

## Contemplative Fire Post

April 2018 – no.30

**Weekend at Mount St Bernard Abbey  
9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> March**



### Notes from Abbot Erik's talk on "Community"

Abbot Erik wanted to address the reasons behind a Christian community. We were in mid-Lent, bringing thoughts of the Exodus narrative and the forming of the people. The individuals who came out of Egypt – the 12 tribes and others, a bit of a rabble! – turned into a nation of people through the experience of the time in the wilderness. He spoke of the redemptive dimension, how something was healed. The community we form in the church – ecclesia – "coming together" - is a redemptive process and experience. Atomised, individualised people were "redeemed" in a social group held together by God's forgiveness, mercy, promise, covenant.

So what needs to be healed? What do we need to be saved from?

Genesis 3 is about the serpent, the fruit of the tree of knowledge, exposure, vulnerability, fear, trust betrayed. In Paul's letter to the Romans 5, this story of disobedience, sin, transgression, mortality, death, could be healed in Christ. The Fall was a tragic missing of the point, setting us on a course of pain, hardship and solitude – the lament of Eve and Adam was isolation, solitude, loneliness – a key wound which could be healed by community.

### The Monastic Tradition

A way of life, a long haul in the same place with the same people...!



*"It is ill to quarrel in a small boat on a long journey"* (Cuthbert Butler, Benedictine Abbot, Downside Abbey) – we need to find remedies. The "remedies" come from Benedict's Rule – people come to monasteries as "sinners" and the monastic life helps them back on course. The Rule is an instrument that shows you – like a ruler – the shortest way from A, estrangement, to B, communion with God. The rule saves me from veering off course. The Psalms speak a lot about feet! Finding the right road (Exodus narrative) and not falling into ditches. We walk together, guiding, sustaining each other, picking one another up.

By sharing the predicament, the contagion of loneliness is overcome in the building of community.



So – Christian community is a community of "sick" people seeking healing.

- Community as battlefield...
- Exasperations allow me to be merciful!
- Community lifts me up when I fall.
- Seeking and giving forgiveness.
- "A brother who helps a brother is a strong tower" (Proverbs)
- Encourage, exhort, console, obey and reverence one another as the image of God before me.

*Gill Greenwood & Sharon Roberts*

*Abbot Erik writes:*

*"I can quite see that my reading of the Fall may have been surprising, perhaps even shocking, to some, but it is rooted in a venerable tradition - and precisely because this question has so often*

*been the cause of controversy, I find it can be helpful to set out from a more ancient perspective, untouched by more closely delimiting views that emerged much, much later. If fruitful exchange came of it, I am happy".*  
(Fuller notes of Abbot Erik's talk available from [gillgreenwood@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:gillgreenwood@tiscali.co.uk))

## Flame to Flame Community Art

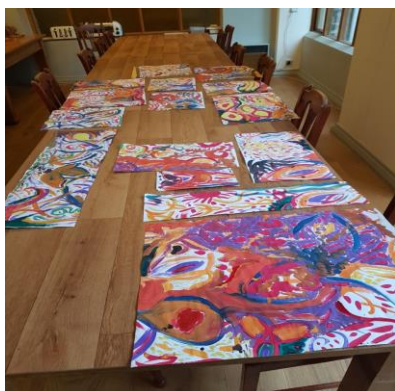


*Diane Rutter writes:*

We are each a flame within Contemplative Fire - what happens when our flames interact? During our March Community Fellowship Weekend at Mount St Bernard Abbey, Companions surrendered ourselves into Charlotte Wright's hands to create community art. The theme was "flame to flame".

Charlotte gave us some large "practice sheets", and a board, and provided pots of paints, brushes and affirmation. We were encouraged to "play", making our marks on the sheets and on the board.

Some of us liked the "practice sheets" so much that we cut them into chunks, and took colourful squares and rectangles away with us, carrying our community creation into our many and varied lives. We gave one to the Abbey's Guestmaster with our thanks for their generosity towards us all.



Charlotte Wright reflected:  
*I have never done that with so many people before and it is always an adventure as we start out, (I won't use the word risk!), because we just don't know where it will lead or how it will turn out. I find the activity, however simple and childlike (perhaps the better for being so) has much to tell us about community.*

*I think it shows a genuine act of trust in each other as we mark-make alongside one another, the less confident with the more self-assured. It can be difficult for those who start the painting and who then move aside to allow others to mark-make after them, often on top of the marks they have previously made, often obscuring them as the layers of colour, the lights and darks, the rhythm and flow of shapes and pattern build until the painting is finished. But it is precisely the layers and what lies underneath them that give the painting foundation, solidity and energy. We worked to the edges. We allowed the contrast of darker colours to energise the lighter, brighter colours. We worked together. We were playful.*



Caroline Newton reflected:

*It was a completely unique experience for me, and although the actual practice of it almost seemed a bit mundane, ultimately when I stood back and saw what we'd created the results were amazing!! I have no idea how that hotch potch of people, often on top of each other with each focusing on a small area, managed to create such a unique and beautiful final picture.*

The main painting is available for Companions to have at different upcoming events. Caroline has been enjoying it in her home, and took it to Saltmarsh for the Pilgrimage/Hub day there on 28<sup>th</sup> April, where it has been offered a home by Catherine and Simon Musgrave. If anyone who would like to have it on loan for a while, please let Caroline know.

