

Weekend Retreat
16th – 18th Feb 2018
Holland House, Pershore, Worcs

Led by Rae Moyise & Sue Riddell

Beyond these shores



Thank you to those of you who have booked for the weekend retreat - half the places are now filled. Do reply to info@contemplativefire.org as soon as possible to book one of the remaining places.

Welcome to Tina



Francoise Pinteaux-Jones from the Trustees, Ann Worrall from the Hub and Gill Greenwood, CF Administrator, interviewed for the Administrator role in Sheffield in October. The

panel was pleased to offer the role to Martina Towey, who starts on Monday 20th November. Gill is providing Tina with an induction programme and Francoise will be the link with Tina and also Chair of Trustees for the interim.

Tina writes:

I prefer to be known as Tina, as that is what those closest to me call me. I come from a Catholic background and my parents were Irish immigrants who met and settled in Maltby, South Yorkshire, which is where I live. I have 3 grown up children - Clare, Vivienne and John, who are all finding their own way, with advice from me when requested and they no longer live at home.

I believe my best self description is a 'spiritual nomad'. A lot of my prayer time usually results in poetry or other writing as a means of discerning what is going on with me, what God is saying and understanding the world around me. I have a poetry blog where I share some of what I feel I am finding out. I really feel I have been led to this position with Contemplative Fire and that it is the next step for me in my spiritual and work journey. I am looking forward to meeting everyone and doing the best I can to ensure the administration of the Community is run well and effectively.

Future Retreats

Charlotte Wright and Sharon Roberts write:

We would like to invite Companions to offer their ideas about potential leaders, themes and venues for future Contemplative Fire retreats, and to share any experience you may have in retreat leading or helping with retreats, so that we might gain from the shared gifting and insight of everyone in the Community.



Responses and replies should be sent to the administrator (info@contemplativefire.org) who will feed back to the Trustees and the Hub for discussion.

We feel it is important to include Companions in this way, honouring our adopted principle of all Companions sharing responsibility for the Well Being - and Action - of Contemplative Fire.

Welcome to new Friends of Contemplative Fire

A very warm welcome to 7 new Friends of Contemplative Fire:

- Eona Bell from Cambridge
- Caroline Brownlie from Melbourn, south Cambridgeshire
- Janet Clark from High Wycombe
- Ann Smedley from Sheffield
- Carrie Williams from Sheffield
- Richard from Gillingham, Dorset
- John from Windsor



Stained glass Trefoil by Carrie Williams

A Companion's Journey

New Companion Mary Sutton writes:

As part of the CF North meeting in August at Whirlow, I was asked to share with Companions something of my journey towards connecting with Contemplative Fire. This was difficult - at the age of 65, what could I isolate, what would be relevant or even vaguely interesting to my captive audience? In a sense, my whole life has brought me here, to a dispersed community with a shared commitment to quietness, learning and engagement, along with the Central Unknown. This draws me, fits, feels like my truth, my way of being. That Central Unknown is increasing exponentially and rather than being frightening I find it reassuring and safe, though it means that I have become less and less articulate or sure of myself and of what I know or would have confidently shared in my young adulthood and middle age.

The enormous freedom and sense of relief in this present moment is perhaps more readily understood if I share something of my background.

The beginnings were a vicarage upbringing, a theology degree, becoming an RE teacher, serving as a Lay Reader/Minister in the Anglican churches of England, Wales and South Africa. There was much teaching, talking, imparting of knowledge, alongside hints of future direction in being part of the Charismatic movement, a community member at Scargill House (a Christian conference centre run by a community of mostly young people) and marriage to someone from a different background and culture and for whom experience of God is central rather than head knowledge about God.

Later there was a growing appreciation of feminist theology, some work around the possible change in the church if God were conceived of as female, and reading *'Dancing on the Edge'* by Richard Holloway. I became increasingly uncomfortable with church hierarchy and sexism.

Eventually I realised that a natural preference for listening rather than talking might be a good and acceptable thing, rather than a sign of shyness which I had always been told was not ok. I worked with the Acorn Christian Healing Foundation, teaching listening skills, then trained as a counsellor with all that involved in increasing self-awareness and acceptance of others and self. Over time I began to appreciate

that right and wrong, correct and incorrect, orthodoxy and heresy etc are not as clear cut as I had assumed. My 'oughts and shoulds' became less demanding.

While living in the USA, I was introduced to the teaching of Thomas Keating and joined a Centering Prayer group. Along with listening, silence was now becoming a part of my life. Richard Rohr's daily meditations were a revelation and I continue to find them inspiring and challenging. His book, 'Falling Upward' made sense of what I now understand to be the second stage of life, from middle age onwards.



