

The lecture series, *“Listening to Other Voices,”* is an attempt by the Benedictine Monks of Glastonbury Abbey to share their spiritual search for God with friends and visitors to the abbey. In doing so, the monks continue to live the fifteen hundred year tradition of Saint benedict (480-547) and the monastic movement which followed from his inspiration. For centuries, Benedictine monasteries have been shelters for people in stormy times. They have offered a stable place for people yearning for God, for meaning, for community.

Today, the monks of Hingham continue that tradition. Since 1954 this small community of monks has reached out to thousands of people each year who come for retreats, workshops, conferences, and various social events which bring a sense of community to a people searching for meaning and belonging. Most important to the monks is a life of prayer and reflection. Catholic and non-Catholic alike are welcome to join the monks in Common Prayer which takes place in the Church five times daily. To all visitors, the Benedictine tradition proclaims PAX, peace and invites you to this special place.

[www.glastonburyabbey.org](http://www.glastonburyabbey.org)

Questions? Please call 781-749-2155 x300

### Friends of the Series

Please consider becoming a Friend of the Series this year. Three categories are offered:

**Friends:** Donations of \$100 to \$250 to support the cost of maintaining the program.

**Patrons:** Donations of \$251 to \$499 to help defray the travel expenses of our speakers.

**Sponsors:** Donations of \$500 or more to offset the honorarium for a given speaker.

You may mail your donation to:  
*Listening to Other Voices*  
Glastonbury Abbey  
16 Hull St. Hingham, MA 02043

**The Benedictine Monks of Glastonbury Abbey offer this yearly series as part of their ongoing commitment to interreligious dialogue.**

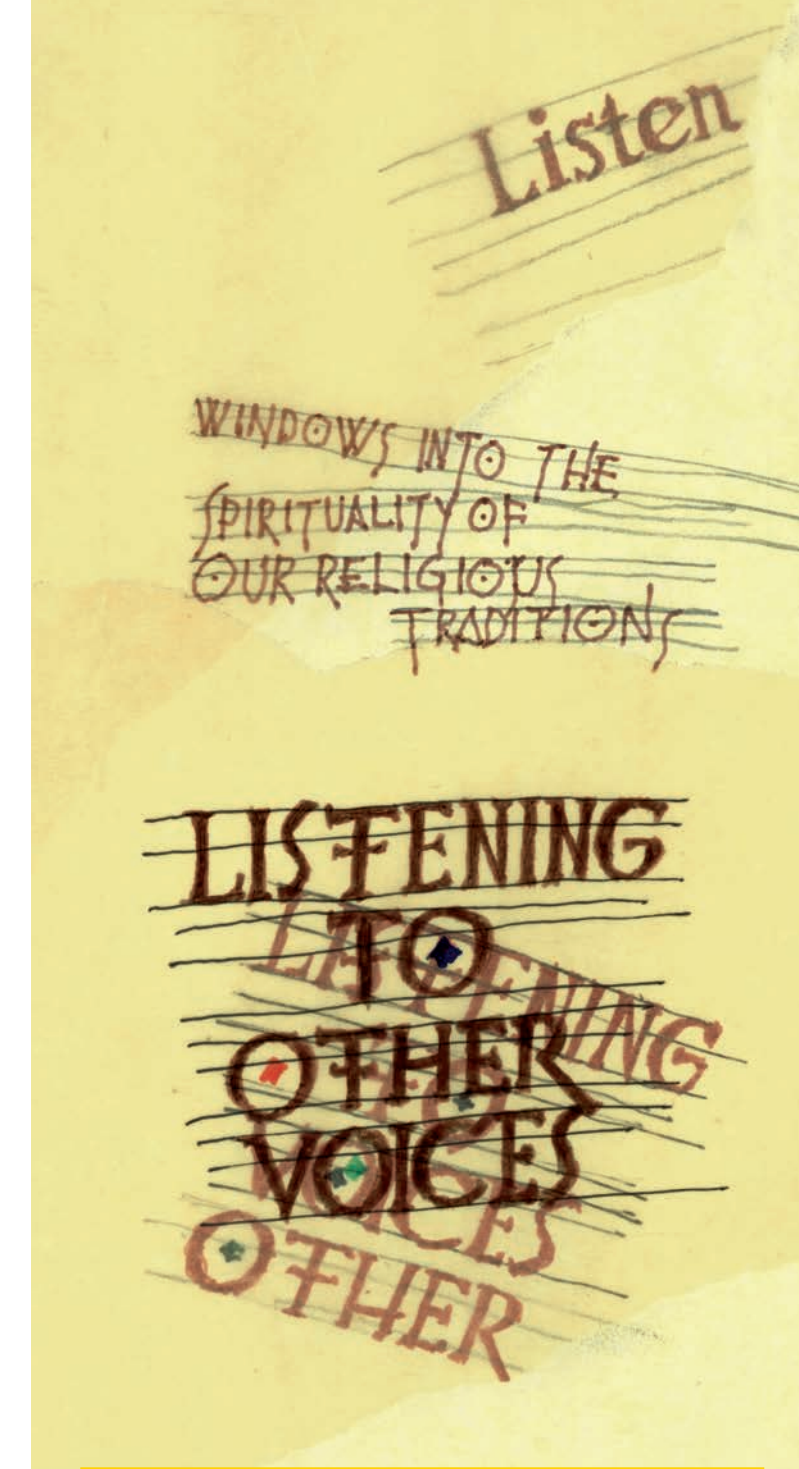
**Events take place at the Morcone Conference Center, 16 Hull Street, Hingham, MA. Thursday evenings at 7:15 pm.**

