

St Benedict's CENTRE

Newsletter

July/August 2025

It is a great pleasure to announce that the Very Revd Dr Richard Fermer has been appointed as the new Director of the St Benedict's Centre. Richard will also be parish priest for All Souls Crockenhill, working with St Benedict's three days each week.

He is currently Dean of the Anglican Cathedral in Bahrain, and will be starting here on 22 September. In the following article he gives us an insight into some of his background, and his vision for what the St Benedict's Centre might contribute to the life of the Church.

Rt Revd Adrian Newman

Acting Chair of the St Benedict's Centre

My vocational journey leading to St Benedict's



A continuous thread in my vocational journey as a priest has been the exploration of the spiritual life and the encouragement of others into the adventure, too.

One appeal of coming to the St Benedict's Centre for me is its inextricable link with the Anglican monastic community of St Mary's that

has graciously shared their space with the wider church. I trained to be a priest at the College of the Resurrection, praying alongside the Community of the Resurrection, which gave the experience a depth, which sometimes the “hot houses” of theological colleges miss. We were encouraged to see the connections between the life of the monastic community, our college life as ordinands and their families, and the life of the parish, in a spirituality which embraced all three contexts: in hospitality, fellowship, attentiveness to the dynamics of life together, and by rooting everything in prayer, worship and Scripture.

During my curacy, my interest in spiritual accompaniment was recognised by my bishop and I was allowed to undertake the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises at St Beuno’s, and subsequently, two courses in “Spiritual Accompaniment” at Loyola Hall, to train as a spiritual director. This was then deployed in my accompaniment of ordinands training for ministry in Brazil, when I served as an USPG Mission Companion.

In my next posting, at St George’s in Paris, I began to organise annual retreats and pilgrimages to some of the truly inspiring monastic centres in France: the Benedictine Abbeys of Le Bec and Solesmes; the Cistercian Abbey of Citeaux; the Monastery of La Grande Chartreuse, mother house of the Carthusians. In each setting, I sought to make relevant the different spiritual charisms of these great traditions to the lives of my parishioners, turned pilgrims, and to their everyday lives.

This continued when I served as an Incumbent in London Diocese, where I led pilgrimages to the Umbria of St Benedict, St Francis and the Syrian hermits; Bardsey Island, a great centre of the Celtic Christian tradition; the Hermitage of Camaldoli, home to the Benedictine Camaldolese Order of St Romuald; and then the Hermitage of Sant Honorat on Puig da Randa, in the footsteps of Ramon Llull.

Llull was a Franciscan Tertiary who engaged with the Muslim world. Little did I know that I too would be led into exchange

with Islam in my next posting to the Arabian Gulf. These were all physical adventures, involving travel to a place, but accompanied by a journey of the spirit.

When I was preparing for my interview for the post of Director of the St Benedict Centre, I was led in prayer to the image of the stream. I must have seen images of the stream and the cascade of St Mary's Abbey. The stream represents those life-giving waters of Christ and the Spirit, that need to flow through all of us. It also signified to me the living tradition of the Benedictine monastic path that has channelled for centuries those life-giving waters in a particular form. The work of the St Benedict Centre became for me, in my prayer, a way of allowing those life-giving waters to reach more people.

I was quite surprised by the next turn of image: the humble beaver. What do beavers do? By cutting down branches and vegetation, beavers build dams and lodges to slow down the flow of a river or stream, and so distributes its waters to a wider ecosystem. Beavers create a mosaic of habitats that live off the benefits of the river water. Well, is that not what St Benedict's Centre is trying to achieve? Through retreats, meetings, quiet and study days, the flow of the life-giving water of Christ and the Spirit is slowed down and distributed to the benefit of the wider ecosystem of the Church.

What the beaver creates may at first appear messy, even a diversion from the course of the stream, but, in fact, it is the craft of an ecosystem engineer, allowing greater biodiversity to flourish. St Benedict's Centre is here to encourage the flourishing of that spiritual biodiversity, by calling us back to the life-giving stream of Christ and the Spirit, and allowing us to swim in the pools of prayer and practice of the tradition of St Benedict.

The Centre is a "place set apart" for prayer and encounter, for spiritual refreshment and renewal, to rediscover spiritual balance, to listen more deeply to God with "the ear of the heart", as Benedict writes in the "Prologue" of his "Rule",

where God's "ecosystem engineer", the Spirit, can form and shape an environment of spiritual flourishing.

