

## Contemplative Fire Post

October 2016 – no.17

**The Hub - 22<sup>nd</sup> October**



*Ann Worrall writes:*

Our newly formed Hub gathered for the first time at Boxmoor Trust, just outside Hemel Hempstead, on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> October. Sally Wright and Tom Hinds came from Windsor, Gill Greenwood from Sheffield, Liz Okey and Ann Worrall from Chesham, Sharon Roberts from Amersham, Caroline Newton from near Nottingham, Helen Fitch-Hunter from Bishops Stortford and Charlotte Wright from Berkhamsted. Susan Blagden was abroad and sadly missed this first meeting.

We found ourselves encouraged to have the chance to get to know such loving and committed Companions as we travel together on this journey. We have made a good start, looking at the way we work in Contemplative Fire, hopefully invigorating it and implementing some ways to work better together, sharing resources and creativity.

We had times of silence, song and outdoor time walking and weaving in circles. We considered the website, training and future Wisdom on the Way days and opportunities for learning from speakers.

We particularly want to encourage Companions to take, and to feel they can take, initiatives. We are a group of people full of hope and thanks for what Contemplative Fire has brought and still brings. For that to continue with such vitality as we have seen in the past, we will need each one of us to be alert for opportunities for the larger group, as well as for ourselves. Sharing this can help build our community.

Our minimum term for involvement in the Hub is a year and maximum three. We hope a rolling membership will mean greater vitality but also stability.

Ann Worrall was designated Steward of the group for this year and Gill Greenwood Secretary. If you have any ideas, suggestions, want to lead something, please feel free to approach any of the group and we will listen, support, encourage, liaise.

We were hoping for an overnight stay for our 28<sup>th</sup> January meeting, but have found Felden Lodge booked and London too expensive. Any ideas for a place for ten people to meet, preferably near a mainline station?

For a fuller picture of our meeting, please see the minutes attached to this Post. Don't hesitate to ask any of us if you have queries and make suggestions as to what you would like to be a part of in 2017.

A really good beginning to a fruitful year ahead. Thanks to all who encouraged us and we look forward to each of us speaking to our wider community.

### **Meeting of Core Group/Trustees 26<sup>th</sup> October**



*Library, St Alphege Clergy House, London*

The Trustees – Charlotte Wright, Elaine Wilkins, Francoise Pinteaux-Jones and John March – with the Treasurer Chris Holmes, the Secretary Gill Greenwood and Companion Tom Hinds, met in London for the AGM and meeting.

Copies of the minutes are available. Key points included:

- Annual Report & Accounts available
- 1,000 copies of new leaflet printed
- Mina Nielsen in Sheffield commissioned to design new website, with team including Jeremy Timm, Ann Worrall, Helen Fitch-Hunter and Gill Greenwood
- to await the out-turn of the CIO membership process and its potential impact on financial giving, before responding to the Community Weekend wish to use reserves for charitable giving
- consideration of processes, from a report by Jo Howard, for supporting Enquirers, marking the commitment to becoming a Companion, an annual re-commitment and the importance of the financial care of our Community
- a letter to go out to all Companions about membership of the new CIO
- endorsement and support for the Hub, with the detail of co-responsibility and any necessary changes to the constitution to emerge
- discussion of a strategy for growth
- *dates for 2017 meetings*: Wednesdays 8<sup>th</sup> Feb, 3<sup>rd</sup> May (EGM) and 12<sup>th</sup> July. Further dates to be decided by new trustees after the Community Weekend in September.

#### **New Treasurer wanted**

Chris Holmes is coming up to 6 years as treasurer and would like someone else to take over this role. Please put feelers out to Companions and friends.

#### **Still Waters – Vulnerability**



*Ann Worrall and Diane Rutter write:*

At a recent Still Waters in Wendover, we explored vulnerability. Richard Rohr says:

*'In my experience, healthily vulnerable people use every occasion to expand, change and grow. Yet it is a risky position to live*

*undefended, in a kind of constant openness to the other—because it means others could sometimes actually wound us. Indeed, “vulnera” comes from the Latin for “to wound.” But only if we take this risk do we also allow the opposite possibility: the other might also gift us, free us, and even love us.’*

He describes the Spirit as working through us when we are honestly vulnerable, in perpetual flow.

After a period of silent reflection we used a body prayer to express what was in us. There were 3 movements:

Vulnerability (adopt any pose that expresses this for you - for us it was shoulders hunched and tense, hands in front, fingers twisted and crooked)

Conscious opening to God in this (pose of crucifixion - arms outstretched)

Freedom (again adopt any pose that expresses freedom for you - for us this was shoulders relaxed, arms uplifted in forward embrace).

