

Contemplative Fire Post

March 2018 – no.29

Holland House Retreat Weekend 16th – 18th February *Beyond These Shores - reflections*



“The retreat was based around readings from “A Song Among The Stones” by Kenneth Steven. In a sequence of poems he writes he has “sought to give the sense of the fragments of some lost manuscript---nothing more than the last worn away stones of the story”. The following extracts give, I hope, a “flavour” of the poem.”

*This northernness novembered in a moment
Driven slate-gray in a suddenness of storm*

*And sometimes, just sometimes,
The glory of God in the morning*

*All I know is I must seek
This somewhere with all my soul*

*And the moon rose over the rim of the earth
And fell like fish upon the sea
Their moon road north*

*Islands of sea, floors of sea
Valleys of sea, hills of sea
Lifts of sea, slopes of sea
Hollows of sea, steeps of sea
Shapes of sea, shapes of sea.*

Jane Johnston

“Holland House was a beautiful venue with old black beams, creaky stairs, comfy chairs, ... and a character all its own. There was bird song welcoming our morning. Good nutritious food served by the staff.



Rae and Sue led us through a visual meditation on taking steps to “walk on water”
I don't swim well and found it easy to imagine the fear.
It was a journey into the unknown to test our hope and trust.

In the afternoon I drew the view from the window,
Through the panes of glass I saw a tree.
The trunk was thick, rough textured, secure and strong.
Through the strong branches of the tree I saw the fine branches, crisscrossed and intertwined. Muddled and indecisive, weak twigs at the end. Drawing the sap from the trunk they grew and reached upwards.
Through the network of fine branches I saw the spaces beyond.
Into the space beyond, I glimpsed the sky.

I hope I will journey on with the trust I need.
Who can take away my fear?
Only the sense of Presence in my prayers...
My feet rooted in the “NOW”
And others with whom I hold hands.

What a privilege to meet and journey with my fellow retreat-ants!

Companion (anon)



*“He stands there
On water
What to do?”*

*I do not believe my eyes
nor my mind
This is not possible!
I am still, with shock
I relate to my mind*

and freeze.

*My heart is frozen, detached
I cannot feel
Yet I witness*

*Those eyes
Those incredibly bright, vibrant, alive eyes
Blue eyes
Blue as the summer sky*

*He stands
No, he waits
Waiting patiently
For me?
For the length of my life?
For what?*

*His eyes speak
Such tenderness does he give me
I think he is amused at my reaction
Yet, he beckons
Those eyes beckon me*

*His patient gaze is unwavering
My eyes are riveted to his
Held by them I realise I trust him
Trust him, love him
Wish to be as he is
On water?*

*Yes, on water
My foot lifts and steps down
My eyes hold his gaze unflinchingly
The water holds*

*My God, the water holds (me)
My God's eyes hold me
I am not alone but held
Held by love and
In love, with love
I walk closer to those eyes"*

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"This poem 'wrote itself' as I did not once try to construct or organise its contents. I wrote it after drawing an image which I had created in my imagination after engaging in what I would call a guided meditation. I did not feel much on completing it, just pleased that I had created something with such ease. Later on, reading the poem out loud as part of the sharing process at the closing of the retreat, I felt differently. It was only then that the impact of what this poem said about my own inner journey became real to me."



"The silent retreat weekend, Beyond These Shores, was only my second retreat experience – a space away from the busyness of the everyday. It was also my first retreat with Contemplative Fire as I only recently joined CF as a Friend. The weekend began with a car journey from Sheffield to Holland House with Gill and Jane and this was part of entering the retreat; the return journey was as companionable as it was jolly. Both wonderful travel companions.

Holland House felt safe as a space to be silent, to enjoy a beautiful garden full of interest and detail – for example, the labyrinth in the garden was a green manifestation of our entering and leaving spaces and places. The facilitators, Rae Moyise and Sue Riddell, were steering us gently and with a great deal of knowledge through a metaphorical journey (a Celtic one) of departing from familiar shores and setting out to travel into the new and unknown.

There was (silent) companionship and some singing to mark the beginning and end of the silent part of the journey. After the last event on Sunday there was also a lot of talk and chatter. As this was my first Comparative Fire event, I was made to feel very welcome and friendly people ensured that I was included in chats and talking.