**Please check our website for the latest update for each lecture at [www.glastonburyabbey.org](http://www.glastonburyabbey.org)**

**Events are available on Zoom  
Registration is required for all presentations**

**The lectures are free. Donations are gratefully accepted.**

Glastonbury Abbey  
Benedictine Monks  
16 Hull Street  
Hingham, Massachusetts 02043



**The Glastonbury Interfaith Lecture Series**  
*“Does Prayer Matter?”*  
*Faith Perspectives”*  
2024-2025

## From Father Timothy Joyce OSB

From the beginning of our Glastonbury Inter-faith Lecture series, we have been blessed to hear the experiences of people from different traditions. We have been enriched to hear the faith and spiritual ways of many religious beliefs. This gives us a better appreciation of our world as created by our Spirit-Creator. But it also, perhaps unexpectedly, brought us deeper insights into our own religious tradition as we see how others have practiced or believed in the same basic realities as we do ourselves even if expressed differently.

This year we have an extremely rich and diverse group of six lecturers to explore prayer in people’s lives. Does prayer really matter? Can we find insights into our own prayer life? We begin in October with Christian Wiman from Yale, poet, master of literature, spiritual seer into the spiritual journey. He has a penetrating mind that explores poetry, the language of faith, and what it means to be a Christian intellectual in a secular culture. He will speak on “The Days We Cannot Pray: Poetry, Prayer and Other Forms of Listening.” In November we will once again, after a few years hiatus, host a Hindu practitioner. We welcome Swami Tyagananda, Hindu Chaplain at MIT and Harvard Universities. Since his original call in India, he has been involved in five monasteries and has translated and edited ten books. These include *Monasticism: Ideals and Traditions; The Key to a Meaningful Life; and The Essence of the Gita*. Getting past the Christmas holidays and mid-winter, our series meets on January 16th. Rev. Dr. Kirk Byron Jones is a native of New Orleans and is a lively speaker on the rich Black tradition of the South. He has said, “I believe we were all born to play and soar, to experience amazing joy and achievement in every dimension of life”. He will speak on our daily spiritual life and transformation. His title is “Prayer as Soul Talk.”

On February 20th, Omer Bajwa, Chaplain and Lecturer at Yale Divinity School, will speak on “Conversing with God: an Islamic Approach to Ritual Prayer”. He is known for his wisdom, humor and practicality and he will open for our understanding the growing attraction of the Muslim ways of prayer and religion. For our Spring session on March 20th, we will hear Sister Kathleen Deignan, a multi-talented teacher of mysticism, poetry, music and prayer. She is emerita Director of the Iona University Spirituality Institute and also the Director of the Thomas Merton Institute. Among her published works are those on Thomas Merton and Thomas Berry. Merton, known for his theological and social views, will be discussed for his ecological wisdom.

Our season will come to a dramatic conclusion of April 24th when two Jewish Cantors, Rosalie Will and Ellen Dreskin, will come together to give “A Musical Perspective on the Significance of Prayer.” Come and join them for an evening of music, prayer and communal singing. This Jewish tradition is the heritage of all of us!

