

Contemplative Fire Post

July 2015 – no.3



Wisdom on the Way (9th May) “Crossing Thresholds?”

“...Contemplative Fire’s rhythm of life holds within it the invitation and challenge of the Holy Spirit to live and witness with humility in places of the ordinary....we are drawn out of our comfort zone to be at the edge....we find ourselves led through to genuine mutuality and open-heartedness. Be it in justice or compassion...the Spirit illumines and instructs, dismantles barriers and builds bridges.

Nurtured by contemplative practice, silence and solitude become precursors to service....we are drawn to cross the thresholds of culture and experience in order to encounter and proclaim Christ in a new paradigm...this demands some action, invites my involvement and invokes a sense of movement.” (From article by Philip Roderick and Tessa Holland, quoted in the CF Rhythm of Life Resources book)



Hilary Garraway writes:

We reflected on the trefoil and quotes on the balance between contemplation and action. I shared a story I heard from Lawrence Freeman, about two nurses who both gave him a cup of tea when he was in hospital. He described how the act was the same but the experience was quite different, because of the intention behind the act- one just doing her job and rushed and the other offering care and compassion. This related to the YouTube

clip, which Diane Rutter highlighted in an email to the community, entitled “Closing the Compassion Gap.”

(<http://tedxtalks.ted.com/video/Closing-the-Compassion-Gap-Andy>)

We reflected on the following questions:

- What boundaries or thresholds do we cross, or stand at the edge of, as a community?
- In what way do we “engage with wisdom on the boundaries”?
- Are there particular areas of service or areas of challenge that we are being called to as a community?

“Far from being essentially opposed to each other, interior contemplation and external activity are two aspects of the same love of God. But the activity of a contemplative must be born of his contemplation and must resemble it. Everything he does outside of contemplation ought to reflect the luminous tranquillity of his interior life. To this end he will have to look for the same thing in his activity, as he finds in his contemplation – contact and union with God.”

Thomas Merton

“The careful balance between silence and words, withdrawal and involvement, distance and closeness, solitude and community forms the basis of the Christian life....but we often make the results of our work the criteria of our self-esteem....In solitude we discover that being is more important than having, and that we are worth more than the result of our efforts. In solitude we discover that our life is not a possession to be defended but a gift to be shared....When you are able to create a lonely place in the middle of your actions and concerns, your successes and failures slowly can lose some of their power over you. Then your concern for others can be motivated more by their needs than your own. In short: then you can care.” Henri Nouwen

Some Companions' responses:

"To consider how CF is different to other communities, such as Iona or Northumbria (which have mother houses), because we are dispersed and not in one place, where it may be easier to cross a threshold together"

"To consider if we can cross a threshold as a small locality group together"

"To have intention when we leave our stillness and walk out of our house-crossing that physical threshold to be intentional in crossing thresholds in our daily life"

"As we take stillness outwards in our own being, this can encourage others to connect with stillness for themselves"

"Some of us have been drawn to CF to address the balance of activity in our lives, so there may be a hesitancy to engage with that part of the trefoil, for fear that if we start "doing" that we won't know when to stop"

"That the community's values state '*CF seeks to live the mystery of life in Christ by invitation into the spacious stillness of Contemplative prayer and by transforming encounter with the Fire of God's Spirit, which equips us for compassionate living.*' This could imply that we collectively share the learning journey and stillness to then go out individually to cross thresholds".



We then focused on intercessory prayer as one way we can cross thresholds together. I related intercessory prayer to holding both physically and spiritually, holding people or situations in our heart, and that we can focus on this spiritual holding by physically holding objects. We had a time of prayer by silently moving round the room and holding different objects representing different countries and situations, beginning with a collective focus on Nepal.



Sister Rosemary, our Senior Accompanier, writes: "I have had such a beautiful week in Ireland! Here is a link to where I stayed, for your interest: <http://www.holyhill.ie/>

With love and prayers, Rosemary slg"

"Reinventing Organizations" and Contemplative Fire

Philip writes:

We have much to learn from a number of significant contemporary resources, one of which may well be "*Reinventing Organizations*" by Frederic Laloux. The strapline gives a clue to its potential value for us as we seek to build a community of Christ at the edge: "*A Guide to Creating Organizations Inspired by the Next Stage of Human Consciousness.*"

Greatly inspired by Laloux's perspective and that of the twelve organisations he highlights in the book, I wrote to him and he put me in touch with George Por in the UK. George is an academic and mentor and facilitates a Teal Community of Practice (CoP) in London. He invited me to attend the meeting of this newly-forming group on 22nd June. John Watters, an organisational consultant and CF Companion in Brighton, was also a participant in the day, which was held in the extraordinary St Ethelburga's, Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, in Bishopsgate. I was invited to be a case-giver, outlining the CF story and I shared something of our vision, values, practice and evolving structure with a sub-group.