I am not sure that words such as 'I enjoyed myself immensely' or 'I really relaxed' capture the experience of this weekend. I certainly felt restored and – as I had some sad news from home while I was there – it was also a difficult weekend, but I was held – both metaphorically and literally – in love.

Susanne Tietze

Kathy Russell

“We were led in an imaginative meditation on Matthew 14:

I climb out of the boat onto the wild raging sea and walk towards Jesus. Sinking beneath the waves I cry out: “Jesus help me”. He reaches out and catches hold of me.

This is the place where I have been, this is the place where I am. Half-drowning in the wild water and darkness. Suspended, securely held, Jesus’ arm holding mine. I’ve been here for so long. Held in the waves, I am battered. But I also know I am held safe. There is nothing I can do but keep my eyes on Jesus and feel him holding me.

Why am I still here? What is keeping me in the buffeted waves now? Lord hold me. Dangling in the wild waves. Tell me your dreams for me. Tell me what you would have of me. I am here. I am listening.



(Artist Yongsung Kim)

Later.....

I know that I cannot stay buffeted in the water forever. I need to sail these waves with God. Like Noah, I need to build a boat. I sketch my boat and its contents and reflect upon it.

- My boat has sails – I am harnessed to the wind of the Spirit through my daily rhythm of prayer and contemplation, my sails are set.
- I have a radio – part of our dispersed community, I am connected to others who may be unseen but are nevertheless travelling companions in this way of Christ.
- I have lots of supplies – all of us in the Western world do – yet I’m not really sure what’s in those barrels stored away. And there are oilskins for protection – but I haven’t checked them recently...

- There are many indicators, flags, and gadgets – but I’m not looking at them, and don’t know how to read them if I do!
- I have a log book – I am reflecting and journaling, noticing where I have been and what each day has held.
- There are various charts – but I haven’t looked through them, mapped my way ahead or set a course.
- There is a compass – but do I know what my true north is?
- Life raft? Escape route? Not sure, but I’m confident I’ll find one if I need it.
- Ahh – there isn’t a crow’s nest – I draw one in – and immediately I realise that is where I’d really like to be, up in the crow’s nest surrounded by the rushing wind of the spirit.

I want it all. I want to be immersed in the raging waves, immersed in the rushing wind, I want to be engulfed in God. I don’t really want to be safe in the boat steering – although I’d like to know that it’s there to climb back into when needed. I look again at the things in my boat, and I start to draw a chart of my life ahead. Help me Lord, to make this boat sea-worthy for the oceans we will cross. I want to be ready to climb the mast and be wrapped in the winds of your Spirit whenever my being hears your call and my body takes me there. Amen.”



(Artist Unknown)

Diane Rutter





of being and of listening. The silence seemed to hold me and allow this to happen. Walking gently through the lovely garden, I became particularly aware of this delightful carving placed on an old tree stump underneath a cedar tree. The stump had become the growing place, not only for house leeks and snowdrops, but also for a very young, almost indiscernible cedar seedling. Beside it, carved from a log, the kindly face of an old bearded man looked at me, open mouthed, as if about to say something.

As the weekend unfolded, I kept noticing old dead wood, particularly one small but heavily pruned cherry tree, its old unwanted wood lying as logs for burning at its base. It had one young branch that was budding, receiving the full benefit of the tree's restorative growth. Through it and the tiny new cedar tree, seeded in the decay of the tree trunk, I was able to understand the message of dead wood no longer being needed, and the necessity to cut it out to make room for the new and stronger shoots and branches to bud and blossom. Perhaps this is what the old man of the carving was helping me to hear."

Charlotte Wright



Soobie Whitfield

Dead Wood and New Shoots



"The weekend retreat at Holland House was our first visit there. There was a sense of peace and hospitality as we walked into this amazing old house. I was ready to enter into a deeper place

"Outside the beautiful Holland House stood a tall cedar tree. I am guessing it could tell lots of ancient tales, as cedars began to be planted from the 1740s by many of the country houses and stately homes, all trying to keep up with the latest arboreal fashions. I enjoy bird watching, not that I would ever describe myself as a proper twitcher, but my binoculars normally do travel with me, as they did to Holland House. I quickly sorted out a perch where I could sit and have my coffee and watch all the comings and goings of our feathered friends in the cedar tree.

