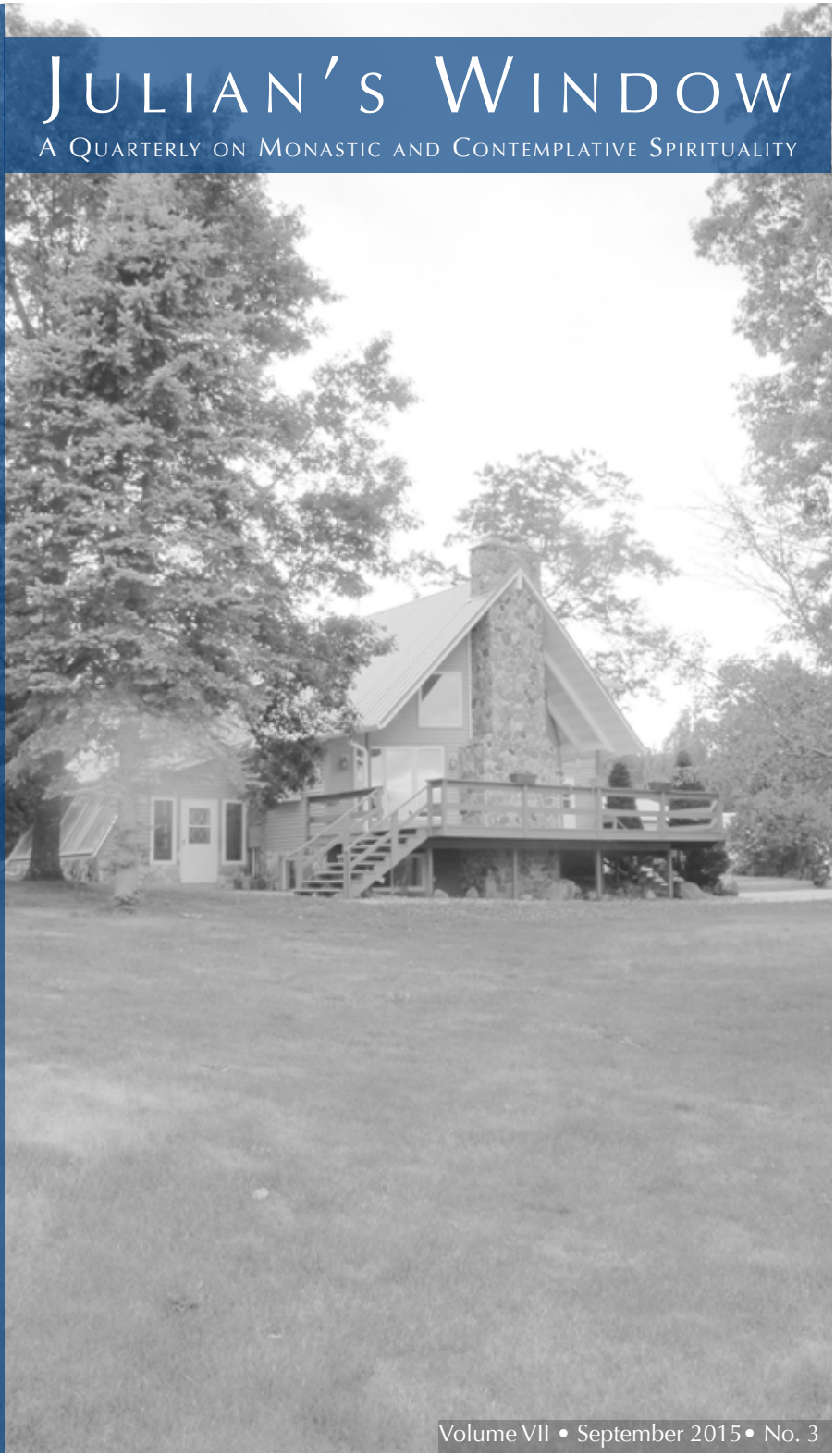
The Order of Julian of Norwich

Julian's Window

A Quarterly on Monastic and Contemplative Spirituality



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On the cover: Our new home in White Lake

The Order of Julian of Norwich

is a contemplative Order of monks and nuns in the Episcopal Church. Our aim is to renew the spiritual life of the Church in three ways: first by a renewal of the contemplative monastic tradition, second by supporting a vibrant community of affiliates who are a bridge between the monastery and parishes, and third by occasional works of mission in publishing, spiritual direction, and hospitality. For more information on the Order, please see our website at **www.orderofjulian.org,** through which we publish articles on the spiritual life.