What a jam-packed program, a great learning experience, a time to deepen our appreciation of others. Thank goodness there will be time between each program to assimilate and perhaps read more about what we shall hear.

### Program Notes:

This year, the Committee expects all our programs to be in person at the Morcone Center. We will continue to present the hybrid model, offering the online option as well as the dynamic in person experience of meeting and engaging with the presenter. **All programs begin at 7:15**

**Please Note: Online registration is required for ALL lectures. Please check the Abbey website for the latest update for each lecture.**

[www.glastonburyabbey.org](http://www.glastonburyabbey.org)

# LISTENING TO OTHER VOICES: DOES PRAYER MATTER? FAITH PERSPECTIVES

**October 17, 2024** – *The Days We Cannot Pray: Poetry, Prayer, and Other Forms of Listening*

## Christian Wiman

In the preface to his book, *My Bright Abyss*, Christian Wiman writes, “I wanted to write a book that might help someone who is at once as confused and certain about the source of life and consciousness as I am.” Wiman has spent a lifetime amidst poetry and prose, gathering thoughts from the known and lesser known as he weaves his way through despair, hope, revelation and back again. His grasp of literature is overwhelming. His thoughtful approach to the joys, struggles, highs and lows of life and faith is awe inspiring. Throughout his writings are deep questions, duality, explorations, and honesty. In a lecture at Wheaton College, Wiman quotes St Anthony of the Desert, “A true prayer is one you do not understand.” Join us for an evening of questions, inquiry, and words from the poet.

From his poem “Prayer,” Wiman ends with  
“even now,  
my prayer  
is that a mind blurred  
by anxiety or despair  
might find here  
a trace of peace.”

Christian Wiman is the author, editor, or translator of more than a dozen books of poetry and prose, including two memoirs, *My Bright Abyss: Meditation of a Modern Believer* and *He Held Radical Light: The Art of Faith, the Faith of Art; Every Riven Thing*, winner of the Ambassador Book Award; *Once in the West*, a National Book Critics Circle Award finalist; and *Survival Is a Style*—all published by FSG. His latest book, *Zero At The Bone: Fifty Entries Against Despair* was published in 2023. Christian Wiman, the former editor of Poetry magazine, now currently serves as Professor of the Practice of Religion and Literature at Yale University.

**November 21, 2024** – *Prayer as a Spiritual Discipline*

## Swami Tyagananda

Satsang is a Sanskrit term that refers to a gathering of people with similar interests, especially those on a spiritual path. In a Satsang entitled “*Improve, Change, Pray*,” Swami Tyagananda shared that the spiritual life is a life lived moment to moment, a life that is lived with awareness, it is about transformation. His presentations weave ancient teachings with contemporary life circumstances, resulting in a shared and relevant deep wisdom. In this series, Swami Tyagananda will speak on the subject of prayer, which he says is the most powerful practice in our lives.

Swami Tyagananda is a Hindu monk of the Ramakrishna Order and presently the head of the Vedanta Society in Boston. Currently he is the Hindu chaplain at MIT and Harvard University. He has presented papers at academic conferences, and gives lectures and classes at the Vedanta Society, MIT, Harvard and other colleges in and around Boston.

**January 16, 2025** – *Prayer as Soul Talk: An Enriching Practice for Spiritual Engagement*

## Rev. Dr. Kirk Byron Jones

In his book *Soul Talk: How to Have the Most Important Conversation of All*, Rev. Jones states that, “When you smile for no reason, know something for sure without having learned it, or feel peace amid broken pieces, your soul is manifesting itself. Your soul is your pool of deep wisdom, peace, and joy within. Your soul is the part of you God held last as God released your free flight into the world.” In this series, we look forward to hearing about practices to enable us to engage, enliven, and embrace the conversations we can have with our souls.

Rev. Dr. Kirk Byron Jones is a graduate of Loyola University and Andover Newton Theological School, and holds a Doctor of Ministry degree from Emory University and a Doctor of Philosophy degree from Drew University. A retired pastor of forty years, Dr. Jones now writes and coaches new authors. He serves as guest preacher and teacher at churches, schools and conferences throughout the United States. His writings have been published in various journals, including *The Christian Century, Leadership, Gospel Today, Pulpit Digest*, and *The African American Pulpit*, a quarterly preaching journal he co-founded in 1997. For his past and continuing ministry with seminarians and clergy, Rev. Jones is affectionately referred to as “The Preacher’s Teacher.”

