

Welcome



NAOMI STARKEY

Are you a lark or an owl? Somebody who bounces out of bed at the first hint of day or one who wakes gradually and prefers to linger at the other end of the day? In the early days of our marriage, it took a while for my (lark) and my husband's (owl) preferences to coexist peacefully!

In reflecting on 'morning', we think of beginnings, new opportunities, making a fresh start—and, while many people relish tackling new things, for others the word 'new' is inevitably linked with 'the shock of the...'. Of course, some changes and beginnings are much more demanding than others. Becoming a parent is one of the biggest changes that many people undergo, bringing a host of choices and challenges, and in this issue Lindsay Melliush shares her experience of local church outreach to those who have recently entered this stage of life.

In our opening article, Maggi Dawn shares her experiences as a college chaplain in the unique environment of the University of Cambridge. We also have Jason Gardner writing about the work of the Romance Academy in teaching young people how to handle relationships responsibly.

New jobs are always a mixture of excitement and challenge and it is thought-provoking to read Michael Volland's experiences in pioneering a 'fresh expression' of church in Gloucester. On a much bigger canvas, the 'dawn of a new day' can herald hope and the chance of transformation, and I am delighted that Julia Fisher has written for *Quiet Spaces* on the exciting peace initiatives gaining momentum in Israel today.

Quiet Spaces

VOLUME 10

CONTENTS



The meaning of morning4 <i>Maggi Dawn</i>	When morning never comes40 <i>Lisa Cherrett</i>
Attracting and keeping young families10 <i>Lindsay Melluish</i>	I know you43 <i>Francis Buxton</i>
The dawning of peace in the Middle East14 <i>Julia Fisher</i>	Learning to love: the work of the Romance Academy44 <i>Jason Gardner</i>
Pioneering growth20 <i>Michael Volland</i>	Amy Carmichael: labouring from dawn till dusk50 <i>Heather Coupland</i>
At the morning of our lives.....25 <i>Martyn Payne</i>	Ashburnham Place: a place of blessing53 <i>Andrew Wooding Jones</i>
The people who touch the sky29 <i>Clive Price</i>	Prayer through the week58 <i>Helen-Ann Hartley</i>
Music for the soul: the sound of sunrise32 <i>Gordon Giles</i>	Musings of a middle-aged mystic61 <i>Veronica Zundel</i>
New every morning36 <i>Emma Garrow</i>	

The meaning of morning



Maggi Dawn is an Anglican priest, currently serving as Chaplain and Fellow of Robinson College, University of Cambridge, where she writes and teaches theology. She has contributed to BRF's 'Guidelines' Bible reading notes and is also the author of a number of hymns and contemporary worship songs. She has her own much-visited website at <http://maggidawn.typepad.com/maggidawn>

...seems to sharpen the senses
for new projects, new knowledge,
new achievements...

Morning is a recurring theme throughout the Bible. Some Old Testament characters seem to be 'morning' people: for instance, we are often told that Joshua did things very early in the morning, and Ezekiel reports several times that 'in the morning the word of the Lord came to me'. I tend to be more of an owl than a lark, and, given the well-

rehearsed caricatures of students' aversion to morning, you might think that would be an advantage for someone working as a college chaplain. What people associate with student lifestyles might be better described by Proverbs 27:14: 'If anyone loudly blesses a neighbour early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse' (TNIV).

Joking apart, the Bible makes use of the idea of morning metaphorically as well as literally, and as a metaphor it gives two different and apt reflections on college ministry. First, morning gives the idea of a beginning. The book of Job speaks in a mystical sense about the beginning of everything,

when ‘the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy’ (Job 38:7, NRSV), but I have more in mind the way that morning is used poetically in the creation accounts in Genesis 1: ‘There was evening and there was morning...’. Each time this phrase is repeated, it marks the beginning of a new day, a new phase of development.

A life built around the academic year echoes this sense of repeated beginnings. Ever since I was a child, the beginning of the new school year has seemed exciting and optimistic. There were the familiar rituals of preparation, such as a trip to a nearby city to buy new school clothes, and there were familiar smells—of new leather shoes, newly sharpened pencils and crisp, clean notebooks. The sight of all that unspoilt white paper gave a sense of hope and lightness. This was the year you would work a little better, dream a little bigger, play a little bolder, laugh a little lighter.

