UNDER THE THINKING TREE CENTRE FOR WELL-BEING



Simple Things That Make Your Heart Sing

Cover Image by Rick Nelms

Simple Things That Make Your Heart Sing

Under The Thinking Tree C.I.C
www.underthethinkingtree.com

“When “problems” fill the day, then those problems are the day’s worship. The most mundane and seemingly meaningless effort, when approached with a sense of service and a questing heart, becomes an act of beauty. And when we finally come exhausted to a quiet moment, we are ready to fall silent before the mystery. Too tired to maintain our pretences, we rest in awe.

And then
once more the quiet mystery
is present to me...”

Denise Levertov

Poetry is something that makes my heart sing. It often captures an experience or mood and then gives a surprising insight into it. This reflection by the poet Denise Levertov seems to sum up 2020, for me at least. Everything seems even more difficult than usual. Problems, along with anxiety, seem to be magnified. Yet this quickly slips away when the focus is shifted to think of others or to explore something in greater detail.

I have discovered this again whilst putting together this booklet. The pieces included are a gift from one neighbour to another, friend to friend, and are intended to bring a smile, or generally cheer each other up. They are not only sent with goodwill, they take our focus onto something other than the problems we face.

The booklet began following a beautiful walk I took with my Mother, who had not been out of the house for 6 months. She was starting to feel down, and needed something to improve her well-being. It was such a joy to spend this time with her. At every turn she exclaimed, 'Look at those beautiful trees,' or 'See the red ripening berries,' and 'What an amazing view.' Her positive attitude was infectious. I went away feeling better too. This walk was a simple pleasure that made my heart sing.

When I told his story to Rick, who is an artist working with us at Under the Thinking Tree Centre for Well-Being, (see back page) he painted a picture of a lovely hedgerow with hawthorn and guelder rose as well as other seasonal flowering bushes. It was like a ripple effect and the joy of a simple walk spread out.

The team at Under the Thinking Tree came up with the name and extended the idea into a whole-community project. They saw this project as a way to make people smile, and draw the community together.

The ripple effect went out wider still. Some people outside the village heard and have been inspired to contribute. All the contributors are willing the best for those who will read what they have written.

There is one page for each day of the Month. The hope is that it might make the day that little bit better for all of us, if we know that our friends and neighbours wish us well.

Love and Friendship



Rev Julie Norris





01 DAY

Watching Swifts – The Most Incredible Bird Of All Time

They arrive in the first week of May, like jet-propelled arrows, straight into their nests in the eves which their ancestors have used for hundreds of generations. They have flown about 9000 miles without landing. They do everything on the wing, eating, sleeping, washing and mating. We have about 16 nests in the roof of our 700 year old house beside the cricket pavilion. We tried to count them (flying at speeds up to 70 mph) as they swooped over the cricket pitch, especially between 8-9 pm as they came home from their days foraging which can be 100 miles away.

We have a camera in one nest and have had enormous pleasure and excitement watching the eggs being laid, hatching, feeding, wing strengthening and finally flight. The babies will not land for four years when they will come back to breed. Although so sleek and fast on the wing, they are cumbersome in the nest as they do not have proper feet. The whole body is made for flight.

Swifts are the most incredible bird of all time, one of the oldest families in the natural world separated from all other families of birds. We are lucky they return to Barrington each year. They are only here until the first week of August, so remember to look up above the Green in those summer months.

Jenny Anderson

Towards the end of the day it is noticeable that the swifts dive and soar. Silently they fall and then rise upward, higher and higher until they disappear beyond our sight. This ascent is sometimes called their "vesper flight." The Latin term vesper means evening, and Vespers is the name given to evening prayer in Church. The swifts flight is like an evening prayer ascending into the heavens.

“When you do things from your soul,
you feel a river moving in you, a joy.”
Rumi

02 DAY

A Lockdown Greeting



Wilma cut a few green strands from a willow tree and wound it into this beautiful wreath for her door and sent as a greeting to cheer us up.

Doing something creative today increases positive emotions and flourishing tomorrow. This is the case across all personalities. Participants do not have to produce a great masterpiece, just thinking that what you are doing is creative seems to be enough to bring benefits.

The desire to create is God-given and a reminder that we are made in God's image. When we set about making something beautiful, we express the God who is inside each of us.

Wilma Mckiernan

> Let us weave a life-line we can throw each other
>
> Julie Norris







Believe in a love that is being stored up for you like an inheritance, and have faith that in this love there is a strength and a blessing so large that you can travel as far as you wish without having to step outside it.

R M Rilke

03 DAY

Early Morning Joy

During the lockdown, and still, I love to go to the end of the garden first thing and look across the fields to see the sun rise.

I am reminded that "The Earth is the Lord's" and whether I can see the sun actually rise and fill the sky with colour and light, (or not because of the clouds) it will rise, and at the appointed time.

The light will dispel the darkness of the night and the birds will respond with flight and song. The temperature will rise and I'll feel its warmth on my face.
The night is past and the day lies open before us...

A time to Be still...and Listen.
All around me people are waking, walking the dog and going to work.
Be still...and Listen
A good start to the day.
Life all around....

Althea Whybrow



The Weaving by Corrie Ten Boom

My life is but a weaving
Between my God and me.
I cannot choose the colours
He weaveth steadily.
Oft' times He weaveth sorrow;
And I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper
And I the underside.
Not 'til the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly
Will God unroll the canvas
And reveal the reason why.
The dark threads are as needful
In the weaver's skilful hand
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned
He knows, He loves, He cares;
Nothing this truth can dim.
He gives the very best to those
Who leave the choice to Him.

