and being enabled to reflect on how we relate to the environment, needing to travel and consume less, and appreciating nature and just being still more. The Loving Earth Project now has a number of online resources including a guided meditation (at <https://lovingearth-project.uk/resources/>) and occasional online events which are helping some people explore these issues more deeply while contributing to a wider community seeking to act from love to care for the environment.

Below are a couple of contrasting images which can also be found at <https://lovingearth-project.uk/gallery/>.



Waste Not Want Not

The start of the COVID-19 lockdown made me more aware of our dependence. For some time we have tried to avoid flood flow in from distant parts of the world, to reduce our carbon footprints and I have been concerned over our dependence on transport and the just in time economy. We need to build local economies



Ancient Woodlands

Time slows in the ancient woodlands nestles among the rocks in the valley between the fields. I rest and notice the sunlight painting hypnotic patterns of light and dark on the moss-scented earth. In this hushed place, words drift like dandelion seeds in the air between the gnarled trees, ready to be caught by those who listen: Will you hear the whispered wisdom of the wind? It is time to come home.

DIARY 2021

22 March 10am-3.45pm - SPIDIR Refresher Day

“Am I Dead Yet”

Led by Revd. Dr Andrew Goodhead

Venue: Convent of Sisters of St Andrew, 99 Belmont Hill, London SE13 5DY. Cost £20. Pay on the day.

28 June 10am – 3.30pm Annual General Meeting and Annual Conference - Guest Speaker:

Liz Watson

‘Silence and Self-knowledge: Wisdom from the Desert’.

Venue: Trinity House, 4 Chapel Ct, Borough High St, London SE1 1HW

21st September 10am - 4pm. **SPIDIR Spiritual Direction Course** at St George the Martyr, Borough High Street, London SE1 1JA

Course led by: John Philpott-Howard, Ruth Lampard, John Philpott-Howard, May Nicol and Rosemary Shaw.

19-21st October **SPIDIR RETREAT**

Venue: St Michael’s Convent, Gerrards Cross. Led by

Revd. Barry Preece

Further enquiries from: sallylowe1943@gmail.com
susanjcharles@aol.com

SPIDIR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair:	Biddy Taylor 43 Caldervale Road SW4 9LY biddytaylor.spidirchair@gmail.com Tel 0207 622 4912
Vice Chair & Safeguarding Coordinator:	Revd. John Philpott-Howard philpotthoward@aol.com
Committee Secretary:	Revd. Sue Charles susanjcharles@aol.com Tel: 0208 850 0189
Treasurer:	Chris Dowlen 174 Gleneagle Road, SW16 6BA Chris.Dowlen@waitrose.com
Membership Secretary:	Sally Lowe 2 Parkway, Dorking, RH4 1EU sallylowe1943@gmail.com
Referrals Secretary:	Christopher Serbutt spidir.referrals@gmail.com
Supervision Coordinator:	Revd. Rosemary Shaw rosemary.shaw1@ntlworld.com
Newsletter Editor:	Revd. Hannah Neale 2 Colborne Ct, 139 High Path London SW19 2JX hneale@aol.com
Other Members:	Revd. Nim Njuguna, John Woodhouse, Peter Graystone, May Nicol

www.spidir.org.uk