

LAUNDE LEAVES



THE FRIENDS OF LAUNDE

EASTER 2020

I AM THE WAY

Supporting Launde Abbey
The Retreat House of the Dioceses of
Leicester and Peterborough

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

We are living in unprecedented times and the printing of Launde Leaves was halted by the lockdown that has affected so many businesses and most of our activities. On behalf of the Committee of the Friends of Launde, I hope that you and your loved ones are well and that you are not feeling too isolated, wherever you live and whatever your circumstances. The COVID-19 pandemic is testing us all and we are finding new ways of living and supporting one another, following government advice that the best way we can keep one another safe is to keep apart. The telephone, letter-writing and electronic communication are helping us through this paradox and we are accordingly sending out this edition of Launde Leaves by email to those Friends whose email address we have, as well as, thanks to the expertise of Deputy Warden Chris Webb, posting it on the Launde Abbey website. Friends without an email address will receive a note explaining all this by Royal Mail.



The theme of Launde Leaves for Lent 2020 was the assurance of Jesus, “I am the way” and that has remained the theme for this Easter edition. St Augustine of Hippo wrote, “We are an Easter people and ‘Alleluia’ is our song!” I hope you will find much to inspire you in this edition, much to make you rejoice, and much to pray for as you read of the activities and spiritual adventures of young people, senior citizens, retreatants at Launde, university students and others. All the meetings and activities featured in this edition have had to cease during the current health crisis and we wish them all a joyous resumption when it is over. Many of us are wondering if we shall go back to our former ways of doing things or whether we shall be changed, view our personal, community and spiritual lives differently, be transformed by this experience and the reflection it has forced upon us. The Friends of Launde exist to support Launde Abbey and all it represents practically, financially and spiritually. Being friends means keeping in touch, loving and supporting one another in times of need and adversity. Please keep in touch by email or telephone (details on the back page), pray the Launde Abbey Prayer (also on the back page) and be assured that this edition of Launde Leaves comes to you with love.

We are an Easter people and ‘Alleluia’ is our song!

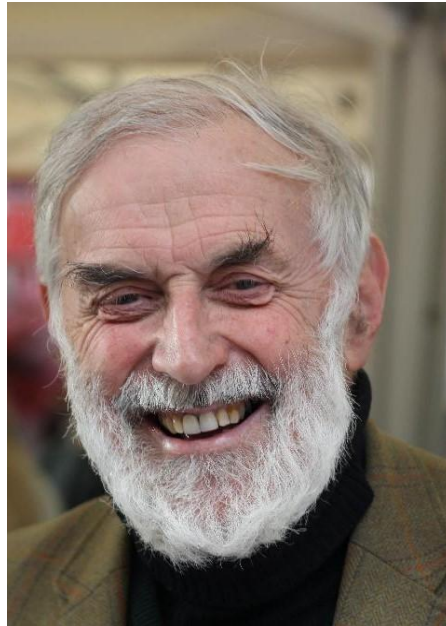
Beverley Lott, Editor

FROM THE CHAIR OF FRIENDS, CANON BRIAN DAVIS

I AM THE WAY

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to say that after much toil and trouble Leicestershire County Council has finally agreed to erect Brown Signs on the A47 and the Oakham Road, as well as two signs in Loddington, directing people to Launde Abbey. Evidently there was a move over ten years ago to apply for Brown Signs but that failed. 'Hope and persevere' (I saw this motto on an old farm house) and we did, and they should be installed very soon, paid for by the Friends.



Finding the way to Launde is not easy if you are coming for the first time. The attraction of Launde is that it is tucked away, out of sight, a haven of peace and beauty. But this is a problem too. Launde is out of sight, and out of mind for many people who have lived in the area all their lives. So we hope the new signs will point the way to one of the 'jewels in the crown' of our county and the Dioceses of Peterborough and Leicester.

When Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except by me,' I believe he meant that the only way to find God, who is love, is by way of love – the love that Jesus showed: self-giving, sacrificial love, the love that gives and gives and forgives.

Richard Burridge, a New Testament scholar writes: 'Whenever anyone, of whatever belief, finds truth and life in God they come through the way of Jesus, whether they realise it or not. But those who do know it, and know Jesus as the way, do not just find God, but they know him as Jesus reveals him, as our Father'.

