

## Contemplative Fire Post

September 2016 – no.16

**Community Weekend  
19<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> September**

***“Contemplative Fire – the treasure we  
uniquely carry”***



***“But we have this treasure in earthen  
vessels, that the excellency of the power  
may be of God, and not of us”***

*(2 Corinthians 4:7KJV)*

Charlotte Wright spoke about our treasure – the charism of Contemplative Fire – a gift of God, a treasure we uniquely carry, as we were told by Graham Booth of the Community of Aidan and Hilda. About how everyone can be a flame for Contemplative Fire, even when alone and dispersed. And that this weekend we have the opportunity to make our clay pot our vessel and to ask what does it mean to have this treasure within?



*Ancient coil pot*

Susan Fogarty read two poems by Rumi, as a prelude to reflecting on our journey this past year:



O you who've gone on pilgrimage -  
where are you, where, oh where?  
Here, here is the Beloved!  
Oh come now, come, oh come!  
Your friend, he is your neighbour,  
he is next to your wall -  
You, erring in the desert -  
what air of love is this?  
If you'd see the Beloved's  
form without any form -  
You are the house, the master,  
You are the Kaaba, you! . . .  
Where is a bunch of roses,  
if you would be this garden?  
Where, one soul's pearly essence  
when you're the Sea of God?  
That's true - and yet your troubles  
may turn to treasures rich -  
How sad that you yourself veil  
the treasure that is yours!

Come, come, whoever you are.  
Wonderer, worshipper, lover of leaving.  
It doesn't matter.  
Ours is not a caravan of despair.  
Come, even if you have broken your vow  
a thousand times  
Come, yet again, come, come.



Jacky Stride led the Lord's Prayer Body Prayer to words by Don McGregor from "Blue Sky God":

*“O Breath of Life, who flows in all creation,  
may the light of your presence fill the universe,  
your way of being come, your desire be done,  
in this and all realms of existence.  
Bring forth the nourishment we need for this day.  
Forgive the failures that bind us,  
as we let go of our hold on other's failures.  
And let us not be satisfied with the surface of life,  
but deliver us from wrong paths.  
For you are abundant life, creative unity and glorious  
harmony,  
through all time and beyond.  
Amen.”*

Sr Rosemary led a meditation on “*The Kingdom of God is within us – treasure in clay pots*”. She has kindly made copies available – contact Gill on [gillgreenwood@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:gillgreenwood@tiscali.co.uk).



*Failed pot on wheel*

Tessa Holland spoke of exploring our charism with St John of the Cross through the poem “*The Living Flame of Love*” - songs of the soul in intimate communication of loving union with God.

*O living flame of love  
that tenderly wounds my soul  
in its deepest center! Since  
now you are not oppressive,  
now consummate! if it be your will:  
tear through the veil of this sweet encounter!*

*O sweet cautery,  
O delightful wound!  
O gentle hand! O delicate touch  
that tastes of eternal life  
and pays every debt!  
In killing you changed death to life.*

*O lamps of fire!  
in whose splendours  
the deep caverns of feeling,  
once obscure and blind,  
now give forth, so rarely, so exquisitely,  
both warmth and light to their Beloved.*

*How gently and lovingly  
you wake in my heart,  
where in secret you dwell alone;  
and in your sweet breathing,  
filled with good and glory,  
how tenderly you swell my heart with love.*

*The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*  
Trans. Kieran Kavanaugh OCD & Otilio Rodriguez  
OCD. Revised Edition, 1991, Washington: ICS  
Publications.

## How do we conceive of this treasure?

- “how sad that you yourself veil the treasure that is yours”
- the parable of the treasure – it wasn’t quite what they thought
- pushing the cow off the cliff...we have to find other ways...going headfirst like a cat coming downstairs....(!)
- “everything is connected” – used by a property company...
- if you know all but yourself is lacking, you have missed everything
- the meaning is in the waiting
- why “uniquely”?
- charism is like charisma – they have something about them, we carry our own unique version
- common vocabulary but unique perspective
- the facets of the diamond
- this is the only place I can safely say my feelings
- deeper into the silent space, connections
- the world is on fire and we need the fire of love to counter it
- I am at home
- allowed me to fulfil a longing to belong
- reconnecting with the sense of belovedness; a fire of longing and lostness.



*Mosaic pot*

**The Beaker People** spread out from central Europe 3000-2500 BC to the British Isles. They were originally bronze traders, who subsequently settled within local Neolithic communities and got their name from the pots they made and used. These clay pots enabled food to be transported, preserved and also enabled metals to be refined. They used decoration purely for decorations sake. To strengthen terracotta clay ware, they ground up old pot shards to a fine powder and added this to the raw clay, which was found to strengthen the fired clay.

After lunch we had the opportunity to reflect on the treasure within, with a Visio Divina of seven pots: an ancient coil pot, earth tone glazed pots, a crackle glaze pot, a mosaic pot, pots in a kiln, a failed pot on wheel and a Neolithic decorated pot (pictured in this newsletter).