Julian's Window, also found on our website, is published quarterly. For permission to re-publish, please write to the Order:

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Being Here

Mthr Hilary OJN

What is the nature of the relationship between a place and its people? Whatever else it may be, it is complex, and so significant that each shapes the other for good or ill.

It is remarkable how often old farmers begin to take on the character of the land they have loved and worked on; and old monks and nuns living in one place for decades to seem as if sprung from the land, their prayer now inseparable from their fellows and from the very ground the monastery is built on. In the way that some long-married people come not only to depend on one another as their lives twine but actually to resemble one another, it is impossible to unpick this or that thread of a longstanding relationship of land-and-people without damaging one or the other of them.

It is also true that, like some other marriages, the relationship can be troubled from within or beset by such tremendous exterior pressures as to drive a land and its people apart. One wonders what will be the final psychic cost of the record numbers of displaced peoples uprooted by war, the actions of unjust government, famine or any of a hundred other compound disasters. And what will be the collective cost to us over time of the increasing numbers of people now voluntarily and habitually disconnected from the places in which they live?

Whatever the place, there is an invitational pressure that it exerts upon those who live there, a teaching that a place holds out for those who would attend to it.

Julian the anchorite has a word to speak in this regard. “Twenty years after the time of the showing (short three months) I received inner teaching, as I shall say”. By this time Julian would have known the character and contour of every stick and stone in her anchorite cell, and become familiar with every sensory element within and without, from the sound of mice in the walls of her cell to the sounds of the parish church, and of the people and traders’ drays as they made their way to market. All these familiar elements helped “place” Julian and ground her, at one and the same time the sign, part, and parcel of her belonging among and alongside others, her “even Christians”.

Such specific stability forms a kind of contextual stethoscope, allowing the attention to be trained all the more deeply on the movement of the Spirit of God beneath and behind the surface of physical place and time. So Julian reports, as she tells us in what that inner teaching consisted: *"It is right for thee to take heed to all the qualities and conditions that were shown in the illustration even though thou thinkest that they are obscure and uninteresting to your sight."* We can take this as a map, and a *modus operandi*. Once the outer eye and ear learn the habit of observing and hearing, the inner senses are the more able to follow suit.

That which forms people into hearers and lovers of God as monks and nuns is the living of the monastic life itself — the actual day by day engagement with solitude and community, silence and speech, prayer and work, activity and rest, with all its inner and outer challenges and lessons, repeated over a lifetime. And the corollary to this is that the formative monastic life is itself inevitably shaped by the particular conditions that comprise its context in time and space. The very characteristics of the place in which the monastic life is lived have a great deal to do with the subsequent form the life itself may take.

When most truly, unselfconsciously itself, the monastic life has been understood to be prophetic. The peculiar mix of solitude and community life engenders a significant body of wisdom relevant to a diversity of time and circumstance, and over the centuries people have approached the life simply in order to ask for a word from its store. But there are still more numerous monks and nuns who do not speak in publicly accessible ways. Do they also have a prophetic word for the world? In a time when mobility is the norm, in and of itself a positive value, it is, perhaps, that the lives of long-serving and rather stationary monks and nuns are themselves the eloquent and prophetic word. Their lives must, and do, speak for them, a word of graceful invitation especially for ones like us just starting out on a similar path.

But that leads to a more fundamental question: what, in the first place, would possess a person to choose to tie themselves to one particular place and people for as long as their lives shall last, and that by the most serious of vows?

The shortest, most direct answer possible is "for the sheer delight of the thing and of the divine invitation to it".

