

## THE COMPANIONS OF JULIAN OF NORWICH

The Companions of Julian of Norwich are a core grouping within the wider community of the Friends of Julian, men and women, lay or ordained, who wish to commit themselves at a deeper level to living out the insights and teaching of Julian of Norwich in their own personal lives.

The Companions bring together the many people throughout the world who find inspiration in *The Revelations of Divine Love* and who wish to pursue a life based on Julian's insights into the nature of God and the human person.

They welcome Christians of all denominations, and any others who find in Julian a reliable guide on their spiritual quest.

While not being a religious community in any formal sense, as Companions of Julian they commit themselves as best they are able:

1. To reflect the unconditional love of God in their response to others and to themselves
2. To exercise compassionate empathy in their daily lives
3. To meditate and intercede for the world for at least 30 minutes a day
4. To seek spiritual nourishment from regular study of *The Revelations of Divine Love*
5. To make at least one visit to the Julian Shrine in Norwich during their lifetime if possible.

In addition, Companions accept responsibility for furthering the educational work of the Julian Centre in Norwich through prayer and regular financial support.

The Companions of Julian of Norwich will be entitled to wear the hazelnut badge, and to use the postnominal CJN, as long as membership of the Friends of Julian and the commitment to this way of life are maintained.

## THE WAY OF LIFE OF A COMPANION

### Preface

The Companions of Julian of Norwich is a grouping within the Friends of Julian which has evolved from the desire experienced by a number of people to give a deeper expression to their devotion to Julian and her teachings, as lived out in daily life.

Julian was a woman of her time who tried to communicate to others the compassionate nature of God. Compassion, prayer and times of silence and reflection will characterise those who wish to take Julian as a spiritual guide and mentor.

Julian also challenges everyone to reflect on the meaning of life and not be afraid to confront the big questions concerning God and the reasons they have

for living and loving. As a mystic of the head and heart she encourages people continually to ponder and renew their faith commitments.

As Julian realised that she was united in love with all her fellow Christians, and indeed the whole of the human race, so Companions try to show forth that unity in their own humanity, wounded and incomplete as it may be.

As Companions they live out their responsibilities in the world of work and leisure, finding in Julian, and in the friendship and support of others, a focus for their own spiritual journey. As core members of the Friends of Julian they are also linked to the wider Julian family: the Order of Julian of Norwich with its Oblates and Associates (USA), the Community of All Hallows who care for the visitors who come to the Julian Shrine, and those who live the solitary life under Julian's patronage.

### Becoming a Companion

Anyone wishing to become a Companion should make an initial enquiry by writing to the Secretary of the Friends of Julian. An application form will be sent to be completed, with names of two referees attached who can comment on the spiritual journey of the applicant.

Time should then be given for reflection and discernment as to whether becoming a Companion would be an appropriate step.

If it seems right to go ahead then the enquirer is invited to make a formal commitment. This takes place at a simple ceremony, either devised by the new Companion(s) or according to a set formula, with the help and advice of other members of the Julian family. This ceremony usually takes place at the Julian Shrine, but any other suitable place may be chosen if distance is problematic. At this time of commitment the hazelnut badge will be given and the new member is recommended to take a phrase from *The Revelations of Divine Love* as a focus for his/her own spiritual journey under Julian's patronage.

### Marks of a Companion

Companions of Julian seek to be sisters and brothers of Julian, of each other, and of all humanity. There is no supposition that this makes them better or puts them on a higher level than others. We all fail and need to forgive ourselves as well as receive forgiveness. A compassionate heart is one of the marks of an authentic spiritual life.

Companions will, with advice and encouragement from at least one other Companion or member of the wider Julian family, commit themselves to a way of life that includes regular prayer, meditation and some form of fellowship, so that there is a structure of support in place when taking on the obligations of Companionship.

As Companions their choice of simplicity in living will reflect an awareness of the beauty and fragility of the created world, and of their responsibility to exercise good stewardship in this regard.

They are aware of the needs of their fellow human beings throughout the world, and of their calling to relieve those who suffer from poverty, famine and war.

Companions should ideally be willing to give 2% of their personal annual income to the Shrine and Centre for their continuing work.

Their way of life will reflect a respect for their own sexuality and the right use of their bodies and the bodies of others, doing all they can to foster fidelity and mutual love.

As Julian was a woman of gratitude and saw thanksgiving as integral to a life of prayer, so they seek to foster an attitude of gratitude in themselves and those with whom they come in contact.

Companions may not be able to imitate Julian in her anchor hold, but each of them must find some time and space to live prayerfully, silently and compassionately within the confines of their own lives. Persons cannot bring themselves to others in any meaningful way unless they are trying to live compassionately with themselves, knowing and accepting their own strengths and weaknesses.

Silence is one way of enlarging the heart. As Julian saw the heart of Christ expanding in such a way that all could find rest there, so Companions should offer others space to 'be'. This demands a discipline of self-knowledge fostered by regular periods of silence and solitude. They should discuss what is best suited to their particular needs with a soul-friend or spiritual director if they are in doubt.

### Annual Renewal

Each year Companions should review their commitment to the way of life undertaken, if possible by a day retreat with other Companions or members of the Julian family, either at the Julian Shrine or elsewhere.

At this time they take the opportunity to review their personal Rule of Life and see whether anything needs to be changed or modified according to changing circumstances.

### Record of Companions

A record of committed and aspiring Companions will be kept at the Julian Centre and made available to other Companions. In this way those who are Companions may find way of mutually supporting and encouraging one another.

*As this is a new venture the above recommendations are tentative and may need change and adjustment as experience dictates.*