In a short while, I realised that the tree supported a fluttering chirping community that was really diverse. I watched as rooks flew in and claimed the highest branches, starlings bickered and squabbled, blackbirds courted, wood pigeons cooed, robins fluffed up and sang for England, great tits and blue tits just sat and looked gorgeous, a nuthatch pecked at the bark and a tree creeper showed off its athletic prowess. Such a wonderful community, full of different individuals yet all getting on with their lives together in the tree.



Retreat Socks.....!

As I sat and spied on this little world in the lovely silence, it occurred to me that what I was watching was a like our funny little community of CF. We are all very different individuals and lead different lives and yet we are in community together. Like that great cedar tree, drawing water and nutrients from a place beyond sight, it provided space to rest, feed and engage with others. So with CF, rooted in the depths of the mystic tradition, which often is beyond our sight and understanding, it provides us with real sustenance and a place to rest together as we seek to live out our common rhythm."

Jeremy Timm



An enormous and heartfelt thank you to Rae Moyise and Sue Riddell for leading our retreat.

A Companion writes: "I think the retreat was successful in being at a weekend; in being silent; in having non-CF Leaders; in finding a (splendid) new venue for CF events; in drawing in new Companions, Friends and guests. I think we need to be clear about whether such events are also a Community building opportunity:

- making space and time for Companions to engage with Companions*
- talking at lunch and dinner*
- an hour slot each day for recreation and talking (as do many religious communities)*
- a talking room available until 10pm*
- and to have some collective worship.*

Do send feedback on the Retreat to Tina:
info@contemplativefire.org

Events at Holland House

Richard Rohr meditations

Yoga for Christians

CARM retreat: poetry and prayer

The Lord's Prayer in Aramaic Retreat

In Advance of Advent with John Bell

The Wisdom Jesus

The Roots of Christian Mysticism

<http://www.hollandhouse.org/shop/>



Contemplative Fire

Wisdom on the Way

Saturday May 12th 2018
9.30 for 10am - finishing 3pm

The Woodland Hall, GreenAcres, Potkiln Ln, 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

Sybil Macbeth: Praying In Colour
<https://prayingincolour.com>

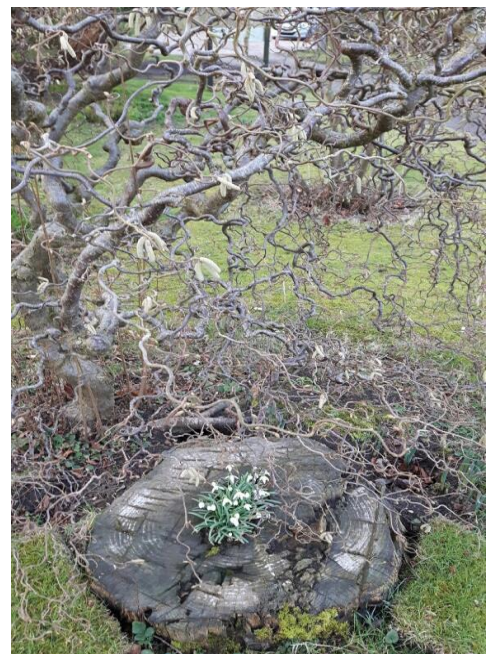


Partnership With Fresh Expressions UK?

Ali Dorey writes:

I have just realised that this is why I was so slow to write the article giving you feedback about the "On the Road" event in the last CF Post. I have a LOT to share! Apologies for the length of this, but I feel it is important to help you to understand my work, so that as a community, we can consider how we relate to it. Obviously, however CF decides to relate to it or not, I will remain involved in both, so will naturally see the links.

Contemplative Fire was probably one of the first fresh expressions of church (fx) to be recognised as such (although I know we like to defy too much definition!). Philip Roderick was asked to be involved, I think, from the start of the Fresh Expressions UK team about 14 years ago. He came onto this small team as a wise guru and someone who could help the team remember their call to pray and listen to God, to help them discern whether they were following the missionary Spirit of God, and not getting distracted or diverted along the Way.