We invite you to share in our reflection and body prayer within your own personal time of still waters or in your local group.



#### **New Monasticism: A UK Gathering of new forms of missional & religious life**

*Elaine Wilkins writes:*

Evening Prayer opened this first UK gathering of New Monasticism UK in the church of St George The Martyr, SE London, 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> October.

We were placed into two streams depending on whether we were already a member of a community (50 of us), or were interested in creating one (45 of us). Those in the first stream spent Saturday working through three areas of community life: vocation, structures and mission.

The weekend was very full and the experience was challenging, encouraging, inspiring and enlarging. Below are some quotes from the two guest speakers: Phil Potter, the leader of Fresh Expressions, and Bishop Jonathan Clark, Bishop of Croydon, who spoke about the importance of New Monasticism. I would encourage you to go to the website that was set up for the weekend, where you can listen to the speakers and read the papers – as well as our menu!!

The biggest laugh of the weekend was Phil reminding us that the saint for the day was St Teresa of Avila, who was labelled as “a restless, disobedient gadabout”, which he thought might make a good name for a community!

Phil also spoke about the challenge of being careful with language, especially when we use the word “new” - as language can cover up a multitude of sins- of not being full of jargon but fully authentic.



Bishop Jonathan spoke about how important this movement is for the Church and society. He encouraged all communities to “continue being a community present before God and living that out, then everything else will flow”, “to liberate the Church to be what society needs it to be, so they can hear the good news of Jesus Christ”.

My reflections on the weekend have led me to understand that I am part of something that is an initiative of God. The word “Mission” is now much bigger than I have ever known it to be. The movement, still trying to grapple with deep questions, didn’t come up with any concrete answers. However, I came away with a place of unknowing in me and I feel content to hold that place in prayer, as those I shared the weekend with are on the same journey. It is indeed a

contemplative time to watch, listen and reimagine the future.

*And from Ian Mobsby:*

“The truth is the label ‘new monasticism’ in and of itself is not really a very helpful one, as it makes people think that we aim to be monks, nuns and friars with a commitment to sandals – but the label has got stuck. Those gathered had a shared sense of vocation to develop contextual forms of missional community that have a praxis or lived experience approach to Christian discipleship, requiring a commitment to spiritual disciplines and practices, as a rhythm of life where everything becomes worship, requiring a whole of life approach to following the way of Christ based on the Gospels.

New Monasticism is not easy, like those through the ages who have been committed to the ‘religious life’, this way of being Christian costs. Yet its commitment to prayer and devotion in the context of the actual place where people live and/or work has been for many a freeing-up and a transformative approach to being and doing as a Christian disciple.

In line with Phil Potter’s vision of Fresh Expressions as a movement of mission, we hope that the New Monasticism UK Network will become a hub amongst hubs, or a movement amongst movements. As a first gathering, I think many of us came away with a lot of questions and thoughts, but I know I was hugely encouraged listening to the stories, dreams and hopes of those called on a similar journey to myself, which can at times feel very lonely and isolating. We hope that this new network, which will soon have its own website and online resources, will be a space of support and sharing of wisdom, in what can feel like a very fragile and challenging form of missional community.

This is a first of what we hope will be a number of support and training events in the UK and beyond, which I hope will help all of us called to this model of fresh expression into deeper understanding and commitment to the Holy Trinity. Listening to the conference, it is exciting to hear that new monasticism as a form of the renewal of the religious life is springing up in all sorts of contexts in and outside of the Church. We hope that new monasticism can play its important role, as it has through the ages, to bring apostolic restoration and hope in



an age of major challenge to the Church in all its forms.

For more information on the New Monasticism UK Network please see the FaceBook group of that name, and soon we hope, a website. “

*Ian Mobsby is a Fresh Expressions Associate, Mission Enabler to the Woolwich Area of the Diocese of Southwark in the Church of England, Priest Missioner to the Peckham New Monastic Community and Priest in Charge of St Luke's Church*

Peckham. <http://www.ianmobsby.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/closingsummaryreport.pdf>

### Prayer For The Day

In September, one of CF North's *Way Beyond Religion* groups went to hear Nadia Bolz-Weber at St Mark's Church in Broomhill, Sheffield. Her version of the Lord's Prayer appeared on Radio 4 a few days later (6/9/16).



“Good morning. In the church where I'm pastor, the house for all sinners and saints in Denver, Colorado, I'm often asked how to pray. So here's the Lord's Prayer for all sinners and saints.