This kind of possession has the most unassailable of precedents. Evangelists Matthew and Luke nail down the matter of particularity with great precision. So Matthew begins, "The genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham" and proceeds to list by name all forty-two generations between Abraham and Jesus. Luke takes a more spatial approach, but the intent is the same. "In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanius tetrarch of Abilene — during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of the Lord came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness ... "As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, 'A voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.' "

God's delight in materiality in general and humanity in particular is such that it was not enough merely to be nearby, like someone looking at babies through the window of a neonatal unit, unable to get any closer. The measure of God's delight would be filled only when God could come among his creatures to be with us as us, himself becoming one of those babies in the crib. In this movement there is no hedging of bets, but it is all-in from beginning to end.

Thus the man Jesus, containing in himself all created things, all particularities whether in heaven or on earth, was and is himself immutably woven into the human fabric among a particular

people, in a particular place at a particular time. And this taking on of particularity is not terminal, but all in aid of a universality that encompasses everything, is accessible to everyone through all time, and leaves out nothing.

Many Benedictine saints have been described with the appellation "lovers of the place, lovers of the Rule, lovers of God" — the paradigm of the Incarnation is why there need be no contradiction in, or competition between these terms. These monks and nuns went about with hearts and minds united with Christ, and feet firmly planted on the ground. Nor for that matter is there any contradiction in the lives of Christians such as Saint Teresa of Calcutta and Blessed Dorothy Day, serving Jesus in the people of God, or (among many others) Augustinian monk Gregor Mendel, excelling in the study of the natural world.

Julian gets the last word on the nature and importance of place, from chapter five of the *Revelations of Divine Love*:

> Also in this revelation He showed a little thing, the size of an hazel nut in the palm of my hand, and it was as round

as a ball. I looked at it with the eye of my understanding and thought: "What can this be?" And it was generally answered thus: "It is all that is made."

I marveled how it could continue, because it seemed to me it could suddenly have sunk into nothingness because of its littleness. And I was answered in my understanding: "It continueth and always shall, because God loveth it; and in this way everything hath its being by the love of God."

Why Pray?

Brenda Weems ObJN

Originally given as a talk for a parish Quiet Day

Part I

That prayer is a serious part of Christian commitment should be taken for granted. But I would like to look more closely at why we do so, what it can do, and some of the ways we can assist or thwart it.

Perhaps the greatest problem with talking about prayer is that I am acutely aware of my own struggles, my own weaknesses, and that I can only speak from where I am at this time in my own journey. Ten years from now I may need to say something different, as prayer is a life-long journey and is always growing as our consciousness and awareness of God grows.

Another difficulty about daring to talk to other souls about God is that I am also aware that God is always breaking God's own rules to get to a soul, to change the situation, to transform the event. Walter Brueggemann, who has given his whole life to understanding the Hebrew Scriptures, says the only consistent pattern he could find in the way God works with God's people is that there *is* no pattern, there is *no single* image of God in the Bible.

So I am left with the pattern of Christ Jesus, fully human, fully Divine. Simply put … Jesus prayed! Although Jesus at twelve years-old astonished the temple teachers with his amazing questions and answers, he disappears after that in the Scriptures in some kind of

hidden life until at 30 years old he re-appears in full consciousness and awareness of who he is, with such clarity of mission in the power and confidence of the Holy Spirit proclaiming the GOOD NEWS. I wish we knew what happened in those eighteen years that equipped him to begin his Mission in earnest and in such power. Jesus said "I do what I see my Father doing". It seems to me that he did *only* what he saw the Father doing, thus it was "always done on Earth as it was in Heaven".

It also seems to me that God is the initiator of all prayer but we, like Jesus, are asked to "release it into the world" so that the *word* becomes *flesh*, becomes reality. I am not sure that we fully understand the *power* of our words to curse or to bless, for Life or for Death.