And here is a favourite quotation of mine that emphasises the way to God who is love. It is by Thomas Merton, who went to Oakham School (1929-1932) and became a famous Cistercian monk, writing many best-selling theological books.

*To say that I am made in the image of God
is to say that love is the reason for my existence,
for God is love.*

Love is my true identity.

Selflessness is my true self.

Love is my true character.

*Love is my name.
If therefore I do anything or think anything
or say anything or know anything
that is not purely for the love of God,
it cannot give me peace, or rest,
or fulfilment, or joy;
to find love I must enter into the sanctuary where it is hidden,
which is the mystery of God.*

(Thomas Merton, A Book of Hours)

DEDICATION OF RECAST STATUE OF CHRIST WITH OUTSTRETCHED ARMS



Visitors to Launde are familiar with Tita Maddens sculpture which greets us on arrival and which has been adopted as the logo for the Diocese of Leicester. The ravages of time and weather have weakened the original which has now been recast. The new statue at last has a home behind the main house and is lit at night. It was dedicated by Bishop Guli in November 2019.

POET'S CORNER

from *The Church Times*, 28 February 2020, reproduced in *Launde Leaves* by kind permission of the editor

On a stormy February day, **Malcolm Guite** takes students to Little Gidding



The other day, I took a small group of students and colleagues to Little Gidding. We were mixed company: some were coming on a literary pilgrimage; some were coming for spiritual space and sustenance; some, perhaps, just to get away from the drudge and intensity of the Lent term in Cambridge (“*the place you would be likely to come from*”, as Eliot drily and obliquely put it); some of us perhaps unsure which of these three reasons had the upper hand. But we came, nevertheless, on a stormy February day, leaving the rough road, turning “*behind the pigsty to the dull façade, And the tombstone*”, and there we all were, once more at the end and beginning of things.

It was a wonderful day, and a joy to breathe Eliot’s great poem into the air in the place that inspired it, while “*the light failed on a winter’s afternoon in a secluded chapel*”. There is, indeed, something mysterious about that place. I have visited it many times, alone and in company, with many purposes in mind, many expectations; but what it gives is always something different, there is always a surprising fecundity in its familiarity, as with each visit you discover that

*“what you came for
Is only a shell, a husk of meaning
From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled
If at all.”*

(T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, “*Little Gidding*”)

I thought I had come to introduce the place and its history, the poem and some of its sources, as I have done many times before; and, indeed, I did these things, but they were, as Eliot says, only the shell, not the husk. We had the early afternoon free, and some of us decided to brave the storm and take the little walk to Steeple Gidding. Our way was almost immediately blocked by a great sea of mud on the usual old track, impassable in our inadequate Cambridge footwear. I would have given up but one of my students said, “Let’s find another way”, and so we set off up the little road, along the hedgerow that Eliot promised would be “*White again, in May, with voluptuary sweetness*”.

In May, maybe, but not in February. Back on the main road, we found another, more promising track, and were off again, constantly rebuffed by the big wind and spattering rain – blown back, but determined more than ever to press on.

My students forged ahead on wet edges between field and woodland, and I followed their lead, struggling to catch up. And, when we came clear together on to a stretch of usable track, further up the way we had earlier abandoned, they had great beaming smiles of triumph, their faces shining and ruddy with the effort and the bite of the wind.

As we pushed on towards the little church at Steeple Gidding, I suddenly remembered how, last year, I had stood in the still air and warmth of my study at Girton while those same students nervously read their essays in practical criticism, and I tried to open and encourage their capacity to appreciate poetry. But here they were, well ahead of me, no longer reciting the dry rehearsal, but breathing in the real stuff.

And so, for me, the purpose of our visit broke sheer and clear like clean new grain from the husk and I knew that my task had been completed, and I could retire gracefully.

JOHN 14:1-6 (NRSVA) – JESUS THE WAY TO THE FATHER

‘Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling-places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going.’ Thomas said to him, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Jesus said, “**I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life**”. These words were first spoken by Jesus on the evening before his own death. But they resonate with his followers to this very day.

Shortly before speaking these words Jesus had given a new commandment, that “you love one another as I have loved you”. Talking with the family gathered here today, it is clear to see that Kathy was someone who loved others, particularly her family, and that she was very much loved in return; they are a family who love and care for each other and Kathy was at the heart of that love. This was the **way** that Jesus taught his followers during his time on earth, and it is the **way** that we continue to follow today, that we love one another as he has loved us.