“*Our Father who art in heaven..... Our Father who art in everything...who art in orphanages and neonatal units, jail cells and luxury high-rises.*

*Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. We beg you to bring more than just a small measure of heaven to earth because this place is a mess. Lord, your people are killing each other and the vulnerable are even more vulnerable and the wealthy are even more wealthy and it's hard to see a way out, Lord. So, we need your Kingdom to speed up.*

*Give us this day our daily bread. Give us this day our daily touch, our daily laughter, our daily kindness our daily humility, our daily freedom. Give your children their daily bread, their daily naan, their daily tortillas, their daily rice.*

*Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins. As we forgive those who sin against us.*

Forgive us when we hate what you love. Forgive us for the pride we exhibit in our political life together. Forgive us for how much we resent in others the same things we hate in ourselves.

*And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.*

Deliver us from the inclination that we too do not have evil in our hearts. Deliver us from addiction and depression. Deliver us from complacency. Deliver us from complicity.

As Jesus taught us, we are throwing this bag of prayers at your door.

Use these prayers to hammer us all into vessels that can accept the answer when it comes.

*For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen”.*

Be totally changed into fire....

Abbot Lot came to Abbot Joseph and said: “*Father, according as I am able I keep my little rule, and my little fast, my prayer, my meditation and contemplative silence; and according as I am able I strive to cleanse my heart of evil thoughts: now, what more should I do?*” The elder rose up in reply and stretched out his hands to heaven, and his fingers became like ten lamps of fire. He said: “*Why not be totally changed into fire?*”



“*The Wisdom of the Desert*”, trans Thomas Merton, Shambala, 1960



## Contemplative Fire

- ❖ Still Waters: meditation and prayer
- ❖ Learning Journey: exploring together
  - ❖ Across the Threshold: compassionate living and action



## Who are we?

We are a dispersed community of people, mainly in the UK and Canada.

In some areas we meet together each month to celebrate our journeys and faith.

We try to follow a 'rhythm of life' of meditation, learning and compassionate action.

Some of us have no connection with religious organisations and others belong both to Contemplative Fire and to a church.

We have in common a yearning for new and creative ways of encountering the Divine and we respect each other's unique spiritual journeys.

We are rooted in Christian contemplative traditions and seek to follow the teachings of Jesus. We also embrace inspiration from the contemplative wisdoms and practices of other faiths.



The text and pictures in the previous column are from the new *Contemplative Fire* leaflet.



### Fund Raising

Tom Hinds is hoping to raise funds for developments in Contemplative Fire by putting proposals and bids to the trustees of grant-giving charities. At least 193 mention "Christianity" in their publicity.

If you can give a quarter of an hour to looking through a list of 123 trustees of 18 potentially sympathetic charities for a name you know, please contact Tom at 145 Maidenhead Road, Windsor SL4 5EZ (01753 858 123).

### *Gill Greenwood writes:*

A friend came across a film entitled "*Ostrov*" (The Island, 2006). He said: "It is a Russian film, with English subtitles, which attempts to convey the experience of Russian Orthodox monastic life. It is very well crafted and, if you have a spare couple of hours, I highly recommend it". I would agree. The first 10 minutes or so contain some quite raw violence, but this is vital to establish the premise of the entire film.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrUJg7WV6wU>

We have changed our name from LivingSpirituality to **Living Spirituality Connections**, and have made our website - [www.livingspirit.org.uk](http://www.livingspirit.org.uk) - easier for people to find their way around. More details will be in the forthcoming newsletter.

All good wishes, Petra Griffiths

**Living Spirituality Connections**  
Coordinator

"We are writing to let you know about **Love for the Future: Being at Home on the Earth**, a new course created by David Osborne in response to the crises of ecology and injustice that face us, and to the feeling of powerlessness that many people experience in the face of the scale of the issues.

The course helps people to access different forms of contemplative practice that they can draw on to clarify and energise action projects.

A news release about it, including how to link to the course content, can be found at [www.livingspirit.org.uk/lftf\\_news\\_release.pdf](http://www.livingspirit.org.uk/lftf_news_release.pdf).

At the same time we are launching a new Special Interest Area called **Towards Human Flourishing**, which signposts to a range of events, resources and practices that help people to connect their spirituality with action in the world. More information here - [www.livingspirit.org.uk/sia/towards-human-flourishing](http://www.livingspirit.org.uk/sia/towards-human-flourishing)."

**The Kingdom Come**

**25<sup>th</sup> May – 4<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

Philip has received a letter from the Archbishops of Canterbury and York about sharing in prayer around the world for people to know Jesus Christ, between Ascension Day and Pentecost 2017. The aim is:

- to join in prayer with the whole family of God the Father
- to pray for the empowering of God the Holy Spirit
- that we may be effective witnesses to God the Son, Jesus Christ.

A large selection of prayer resources and ideas for events, prayer rooms, liturgy for groups and individuals are available at [www.thykingdom.co.uk](http://www.thykingdom.co.uk)