*Earth tone glazed pots*

(referred to Trustees' meeting). Thanks were given to Mark Holland, who had stepped down as Company Secretary, for all his work on previous financial accounts and for the community.



*Created by Judith Rand*

## Community Update

**CIO:** Peter Wright said there would be an Extraordinary General Meeting of existing Trustees in April, which would reconstitute Contemplative Fire Ltd as a CIO. Companions would then become members, having "indicated their agreement and acceptance". The first AGM with elections would probably be Sept 2017. The Trustees are looking at a possible new category of "Friends of Contemplative Fire", as other similar communities have.

**Administration & Finance:** Gill Greenwood spoke about the role of Administrator, as recently outlined in CF Post. The Treasurer, Chris Holmes, had sent his apologies so Gill spoke to his report which was circulated (copies available from Gill). Questions included what were the "consultant fees" (payment to Gill as Administrator and Lee Smith, the book-keeper, who were both self-employed); why the Reserves were 30K (these had been approx 6 months' costs, but with the retirement of Philip and Jill, the reserves didn't need to be so high and would be on the agenda of the October Trustees' meeting); whether donations could be made to other charities out of the reserves

**Trustees:** as current Chair of Trustees, Charlotte spoke about the intention of the Trustees to be more inclusive – the last meeting was held in Birmingham, transparent – with meeting plans and minutes being available, and listening increasingly to Companions, which the new CIO structure will facilitate. It was clarified that anyone belonging to the community as a Friend would not make the commitment to a Rhythm of Life. Thanks went to all the Trustees.

**Events:** *Tony Mealing* spoke about the upcoming Wisdom on the Way day on 12<sup>th</sup> November about going on Pilgrimage, and *Tom Hinds* spoke about seeking funds from charitable trusts.



*Neolithic pot*

## Vocation

*Elaine Wilkins* opened by referring to Laloux, saying that instead of setting goals, we listen to the life that wants to be lived through us. What might the treasure, the longing mean for every Companion? Now it begins, after each “yes”.

*Jo Howard* spoke about becoming a Licensed Lay Minister in the Church of England 13 years ago and her transition from local parish church to Contemplative Fire, now her spiritual home. In keeping with her sense of call to “come outside” her license was transferred to our community in 2007. She sees her continuing vocation within Contemplative Fire as being something of a bridge between the inside and outside of formal church structures.

*Kathy Marsh* spoke of holy listening and beginning her Spiritual Accompaniment training, of seasons and active waiting, of the journey and of openness to God.



*Pots in kiln*

## Introducing The Hub

*Ann Worrall* said that the experience of the Review had encouraged new adventure. There had been 32 responses to the letter from Sharon Roberts and herself about the Hub, which were generally in favour. The group of Companions would explore, steer and support the community, seeding new approaches, implementing new initiatives, respecting traditions and upholding the Vision and Values of Contemplative Fire. There would be 8 or 9 Companions who would commit to a year’s involvement of 4 meetings (with a maximum of 3 years), with leadership being consensual. Gill would minute the meetings which would be written up for CF Post.

Comments included accountability, how Companions would be “acknowledged” into the

Hub – as Trustees would be elected under CIO status - whether it should be written into the constitution, its linkage with our Acknowledged Community status and discussions with our Bishop Visit and Senior Accompanier, and the need for support for local groups. Companions decided that the Hub be established for a year with Ann convening the first meeting, with the blessing and upholding of those present. (More details in the next CF Post).

*“Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.”*

*Goethe*

## Kianjai

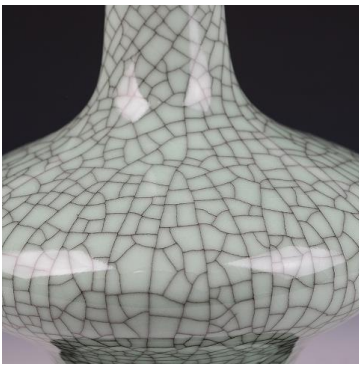


*Caroline Newton and Sally Livsey* spoke about their personal experiences in Kianjai, Kenya and how, by each of them bringing their own skills and slowly learning to trust in creative Grace, events unfolded there beyond what they could have conceived.



<https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-Kianjai-Kenya-172564439483084/>

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**Night Prayer** was led by Sr Rosemary.  
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Crackle glaze pot

## Gathering

*Gathering including Eucharist led by Bishop Paul and Susan Blagden, with the Profession in the Single Consecrated Life of Companion Elaine Wilkins.*



*Susan, Charlotte, Elaine, Diane, Bishop Paul*

*Diane Rutter writes: "A little over a year ago Elaine asked if I would be her accompanier as she took her first vows to the Single Consecrated Life. I confess that I didn't really know what it was that Elaine was being called to. But I did know that she is a Companion in our community who I had come to know and value, and I felt it a privilege to be invited to walk alongside her as she stepped out on her own spiritual journey.*

On a very wet day in London in August 2015 Bishop Paul led a deeply moving and personal service of consecration where, in the company of close friends and family, Elaine took her first vows. Her journey in the year that followed had unexpected twists and turns - only God knew what lay ahead and was alongside Elaine in it all. A year on and many of us had the lovely experience of witnessing Elaine make her life-long vows in our midst, consecrated by Bishop Paul as part of our Eucharistic gathering at the recent Community Weekend.