Years later, as Chaplain and Fellow in a Cambridge college, I find that each September still brings that sense of newness. Despite the sense of autumn creeping into the air and the promise of winter around the corner, September brings a feeling of optimism and anticipation, like a new day dawning. The crisp air seems to sharpen the senses for new projects, new knowledge, new achievements, new friends.

About 170 new faces join our college community every year and, for students arriving in Cambridge for

the first time, there is certainly the sense of a new chapter opening up for them. During the first few weeks of the academic year, the place positively buzzes with energy as lectures begin, course work is assigned and every society and sport and interest group vies for new members. It’s an experience that varies enormously from one person to another. For some, it seems that the day has started with sun flooding

Work a little
better, dream
a little bigger,
play a little
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a little lighter

through the window and they can’t wait to run out and meet it, but for others things start more slowly and it can feel more like an overcast morning at first. Many take time to settle in, feeling homesick at the start, and finding it hard to adjust to the new level of work.

...I like the fact that there is an order and a pace to the instructions from God

Body, mind and soul are intricately connected

One new experience for many students is the sheer pace of life in a Cambridge term. We have no half-term or reading week and it's usual for students to hand in two or three pieces of work every week. Students and Fellows alike find that their feet hardly touch the ground for nine weeks at a stretch. Learning to pace life is a theme that seems to feature strongly in the Bible. God's commands to the patriarchs and prophets often specified doing things at the right time of day. Sometimes he instructed them to be sure to finish a job before ending the day: for instance, many commands concerning ritual sacrifices state that the job must be completed within the day and nothing may be left until the morning (see Leviticus 7:15; 22:30; Numbers 9:11).

Equally, there were times when God instructed his people to sleep first and wait until the morning before starting a task. When God told Moses to go to Pharaoh and demand that the slaves be released from Egypt, we read that the Lord said, 'Get up early in the morning and confront Pharaoh' (Exodus 8:20, NIV). 'Why wait till morning?' you might ask. If God has a plan, why not get on and do it right now? It's a reasonable question but I like the fact that there is an order and a pace to the instructions from God. The sense that there is an urgency about obeying God doesn't alter the fact that tasks have a right time. Learning to pace ourselves is important.

For all Cambridge students, there are always multiple activities they could be doing, and learning to choose between them is a life skill that's vital for success and sanity. One of the things I say repeatedly to students, especially during revision for exams, is to keep regular hours: work hard through the day, eat properly, exercise and get some sleep. Of course, there are always exceptions to the rule and there are a few who seem to flourish by burning the midnight oil, but, for most people, a good balance of rest and work, food and exercise, is what produces the best results. Body, mind and soul are intricately connected and for the most part we need to keep life in balance.

The student population is, of course, transient, but another section of the college community is made up of Fellows and support staff who have



long-term posts. What does the idea of morning have to say in the context of permanence and stability? An image that recurs in the Psalms and the prophets is the promise of morning as a metaphor for hope, and this is valuable at times when people are affected by illness, family problems or a death. One of the strangest feelings that accompany times of darkness is the realization that the rest of the world continues to turn as if everything is normal. The sun still comes up in the morning, the buses still come and go, and the bereaved or depressed person wonders at the audacity of the world. Why doesn't everything stand still when your own life has ground so painfully to a complete halt?

A good balance

of rest and work, food and exercise, is what produces the best results...

At times like that, we need friends and ministers who understand the darkness. There's nothing worse than a Job's comforter who tells you that if only you behaved a little differently, everything would get better. Sometimes, as Job knew, you do all you can and the darkness still falls. But the promise of morning is a poetic image that the psalmists throw out

**Many students struggle intensely
with stress, anxiety and depression...**

There was
evening
and there
was morning...

into the darkness as a thread of hope: as surely as day follows night, light will come in the darkness and joy will follow pain. 'Weeping may linger for the night, but joy comes with the morning,' writes the psalmist, stubbornly hopeful in the face of despair (Psalm 30:5, NRSV).