**February 20, 202** – *Conversing With God: An Islamic Approach to Ritual Prayer*

## Chaplain Omer Bajwa

In an article helping Yale students and faculty manage the expectations of Ramadan, Chaplain Bajwa gave this insightful suggestion. “First, try your best to wake up for Suhur (the pre-dawn meal), not only to eat, but to speak with your Lord. Take time to make dua (a prayer of invocation or request), use this time to supplicate to your Lord about all your needs of this world and the next.” This blending of practicality and devotion is perhaps a hallmark of the style of this lively and articulate chaplain. He characterizes his office at Yale as a welcoming place providing a non-anxious presence, and lightly refers to the chaplaincy as a gastronomical ministry that feeds the mind, the body, and the soul and, on a playful note, offers free ice cream! Join us as we learn how Chaplain Bajwa helps facilitate conversations with God.

Chaplain Omer Bajwa serves as Director of Muslim Life in the Chaplain’s Office at Yale University and is a Lecturer at Yale Divinity School. He earned his Graduate Certificate in Islamic Chaplaincy from Hartford Seminary, and he has been engaged in religious service, social activism, interfaith engagement, and educational outreach since 2000. He regularly lectures on these topics around the country, and mentors contemporary Muslims on exploring their intellectual and spiritual lives in today’s world. Omer is a co-editor of the book, “*Mantle of Mercy: Islamic Chaplaincy in North America*” by Templeton Press.

**March 20, 2025** – *Prayer Matters in the Dark Night of Creation: The Ecological Wisdom of Thomas Merton*

## Kathleen Noone Deignan, C.N.D. Ph.D.

Trappist monk Thomas Merton wrote in his journal: “I myself am part of the weather and part of the climate and part of the place ... It is certainly part of my life of prayer.” As a child, Thomas Merton’s first words were those of flowers around his home where he would spend endless hours watching his father paint landscapes in the open air. In his last years at Gethsemani, Merton lived, prayed and wrote while in the forest hermitage. Nature was integral to his life and his awareness of all living things became the basis for his environmental consciousness. Sr. Kathleen edited *When the Trees Say Nothing: Writings on Nature* and in her introduction writes, “Curiously, what remains hidden or obscure in [Merton’s] very public discourse on matters of the sacred is the significance that the natural world played as the ecstatic ground of his own experience of God. But a close reading of his voluminous writings reveals his intimate rapport with and progressive espousal of creation as the body of divinity—at once veiling and unveiling the God he so longed to behold and be held by.” Join us for an in-depth look at prayer and Thomas Merton with this renowned Merton scholar.

Sr. Kathleen Deignan, C.N.D., Ph.D., is Professor of Religious and Environmental Studies at Iona College, where she founded and directs the Iona Spirituality Institute and co-convenes the Thomas Berry Forum for Ecological Dialogue. The President Emerita of the International Thomas Merton Society, she now animates the Merton Contemplative at Iona and sits on the board of the American Teilhard Association. She holds a master’s degree in the History of Christian Spirituality and a doctorate in Historical Theology from Fordham University.

**April 24, 2025** – *Heart of the Matter: A Jewish Musical Perspective on the Significance of Prayer*

## Cantors Rosalie Will and Ellen Dreskin

It has been said that when we sing, we pray twice. Join us for an uplifting evening of music, prayer, and communal singing with Cantors Ellen Dreskin and Rosalie Will. Cantor Will sees music as a conduit for the expression of prayers and/or texts, offering a vehicle that allows them to become more relatable. In a course offering, Cantor Dreskin states, “Reflecting on how music functions in prayer can open our hearts and broaden our perspective on personal prayer practice in a communal setting. What is happening in me when I pray, and how can a variety of musical prayer experiences be of assistance to me on my journey?” Two women, two cantors sharing their voices and hearts.

Cantor Dreskin and Cantor Will are both leaders in communal worship and ritual and bring their collective musical abilities to this presentation. Ellen Dreskin holds an MA in Jewish Communal Service from Brandeis University and has been a Scholar-in-Residence at dozens of congregations across the country. She has served as Cantor/Educator at congregations in both White Plains, N.Y and Cleveland, Ohio.

Cantor Rosalie Will travels as cantor-in-residence, mentors clergy in the field and consults on issues of worship, music, and synagogue transition and change. She is also founder and Executive Director of *Sing Unto God*, and serves as lead consultant for the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) on issues related to music and worship.