Reflections on 'Greeting our Dreams' –24th February 2021 – prepared by Hazel

Opening words: This week, we have a transcript. We are no longer providing video resources every week but may continue to create these important seasons of the year. We have attached some pictures/ resources to help you in your meditation. If you are meditating alone but would like to feel 'with us' we meditate in our homes at 7.30pm on Wednesday. The tradition we meditate in is Centring Prayer which is fully inclusive of all traditions of Christian Meditation and welcoming of World Traditions.

Welcome to Christian Meditation in the Centering Prayer Tradition: A very warm welcome from Fiona, Marie, Rob, Hazel and Paul, the leaders of the Christian Meditation group at Wisdom Centre, Romsey. The whole session is about 50 minutes. We meditate beginning with an opening prayer followed by reflections and then 25 minutes of silence. We hope you enjoy your meditation with us.

Opening Prayer: Eternal God, through our meditation may the ears of our hearts be attentive to your Word. May we seek and find You. Awakened to Your presence may we be joyful, embodying peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-awareness. May we follow Your teaching, seeking also, the wisdom of the Holy Fathers and Mothers. May we, therefore, commit to community, love of earth, stability, peace and justice making. **Amen**

Introduction: I was once given a dream catcher by a friend. It still hangs from a ceiling at home. Dreamcatchers date back many centuries[1] and were used to catch the 'bad' dreams to prevent them reaching the sleeper and let the 'good' ones through the web. Strangely, when I look at it, rather than transporting me to a world of fantasy or of 'dreams for the future', it takes me to a more grounded place, rooted in my sense of presence in the moment. This is a short exploration of how we might contemplate our relationship with dreams (if they come to consciousness), and offers some poetry to reflect upon.

Biblical references to dreams: Biblical references to dreams are many and varied. Sometimes God conveys a message in a person's dream. Joseph had two such messages: In Matthew 1:20, 'an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit" '. In Matthew 2:12-13, 'he was warned in a dream not to return to Herod' … 'for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.'

The book of Daniel tells how King Nebuchadnezzar's was troubled by the desire to understand a dream and called upon wise people to interpret it for him. With the help of Daniel's interpretation, he learned a lesson about humility and bowing to the sovereignty of God.

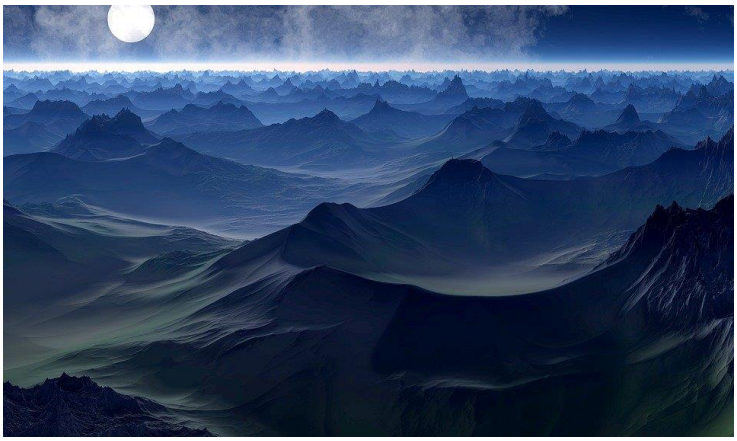
Many biblical references are warnings about interpreting dreams for the ego's purposes, or dreams as punishment, or wise observations such as in Sirach 34:3 - 'What is seen in dreams is but a reflection, the likeness of a face looking at itself.' This aligns with more recent understanding of the science behind dreaming. Our dreams hold much valuable unconscious material that we might humbly reflect upon.

God of Surprises: Like so many things in life, our dreams are totally outside our control and yet they are an essential part of our existence; each object or character in a dream reflects part of our nature. In his book 'God of Surprises', Gerard Hughes[2] explores discernment and how we might tell the difference between what he terms 'consolation' and 'desolation', and in so doing, he notes the value of dreams and welcoming their content. He references Carl Jung's encouragement to 'Face your Shadow', which often involves facing our fears. Hughes recalls a student of his, studying the spiritual exercises of Inigo of Loyola. The man was sufficiently attuned to be able to process a frightening dream and learned that for him its message was 'Receive those things in your life of which you are afraid and befriend them'. Hughes observed, 'He began to

look at some of the fears in his life and discovered that some vanished, while others turned out to be sources strength.'

Acceptance and kindness: There are of course some types of dreams and situations that would be good to talk through with another person we trust. Following the core principle of treating dreams just as any other aspect of our contemplative awareness, being open to them, curious, welcoming them and bringing kindness to them, enables us to value the treasures that they bring, whether they are 'good' dreams or 'bad'.

'On Dreaming' by John Newton [3]



When slumber seals our weary eyes,
The busy fancy wakeful keeps;
The scenes which then before us rise,
Prove something in us never sleeps.

As in another world we seem,
A new creation of our own,
All appears real, though a dream,
And all familiar, though unknown.