04 DAY

The Different Threads That Make and Remake Our Lives

> She who reconciles the ill-matched threads
> Of her life, and weaves them gratefully
> Into a single cloth –
> It's she who drives the loudmouths from the hall
> And clears it for a different celebration.
>
> R M Rilke



Julian writes this about God,

> He is our clothing, who wraps and enfolds us for love, embraces us and shelters us, surrounds us for his love, which is so tender that he may never desert us.
>
> Julian of Norwich

The Holy Spirit, overshadows as the tapestry of our life is woven. I used to think that the Spirit was like the long warp yarns which hold the woven fabric still and provide strength and hold the tension, as the weft events of life are woven in and out. Then I thought that the Holy Spirit was like the weft threads, making the pattern and shaping the tapestry. Then, I looked again, and thought that the Holy Spirit is like the selvedge or the binding at the edge of the tapestry which is often unnoticed while providing resilience and stopping the fabric from falling apart. Maybe, the Holy Spirit overshadows all three.

Julie Norris

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

John 1. 5

05 DAY

The Light Shines Through

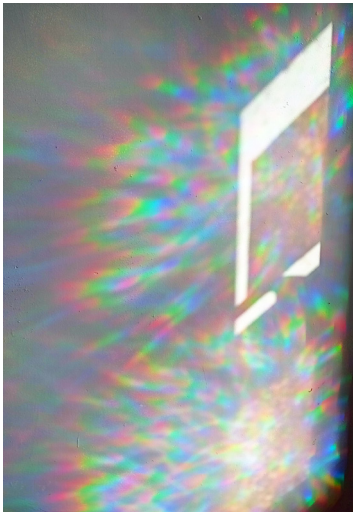
Wendy doesn't live in Barrington, but heard about the project and had an idea for us. During the first lockdown, she bought a window transfer to give more shade in a sunny room. It looks like this on her window.



Then the light shines through to produce the multi-coloured effect.

She writes,
Hi. One thing that might bring a smile to people, including yourself. I wanted to show you. It is a window privacy effect in 3D so when the light shines through it obviously gives off a colourful effect wherever it shine onto. Hope this can help.

Wendy Phillips



Another Day to Live Again by Julie Norris

The early morning light brings a blessing
This is another day to live again,
let me live it to the full.
Let me choose how I will respond today instead of just reacting.
Let me be motivated by loving kindness
rather than the pursuit of gain.
Let my smile touch another with friendship
and my acts show wise compassion.
Let me live with peace at the heart of my being.

06 DAY

Amazing Light



Friday 6th November 2020 in the morning. Photograph by Kate Wootton

Taking an early morning walk is a theme which is repeated in many conversations about, 'things that make the heart sing.' Kate has captured the awe of light playing across the fields in her photograph. We watch the world awaken, and it gives us a sense of our own place, as well as inspiring us to start afresh.

Start Again Today by Julie Norris

Good morning sunlight spread over the fields,
Welcome opening world
Today I will start to live again.

“When you are not looking or expecting anything, sometimes a flash of colour, gives encouragement.”

Julie Norris

07 DAY

Thoughts Of Sitting On The Balcony In A Beautiful Place

My thoughts of things to make the heart sing as follows though in no particular order:

1. To wake to a bedroom filled with early morning sunshine.
2. The sound & sight of the sea, & a light breeze on my face.
3. The laughter of my grandchildren.
4. A sublime piece of Rachmaninov with the log burner blazing on a winter's evening.
5. The peace I find in an empty ancient church.





6. Sitting on a balcony, in the warmth of a summer's evening, way above a huge Provençal landscape, with a glass of cool rosé.
7. The huge & happy welcome I get from my dogs every single time I get home
8. Choral Evensong in a Medieval Minster with the echo of beautiful voices fading in the distance.
9. The flash of a tiny brilliantly coloured kingfisher on a riverbank.
10. Open East Anglian skies filled with the movement of birds.
11. Last, but mostly certainly not least, the joy of my friends. The laughter, tears, life experiences shared. They are my lifeblood.

Caroline Crewes

“All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.”

Julian of Norwich

08 DAY

A New Friend

Judy, who has been unwell during lockdown wrote about friends who have cheered her up. Including a friend who sent her a video of this Aardvark eating, with the message…

"His name is Indie…he is from Spain and adorable! You can have a cuddle with him when you are allowed to."





Judy Writes,
People have been so kind since hearing of my illness. Encouraging me to look forward to things in the future. It truly melts my heart. Lots of lovely gifts and messages and even one from Indie at Shepreth Wildlife Park

Judy Purse

We are thinking of all in the village who are in the middle of medical treatments at this time. We all hope that the treatment you are receiving restores you to full health and soon.

A Guardian Angel Prayer

Angel sent by God to guide me,
be my light and walk beside me;
be my guardian and protect me;
on the paths of life direct me.

09 DAY

A Snow Angel

In many religions angels are messengers between heaven and earth. They have a purpose to fend off malice, speak truth and to protect both individuals and the faith community. They are a symbol of goodness.

I visited someone who was on the phone to the Samaritans when I turned up at her door. She called me her angel bringing a message of hope. Sometime afterwards, when I was going through a difficult time of my own, I received in the post a gift. She had sent me a pocket angel. Now she was the angel bringing good news to me.