Simplicity and travelling light have become increasingly central, not least because I have moved homes, cities and countries frequently. I've been trying to deepen these two ways of being from the merely practical (not accumulating things), to something in my core/heart/soul. So, on moving to Sheffield I searched (on Google) for a resource or a community that I could both receive from and contribute to and that would hopefully result in further growth in depth and simplicity. I found Contemplative Fire's website and was thrilled to discover that Listening in Threes and Way Beyond Religion groups are an integral part of the community. Here are: space to be (experienced through a facilitated weekly meditation group), Companions for the way, openness, flexibility, along with deep knowing. The place, the time, the people. The flow of life. And all without pressure to perform or to be correct. As the Shaker song says:

*'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be.
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.
When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed,
To turn, turn will be our delight,
Till by turning, turning we come 'round right.*

"True Creativity is the courage to stay in the ambivalence"



Salamanca trinity

Charlotte Wright writes:

Recently Peter and I were invited for supper with our suffragan bishop, Michael Beasley (his predecessor was Bishop Paul Bayes, our former CF bishop-accompanier) and his wife Lizzie. They invited us because they thought we might enjoy meeting Bishop Martin of Linkoping in Sweden. Our curiosity was aroused.

Michael and Lizzie were relaxed and companionable hosts. Michael was informally dressed, but when we entered their sitting room we were met with a row of four 'dog' collars, two of them attached to bishops' purple! My somewhat awed greeting of 'Oh my goodness!' was quickly eased by the warmth of the people we met who shone from behind this ecclesiastical facade.

Bishop Martin had a kind and gentle face and talked about his hobbies of sailing, photography and birds. He spoke of contemplative photography and I was able to share something of Susan Blagden's work with Contemplative Camera. This led on to my sharing more about Contemplative Fire, at the suggestion of Bishop Allen of St Albans, who knew of our 'fresh expression' of church. He seemed keen that both he and Bishop Martin should know more about Contemplative Fire.

It was easy to talk openly and honestly with Martin, as he asked me simply to call him. His gentleness revealed a humility of experience that had gifted in him a depth of wisdom by which he had been helped and had learnt to live. I spoke with him about my understanding of our Contemplative Fire journey so far, with our evolution towards shared leadership and our struggles of emergence following Philip's founding leadership and oversight.

Martin recognised that our path was not an easy one, but that it could be a very rewarding one. He reflected that when he had major decisions to make, after a time of discussion, he and his colleagues would withdraw for a short period of retreat, for being and prayer. He observed that this, as a preliminary to decision making, allowed the

necessary space, even though at times it was an uncomfortable space, for issues to resolve creatively and unhurriedly.

He said he had read 'somewhere' something that had helped him enormously. It was this:

True Creativity is the courage to stay in the ambivalence

It made its home in me as a profound truth, so much so that I want to share it with you as something we might all learn from in our journey together as Contemplative Fire .

Martin went on and shared another insight that again spoke deeply. It was about the importance of the three most significant relationships in one's spiritual life:

My relationship with God

My relationship with the other (human being)

My relationship with myself.

I thought of this 'trinity' of relationship in terms of the trefoil and my rhythm of life. I wonder how it might help me towards a more balanced and healthier interaction in my relationships within all of Life. I don't think Bishop Martin was aware of the pearls of wisdom he presented me with. I offer them to you for your own reflection with my grateful thanks to him.

CF Post - September

"Thanks Gill, what a wonderful edition! Contemplative Fire is vibrant."

In the still watches of the night

Church Times

03 NOVEMBER 2017

Philip Roderick describes a revival of the practice of unceasing prayer



Credit: IGOR KIREEV/ALAMY

DOWN through the centuries, those seeking to embody more comprehensively Jesus's way of love have yearned to make a fuller response to St Paul's invitation. I believe that a new generation of Christ's followers (of whatever age and background) are being prompted to open themselves to the equipping of the Spirit. God longs for people of faith, hope, and love to step forward and make a commitment to learning both ancient and new ways in which to practise prayer without ceasing — prayer at the heart of life.

It is this belief that undergirds the particular adventure and ministry of Hidden Houses of Prayer, which is awakening interest and quiet involvement in the UK, and, gradually, in different parts of the world. It seeks not only to develop the practice of unceasing prayer, but also to encourage conversation about practices of prayer, and the telling of spiritual stories woven from the fabric of everyday living.

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2017/3-november/faith/faith-features/in-the-still-watches-of-the-night>