Sometimes the mind beholds again
The past day's business in review,
Resumes the pleasure or the pain;
And sometimes all we meet is new.



What schemes we form, what pains we take!
We fight, we run, we fly, we fall;
But all is ended when we wake,
We scarcely then a trace recall.

But though our dreams are often wild,
Like clouds before the driving storm;
Yet some important may be styl'd,
Sent to admonish or inform.

What mighty agents have access,
What friends from heav'n, or foes from hell,
Our minds to comfort or distress,
When we are sleeping, who can tell?



One thing, at least, and 'tis enough,
We learn from this surprising fact;
Our dreams afford sufficient proof,
The soul, without the flesh, can act.

This life, which mortals so esteem,
That many choose it for their all,
They will confess, was but a dream,
When 'waken'd by death's awful call.

Although our dreams reflect our waking, and our waking reflects our dreams, we often continue in the bustle of life oblivious to this process. John O'Donohue reflects on how there is a subtle blur between dreams and reality. As we embrace both by attending to the present moment we might sense a connection with the deeper dream, of collective consciousness of Nature itself, of 'earth's dreaming'.

Some reflections on dreams by John O'Donohue [4]

'In the beginning was the dream… In the eternal night where no dawn broke, the dream deepened. Before anything ever was, it had to be dreamed…

If we take Nature as the great artist, then all presences in the world have emerged from her mind and imagination. We are children of the earth's dreaming. It's almost as if Nature is in dream and we are her children who have broken through the dawn into time and place. Fashioned in the dreaming of the clay, we are always somehow haunted by that; we are unable ever finally to decide what is dream and what is reality. Each day we live in what we call reality, yet life seems to resemble a dream.

We rush through our days in such stress and intensity, as if we were here to stay and the serious project of the world depended on us. We worry and grow anxious – we magnify trivia until they become important enough to control our lives.

Yet all the time, we have forgotten that we are but temporary sojourners on the surface of a strange planet spinning slowly in the infinite night of the cosmos…

There is no definitive dividing line between reality and dream. What we consider real is often precariously dream-like. Our grip on reality is tenuous...'

In this final poem before we go into our meditation, Helen Luke observes that sometimes we might notice a quality of 'cleanness' or 'pure transparency' in dreams, that opens into a sense of wonder at 'the great pattern of eternity'.

When I have gazed into a tidal pool by Helen Luke [5]

When I have gazed into a tidal pool
And seen the texture exquisite of stone,
Of life and plant, deep in the lucid cool,
It seems no greater wonder could be known.
Yet there's a cleanness I have known in dreams --
In those rare dreams that are like blessed wine --
A pure transparency wherein it seems
Is traced the form of the Creator's line.
Distinct and clear appears each one and thing,
And every grain of sand, as though I see
Through unseen water; and the angels sing
An unheard tone from heaven's melody.

So wonder grows to crystal-cut lucidity
Defining the great pattern of eternity.

Preparation for Meditation: When you are ready, you may wish to adjust your posture until you are comfortable. Notice any tension in your body and take a moment to move or stretch as you need to. Perhaps take your attention to the sensations in your feet and then your hands; gently move your toes and fingers and observe what is happening to your breath. If you have a sacred word you might notice its rhythm, in time with the breath. You may wish to follow your normal practice, or to simply focus on staying present, open and awake, neither clinging to, nor rejecting, anything, knowing that you can always return to your sacred word or your breath as your mind wanders.

Meditation for 25-minutes.

A Blessing 'Before Sleep' by John O'Donohue [6]

As I lay down to sleep, May the guardian angel Watch over me, Coaxing all my cares To unravel into peace. As darkness within Is wed to darkness without Freed from the weight of light, Let my eyes sleep, Relieved of all intensities.	Let my imagination Trawl the compressed seas To bless the dawn With a generous catch Of luminous dream. May this new night of rest Repair the wear of time And restore youth of heart For the adventure That awaits tomorrow.



Closing prayer: Loving and Eternal God, we thank you for the gifts of prayer, meditation and contemplation. We thank you for being with us and for this community. May we, therefore, pray with all others, as one community, one world and one spirit to One God…Moments of your personal prayer follow…**Amen.**

Thank you for meditating with us, please join us again soon. Stay safe and well.

Resources: Pictures from Pixabay.com / author

(1) Native American Vault 'A history of dreamcatchers' 'A history of dreamcatchers'
(2) Hughes, G. (1985) 'God of Surprises' p102. London: Darton, Longman and Todd
(3) Newton, J. 'On Dreaming' in Allpoetry.com
(4) O'Donohue, J. (2000). 'Eternal Echoes: Exploring our Hunger to Belong'. London: Bantom Books. Also available in Freerangephilosophy.com/
(5) Luke, H. 'When I have gazed into a tidal pool' in Friendsofsilence.net
(6) John O'Donohue (2007). 'Benedictus: A Book of Blessings'. London: Bantom Press.



Our peaceful outdoor spaces promote wellbeing and are open to all, free of charge.