Knowing what faced him that evening and the following day, Jesus wanted to reassure the disciples of his continuing love for them. He told them, “do not let your hearts be troubled.” The words of the 23rd psalm remind us that, even “in the valley of the shadow of death God is with us and comforts us”. Jesus promised that he would be with us for all time, and that he would send his Holy Spirit to be our comforter. This is the **truth** that he promises us.

Of course this doesn't mean that the loss doesn't hurt, that we don't grieve or that you won't miss a loved one, pain and tears are a right and proper part of today, and it is only natural that we should feel that grief and come together to comfort one another in this time of sorrow. But it does mean that Jesus walks with us in the sorrow, he knew what it was to weep at the death of someone he loved, and he knows the pain of grief. And he is faithful to us and walks alongside us, - his **truth** is that he never leaves us.

But Jesus goes on to say more than this. Jesus wanted to reassure his disciples about their own lives and their own future. “In my father's house there are many dwelling places” he tells them, and he promises them “I go to prepare a place for you.” The place that he prepares for us is not one of sorrow, pain or suffering. It is not a place of infirmity or old age. Instead it is a place of eternal life, the eternal life that Jesus promises us, with him in his Father's house for all time. We can take comfort in the knowledge that he has prepared a dwelling place for Kathy to be with the Father for all time.

Furthermore, Jesus gives us all the reassurance of his promise, that there is a place for each and every one of us in his Father's home and that a place is already prepared for each and every one of us. This was the **life** that Jesus came to bring us. The **life** he promises is eternal life and Jesus tells us clearly that we can all enter into the dwelling place he prepares for us, into that eternal life through him.

Jesus showed us the way of love, the truth of his ever-comforting presence with us and the life eternal that was to come, for **Jesus is the way and the truth and the life, we come to the Father through him! Amen**

Thank you to The Reverend Clive R Watts, Priest in Charge, Barrow and Wolds Group for permission to include this funeral sermon.



ROOTS AND WINGS AT LAUNDE ABBEY

Roots and Wings is a group for 11 – 18 year olds who meet monthly at Launde Abbey on Sunday evenings. We have been meeting for over a year to provide something more reflective for young people than Watershed (the group for families that usually meets before Roots and Wings). Each month we choose a theme about our faith to explore the following month. The themes we have had so far are roots, wings, love, change, parties and traditions, banners (with Revd Hazel Aucken sharing her banners and knowledge of how to use them), prayer, remembrance, a Christmas party, stars and light. We all bring a reflection, Bible

reading, song, prayer, game or craft activity based on the theme. We also all bring food to share which has included some amazingly decorated homemade cakes and home reared pork sausage in homemade sausage rolls.



We have developed our own liturgy using prayers, readings and poems we all like, including this one, which inspired the name ‘Roots and Wings’:

Spirit of Life, come unto us.
Sing in our hearts all the stirrings of compassion,
Blow in the wind, rise in the sea;
move in the land, giving life the shape of justice.
Roots hold us close; wings set us free:
Spirit of life, come to us, come to us. (Adapted from a song by Carolyn Mcdade)

Another of the things we have agreed to do is to have the Lord’s Prayer in a different language every time we meet, which has ranged from Aramaic to sign language. For Remembrance Day one of the newer members learnt the Lord’s Prayer in German. Parents who bring us join us for worship and Miriam Stoate (Pioneer) and Rev Jonathan Dowman (jonathan.dowman@leccofe.org) facilitate the group.

Written by members of Roots and Wings

WERRINGTON PARISH CHURCH – WAY IN PROFILE

When we were looking for a place to meet to discuss this edition of Launde Leaves, Friends Committee member Ann Green suggested **The Way In**, a centre run by the Parish Church of Werrington, near Peterborough. The Way In is located at 11 Copewood, a terraced house in a residential road. Thank you to the manager Michelle for providing us with this account of its history and range of activities.