People can be angels, messengers of God, bringers of goodness. Sometimes we can meet angels unaware in the people we meet.

Julie Norris



On Friday 4th December, Kate Wootton turned the chore of clearing the snow from her decking into fun by making a snow angel.

“And for all this, nature is never spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things.”
Gerard Manley Hopkin

10 DAY

The Enjoyment When Wood 'Speaks' and a New Wooden Character Emerges

I'm sitting looking at the wood turned snowmen and tomte I've made. A tomte is a Father Christmas-like character. They're ready for selection and distribution to our children. Each is different and turned from small pieces of wood found on our daily walks or donated from the chopping and taming of garden hedgerows.



A combination of lockdown activities resulted in my standing at a lathe with bits of wood knowing what I wanted to make but unsure what the end piece would look like. This was not a controlled factory of reproduced shape. It was something personal between me and wood.

There is a mediative quality to turning wood. It takes time and patience and a slipping into a calm state of mind where time has no meaning. Somehow hours pass in the repetition of carefully sharpening, setting, and creating cylinders of wood. Then forming the shapes. Sometimes not successful, other times mediocre and occasionally something to be proud of. Trying out these new things using the ubiquitous You Tube videos requires practise and patience. It also means you must be prepared for failure and less than perfect results, along with an acceptance that as new things emerge it will not always be as you thought it might be. It's a case of trying, thinking, and doing new things.

In turning I had an end point, but the wood seemed to 'speak'. Each of the ornaments is different. Each has revealed a shape and face as it was turned. One winks, some sleep and others smile. The wood sort of formed this without my knowledge. I guided the chisel and knew what I needed to do to get a small gnome like shape or a top hatted snowman but found enjoyment in not knowing what would finally be created. The uncertainty of what was about to happen was exciting.

There was additional satisfaction in turning waste into something that has evolving form and function. This has given me a way to gain a perspective on change.

Wayne Talbot



11 DAY

Listening To Birdsong

For two years, I lived in a new-build flat in the middle of one of the new estates in Trumpington, South Cambridge, which was still being built around me for the first year. Within days of moving in, I realised something was missing: the sound of birds. There were no songbirds, not one. Occasionally, there would be the odd pigeon or crow who dropped in, but there were no robins, blackbirds, tits - no 'garden' birds of any kind. The only sounds I heard in my flat were the thrum and thump of building works, the squeals, cries and screams of children in the flat above me and on the street outside, the chatter and shouting of adults, booming bass lines from music and theme tunes from televisions, the ubiquitous traffic and the occasional dog. I'd often lie there first thing in the morning, listening to the distant rush of the M11, imagining the birds waking up just down the road, toward the older part of Trumpington, and feel overwhelmed with sadness. Walking at dawn or dusk to an area that did have songbirds became one of my favourite things to do and helped to soothe my need for nature amidst so much man-made noise.

Happily, though, my new husband and I now live in a small village near St Neots, with fields and woodland just the other side of our garden fence. The dawn chorus regularly wakes me up and, every time it does, my heart fills with pure joy. My favourite songbird is the robin (closely followed by the blackbird) and, often, when one starts chirruping away outside my window, I can't help but stop what I'm doing, shut my eyes and just let it flow through me. Standing in the garden at dusk, listening to two robins sing to each other, is one of my favourite things, especially on a clear night as the stars begin to peep from beneath the cover of daylight. And now we also have pheasants to delight in, too - such silly, beautiful, birds, with their proud squawks and funny walks! We've also had skylarks, swallows, swifts, red kites and, more recently, a pair of tawny owls have begun to visit. I frequently lie in bed unable to sleep, because I get lost in listening to the owls call to each other(!)

Birdsong is something that makes me feel so soothed, energised and, somehow, more connected to God. It's funny how something as simple as a bird singing can fill my heart with such great joy and gratitude, but it does and, having experienced the absence of it, I find myself more grateful for it now than ever

Gemma Markettos

“You will teach them to fly,
but they will not fly your flight.
You will teach them to dream,
but they will not dream your dream.
You will teach them to live,
but they will not live your life.
Nevertheless, in every flight,
in every life, in every dream,
the print of the way you taught will always remain.”

Mother Teresa

12 DAY

When Little Children Express Their Delight

Mary Stapleton was baby-sitting her grand-daughter, Lucy, and discovered a piece of music that inspired Lucy with delight.

Mary writes,
Jane, Lucy's mother, had got out some musical Christmas cards that her other grandma had sent over the years. When opened, one of these cards played, 'The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy' by Tchaikovsky. A toy soldier twirled as the music played. This definitely inspired Lucy with delight. There are probably lots of versions but the one with tubular bells is really inspiring.

Delight in young children is probably something we all have in common

Mary Stapleton



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B9zRToy-mwk
The National Philharmonic Orchestra, Richard Bonynge

“Do not assume that he who seeks to comfort you now, lives untroubled among the simple and quiet words that sometimes do you good. His life may also have much sadness and difficulty, that remains far beyond yours. Were it otherwise, he would never have been able to find these words.”

R M Rilke

13 DAY

"Can we rescue a word and discover a universe?" Sir Edwyn Hoskins (1844-1937)

Ordinary words link everyday ideas and have lasting impact. The way even items with ordinary names casually touch our lives can be fleeting and go unnoticed. There can be a universe of ideas couched in simple words.