This image can be equally important to students. It's easy to assume that young people in a creative and independent phase in their lives are endlessly happy and carefree, but many students—and young academics as well—struggle intensely with stress, anxiety and depression. The reasons for this would fill a whole book but, given that it is the case, a significant part of my work is the care of depressed and anxious

people. Alongside various other agencies, chaplaincy ministry is a vital component in supporting people who are struggling.

It's hard to understand, unless you've been there yourself, just how densely black things can look when you are depressed. For some people, days and weeks can go by in unrelieved shadows of bleakness and it is hard to make hope real to someone at such a time. I find it a relief to note that both prophets and Psalms paint a thoroughly realistic picture of life at its darkest.

It's tempting to feel that a minister of the gospel should always offer hope. Sometimes, though, for a depressed person, the acknowledgment that the darkness is indeed very dark offers more hope than words, however sincerely meant, which seem to suggest that you don't understand the depth of hopelessness someone is experiencing. In this kind of desperate situation, the psalmist again uses the image of morning, but this time as the morning that refuses to come: 'My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning' (Psalm 130:6, NIV). They say that the darkest hour is just before the dawn, and if you've ever suffered from

insomnia, you'll recognize that sentiment.

One of the worst nightmares of any educational institution is the death of a young person. Not often, just every now and then, a life is lost through accident or illness, but perhaps worst of all is the instance when someone loses their battle against despair and ends their own life. Walking alongside a bereaved community is one of the most stretching but perhaps one of the most important tasks a chaplain carries out. When a young person dies, it is often their friends' first experience of the death of someone close to them or of someone their own age. It's a moment when the fragility of life and the sense of one's own mortality suddenly become a stark reality.

Some years ago, I led a memorial service for a student who had, tragically, ended his own life. I remember concluding my address with the words, 'His life has ended, but now our lives have to go on without him.' I choked on tears as I said it, knowing that although he had lost hope, his friends now urgently needed to rediscover it. We sought ways of commemorating his life together over the weeks that followed, reading and talking together, playing his music and planting a tree in the college garden in his memory. Not all the students I was talking with shared my faith but I sought ways to restore to them the sense of 'a future with hope' that Jeremiah spoke of (29:11, NRSV).

A final thought about the meaning of morning in the Bible sums up for

me the heart of what college chaplaincy is about. In John 21 we read, 'Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus' (v. 4, NIV). A great deal of chaplaincy work involves offering welfare and pastoral care to people who do not share my faith and do not perceive God at work in their lives. I have come to see that this is no barrier to the working of God's Spirit. God, it seems, is generous with grace towards people who do not recognize him at all.

To be a Christian chaplain in a community of mixed cultures, faiths and experiences is to be a minister of hope, someone who embodies the belief that 'joy comes in the morning',

Chaplaincy ministry

is a vital component in supporting people

someone who knows how to find calm in a crisis and hope in despair. Some may never find faith, but every now and then an ex-student will return, sometimes years later, to seek me out and tell me that along the way the penny has dropped and they have indeed discovered faith for themselves. When that happens, I am reminded again of morning—both as a new phase of life and as a symbol of hope. 'There was evening and there was morning...'—a new day! ■

The people who touch the sky



'The Hands and Feet of Jesus' by Clive Price (BRF, 2007) shares the extraordinary stories of ordinary people expressing God's love in desperate and desolate places around the world. Published in conjunction with World Vision, it shows how strong faith combined with practical compassion can change lives. This abridged extract tells how one man in Bolivia realized that the dramatic results of development work outweigh the demands of just getting the job done.

Sleeping under the stars on a clay-brick bed with animal skins for sheets, he wondered if he had made the right career move. 'What am I doing here?'

It was my duty

as a professional to serve these people

Marcos Quino thought to himself. 'Did I study that much for this? If my family gets to know about this, they will mock me. As soon as I get back, I'll quit.'

Marcos had only just started at World Vision's field office in Bolivia. His first trip had been to Laja, a town in the middle of the cold, high plains of the Altiplano. Parts of the region are rocky and barren, almost like a Martian landscape. When he left this desolate place three days later, he wrote his resignation letter:

...to give them
an active role in
their fight against
poverty

It turned out to be an inhospitable place for him, and he pleaded to be moved

I talked to the National Director. He explained to me in more detail what the job was all about, what World Vision was all about—and that moved my heart. I never gave her my letter.