When CF and the Quiet Garden movement began to gather momentum, eventually I think Philip had to step back from his role with the FX UK team, and was replaced by someone else. But he always retained contact with them. I came on board with FX UK a few months before my cancer diagnosis in the summer 2015. I am Director of Training with

FX UK, so I am working with others to develop tools to help people to grow communities like CF in many different cultural contexts across the UK and beyond. The UK team was originally called to this work by Archbishop Rowan Williams, and never set out to do anything other than enable good growth of this sort of thing across the UK, but, perhaps unsurprisingly, there are now Fresh Expressions teams across 3 different continents and at least 7 different countries, with more countries exploring it all the time. In the autumn 2017, we had an international learning community with people from USA (East and West coast teams), Canada, South Africa, Australia, Germany and Sweden. We met to learn from one another, and to make plans for growing this work in our different contexts.

From within, it seems blindingly obvious to me that this whole thing has been something that the Spirit of God has inspired and generated, rather than being something humanly conceived. No one could have foreseen the impact of it. And when we meet on our CF Community Weekends, it brings me great joy to be a Companion within the wonderful fx that is CF.

FX UK has a number of partner denominations of church (including Church of England, Church of Scotland, Methodist, Salvation Army, URC) and also a number of “network partners” (including organisations like the Baptist Pioneer Collective, Ground Level Network, Messy Church, 24/7 Prayer, the Centre for Pioneer Learning, Church Missionary Society, HOPE Together etc). One of my questions has been, “Does CF have a vocation to be a network partner of Fresh Expressions UK?” Secondary questions in my mind are, “What would partnership between CF and FX UK look like? Who and/or what would keep the relationship meaningfully alive?”

It was reflections such as these, alongside the FX UK team’s realisation at our International Learning Community that we needed to re-prioritise prayer in this phase of the team’s life, that led to my asking CF Companions to pray for the “*On the Road*” event. I wonder if CF may, as a community, have a vocation to be a prayer support and guide to FX UK? Given how our roots are in some ways intertwined with the whole Fresh Expressions movement, this could make a lot of sense. But I have no wish to place a burden on us as a community that we haven’t discerned we should carry.

I would say, though, that the FX UK team is the most positive, adaptive and creative team I’ve ever had the pleasure of working with. We are all

very well aware of our own inadequacy to the task set before us, but between us we have faith, and we regularly stand amazed at the mountains God seems to have moved, as well as perpetually frustrated by how things continue to be difficult. I am reminded of the Psalm 18.29 that says, “*With my God I can scale a wall*”.

Linden Bevan-Pritchard writes:

Dear Gill

I have forwarded this to you in case you can include it in a Newsletter or circulate the information. The Oxford Centre for Spiritual Growth is a great resource for those living near Oxford and you could send out the web address for the event:

<http://www.ocsg.uk.net/events/exhibition-paintings-and-thursday-talks-st-giles>

Exhibition of Paintings and Thursday Talks at St Giles Church, Oxford

The exhibition can be seen when the Church is open, after services and daily between 12.00 noon and 2.00pm. Paintings by Nick Mynheer and Robert Wright will be on exhibition at St Giles’ Church, Oxford between 14th April and 20th May. During this period a series of 5 Talks will be given in the Church, each Thursday lunchtime, starting at 12.30pm and lasting about an hour. The theme is ‘Resurrection’



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. As Community Administrator I have stored on the organisation's 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. that some of you have set up with us.

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 use either the Word file or the pdf one, whichever works for you. Please could you complete this with the details you are happy for us to hold and return it to me either electronically or by post as soon as possible. Contact details are at the bottom of this email and on the form.

If, for any reason, this is difficult for you, please let me know and I will post a form to you.

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.

- This means we will not be able to contact you or keep you informed about the Community, unless you return the completed form.
- For Companions – we will not be able to send you the contacts list of Companions, unless you return the completed form. And we will have to remove your details from that list before sharing it with those Companions who do return the form.

To protect the information we hold, we will be required by law to password protect each file we hold.

A copy of Contemplative Fire's Privacy Notice has also been circulated for your information. This gives further details of the basis upon which we hold your information.

Please do not delay in replying.

Thank you and God Bless,

Tina

info@contemplativefire.org

The Circle, 33 Rockingham Lane
Sheffield S1 4FW



Next issue: reflections from the Weekend
at Mount St Bernard.