*This year **The Way In** celebrates 30 years of serving the community. We offer children's groups, lunches for seniors, games afternoons, coffee and scone mornings and craft sessions. While the house is open Cruise counselling, Spiritual Direction, one-to-one listening and support and one-to-one parenting courses are taking place. The staff are CAB sign post trained and we are a food bank voucher centre. We provide fellowship, support and pastoral care as well as a safe haven to young and old, whether they are single parents or families, retired or simply in need of a friendly environment. The Church employs a Manager and a Deputy Manager on a part time basis and they are supported by a group of volunteers. An average week will see ninety to a hundred people using the service.*



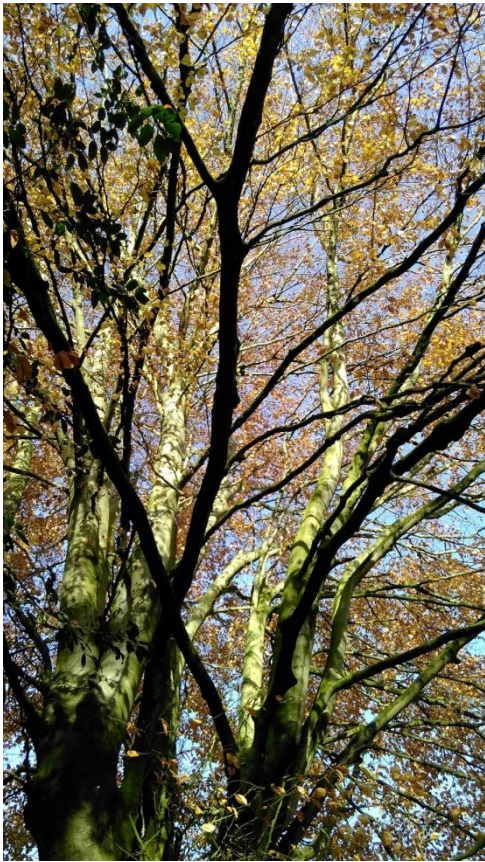
The welcome offered by the staff was warm and coffee was soon on its way. A room upstairs was provided for our meeting and we were able to see something of the work that goes on there – a toddlers’ group and seniors’ lunch on the day we visited. The lunch guests were arriving, as you can see in our photo, and were full of enthusiasm for the opportunity to meet and chat, especially when they were facing health or other personal challenges. There is no doubt that friendship, prayerful support and a listening ear are always available at this wonderful centre in Werrington. It is a great example of church and community collaboration, Christian love in action, so aptly named The Way.

The wall hanging pictured below reflects the very special atmosphere of the house.



The users of **The Way In** from toddlers to senior citizens, will, like members of so many regular groups, be missing all that it offers during the pandemic crisis. We wish it well when it resumes.

SAYING YES TO LIFE – PLANTING TREES



This year it is hoped to plant 900 trees to celebrate 900 years since a monastery was first established at Launde. The poem below comes from Ruth Valerio's 'SAYING YES TO LIFE' – The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book. It is by Reverend Francis Simon.

To plant a tree is to say yes to life
It is to affirm our faith in the future.
To plant a tree is to acknowledge our debt
to the past: seeds are not created out of nothing.
To plant a tree is to co-operate in nature's works
whereby all forms of life are interdependent.
To plant a tree is to take sorrow for past mistakes;
when we took life's gifts for granted.
To plant a tree is to make a social statement for
green-consciousness, for conservation and ecology.
To plant a tree is to enhance the quality of life
It brings beauty to the eyes and uplifts the spirit.
To plant a tree is to make a spiritual statement
or point. We are all members of the tree of life,
we stand or fall together.

Published with the kind permission of Ruth Valerio

REFLECTION ON THE FRIENDS OF LAUNDE ABBEY RETREAT 25–26 JANUARY 2020

“CROSSING BOUNDARIES”

Leader: Bishop Gulnar Eleanor “Guli” Francis-Dehqani,

Bishop Guli focused the retreat on the phrase: ‘Let’s go across to the other side’ from the story in Mark 4: 35-41 of Jesus crossing the lake. I have tried to extract the essence of what she said in each session from her notes because her reflections were beautifully crafted, wisely and sensitively chosen, gently spoken and challenging like a prophet. Each session was followed by a beautiful piece of music.

Session 1: Moving from activity to stillness, from control to surrender

“Let’s go across to the other side”...Jesus says to his disciples...The phrase signals his move from busyness to time out...moving from the activities of the mind towards stillness within... When we have taken responsibility and done what is within our power, then we must surrender the rest to God...If we are to learn the art of surrender when we need it most – when we are caught amidst the storms of worry and anxiety and uncertainty – we must cultivate a life of prayer through daily practise of surrender to God...through silent prayer...coming before God in silence and stillness to listen and to be and to know that we are loved...Acceptance that it’s OK sometimes not to know the answer, or not be able to change things, that it is good simply to dwell in the arms of God while the storm rages on.”