It was my duty as a professional to serve these people... we had opportunities they never had, so it was only fair to help them get the opportunities they needed. So I stayed.

Marcos was born in Oruro, north-east Bolivia. Formerly a busy centre in the 1940s and 1950s, thanks to silver extraction, now it can look like a ghost town. Only the February carnival breaks up the monotony. Normally it's a passing-through place where miners get their supplies and then return home...

As a young teenager, Marcos had heard about World Vision. In 1984, he

found out that there was a vacancy at their Bolivian field office. Almost at the same time, there was an opening at the Bolivian Central Bank that interested him, so he applied for that one, too. Both institutions offered him jobs.

It was a dilemma. Marcos liked both placements, but his father helped him to discern the right way forward: go with a stable Christian organization that was serving the poor, or with an unstable financial institution with better money. Convincing himself that 'money isn't everything', Marcos decided to work with World Vision. One of his first tasks was to serve with a

project in Laja—an assignment that almost put him off relief and development work for life.

His next position was as Projects Promoter in Oruro. His team thought it would be a treat for him to return to his home town, but Marcos had only been born there and had never actually lived as part of the community. It turned out to be an inhospitable place for him, and he pleaded to be moved somewhere else.

Three months later, he was given responsibility for projects in La Paz and Pando, on the borderlands with Brazil. He enjoyed increased freedom and worked in the area for two years. Eventually Marcos became National Manager:

That [job] was made for me. I could really do what I wanted to do now.

I felt uplifted and useful again. I got to know all the projects in the country and that enhanced my point of view.

I always gave my 100 per cent in all the positions I was in. And that was acknowledged by the institution—which was great for me—because my dream was always to give the best I could in everything.

Marcos has benefited in more ways than one by working with World Vision. He met a nutritionist and dietician called Esther, who had visited one of the projects as part of a church group. She later became his wife, and supports him in his role.

Marcos has made some remarkable inroads. In Santa Cruz, a community leader rose up in opposition against World Vision. In a bid to become involved—and potentially close down the work from the inside—he climbed to the dizzy heights of becoming president of the board of one of the projects. Ironically, he became one of World Vision's best spokesmen, and even made a personal commitment to the Christian faith. 'He could have easily destroyed us if he'd wanted,' says Marcos, 'but he changed to become our best ally.'

In 1998, Marcos' team arranged for twelve classrooms to be built for a community on the outskirts of Santa Cruz. The project made a great difference for children who used to attend schools located far away (which had put many at risk).

Marcos believes that, like any organization, World Vision has had its

ups and downs. Yet it has always maintained its Christian identity:

It has brought a social consciousness to the church. It has helped, by its own experience, to guide the church to this change from the temple to the community.

It has a different speech and different focus. Many NGOs do similar things, but World Vision has a biblical perspective. It's all about empowering the communities, to give them an active role in their fight against poverty.

He feels that the organization's work has resulted in transformation. Indeed, he refers to World Vision as 'a school of change'. The Bolivian team may not have reached 'multitudes' but, in his

The project made a great difference for children who used to attend schools located far away

humble words, they have reached 'a few children'—and, as Marcos puts it, 'that will make a difference'.

Being a leader in development work is not easy. 'When I stay home for more than two weeks in a row,' says Marcos, 'my son and daughter ask me, "Why aren't you travelling this week?" So far I've been with World Vision for more than 20 years. And if God wants me to, I'll stay with them longer.' ■

I know you

*I know you
in the first, faint flare of dawn
when trees stand, hushed and black,
against the yellowing blue.*

*I know you
in the glory of the sun
bursting the horizon,
chasing the night,
discovering colour.*

*I know you
in the rising breeze,
the rustle of leaves,
the slink of home-returning cats,
the busy flit of little birds
about their breakfast.*

*In this daily miracle of loving sustenance,
this morning of the world,
I know you,
Lord.*

*And so,
in this intended re-creation,
this new awakening,
this little, daily resurrection
I sense the promise
of another, greater, personal,
of fullest knowing,
of longing love fulfilled.*

FRANCIS BUXTON

Morning

These prayers are written by Helen-Ann Hartley, who is a curate in the Wheatley Team Ministry near Oxford, and tutor in New Testament at Ripon College, Cuddesdon.