Take the idea of a BAG for instance. Since the Attenborough revolution, plastic bags polluting our seas have become a guilty symbol of our profligacy and unfettered consumerism. We now re-use and in some cases recycle bags. We are trained to bring them to the supermarkets. Bags are designed to contain stuff, to embrace what is within, to protect items and free our hands to do other things. They serve vital functions and have done so throughout human millennia. This illustrated example is made from scrap curtain samples destined for landfill. It contains nothing just now.

However, bags clearly limit the movement of whatever is contained within them. When experiencing lockdown, we, like the contents of bags, cannot physically move beyond our confines. We are in an impasse. Seemingly moving in our lives neither backwards nor forwards, but simply staying put. We do change, however, as our place in the universe shifts.

Being confined is perhaps encouraging us to retrace our freedom of thought, our creativity while in retreat from the world. Confinement ironically gives us an opportunity to arrive at another point from which we can set out afresh to discover, to discern yet more.

Amanda Tuck

“You suppose you are the trouble
But you are the cure
You suppose that you are the lock on the door
But you are the key that opens it
It’s too bad that you want to be someone else
You don’t see your own face, your own beauty
Yet, no face is more beautiful than yours.”

Rumi

14 DAY

Simple Pleasures

A friend who has travelled to Paris for a family wedding and was really worried about going, sent some photos from the hotel. She said that she felt calmer because she was being looked after.





This was a reminder to me that it is often the simple things, 'that make our heart sing.'

Kate Wootton





> Let us be grateful to the people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.
>
> Marcel Proust

“In the sweetness of friendship let there be laughter, and sharing of pleasures. For in the dew of little things the heart finds its morning and is refreshed.”

Khalil Gibran

15 DAY

Making Me Laugh

My two gerbils Finn and Ralph never fail to bring me joy. Although they're very small animals they have huge personalities and bring a smile to my face every day. As well as looking very cute and being soft and fluffy they are friendly, playful and curious about everything. When I come to see them they run up to touch noses in greeting and then proceed to use me as a climbing frame/adventure playground. My shoulders are especially popular as they make good lookout posts. They do like to know what I'm up to, especially if they suspect I might have sunflower seeds about my person - a gerbil will do a lot for a sunflower seed! They also make me laugh when they suddenly decide to rush about and play wrestle with each other, and it's really interesting to see all the work they put into making tunnels and burrows.

I only started keeping gerbils about 7 years ago but I'm glad I decided to give them a try.



It's quite difficult to get a pair of gerbils to both sit still together in front of a camera but these are my best at-tempts! (Finn is ginger and Ralph white.)

Mel Eyeons

> When you find something to laugh at in the face of adversity, you win.
>
> Julie Norris

“Nature is good for the soul, it is a pure joy and a wonderful God given gift for which to be thankful.”

Jean Barnes

16 DAY

A Laugh Out Loud Moment

In March I decided to write my Memoirs. My family had been requesting this for some time and I decided perhaps now was the right time. I began…



"I can hear birdsong. The sky is cloudless, periwinkle blue, the air is still. We have the most amazing opportunity to enjoy life and be thankful – except for the reasons! Apart from birds singing their hearts out, there is silence – no cars, no aircraft, no trains! 'Peaceful'! 'Solitude'! But we are in 'Covid Lockdown'!! Told to isolate'!?" …..... So for all the wrong reasons there is joy. From our windows we have the most amazing views across a meadow – each spring, the farmer brings the ewes with their new-born lambs. I can watch them for hours – our neighbour who owns this land had a pile of soil which over time had grassed over and the young lambs would play 'I'm King of the Castle' on this. The first would dare anyone trying to usurp its position and there would be a short 'battle'. Even the Mothers would challenge any other sheep who dared to attempt to climb up if she had claimed her possession – there would be a face to face challenge, head-butting, and even funnier, another would come from behind and push the first claimant off balance. The winner would then stand in glory – until the whole cycle happened again. A laugh out loud moment; but such simple and undeniable joy.

In the evenings, facing east, we view the sunsets. The meadow is bounded on the far side by a small woodland. In winter when the leaves have fallen the skeletal shapes of the branches are illuminated by the forever changing colours in the sky from softest pinks to deep carmine or some-times the palest of yellows blending into soft shades of oranges and blue. It is a wonder to watch - until slowly, the sun slides down behind the trees and is lost to view with just a fading glow.

Another magical joy in winter from our windows, is the hoar frost. We might wake up to find the whole world is white, with the rising sun – still low in the sky - causing every branch and blade of grass to sparkle like diamonds often against the backdrop of the deepest of blue skies. Pure delight and joy, but free for everyone, at which to marvel.

Jean Barnes



17 DAY

Silent Night

Silent Night has been chosen for the 'Blue' Christmas service and I think its beauty can be appreciated by everyone. Also it always suggests to me the idea of peace and goodwill, and that there are some songs, pieces of music, which are sung in many countries and remind people that we are all human and appreciate the same values. I am thinking of the story of a truce on Christmas eve in the First World War when German and English soldiers sang together.

On Christmas Eve 1914 in some places along the trenches small fir trees were set up and decorated with lanterns. Carol singing was heard across both sides of the trenches. In the morning Brit-ish and German soldiers met in no man's land. They exchanged gifts, took photographs and played impromptu games of football.

Mary Stapleton

G K Chesterton called this 'passionate peace.' He wrote ,.