Music: *In a Landscape* by John Cage

Session 2: Moving from fear towards faith

“There may well be things to be fearful of but...we need not be consumed or paralyzed by the fear” we need to “be sensibly fearful and act accordingly.”

“Some change – some crossing of boundaries – is necessary and good and we must find the courage to overcome the fears that prevent us from pressing forward...if you find yourself...on the cusp of something, living with uncertainty, feeling on the edge for whatever reason, do not fear, for God is in that place, just as Jesus was on the boat with his disciples.”

"Through the endless crossing of boundaries for God’s people, all the way through the Bible is littered with the phrase, 'do not be afraid'".

Music: *Do not be afraid* by Philip Stopford



Session 3: Moving towards encounter with the stranger

“Having been on the Jewish side until this point, the crossing [over] represents a move into Gentile territory...to what might be considered an unacceptable or perhaps even dangerous destination...Crossing this boundary sees Jesus reaching out to strangers, to the Other, to the enemy even...[W]ho might be the stranger, the Other or even the enemy, for us?...Who are those we neglect or reject, not just because they are at the bottom of the pile, but because they are hated and feared...the paedophiliacs, ISIS terrorists and Right Wing Extremists of today?”

“‘Let us go across to the other side’ is a direct challenge by Jesus to [the] human instinct to stick with people like ourselves...Reaching out to others...involves movement on our side...to cross over into their context...though it may make us feel vulnerable and unsure...The presence of people who are in geographical exile from their own lands has become the embodiment of an inarticulate sense of exile among those who feel their own country has abandoned their values even though they have not moved an inch.

“Learning to be part of the kingdom of God means learning to be part of those whom Jesus gathers around him...we don’t get to choose who is in the band of disciples. If we want to be close to Jesus we have to be close to people who look, sound and smell different to us. And this is only possible if Jesus is at the centre.

“Whatever the boundary you are crossing Christ is with you, blessing, encouraging and urging you on.”

Music: The Silk Road Ensemble playing *Ascending Bird*

For the final Session Bishop Guli rearranged the room into a Quaker-like circle. After listening to JS Bach Chaconne from Partita no 2 in D minor played by Itzhak Perlman, she invited us to share, either in words or silence, our reflections over the weekend. It was a privilege to listen to the wisdom shared - honestly, deeply and joyfully - ranging from the joy of dance to our connection with everything – including a dragonfly.



We ended with a Closing Eucharist with Bishop Guli presiding.

Very heartfelt thanks to Bishop Guli for the time and care she dedicated to preparing and delivering this retreat, to Mike Playdon for his thoughtful organisation and planning and to all the staff at Launde Abbey for their usual caring and welcoming hospitality.

Miriam Stoate

THE GIFT OF LABYRINTHS

Since at least the fourth century Christians have used labyrinths for prayer and meditation. They can be found carved into church pillars, inlaid in the tiles of cathedral floors, and cut into the turf of churchyards. Recent years have seen a steady growth of interest in this ancient prayer practice and many places have created their own contemporary labyrinths, such as the two at Launde Abbey (in the woods and behind the walled garden).

Barbara Wallace, founder of the labyrinth ministry Pilgrim Paths, has been running labyrinth retreats at Launde for the last few years. At the beginning of this year Barbara decided to draw that ministry to a close and, because of her warm friendship with us here at Launde, offered to donate most of her labyrinth resources to the Abbey.



So in February the clergy team (together with Miriam Stokes from the Friends) spent a day training with Barbara and exploring the resources she brought with her as a gift. Barbara explored the history of labyrinths, the use of labyrinths in Christian prayer and retreat, and various ways in which people can engage with labyrinths to explore their own spiritual journey. She provided Launde with a wealth of books, leaflets and other printed resources and craft items. And she donated to us two magnificent canvas labyrinths which can be laid out of the floors of our Chapel or meeting rooms so people can walk the journey for themselves.



We intend to continue running labyrinth retreats at the Abbey using these resources and will be making use of them at other events and retreats too. And we're deeply grateful to Barbara for her kind gift and all that it will mean to us in our ongoing ministry.