Here are some images of what emerged –

[https://1drv.ms/a/s!AoUP26lfJ2\\_hX7v6INO3q9v1VjO](https://1drv.ms/a/s!AoUP26lfJ2_hX7v6INO3q9v1VjO)

## Hopes and dreams for CF....

### How the original vision for CF might inform our future

*Philip Roderick's reflections*

Each one of us is different; our life experience and core stories vary hugely. In our bodies, minds and spirits, each one of us carries memories and meaning, wounds and well-being, penitence and possibility. Contemplative Fire rejoices in the variety of ways there are of hearing, seeing and awakening to the intricacy and pattern of the spiritual path.

Words and concepts, symbols and practices are important, but words and concepts, symbols and practices can lose their fragrance and savour and instead, divide and objectify, closing down real interchange and growth. We are committed to respect difference, to work to keep words and interpretations of words open, invitational, sensitive and restorative.

Even as we read this, we are poised at the intersection points of past, present and future. Each of us will find ourselves re-sourced by different things at different times of our life, in the seasons of our interior pilgrimage. As you reflect upon the dispersed community we call Contemplative Fire, here for your consideration are sixteen pause points that present themselves to me and which may trigger your own "mapping" of the unfolding journey.

#### **-The call of Christ**

#### **-Our response**

#### **-Contemplative discipleship**

#### **-The Trinity**

#### **-The invitation by mainstream Church**

#### **-Nurturance and Oversight**

#### **-The crucial role in the emergence and growth of Contemplative Fire played by networks of support and common interest**

#### **-The Contemplative Fire community and its rhythm of life is vital**

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#### **-Gatherings**

#### **-The richness of Lectio Divina's four steps**

#### **-Contemplative-apostolic charism**

#### **-Nature**

#### **-Music**

#### **-The creative arts**

#### **-Body prayer**

*(Full version available from Tina at [info@contemplativefire.org.uk](mailto:info@contemplativefire.org.uk))*

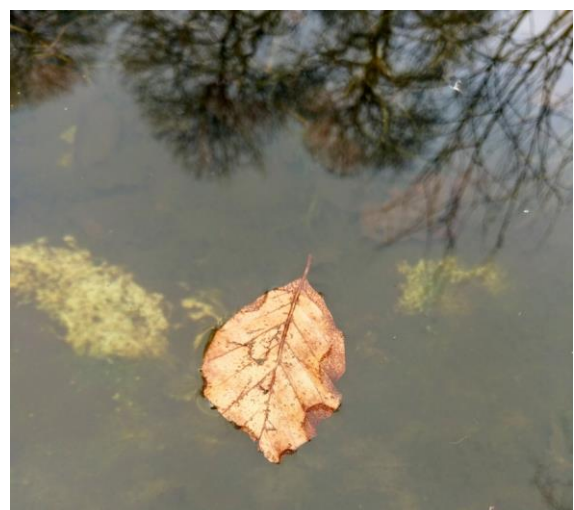
See related articles published primarily in the **Ancient Faith, Future Mission** series by Canterbury Press over the past ten years:

*Doorways to the Sacred: Developing Sacramentality in Fresh Expressions of Church, 2017* "In at the Deep End: Transforming Initiation" by Susan Blagden and Philip Roderick

*New Monasticism as Fresh Expression of Church, 2010* "Connected Solitude: Re-Imagining the Skete" by Philip Roderick and "A Rhythm of Life: Critical Reflections" by Tessa Holland

*Fresh Expressions in the Sacramental Tradition, 2009* "Contemplative Fire: Creating a Community of Christ at the Edge" by Philip Roderick and Tessa Holland

*Evaluating Fresh Expressions: explorations in emerging church, 2008* "Dynamic Tradition: Fuelling the Fire" by Philip D Roderick.



**Beginners** by Denise Levertov 1923 – 1997,  
American Poet (Quoted in *Raven's Bread: Food  
for Those in Solitude* Vol 22 No 1, Feb 2018)

*'From too much love of living,  
Hope and desire set free,  
Even the weariest river  
Winds somewhere to the sea—'*

But we have only begun  
to love the earth.  
We have only begun  
to imagine the fullness of life.