The idle humble hill and wood
Are bowed upon the sacred birth,
And for one little hour the earth
Is lazy with the love of good…
Hunger is hard and time is tough,
But bless the beggars and kiss the kings;
For hope has broken the heart of things,
And nothing was ever praised enough.
Only till Christmastide go by
Passionate peace is in the sky.

"Always try to keep a patch of sky above your life."

Marcel Proust

“There is a time for everything,
and a season for every activity under the heavens…
I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. He has made everything beautiful in its time.
He has also set eternity in the human heart;
yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.
I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live.
That each of them may eat and drink,
and find satisfaction in all their toil—
this is the gift of God.”

Ecclesiastes 3. 1 and 10 -13

18 DAY

FISH AND CHIPS - What Is There Not To Like?!

The smell that wafts through the air, standing at the counter eagerly anticipating with each shake of the basket in the hot oil, the chips being ready and that each fish that is placed on the rack could be mine. The sound of the metal server as it digs into the cooked chips and watching the pincers reach for 'that' fish, my fish. What decision am I going to make; salt? vinegar? or both?

With the paper wrapped expertly around my ready meal, I experience the warmth and the concentrated aroma of the fish and chips soaked in vinegar.

Fish and chips is synonymous with the Seaside and I am reminded of walking down to New Brighton Pier to go to the funfair with my Mum and sister, riding on the ghost train and walking the 2 miles home. On the way back we stopped at the 'local chippy' and bought fish and chips wrapped in newspaper. We were allowed to eat them as we walked along the street but were bound to secrecy as Grandma would NOT approve.



Today, the sea is much further away and New Brighton Pier no long exists but I have lost none of my childish glee when I pick up my fish and chips from the van in the village hall car park on a Friday evening. The newspaper has been replaced by a well presented cardboard box and my taste has matured to include mushy peas. I proudly walk home, with my box held securely, to eat my fish and chips in front of the fire. What can be better than this?!

Kate Wootton

“Hope” is the thing with feathers by Emily Dickinson

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -
And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -
I’ve heard it in the chillest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.

19 DAY

Marlene's Shower For Birds

Each day I put out on my lawn, a large plant pot dish filled with fresh water and I sit a watch the birds come to drink. It is usually the larger birds.

During one hot summer's day, I watched a pigeon fly down to the edge of the dish. It drank a bit before jumping straight in. It paddled around, ducking its head down, covering itself in water. It then hopped out onto the grass, stretched out its wings and sat as though it was sunbathing. I just laughed.

The following day a green woodpecker visited my 'garden shower'. I watched whilst it too pecked at the water before taking a paddle. I couldn't help but smile.

So many birds and wild animals visit my garden throughout the year and I enjoy watching them all but the visits to 'Marlene's shower' have really given me joy.



Four reasons to watch the birds in the garden:

1. Watching birds in the garden can bring you delight and improve your mood.
2. It gives you some peaceful time to yourself.
3. It stops you being bored because they are always up to something, whether it is having a bath, looking for food, or teasing the cat.
4. Loading up the bird table gives you an excuse to go outside and get fresh air.

Marlene Hilyard

“Live in the present and make it so beautiful that it will be worth remembering.”

Ida Scott Taylor

20 DAY

A Simple Starter - Appreciation

The simple side dish I did with my Tagliatelle al Pesto Genovese the other night would make a nice light starter:



1. Take any green, hard fruit: Granny Smith apples, crisp green pears, guava etc and cut horizontally into thick circular slices, about 1.5cm - 2cm thick. Another fruit which is in season, crisp and not too sweet is persimmon.
2. Remove seeds or core if necessary. Lay the slices on a lightly buttered or oiled foil sheet on an oven tray and grill in a hot oven until softened and caramelized to taste, say about 10 to 15 minutes.
3. Cut thin horizontal slices of smoked scamorza cheese and place on the fruit circles. Return to the oven and grill until the scamorza starts to bubble and brown.
4. Remove from the oven and season with freshly ground black pepper.
5. Add a garnish, or varying garnishes to taste: chives, parsley, pomegranate seeds or other seeds.. sunflower, pumpkin or grilled pine nuts !

Bill Henderson

When we eat lovely food it heightens our sense of appreciation.
Appreciation is the recognition and enjoyment of something (or someone). When it is applied to food, it is seeing and valuing the qualities of the ingredients, the method of cooking and the significance of those we share the meal with and the occasion.

When we eat with appreciation it turns the meal from mere sustenance to an experience that feeds the soul as well as the body.

Appreciation is multisensory. It is noticing the ambience, the aromas, the taste, the smile, the silence, the laughter, the moment. It is recognising the value of the moment and all that life has to offer in it.

When we do not have good things to hand, and we are trying to make the best of things, we can nevertheless, notice and appreciate and adapt, so that we can create quality and value in the present moment. We might remember 2020 as a trying period in our lives, but perhaps we can also recall and create memories of kindness, gratitude, love, laughter, joy and attentiveness to each other as we go forward from here.

Julie Norris

“O most honoured Greening Force,
You who roots in the Sun;
You who lights up, in shining serenity, within a wheel
that earthly excellence fails to comprehend.
You are enfolded
in the weaving of divine mysteries.
You redden like the dawn
and you burn: flame of the Sun.”