Revd Chris Webb, Deputy Warden



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

FRIENDS OF LAUNDE AGM

Thursday 8th October 2020

5:30pm Refreshments

6:15pm Eucharist

7pm AGM

All details subject to confirmation nearer the time

This will be the opportunity for a joyous celebration of the continuation of the Friends. We look forward to seeing you there.

Please let the Editor know if you would prefer to receive future editions of Launde Leaves by email and check that she has your current email address. Email Beverley at b.lott1509@gmail.com
Thank you

FRIENDS' RETREAT 2021

Thank you to Mike Playdon for making the following arrangements:

Lunchtime Friday 12th - teatime Saturday 13th February 2021.

Leader: The Rt. Rev. Mike Harrison, Bishop of Dunwich, in the Diocese of St. Edmundsbury, Suffolk.

Bishop Mike is well known to many in Leicester as the former Director of Ministry and Mission and as a Trustee of Launde Abbey.

Application forms will be available with the autumn edition of Launde Leaves, though you may register your interest now with Mike

Playdon, playdon.mike@gmail.com.

Bishop Mike Harrison writes: *"If you could only speak one last time before you died, what would you say and why? That's what we'll look at on this retreat, focusing on what Jesus chose as his last words in the 'Farewell Discourses' of John's Gospel, chapters 13 - 17. No previous knowledge assumed, just an open mind, a warm heart and a disposition to laughter."*

FROM THE WARDEN

I AM THE WAY

Dear Friends,



I was once given a book called “the World’s Stupidest Signs”. Many made me smile, but my favourites were the factory sign that said “Would the person who took the step ladder yesterday please bring it back or further steps will be taken” and the garage sign which said “Auto Repair Service: try us once and you’ll never go anywhere again”.

We want our signs to be clear. I’m sure we have all had the experience of being in an unfamiliar city trying to follow road signs which require us to keep crossing busy lanes of traffic and then suddenly at the vital moment disappear altogether. We have certainly been trying to ensure that people’s arrival at Launde is less traumatic. The fluorescent signs at the road entrances mean that even if you arrive on a dark winter evening the way in is still clear. Soon there should be some brown signs pointing the way here from the main roads, thanks to some hard work by some of the Friends getting the necessary permissions. Within the grounds too we have been experimenting with signs to direct guests to particular places, before we put more permanent signage in place.

The Christian life is often depicted as a journey and one of the first descriptions of Christians was ‘followers of the way’. I see one of the main purposes of our ministry at Launde as helping people discern the signs that God gives for that journey. His signs are not always immediately obvious. There is no satnav voice, or big signpost pointing out the way to follow. It is more subtle than that but nonetheless real. Occasionally someone hears God very clearly as this description of Moses suggests: “When there are prophets of the Lord among you, I reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses...With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles..” (cf. Numbers 12:6-8) Most of us have to interpret the riddles and that can be difficult. However, there are signs around, and when we make space to look they begin to reveal themselves. Sometimes we just have to step out in what we sense to be the right direction. Someone once pointed out that it is much easier to steer a bicycle when it is moving – and I’m sure that has a spiritual parallel. Furthermore I know that walking quite literally for me can be a time when I hear God. The ideas for the book that I had published last year came initially as I walked the St Cuthbert’s Way some years ago. Elsewhere in this Launde Leaves you will find an article about the labyrinths that Launde has been given, which are an ancient form of prayer as walking.

In the end, however, the way for Christians is a relationship as much as a destination. “I am the way” said Jesus and in developing that relationship we find direction. So perhaps the most important sign we have now at Launde is the new statue of the welcoming Christ that greets you from up the slope as you turn into the car park. Seeing it lit up at night is powerful and reassuring. We never walk alone.

The Reverend David Newman

LAUNDE LEAVES

is published by the Friends of Launde Abbey

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To join the Friends, collect an application form from the Abbey
or email Jan Zientek at j.zientek12@btinternet.com

LAUNDE LEAVES is edited by Beverley Lott.

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The Launde Abbey Prayer

Father,

here may the faithful find salvation

and the careless be awakened;

here may the doubting find faith

and the anxious be encouraged;

here may the tempted find help

and the sorrowful comfort;

here may the weary find rest

and the strong be renewed;

here may we all find inspiration,

and that peace which the world cannot give:

your precious gift to us in Jesus Christ our Lord,

Amen.

For more information about Launde Abbey and its programme of events ring (01572)
717254 (between 10.00am and 4.00pm), email info@launde.org.uk or visit
www.laundeabbey.org.uk

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