Above the tomb of the Venerable Bede in Durham Cathedral, there is an excerpt from his commentary on Revelation which reads,

‘Christ is the Morning Star who when the night of this world is past brings to his saints the promise of the light of life and opens everlasting day.’ Our prayers through the week echo this hope, reflecting on words from Psalm 139 (NRSV) that speak about ‘the inescapable God’.

Sunday

O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away (vv. 1–2).

It’s easy, Lord, to awaken in the morning and be filled with thoughts of tasks to do and pressures that can weigh heavily upon us.

Help us to be mindful of your continual presence among us. You know us better than we know ourselves. Help us to use this new morning to its full, allowing its light and vibrancy to fill our hearts.

Guide our thoughts, that we may never be far from your will. Allow your Spirit to breathe through the tasks that lie before us this coming week, and give us a sense of peace and rest on this your day.

Monday

If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me fast (vv. 9–10).

Thank you, Creator God, for the beauty of this morning.

Help us to remember that our morning is some other land's nightfall. Keep us alert to the needs of our world, that we might see your guiding hand in everything, and your reassuring hand where it is needed.

Our world is a precious thing, yet so often we abuse it. We pray that you will give us the wisdom to be good stewards of your creation. Enable us to challenge those who live only for today, that they might encounter your eternal splendour in the renewal of this morning light.

Tuesday

If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light around me become night', even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you' (vv. 11–12).

O God of everlasting glory, we pray for those who will pass into your greater presence this day. Grant to them the light and peace of your sustaining love. Bring comfort to their families, friends and communities.

This morning may be bright to some, yet dark and hopeless to others. We acknowledge that even in times of darkness, your light continually shines. Help us to realize that, even in darkness, new things grow and come into being.

In the early light of morning, we praise you, O loving God. May the dawn light inspire us now and always.

Wednesday

For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made (vv. 13–14a).

O Lord of life and love, we pray for all those to be born this morning. Thank you for the expertise and care that will surround their entry into your world. We pray especially for those who will be born in difficult circumstances.

Thank you, Lord, for all new life. Help us to value those who live around us. We ask that we might learn from children who are filled with wonder and amazement at everything.

Sometimes, Lord, we take the wonder of our own creation for granted. Forgive us for the times we neglect ourselves. May this morning be a chance to reflect on our lives and pray for your grace and mercy in everything we do.

Thursday

Wonderful are your works; that I know very well (v. 14b).

Do we really know your works, O Lord? Look with compassion upon our ignorance.

There are times, Lord, when we feel distant and alone. With your help, we remember that we are not alone, for you are always with us.

If we look out of the window this morning, what do we see? We praise you for the little things, the things that don't seem important. Help us to see the extraordinary in the ordinary. Lift us out of our selfishness, that we may see more clearly the evidence of your works all around us.

To request our quarterly Prayer Diary

visit www.quietspaces.org.uk

Friday

How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! I try to count them—they are more than the sand; I awake—I am still with you (vv. 17–18).

O God of all ages, from before time, in time, and beyond time, our lives are full of thoughts, racing here and there.

How profound it is that our thoughts are but a few grains of sand on the seashore, yet how precious are they to you. Give us faith this morning to harness our thoughts creatively.

We thank you that as we awaken from our rest you are waiting for us. Help us to listen to you, wherever we might be.

O God of all ages, pour your blessings on us, that we might return them to you in our morning tasks.

Saturday

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (vv. 23–24).

Challenge me, Lord, this morning. Where I have caused upset, may I be gracious in repairing it. Gentle Holy Spirit, move within us, to awaken, refresh, test, correct, and inspire.

May we glimpse your eternity in the fresh light of this new day. As we reflect on this week, thank you for all the opportunities we have had to serve you, and forgive us for all the times we have failed you.

Your love is new every morning; how amazing it is, to dwell in your light.



Musings of a middle- aged mystic

Veronica Zundel is a journalist, author and contributor to 'New Daylight'. She has also written 'The Time of Our Lives' for BRF. She lives in north London.