If Jesus is our pattern, then how can you and I get to this full awareness/consciousness of the power of God within us so we can better co-operate with God to help bring into reality what "IS already done in Heaven," to bring all things into the fullness of the Christ? Hebrews 2 says "For He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have one origin, one Essence." 1 Corinthians 3:16 says "do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you". Can anything be more wonderful? St Paul says "neither life nor death can separate us from the love of God." So as Psalm 116:8 says, we can "walk in the presence of the Lord in the land of the living." Is it possible indeed to walk *now* in this wonderful confidence that Jesus had that there is no doubt that our prayers will be in the Father's will?

Yet it seems to me that one cannot talk about prayer without talking about Faith: there is a scarlet thread entwining the two**.** As our faith and trust grow by grace and we stay steadfastly on the path, we will begin to pray in deeper and deeper confidence in Him "in whom we live and breathe and have our being."

A stage [of growth in the spiritual life] is one in which prayers do not often receive a perceptible answer. God always does answer prayer; He always acts in response to prayer; but often we cannot understand His actions. Your confidence in praying ought not to be chiefly confidence that you are going to get what you ask, because that will be confidence as much in your own judgment as in God. It has to be a real surrender to him.

—William Temple

So if God is the initiator of prayer and Holy Spirit knows what I need and "prays for us with deep groanings"... why pray? It seems to me then that there needs to be a response to this "groaning of the Holy Spirit within us". Archbishop Rowan Williams in his book *Being Christian* says that the theological teacher Origen answered that question as far back as the 2nd century: "God knows of course what we are going to say and do, but God has decided that he will work out his purpose *through* what we decide to say and do. So if it is God's will to bring something about, some change for the better of the world, God has chosen that our prayer is going to be part of a set of causes that makes it happen." Therefore, Rowan Williams says, we had better get on with it as our prayers are part of God's overall purpose for the situation in which God is going to work.

What an awesome responsibility we have been given!

But "What about unanswered prayer"? Edward Hayes, a retired priest, noted that CS Lewis said he was grateful that God had not answered all of his prayers, as he later saw how disastrous his life would have been if God had answered some of his petitions. So it seems to me that this pivotal *awareness* of God's benevolent presence and wisdom, and *trust* in Him, that He is doing the best thing for us, is necessary in our life of prayer.

Why pray? Why breathe? Prayer is the "breathing of our souls". I cannot imagine a life without prayer. But although prayer may start more selfishly, over the many years of intentional surrender and loving discipline and training under Holy Spirit, as one's heart is opened to the divine heart, we become *more attentive* to the guidance of Holy Spirit and prayer enlarges to embrace all of God's creation, to weep and intercede for what is picked up from the Heartbeat of God. I have also come to value that inner discomfort given by the Spirit when I am "off course" for this is what gives me HOPE. Prayer unclogs the spigot so that *living water* can flow into the world.

Fr Thomas Keating, a leader of the Contemplative Prayer movement, says "God may be preparing a great awakening for the world, if … IF…God can find enough people to co-operate in this mysterious plan." So let us have the courage and steadfastness to press on and press in to this evolution of consciousness to which Jesus invites us.

Part II

If this awareness/ consciousness of God is so pivotal to our prayer life, "Is there anything we humans can do to co-operate in this Grace?" Here again I can only speak from my own journey into prayer.

So here are a few aids in the journey of prayer: There are many, including journaling, and always**,** walking humbly before God, but I will talk mainly about two:

1. Prayer as a Rule of Life:

Until we have established a *regular practice of prayer,* our unavailability/inattention to God can hinder our growth in this area. Even though I was passionately committed to a spiritual journey I had an undisciplined prayer life, which meant I just went with my own desires and pleasures in my prayer life. Becoming an Oblate fifteen years ago was part of God's way of dealing with my strong self-will. I now could not "do my own thing" but was committed by a Rule of Life to praying the Divine Office twice a day, with daily contemplative prayer, as well as sacramental worship weekly. I would like to tell you it was easy but I went "kicking and screaming" to such discipline…. I am a "go with the flow" Freedom child, yet I have finally, by grace, settled *into* a Rule of Life, just as the Daughters of the King have a rule of their own.