Hildegard von Bingen

21 DAY

From a Plant with No Label

From a Plant with No Label by Althea Whybrow

In Creation I'm a Camellia, but you can call me Delia –
I have no other name, but I am pink.
I'll give my best display from November until May
Or sometime in between those months...(I think...)
I am a real cool lady, in fact I like things shady
Just point me to the North or to the West
(I just hate the morning sun and if I could I'd run away
from soil containing lime - I'm sure you've guessed!)
To be truthful – not audacious –
I like my compost ericaceous
And I love sequestrene food in early Spring
(...it keeps my leaves all green and glossy –
Hope you don't think I'm too bossy
If I get all this I'm on a real good thing!)
Apart from that...I'll be no trouble. Oh! I'm single (or I'm double...)
I don't need pruning so there'll be no need to measure.
Ah...and I can be propagated (but I think that's over-rated...)
So I'll just do my best to bloom...and bring you pleasure!



Let My Dance be a Prayer by Julie Norris

May each step connect me to the rhythm of life.
When I leap, fill me with joy.
When I stretch, let it draw me into your embrace
Let your strength give me balance
Let my dance be a prayer
Which celebrates the heartbeat of your love.

22 DAY

Going to a Virtual Tea Dance



Snape Maltings put on a virtual Tea Dance. Grace and Kenneth Wallace from Orwell joined in.

The music was great, including old favourites such as Moon River, as well as a Jive and a Waltz. For those who were able, they were shown how to dance on their feet. For others the dancing took place from the chair.

Kenneth and Grace, who live in Orwell, loved the music and dance and talked about it for days afterwards.

It brought back many other memories of other dances that they had been to in different seasons of their life.

Dance, even when following instructions and music online, at home, is a way of getting physical exercise whilst being distracted by great music. It encourages emotional and artistic self expression. When we dance we can awaken creativity. Dance also connects us with others who like to dance.

Julie Norris

Dance as though this is the dance of life
Love as though love is for ever
Sing as though you are connecting with the universe
Live as though heaven is on earth.

Julie Norris



Thou that hast given so much to me give me one thing more, a grateful heart: not thankful when it pleaseth me, as if Thy blessings had spare days, but such a heart whose pulse may be Thy praise.

George Herbert

23 DAY

Wildest Goose Chase?

First, chase your goose! Fresh, if you have a goose-friendly butcher, remembering that the yield of meat from geese is disappointing by comparison with most other poultry (except perhaps quails) and you should take your butcher's advice on the size you'll need for however many guests are dining. Frozen goose from the supermarket is equally good, and often leaner, but you will need to thaw it for around 24 hours. And remember to remove the giblets.

Second, stock and orange juice. Put a litre of unsweetened orange juice (Tropicana or similar) into a very large saucepan with 1/2 litre of chicken stock (liquid or from a stock cube) and bring to the boil. Reduce to a rolling simmer and immerse the goose. Simmer for around an hour. If the goose is too large (or the pot too small), cook the rear end of the goose first and then invert it. Remove the goose and allow it to cool on a large platter. Cook down the juice and stock mixture a little and then leave to cool also !

Third, drying the goose. Once the goose has cooled, place it, uncovered, in the fridge, ideally for 24 hours to dry and crisp the skin. Remove the layer of goose fat (the original "schmalz") from the surface of the cooking liquor and put in a sealed jar in the fridge to consolidate. Some of this can be used to baste the goose during roasting, along with the orange/stock liquid, to keep it moist during roasting. The rest of the goose fat can either be kept for roasting and frying other vegetables and meats, or given away to Central European friends, who will become friends for life

Fourth, Roasting. Around 1.5hrs before you need to serve, roast the goose at around 180C, breast side down for 40 mins, basting from time to time, and then roast breast side up for 25 mins at 200C until the skin is crisp and brown. Once cooked, remove the goose to rest before carving and deglaze the roasting pan with red wine, or port and stock to make a rich gravy, which can be thickened to taste with flour. Serve with roast potatoes and/or other root vegetables, red cabbage and red currant sauce.

Fifth, and not at all least, what's sauce for the goose, is soup for the gander ! Use the carcass, leftover vegetables and gravy to make goose soup, which is the goose's way of appeasing any disappointment caused by its lack of meat on the bone.

Bon Appetit!

Bill Henderson

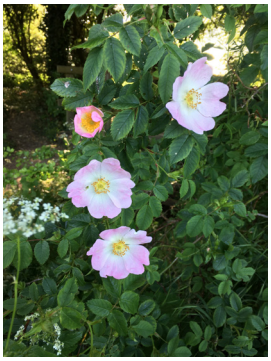
“If you will stay close to nature, to its simplicity, to the small things hardly noticeable, those things can unexpectedly become great and immeasurable.”

R M Rilke

24 DAY

Walking Through The Fields

Margaret Cook saw the following things as those which make her heart sing:



Picking apples from the garden, cooking and then freezing them ready for Winter.



Walking through the fields, looking closely at the wild roses and counting the petals, and the childhood memory of picking wheat and chewing it and then, in the Autumn returning to the fields to eat the 'hips and haws'.





There are benefits of just getting outside in the open air and being attentive to what is around.

To go outside stimulates your senses with experiences, sights, sounds and smells of nature. This gives you a lovely distraction from the stresses, anxieties and demands of everyday life.

Margaret Cook



“These trees are magnificent, but even more magnificent is the sublime and moving space between them, as though with their growth it too increased.”

R M Rilke

25 DAY

The Beauty of the World

The beauty of the conker

Several times over the past few months, Kate Wootton has made comments to her friends about how much enjoyment she gets from conkers.