Do you wake in the morning full of joy and ready to face whatever challenges and gifts the day may present? No, nor do I. Mornings are so 'not me'. I don't do mornings. Getting up at 8 o'clock is early as far as I am concerned. That's one of the joys of being self-employed and working at home—though it's one of its hazards too, as it is so easy to waste half the day snoozing or playing Patience games on the computer.

Yet I remember with great pleasure the Easter Sunday sunrise services at a Christian conference centre that I used to visit often. We would gather at 5am in the dewy garden, where there was a little outdoor chapel with a rough log altar and a plain wooden cross. The words 'Praise for the sweetness / Of the wet garden' came alive as never before, and after we had sung and prayed we would repair to the dining hall for coffee and Finnish cinnamon pastries, fresh and warm from the oven. It was a wonderful way of celebrating the resurrection, that morning of mornings.

Morning has always been a symbol of new beginnings, of restoration and hope. Even in the midst of overwhelming grief, the author of

Lamentations can declare, ‘His mercies... are new every morning’ (3:22–23, NRSV). The psalmist announces, ‘Awake, my soul! ... I will awake the dawn’ (Psalm 57:8), which suggests that he was a better early riser than I am. Isaiah promises Israel that ‘your light shall break forth like

One unimaginable day, there will be a morning **without clouds**

I’m heartened by the fact that, in the creation story, each day begins not with morning, but with evening

the dawn’ (58:8) and that ‘nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn’ (60:3).

The phrase ‘a new dawn’ has become a favourite promise of politicians and a common image on posters like those Communist era ones that show a noble worker striding out against a rising sun, with the legend ‘Forward to the next Five-Year Plan’. Yet for the guilty or the depressed, morning can mean nowhere to hide, or the start of another day full of difficult tasks and obligations. God, in the book of Job,

describes the dawn as taking hold of the skirts of the earth and shaking the wicked out of it (38:12–13), a vivid picture of the impact new light has on those who (for whatever reason) prefer the darkness. To look forward to each new morning without the dread of repeating yesterday’s failure can seem a hope beyond reach for those whose life, whether by their own fault or through circumstances, has become hard to bear.

Can morning really be a joy to someone like myself who has to drag herself out of bed, and who on some days can’t wait for sleep? I’m heartened by the fact that, in the creation story, each day begins not with morning, but with evening: ‘And there was evening and there was morning, the first day’ (Genesis 1:5). Jews still begin the sabbath with the festive family meal of Friday night, not with Saturday morning’s service. Perhaps, while God in Genesis rests after the work of creation, people who inhabit the world made by God are allowed to rest *before* doing their work.

Certainly it’s true that for some of us, there has to be a lot of darkness and night before there is a glimpse of morning, but I’ve never known a night that didn’t eventually end with the sunrise, even if that sunrise happened behind clouds. And the promise still holds: one unimaginable day, there will be a morning without clouds, internal or external. One day, morning will come and never leave. ■

Visit the Quiet Spaces website www.quietspaces.org.uk

The screenshot shows the website's navigation menu with options: Annual subscriptions, Back issues, Books and resources, Daily Bible reading notes, Quiet days, and BRF. A search bar is present with the text 'Find resources...' and 'Search words'. A sidebar on the left contains a 'Your Basket' section (empty), a 'Home' link, and a 'Sponsored by BRF' section with contact details for 15 The Chambers, Vineyard, Abingdon, OX14 3FE, United Kingdom. The main content area features a header 'Exploring prayer and spirituality' and three featured articles: 'A new spirituality journal' (with a 'Quiet Spaces' logo), 'Now available' (featuring 'Fire' edited by Naomi Starkey), and 'Coming Soon' (featuring 'Morning' available March 2008, edited by Naomi Starkey). A 'Paperless Advent Calendar' section is also visible, promoting a video series for Christmas.

Do take a moment to visit the *Quiet Spaces* website (www.quietspaces.org.uk) and email us with your thoughts, perhaps sparked by what you have read in this issue.

In our next issue

Noel Coward declared that ‘mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun’—so is noon the time for rushing around and getting lots done (making the most of the day) or the chance for a siesta, finding a quiet space somewhere in the shade? Our next issue of *Quiet Spaces*, ‘Noon’, considers the need for ‘seizing the moment’, making the most of the opportunities God gives us, and also the importance of pausing to rest and reflect.

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