The promise of the shift to organisational design 'inspired by the next stage of human consciousness' is to unleash the power of freedom and creativity. In essence, as the Teal CoP Community Charter puts it: "The core task of the CoP is to 'embody the organisational model we want to see succeeding in the world'. How? By practising what Laloux identifies as the three Teal breakthroughs:

- Self-management - co-ordination of collective action driven by peer relationship rather than by hierarchy
- Wholeness – showing up in our interactions as a whole person, without a professional mask
- Discovering and gradually adopting a purpose larger than our collective self-interest e.g. how we make a larger positive impact on the world than we could separately."

The Laloux invitation that some of us in CF are finding congruent and challenging finds expression in a number of ways, one of which is that suggested by the Teal CoP: "Show up, bring your whole self: pay attention to what has heart and meaning; tell the truth without blame or judgement; be open, rather than attached, to outcomes; sense what needs to emerge and evolve."

As the day progressed, I was reinforced in my sense that we in CF are far from alone in our commitment to life in all its fullness and to life "at the edge". In the mix of our dispersed community, and on the continuum that represents the 'gifts differing' of our Companions on the Way, we are called to discern, celebrate and embody the lineage of paradox - the mutual and the mystical, the engaged and the interior, the prophetic and the personally enriching. Our journey in Christ, in the flow of the Spirit and in creative exchange with other adventurers from all sorts of contexts and cultures, will change us, shape us and equip us.

The discourse platform for "*Reinventing Organizations*" puts it beautifully: "*Let's interact from a place of authenticity, of wonder, of lightness, a place of deep listening to others, and from a place of gratitude for how blessed we are to be part of an interesting collective adventure.*"

<http://www.reinventingorganizations.com/>



**The CF coracle now has a new home
with Companion Susan Fogarty in
North Wales.**

(image not of CF coracle)

News from the Trustees

The Trustees/Core Group met in June at St Alphege Clergy House in London. There are now five Trustees – Paul Arnesen (chair), John March, Françoise Pinteaux-Jones, Elaine Wilkins and Charlotte Wright, with Chris Holmes as Treasurer and Gill Greenwood as Secretary. Recent business has covered safeguarding for vulnerable adults, financial controls, vocation and formation within CF, hearing from Companions in Canada and financing the reprinting of the “Resources to Support Our Rhythm of Life”.

At the meeting in February, Companion Tom Hinds was invited to share his ideas about *Community Leadership* and *Co-Responsibility*. Out of the discussion on a possible *Council of Companions* came some initial actions:

- to seek the views of Companions about how they would wish their voices to be heard within the Community
- to have an Open Forum at the Community Weekend
- to seek Companion involvement, following the Laloux advice process, in organising Wisdom on the Way days for 2016-17, as a possible template for co-responsibility.

Are any Companions’ interested in links with Companions in CF Canada? Four Companions are due to be coming to the Community Weekend in September, staying at Felden Lodge. And are there any Companions who would be interested in helping to redesign the CF website?



St Alphege Clergy House, London
<http://www.franciscans.org.uk/where-we-are/retreat-or-stay/southwark-csf>

And some words about CF Post...

“It is VERY ENCOURAGING to read the Newsletter ... the Whitby Conference sounds full of riches. Good, too, to hear of talks and conferences... So, warm greetings from someone who sits on the very edge of most things! “

“Thanks so much for this - it made for good reading and prompted yet more thoughts about the illusive nature of community, and what actually breathes life into a community.”

“I’ve only just got around to reading the newsletter. My immediate response is one of gratitude. It’s so lovely to have visibility of what is happening in our wider community.”

“Thank you for the CF Post. It really is working for me as a means of being in touch with other members of the community.”

“Jill and Philip would like to thank everyone for their prayers, cards and messages of solidarity and blessing. Our move went very well. Even though we are still surrounded by a certain amount of chaos and boxes, it is good to begin this next phase of the journey. (Our landline number is 01273 275 352).”

Contemplative Fire Community Weekend, 12/13 September 2015

- **PLEASE send booking forms as soon as possible to Gill Greenwood, 16 Graham Court, Graham Road, Sheffield S10 3DX**
- If you are **unable to come to the weekend**, do please let us know by email to Gill, as this helps greatly with overall planning. Thanks.
gillgreenwood@tiscali.co.uk