What does the Consecrated Single Life mean? Why celibacy? Where is our embodiment in this? These are questions I have heard voiced by some Companions. I don't have the answers and I rather suspect that indeed the answer is different for everyone!

This is not something that gets talked about within the Church very much. I don't get the sense that the Church is trying to encourage others to join this calling. But clearly there have been people throughout the ages who find themselves called to make such a commitment and the Anglican church makes provision for them to do so. In recent years some who have this calling have established a network to support each other and you can find out more about their experiences and stories online. <http://www.singleconsecratedlife-anglican.org.uk/>

We each have a unique spiritual journey and we each have our own story to tell of how we encounter and experience relationship with Jesus, the Divine, or whatever we call this person or dimension in our lives. Elaine's path is different to mine. Each are valid.

It was a huge privilege to stand alongside Elaine as she made her life vows, and I hope we will all find ways to support her as she journeys onward. While it isn't easy to put into words, I know that if anyone wants to hear more from Elaine about this consecration of her life, she will be willing to share her story - as long as you will take time to listen. It is deeply personal and can't be summed up with any meaning in a few short sentences! I know that Elaine is keen to listen to your story too. She believes that for each of us, our way of being with God is uniquely special and precious. May we all find ways of accompanying and journeying alongside each other as we deepen our personal rhythm of life within Contemplative Fire. Elaine is happy to be contacted.



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**"Heart of Jesus, Heart of Creation, unite us to yourself" (Teilhard de Chardin)**

Chant composed by Charlotte and Peter and sung for Philip and Jill.  
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## Thinking Circle

Tom asked Companions to think about the kind of external input that Contemplative Fire might benefit from, as in *Living The Mystery* in 2005-2008. He asked Companions to suggest two names who might make a significant input into our thinking and/or two topics. Tel: 01753 858 123.

## Christ of the Celts

“A number of years ago, as the little spirituality centre of Casa del Sol in New Mexico was being conceived, I spoke with a native leader about the type of conversations we might have in a community of listening and dialogue. I asked, ‘What is it I am to bring to the table of humanity? What am I to bring to our relationship in this place?’ He answered very simply, and very challengingly: ‘Philip, bring your treasure, bring Christ’. He then said, ‘Would you expect me, as a native leader, to bring something less than my greatest treasure? Would you be satisfied with something less? So I tell you, bring your treasure, bring Christ’.

I understand why those of us of a liberal sensitivity in the Christian household have hesitated from bringing Christ to the table. In the past, he has been used to beat others over the head and tell them they need to become ‘like us’. So I understand the hesitation. I know why many of us have simply gone silent. But if we are to establish true relationships in the journey of the world today, as distinct cultures and religions and nations, we need to find ways of bringing our treasure to one another. And we need to do it now, with reverence and with costly self-giving, if there is to be healing. The treasure we carry is never simply our own. It belongs to the human soul. And in that sense we are only giving it back. ‘Bring you treasure,’ he said, ‘bring Christ’.

.. I am aware that this is my desire, to bring the treasure of our Christian household to the yearnings of the world today. And I am seeing that we can do it in new ways, in ways that listen reverently to the hunger of the human heart and in ways that will bring us closer to one another, as individuals and as distinct traditions, instead of into further separation and brokenness. This is the desire that issues from deep in the soul. It is not a Christian desire or a Muslim desire. It is a holy human desire, and it will cost us much. But it is for the healing of the nations.”

*From J. Philip Newell ‘Christ of the Celts’ p143-4*



*Diane Rutter read the closing blessing from Philip and Jill’s retirement party and John Marsh led the final community peace.*

*May the blessing of Light be on you  
Light without and light within.  
May the blessed sunlight shine upon you  
And warm your heart till it glows like  
A great peat fire, so that the stranger  
May come and warm herself at it  
As well as the friend.*

*And may the light shine out of the eyes of you,  
Like a candle set in the windows of a house,  
Bidding the wanderer to come in out of the  
storm.*

*And may the blessing of the Rain be on you  
The soft sweet rain. May it fall upon your spirit  
So that all the little flowers may spring up,  
And shed their sweetness on the air.  
And may the blessing of the great rains be on  
you,*

*May they beat upon your spirit  
And wash it fair and clean,  
And leave there many a shining pool  
Where the blue of heaven shines,  
And sometimes a star.*

*And may the blessing of the Earth be on you  
The great round earth; may you ever have  
A kindly greeting for people you pass  
As you’re going along the road.*

*And now may the Lord bless you and bless you  
kindly.*

**Thank you to:** Tom Hinds for taking notes of the weekend, Mark Holland for the PA system (indoors and outside!), the presence of Sister Rosemary and Bishop Paul, the 32 Companions who were able to come to the weekend, the ten Companions who sent apologies and all the many and varied contributions to the weekend and since.