The shared fun of collecting them…

During her walk in Wimpole Park (included later in the booklet) Kate described how, whilst following the one way system back to the carpark, through the fern garden, she came across some young children with their Mum. She spent an enjoyable time helping them search for open conker cases.



The cheering of their beauty on a miserable day

Earlier, in October, Kate was sitting at her desk and wrote this other musing about conkers.

"I'm sitting here at my computer gazing out at the miserable drizzle which is helping my new grass seed to grow. Next to me are my 23 conkers (collected the other day). I am trying to decide what to do with them and remembering the joy of collecting them…"

Remembering the delight of the day and the places where conkers have been collected before.

"I am Remembering the joy of collecting conkers in a place called Willaston. I'm sure it was much later in the year because there were so many more leaves on the ground. I look forward to seeing more of the brightly coloured autumn leaves."



Planting a conker

The latest update…

"This is what I did with some of the conkers and one has sprouted. It is a bit early I fear. There is a desperate need for new life but with all the perils of winter still ahead. Maybe nature knows better than we do."

A Collection of thoughts by Kate Wootton

“The demands of the day sometimes demand our all. Yet it is the wonder and the mystery that fills our lives and gives them meaning.”

Denise Levertov

26 DAY

Murmuration of Starlings

We have discovered that the reed beds in the National Trust land next to the A603 opposite Wimpole Hall are a great place to see a murmuration of starlings. We have regularly visited this place over the past weeks. Each evening as the sun goes down, thousands of starlings gather. They come in smaller groups, and join into a great crowd. If you listen there is the gentle hum of thousands of wings. Then they make their dance, swirling and swooping, turning and twirling. Each bird is about a bird width from the next, and they move together in a remarkable choreography.
It is an amazing natural beauty which takes my breath away.

Then, as the sun goes down, like a light switched off, they drop suddenly into the reeds.

Miriam Norris

Time for bed!





Remember to look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious. And however difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at. It matters that you don't just give up.

Stephen Hawking

The stars speak to us of permanence even when our own life is fragile and changeable. It invites us to look for what is eternal in our own human heart and lives.

A billion stars go spinning through the night,
glittering above your head,
But in you is the presence that will be
when all the stars are dead.

R M Rilke



27 DAY

Looking at the Night Sky

When you stand outside on a clear night in Barrington you can see the stars. I have lovely memories of conversations about the universe with my son when he was small, as we looked at the astounding panoply in the sky above us. As we gazed upwards, we pondered on the fact that we were looking at some of the one hundred million stars in the Milky Way. He was always much quicker than I was at finding the Great North Star or identifying some of the galaxies. The vastness never fails to catch me with awe.

It is interesting to think that the furthest away star that we can see without a telescope in more than 16 thousand light years from us now.

To look upwards at the great constellation of stars makes us feel small and gives us a sense of a much bigger world. When we go back inside to our mundane lives, the vastness of the universe gives us a new and different perspective.

Julie Norris

Percy and I are amateur star gazers and we have been fortunate to view the Heavens from all seven continents this prayer always comes to our minds. We would like to share it with you.

A Prayer by Ruth Burrows

O God, let me rise to the edges of time
and open my life to your eternity,
Let me run to the edges of space
and gaze into your immensity,
Let me climb through the barriers of sound
and pass into your silence.
And then in stillness and silence
let me adore You,
Who are Life-Light -Love-
Without beginning and without end.

When we gaze at the night sky we feel the wonder of what we call God.

Jean Cruttwell and Percy Hammond

“I find you, Lord, in all Things and in all
my fellow creatures, pulsing with your life;
as a tiny seed you sleep in what is small
and in the vast you vastly yield yourself.

The wondrous game that power plays with Things
is to move in such submission through the world:
groping in roots and growing thick in trunks
and in treetops like a rising from the dead.”

R M Rilke

28 DAY

Nature and Having a Chat

In October, I went for a walk in the grounds of Wimpole Hall, the first time since the new carpark and entrance block has been open. I was surprised to see the banks of wild-flowers and they lifted my spirit as I drove into the car-park. I had a chat with the lady and gentleman managing the visitor centre. How lovely to have a chat with strangers after being isolated in Barrington for such a long time.

I then walked down the new path towards the stable block. Each person or couple I passed smiled and said hello.



The grounds were eerily quiet but I followed the one way system to the walled garden where I saw the display of dahlias and wondered how nature managed to put together such dissonant colours to make an amazingly vibrant display. There were seed heads and fruit which reminded me that we were moving towards winter but there was still much to enjoy in shape and colour. I bought a couple of plants from the outdoor store at the garden entrance.

I walked back to the car with a wonderful sense of wellbeing; carrying a couple of plants, a garden ornament, a book to further my creativity. I thought about the beautiful walk through the changing seasons and reflected on the number of really pleasant conversations I had had with people who had time to chat.

Simply enjoying nature whilst out walking and having the opportunity to connect with people, on that day, reminded me of all that is good in the world.

Kate Wootton

“We don’t receive wisdom; we must discover it for ourselves after a journey that no one can take for us or spare us.”

Marcel Proust

29 DAY

The View From My Window

Deborah looks out of her window at the ancient church of St Andrew's in Orwell. She told me that the view out of her window, without fail, makes her heart sing.

Deborah writes,
I raise my eyes from my desk to look outside. I see the clouds part and the sun shine through, its rays highlighting the church and gravestones. A gentle breeze ripples through the trees causing the leaves to dance to its music. I know I am at one with nature and at peace with the world.