It is a place where we can learn again: "Your way of acting should be different from the world's way; the love of Christ must come before all else." (RB 4.20 -21)

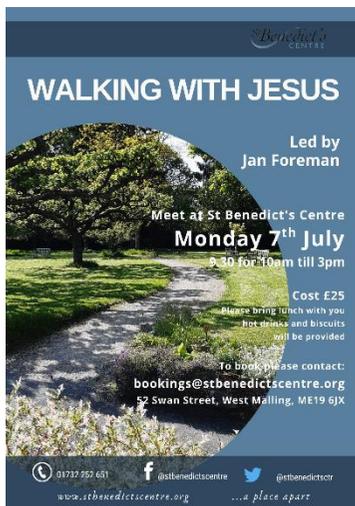
The Very Revd Dr Richard Fermer

Director, St Benedict's Centre (from September 2025)

Events in July

Walking with Jesus

Monday 7th July, 9.30 for 10am-3pm



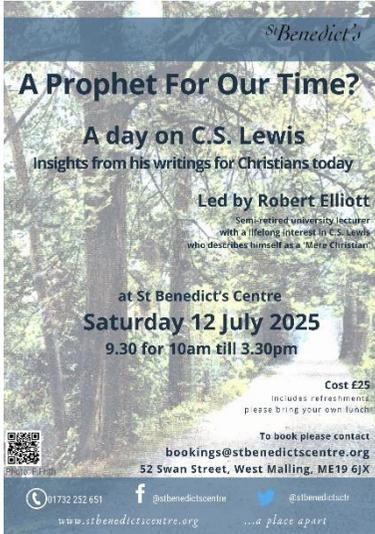
This month we reintroduce our Walks with Jesus, themed walks in the beautiful countryside around the Abbey. This Walk will be guided by Jan Foreman.

The cost for the day is £25. Tea and coffee will be available all day but please bring a packed lunch.

To book: bookings@stbenedictscentre.org

A Prophet for our Time? A Day on C.S. Lewis

Saturday 12th July, 9.30 for 10am-3.30pm



Robert Elliott will focus our attention on some of the key themes in C. S. Lewis's writings and consider how these can provide insights into living as modern-day Christians. There will be opportunity to work in groups and also time for personal reflection.

When Lewis died (on 22 November 1963 - the day that President Kennedy was assassinated) he left behind a

remarkable body of published books, ranging from works of scholarship that have become classics in their field, to the ever-popular children's series 'The Chronicles of Narnia'.

He also wrote many religious books – including 'Mere Christianity', 'The Screwtape Letters', 'Miracles', and 'Surprised by Joy' – all of which continue to be published and read widely both in the UK and in America.

Robert reads widely, but particularly enjoys the works of Christian writers. Alongside his professional career in the world of education he has delivered programmes that explore these works. C.S. Lewis is a firm favourite, and he has led several workshops on this author. His passion is working in a way that enables full engagement interactively and that challenges,

emancipates and stimulates bigger thinking; so encouraging lively and thoughtful debate.

Robert has been married to Elizabeth for 50 years and together they have set up '[Treasures of Darkness](http://treasuresofdarkness.co.uk)' (treasuresofdarkness.co.uk). This is for "treasure seekers and those wanting to dig deeper, seeking hidden gems of the Kingdom, a place to debate, rethink, ask difficult questions, learn, reflect, and look more deeply at the life issues that tug at your mind and heart ... and feel confident to make new decisions."

The cost for the day is £25. Tea and coffee will be available all day but please bring a packed lunch.

To book: bookings@stbenedictscentre.org

Further ahead: August/September

In **August**, the centre will remain open for visitors to come and enjoy our beautiful grounds and prayer labyrinth.

Individual quiet rooms can also be booked for the day offering a private space for a restful, restorative time away from the bustle of daily life. To book: bookings@stbenedictscentre.org

13 Sept: The Enneagram (for beginners) – Shelley King

18 Sept: Learning (Scripture) by Heart – Suzanna Hamilton

25 & 28 Sept: Art Exhibition – Giles Whitehead

All our event information and updates can also be found on our website. Please check our [programme page](#).

General event information

Our events tend to start at 10am, with coffee available from 9:30am, and normally finish by 3-3.30pm to ensure everyone has the full benefit of the day's programme.

However, participants are very welcome to stay beyond this time to enjoy the Centre's beautiful grounds, quiet spaces, and a quiet room (if available) for further reflection.

Coffee, tea and biscuits are always included, but you need to bring your own lunch.

Need to cancel your booking?

When you book a room or place at one of our events, we ask for payment in advance. If you need to cancel, your payment will be refunded in full if cancellation is seven days or more before the event; if cancellation is within the seven-day period you will instead receive a voucher to be used for another one of our events.

Event cancellations

While we are always reluctant to cancel an event at short notice, we may have to do so in case of illness, bad weather conditions or low take-up. You will be contacted as soon as circumstances require us to cancel an event.

Day Guests



Our 10 individual quiet day rooms offer the space to rest, reflect or work in solitude at the Centre.

You can book a room for £18 (full day) or £12 (half day).

This includes hot drinks; the use of the beautiful grounds; the opportunity for private prayer in the pilgrim chapel and of joining the Sisters in prayer in the Guest chapel.

Your booking can be changed or cancelled at short notice, if need be, at no cost.

We offer gift vouchers for individual quiet days – the perfect gift for someone in ministry.

To book your day of rest and retreat, or to purchase a voucher contact: bookings@stbenedictscentre.org

Visit our website to find out everything about the Centre:
<https://stbenedictscentre.org>

We look forward to welcoming you at St Benedict's!