Lest you cringe at the idea of "have to's or legalism", I am here to tell you it has become "my safety net". I still procrastinate and often don't feel like doing it. But *because* of the Rule and of my vows I "show up" and have come to believe that in this at times very dry prayers, it may even be more of a love gift to God because it seems to me I often am not "getting anything out of it." The Holy Spirit can more easily bring to fruition what we have "put in" and my daily YES in prayer has softened my self-will.

And in case you are sighing with relief that you don't have strict vows to keep, *please re-read our Baptismal vows* we say at the Easter Vigil

and renew at each Baptism in the Church. We have all promised, with God's help, "to continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and *in the prayers*, to persevere in resisting evil, to repent when needed, to proclaim by word and example the Good News, to seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves, to strive for justice and peace among all people, and to respect the dignity of every human being." A Rule of Life in itself! Sometimes the struggles we have in prayer can help us locate the precise places where we may be resisting grace in hidden ways.

2. Prayer as divine therapy:

Few of us can get through life without some wounds, some scars, it is part of our journey and I might even dare suggest, our transformation. Our Divine therapist therefore invites us to sit at His feet in silence and *allow*, *consent*, to His working within us — which may not be easy, but is so necessary. This form of prayer is called by many names: centering prayer, contemplative prayer, prayer of silence…. Regardless of the name it IS Divine therapy, a place where God can minister to us. Contemplative prayer can be understood simply as being present to God as completely as we are able as God is totally and constantly present with and to us. The Holy Spirit becomes the therapist and not only heals our repressed wounds but brings us into true self-awareness, a first step into full "transformation into the Image of Christ Jesus", and as Rowan Williams says: "Our vision is clarified, our actions are gradually disciplined, the Divine Life slowly transforms us." For me personally this form of prayer, so quiet and hidden, has been the most transformative in my prayer journey.

Now for some possible hindrances to our growth in our journey in prayer. The main ones that come to me are:

1. Lack of trust that I am heard and loved.

2. Unforgiveness; holding onto grudges:

   Jesus did show us that pattern in his words on the Cross, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." Jesus clearly understood their "blindness." Often we have to creep and crawl towards forgiveness, often it can be a battle, especially when there is *betrayal* which Jesus Himself experienced…. Yet dear brothers and sisters, creep and crawl for as long as is necessary but don't stop as in the end it will be your freedom. Let us forgive as our Father forgives us, it is all part of our transformation into wholeness. Bitterness clogs up our own soul and hinders the flowing of the Spirit. Forgiveness is a *choice* and not a feeling and God will honor that choice, regardless of what we feel.

3. Laziness or indifference:

   Not devoting time as one would/should as to any important relationship or not committing one's attention when there. This is where my Rule of Life helps. As much as I love books, at some point I have to stop reading about other people's prayer lives and jump into the journey of prayer myself.

4. Negativity:

   Myles Munroe says in his book *Understanding the Purpose and Power of Prayer*: "There is positive faith and there is negative faith… both come by the same means … by what we listen to and believe.... If you listen to good teaching for one hour and then negative talk for two hours, we are going to have faith for the negative." I believe we are like midwives to each other, encouraging the birth of whatever new thing God is doing in each other's lives. So let us surround ourselves with kin-souls who "treasure our becoming" and encourage us in the faith. I know that I can use "arrow prayers" to counter any negativity I hear, or that it helps to silently praise God if I hear gossiping or someone cursing God.

5. Wanting to see immediate results: Impatience, lack of trust

   This stems from the belief that prayer must be a certain way and have certain felt effects especially within a certain amount of time. We have to learn to leave our prayers with God and trust His timing and purpose.

And now as St Paul says, "let me show you a better way". As forgiveness is a choice and not a feeling so also, I believe, is Love.

Prayer as Love:

As God is love and we "abide in Him", any time we break the Law of Love we cause a dis-harmony in our soul and body. "Love covers a multitude of sins" and is a *simple* way of praying. One of my closest moments to Christ was when I worked in the ER as a nurse and an old, very dirty, smelly homeless man came in with an injury to his very very dirty feet. The Doctor wanted his feet washed and humanly no one wanted to do it … I didn't either but I stopped and prayed for the gift of God-Love at that moment and offered to do it. I can only tell you that as I started in Faith alone, I felt I was washing the feet of Christ and was filled with an unbelievable sweetness of spirit.