How could we tire of hope?  
—so much is in bud.

How can desire fail?  
—we have only begun  
to imagine justice and mercy,  
only begun to envision  
how it might be  
to live as siblings with beast and flower,  
not as oppressors.

Surely our river  
cannot already be hastening  
into the sea of nonbeing?  
Surely it cannot  
drag, in the silt,  
all that is innocent?

Not yet, not yet—  
there is too much broken  
that must be mended,  
too much hurt we have done to each other  
that cannot yet be forgiven.

We have only begun to know  
the power that is in us if we would join  
our solitudes in the communion of struggle.

So much is unfolding that must  
complete its gesture,

so much is in bud.



*Jeremy Timm writes:*

Trees: you never know what they are thinking. John Collis, 1940's naturalist, farmer, proto-conservationist observed: 'Truly trees are Beings. We feel that to be so. Hence their silence, their indifference to us is almost exasperating. We would speak to them, we would ask their message; for they seem to hold some weighty truth, some special secret - and though sometimes we receive their blessing, they do not answer.'

*Then I spake to the tree,  
Were ye your own desire  
What is it ye would be?  
Answered the tree to me,  
I am my own desire;  
I am what I would be*      *Isaac Rosenberg*

Words from a recently published book, *The Wood*,  
by John Lewis-Stempel.



In community, we are all so very different  
precious, beautiful individuals, yet all travelling  
together on the same path. A path represented  
by our trefoil, which has no  
discernable beginning or end.....

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## Eucharist

When I am present at a Communion Service, and especially, or probably only, at a reflective or even silent one with plenty of space to “be”, I often pause to wonder what I am doing there, or what is happening.

A while ago, fellow Companion Di Williams brought to my attention, as we sat together with bread and wine one Sunday morning, the words “taken, blessed, broken, given.” Four simple words carrying a weight of meaning. From these musings, added to my reading of the Gospel of Thomas at that time, came the following poem, prefaced by Logion 108 which inspired much of it.

The poem has been used at Whirlow and in other places, usually being read as bread and wine are prepared and shared, as we re-mind ourselves that Christ’s body is being re-membered in this act, and in us. I share it with you here.

### **Preface – Gospel of Thomas: Logion 108**

*Whoever drinks what flows from my mouth  
Will come to be as I am  
And I also will come to be as they are  
So that what is hidden will become manifest.*

### **Taken, blessed, broken, shared**

Bread, taken with faltering hands  
and held with unworthy gratitude;  
offered again and again  
in an endless stream of love.

Bread, blessed by ancient words  
of promise never broken.  
Made holy by your eternal presence  
freely given in all realms of existence.

Bread, crumbled between the  
fingers of the Father, for me.  
Broken again by my inability  
to love as you have bidden me.

Bread, shared in corporate recognition  
of a common hunger,  
a unity which cannot be corrupted  
or spoiled by a world of duality and fear.

Bread, enfolded into my body,  
your “thou” coursing through  
the essence of my “I”.  
You in me and I in you.

Wine, plucked from vines  
rooted in the soil of everything.  
Taken by human hands  
and lovingly recreated.

Wine, poured out in love  
washing through body and soul,  
penetrating the depths of pain  
cleansing the unforgiveness of life.

Wine, drinking in your mystery  
sip by glorious sip,  
revealing the God within each one.  
Taken, blessed, broken, shared.

*Jacky Stride, February –April 2016*

### **Welcome to new Friends of Contemplative Fire**

A very warm welcome to 3 new Friends:

-Linden & Stephen Bevan-Pritchard from  
Hunstanton, Norfolk

-Geoff Holt from Birmingham and a member of  
the Community of Aidan and Hilda



### **Farewell and a huge thank you to Lee Smith**

Lee has been the Book Keeper for Contemplative Fire’s finances from before 2009, with a key role in our financial control procedures, including processing the monthly finances which fed into the Treasurer’s reports to Trustees, and providing the data for the Annual Accounts for the external accountants. Many thanks Lee and all good wishes. Her role has been taken on by Companion Sally Livsey.





**Contemplative Fire**

**Wisdom on the Way**

**Saturday May 12<sup>th</sup> 2018  
9.30 for 10am - 3pm**

**The Woodland Hall, GreenAcres, Potkiln Lane, Jordans, Beaconsfield HP9 2XB**



### **From Pen and Paper to Prayer**

**An active, meditative and pLaYFuL practice**

Drawing on the "Praying in Colour" concept as put forward by Sybil MacBeth, Companion Diane Rutter will lead us into this approach to sitting in prayer, and will share her own experience of this prayer practice. The day will include a walk to explore these and other drawing and meditative approaches further. The day is hosted by members of the Hub.