Deborah Brice

The Avowal by Denise Levertov

As swimmers dare
to lie face to the sky
and water bears them,
as hawks rest upon air
and air sustains them,
so would I learn to attain
free fall, and float
into Creator Spirit's deep embrace,
knowing no effort earns
that all-surrounding grace



Primary Wonder by Denise Levertov

Days pass when I forget the mystery.
Problems insoluble and problems offering
their own ignored solutions
jostle for my attention, they crowd its antechamber
along with a host of diversions, my courtiers, wearing
their coloured clothes; cap and bells.
And then once more the quiet mystery
is present to me, the throng's clamour
recedes: the mystery
that there is anything, anything at all,
let alone cosmos, joy, memory, everything,
rather than void: and that, O Lord,
Creator, Hallowed One, You still,
hour by hour sustain it.

30 DAY

Prayer That Remakes Us

Prayer is part of the rhythm of my day.
There have been so many times when people have asked me to pray for them because they have faced some difficult time over the past months. I find the process of praying something which really makes a difference.



Picture by Rick Nelms

Prayer by Julie Norris

Prayer doesn't have to have words
It can flow in tears, or be caught in a sigh, or formed in the tremble of awe.
It can be felt as mystery, or discovered when attentively focused on some detail,
Or found in the feeling of exquisite sensitivity.
When words are used, these don't have to be erudite or clever,
Prayer can be articulated in a burst of song,
Or in an expletive, tearing the veil between earth and heaven,
To dissolve in the realisation that we are not on our own.
One thing that prayer constantly does is to remake us.
It teaches us that we are not the centre of the universe,
That our anger can be driven against injustice,
That our pain can be soothed by divine communion
And that when we are a feather on the breath of God,
Our landing is gentle.

“A joy that’s shared is a joy made double.”

Proverbs

“Sorrow prepares you for joy. It violently sweeps everything out of your house, so that new joy can find space to enter. It shakes the yellow leaves from the bough of your heart, so that fresh, green leaves can grow in their place. It pulls up the rotten roots, so that new roots hidden beneath have room to grow. Whatever sorrow shakes from your heart, far better things will take their place.”

Rumi

31 DAY

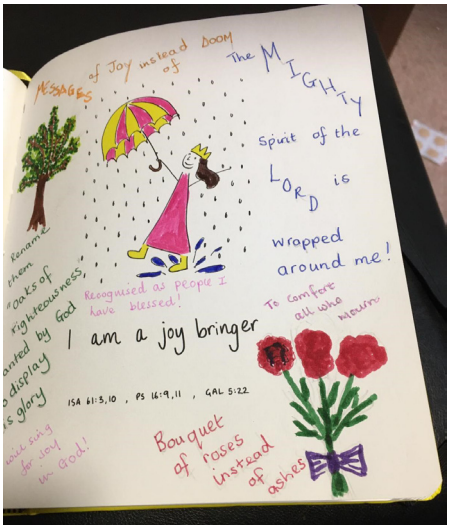
Thinking and Being Thankful for the Joy Bringers

> Joy does not simply happen to us. We have to choose joy and keep choosing it every day.
>
> Henri J.M. Nouwen

Karen Mann heard about this project and sent me this illustration of an exercise that she decided to do in order to improve her sense of well-being. She found it helpful and she thought it might help others too. Karen looked for people from her past, and from her current neighbourhood who she thought of as 'Joy Bringers.' This is the exercise:

1. Think of the people who have been Joy- Bringers in your life.
2. And give thanks for them.
3. Think of yourself as a Joy-Bringer and of those you might reach out to.

Here is a picture she annotated:



> I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.
>
> John 15 10-12

Find people who will shine light on your path.
Ignore those that make you fearful and sad, that degrade you back towards disease and death.
Set your life on fire.
Seek those who fan your flames.

Rumi

END PIECE

Looking After Each Other

Two are better than one,
because they have a good return for their labour:
If either of them falls down,
one can help the other up.
Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

More than ever, during the challenges of 2020, we have realised how important friendship is. When we support each other so much more can be achieved and we feel better. There is a completeness which we enjoy when we are in convivial company.

This booklet could not have been achieved without the contribution and support of many. Your willingness to offer your thoughts on what makes your heart sing was central to this project. In addition, it could not have been achieved without the encouragement and hard work of many others who have edited, helped with printing and delivered it.

Thank you.

A Prayer for You by Julie Norris

To those who are ill, May you be restored
To those who are stressed, May you find calm
To those who are afraid, May your life be filled with love
To those who are sad, May you know that we are not alone
To those who are despairing, May hope defeat the desolation
To those who feel alone, May you know that you have a village full of friends who wish you well.

Work with love, it is to weave the cloth with threads drawn from your heart.
Khalil Gibran

“And now we welcome the new year, full of things that have never been.”

R M Rilke

Under the Thinking Tree Centre for Well-Being

This booklet has been produced by Under The Thinking Tree C.I.C. This is a not-for profit community organisation based in Barrington which seeks to address well-being issues. Our aim is to seek to help people to live more fully. We recognise that personal, social and spiritual well-being are interconnected. We are working with community and faith partners to do this. You can find out more about us at: www.underthethinkingtree.com

This project is a cross-generation, community cohesion and well-being project. If you like this booklet and would like to encourage more like this, you can make a donation through the website, or by post to Under the Thinking Tree C.I.C. at: 67 High Street, Barrington, CB22 7QX

Rev Julie Norris

Simple Things That Make Your Heart Sing