1 Cor: 14 says *"Let ALL things that you do be done in Love*". I began to understand that all things are prayer if done intentionally and for the Love of Christ. Therefore I began to see *one* way it is possible as St Paul says "To pray without ceasing". There are so many opportunities to pray as love during our days as we begin to *see* more and more with Christ's eyes and compassion … to choose to be with people *where they are* in their pain, frustration, misunderstanding, need ... even small actions, little gifts of love offered for Love's sake. Thus our soul begins to "breathe" naturally and simply, sometimes even unaware we are praying. Prayer becomes "the breathing of our soul." One of the desert fathers said: Pure prayer is when you no longer know you are praying (at the point of spiritual maturity when all concern for self is gone).

"If I could love like you, I could heal like you" prays a character in one of Graham Greene's novels. Julian of Norwich says that it *is* "ignorance of love that hinders God's lovers, for Love makes Power and Wisdom submissive to us" so that "we may be one-ed to the Vision and the contemplation of Him to whom we Pray". My dear brothers and sisters, may we allow the Risen Lord to live fully within us in His resurrection power, wisdom and love. Blessed be God!

Community Notes

You may notice the new address on the back of this issue. Have we moved? If all goes as planned by the time this is mailed, yes!

It has been something of a whirlwind for us this year. Things have happened much faster than we could ever have anticipated, and by the time you receive this we hope to be beginning to settle in and unpack boxes. We are also happy to say a good buyer has been found for the property in Waukesha, one of the things that has expedited our move, and hope to tell you more about them in our next issue. As noted earlier, we acquired the new property at the end of July. With much help from friends, moving began in earnest in the first week of August, with work also being done on the floors of the house. We have included several pictures in this issue from those first trips. The land is over a hundred acres and adjoins the Nicolet National Forest (yes, there are bears and wolves — and *many* cabins). Once we have settled in we will reopen Julian Shop and, as soon as possible, get work started on a guesthouse. We are struggling a little with the extra expenses during our relocation, so any additional help you can send would be enormously appreciated.

Despite the Forest, bears, and cabins, we are not as remote as it might sound. The nearest large town is in a farming community only 30 minutes away, and we are just a mile from a major highway. It is true that compared to southern Wisconsin it is farther from major metropolitan areas — and it is much more quiet. We do plan to build a monastery in the future; for now we are making one of the beautiful house on

the property. Already ADA compliant, the house even has an elevator. There are fruit trees, much southern exposure, and 65 acres of forest. Exactly what name our new home will have is still up in the air; we are waiting on the Spirit, and a little more time on the premises.

We have been given so many gifts in this transition and one remarkable one has been the book of the Gospels of the St John's Bible, which is like a keynote for our new monastery. Another remarkable gift has been the assistance of our Oblate Scott Moseley and his wife Holly in Waukesha in the past few years — helping with groundskeeping, repairs, innumerable errands, and even bread. We will certainly miss Waukesha a great deal, including all the friends we have made in southern Wisconsin. They are our greatest 'regrets' in relocating.

Two big trips were also taken this summer. Mthr Hilary made a special trip to the UK to visit our Associates and Oblates in that country, and in July, much closer to home, Sr Therese attended the Monastic Institute at St John's Abbey in Collegeville MN. This second trip gave us many new monastic contacts and is one we hope to repeat often in the future. Smaller trips closer to home included an outing to a Brewer's baseball game for Br Barnabas, and a visit from his family.

Last but not least, Fr John-Julian's latest books from Paraclete Press, *The Complete Cloud of Unknowing* and *Eyes Have I That See*, were published this spring and are available in stores and from the publisher.

Julian's Notebook and the Book Note will return this winter.

Clockwise from top left: At White Lake, eight miles from the house • An informal ceilidh (at a B&B) with our Oblate KC Burton and her husband John, who helped us on the first trip • The chapel, on the first day • The back of the house from the woods

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