Please bring a packed lunch and boots and outdoor wear in case it is wet. Suggested donation for the day between £10 and £20 per person.

*Wisdom on the Way is a resource both for Companions and people interested in and wanting to explore Contemplative Fire. Contact the Administrator for further details: [info@contemplativefire.org](mailto:info@contemplativefire.org)*

<https://prayingincolour.com>



*Elaine Wilkins writes:*

The next ARC Conference will be held from 9th to 12th September 2019 at High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Herts, entitled "Differences in Common". Bookings will hopefully begin from January 2019.

I will not be attending that Conference and I believe it would be very good for other Companions to taste and see. It really is worth spending time with other Acknowledged Communities and the traditional Religious Communities, to listen to what they have to say and learn what the other Acknowledged Communities are doing.

There was an interesting motion – which was carried - at the General Synod Meeting in February:

*"That this Synod, mindful of the Archbishop of Canterbury's priority for the renewal of the religious life:*

- a) note the historic importance of religious communities in the life of the faithful of the country;*
- b) celebrate the many new expressions of the religious life through Recognised and Acknowledged Communities; and*
- c) call on the Business Committee to introduce a new Canon to the Synod by July 2018 to provide a framework for religious life in the Church of England.'*

The legal team at Church House will be working with the Advisory Council to draft the new Canon for Synod in July. One possible model would be the Canons of the Episcopal Church: these usefully distinguish between 'Orders' and 'Communities', corresponding to 'Recognised' and 'Acknowledged' and perhaps more easily remembered.

**POETRY & ART FESTIVAL**  
**RS Thomas & ME Eldridge Society**  
*"Inspired by Others"*  
**28/6 – 1/7/2018, Aberdaron**



*Susan Fogarty writes:*

Knowing that many Companions have an affinity for RS Thomas's poetry, I thought this could be of interest. There is a varied programme of speakers and musical events including:

*"THE POETIC ASTRONAUT OF GOD-SPACE"* by Daniel Westover, East Tennessee State University. A presentation of R. S. Thomas's poetic style in light of key influences. "...where, at last, did this poetic astronaut of God-space turn when he travelled beyond the edges of the poetic landscape and found existing maps inadequate?"

*"RS Thomas for a New Generation"* on Sunday July 1<sup>st</sup> in Bangor Cathedral. Music, poetry and sounds inspired by the Welsh poet and landscape of Pen Llŷn. World Premiere of *"Pilgrimages"* composed by Ellen Davies, three movements inspired by three poems, performed by Ensemble Cymru and the Royal Harpist Anne Denholm.

*"Society today is less religious and more technological. Thomas predicted this in the 1950's. As people recognise the need for greater spirituality and less technology, Thomas provides us with clues as to how we can reconnect to the mystery of life."*

For more information go to [www.rsthomaspoeetry.co.uk](http://www.rsthomaspoeetry.co.uk) or email [susanafogarty@gmail.com](mailto:susanafogarty@gmail.com) or write to 4 Riverside, Pwllheli LL53 7TA, 01758 703039

**Data Protection and Contemplative Fire**

*Tina Towey writes:*

The UK data protection laws are changing in May 2018. This will have implications for members and contacts of Contemplative Fire. I have stored on our computer a contacts database, email addresses and other documents which list the contact details you have given us. We also have details of standing orders etc.

Organisations like ourselves are required to have your consent to hold such information updated. We are recommended to use the form I sent out recently. Please could you complete this with the details you are happy for us to hold and return it to me as soon as possible. If, for any reason, this is difficult for you, please let me know.

IF WE DON'T RECEIVE YOUR COMPLETED FORM BY 25TH MAY WE WILL BE OBLIGED, BY LAW, TO REMOVE YOUR NAME AND CONTACT DETAILS FROM OUR COMPUTER AND ANY OTHER RECORDS OF THESE WE HOLD.

Please reply as soon as possible.

Thank you and God Bless, Tina

[info@contemplativefire.org](mailto:info@contemplativefire.org)

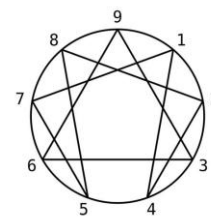
The Circle, 33 Rockingham Lane, Sheffield S1 4FW



**Introduction to the Enneagram**

*"The Nine Faces of the Soul"*

**with Gordon Melvin**



From supertime Fri 19<sup>th</sup> Oct – lunchtime Sun 21<sup>st</sup> Oct, residential at Douai Abbey, nr Reading.

*Cost: £150 (with support from charitable funding)*

Companions write: *"The 2 day experience was extraordinarily effective in opening my mind to difference". "Gordon Melvin's presentation was exceptional". "It was challenging, inspiring, hard work and very worthwhile".*

Contact: [info@contemplativefire.org](mailto:info@contemplativefire.org)