

Contemplative Fire Post

February 2016 – no.10



Exploring Shared Leadership with Graham Booth, Community of Aidan & Hilda 6th Jan, St Alphege Clergy House, London

The Community of Aidan and Hilda (CA&H) is a dispersed, ecumenical body drawing inspiration from the lives of the Celtic saints, and is held by two important anchors of the Communities of the early Celtic Church: the rule of the Community, often composed by the founding saint, and the work of the Anamchara or Soul Friend, who helped each individual to discern God's voice and develop an on-going personal and patterned response.



Shafts of morning sunshine on the breaking waves between Holy Island and Bamburgh

In January, the Trustees and other Companions met with Graham Booth, one of the three Guardians of CA&H, to talk about the shared leadership of his community and to answer questions.

Community of Aidan & Hilda

The Community has 200+ members dispersed around the UK (and abroad) with 95% probably members of a church. Membership has a variety of forms: Friends, Explorers and Voyagers.

How do members make connections?

- through local events and local groups which have autonomy but which can invite one of the Guardians
- a national retreat in North Midlands (in winter) and South Oxfordshire (in summer)

- an annual weekend gathering of members plus interested invitees (for fellowship, worship and teaching)
- a Prayer Diary - they pray for every member of the community every quarter.



A summer sunset across the Slakes, from the Heugh

Leadership

- there is consensus for a plural leadership
- the Community is governed by the **Caim Council** and headed by three **Guardians**
- the Guardians, Caim Council and Trustees give account to the Community Soul Friend (someone in senior oversight of a major church stream eg a bishop)
- “Leadership is not so much created or organised as prayerfully sniffed out!”
- the Guardians gently hold and guard the vision and ethos
- they have created an environment of shared responsibility.

Leadership Trio - Guardians

They feel that leadership is not something one person can do. They want to engage with God as Trinity – a model of relationship which offers combined wisdom/support/ protection. The three Guardians are the spiritual leaders for a five year term.

- Simon Reed*- a vicar in Ealing, Chair of the Caim Council
- Penny Warren* –the Members’ Guardian, a contemplative living in Devon
- Graham Booth* – responsible for the retreat house and community activities on Holy Island.

The US has a single Guardian.

The geographical spread of Guardians is helpful – it enables them to see people, go to local gatherings and receive people into the community.

Process

All 200+ members are invited to suggest names of people who might make up the Guardianship. The names are put on a ballot paper (they don't have to be trustees, but it is expected that they would have been a trustee or a Caim Council member).

Meeting

They meet, often in Birmingham or London, 3-4 times a year, plus Skype and emails.

Accountability is easier with three rather than one as no-one can hide!

Community Soul Friends

- come to community events and Caim Council meetings
- run retreats for Guardians.

Guardians have appraisals which can be useful for specifics... and what they have avoided... Having three helps with any conflict.



Calm waters, with the Farne Islands in the distance

Caim Council (Caim means “encircling”)

The Caim Council has 8 members and offers the freedom to dream and explore. It is a group of prayerful, spiritual people, holding the community and making decisions. It includes the Chair of Trustees (*Geoff Holt*), the three Guardians, the Explorer Guide (*David Cole*), the Community Secretary (*Carol Few*), plus two others.

Board of Trustees

The Trustees focus mainly on the buildings and the balance sheets. (CA&H owns three properties and people receive honoraria).

Processes for electing Caim Council & Trustees

These are still evolving – people can be recommended – look for people who might serve – corporate prayer – invite people – people can offer themselves.

Community Office

There is a Community Secretary.

Finance

A financial commitment is invited for Explorers and Voyagers.

How do people know about CA&H?

- through the Holy Island Retreat House
- the writings of the Founder, Ray Simpson
- being asked to lead events (eg Spring Harvest)
- through the website (web manager – *Paul Swinhoe*), FaceBook
- through Googling New Monasticism
<https://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/guide/examples/monastic>
- through the Christian Resources Exhibition.

Founder

The Community was formed primarily by an extraordinary visionary man, Ray Simpson, who the Community continue to honour and support. Merely copying the founder is doomed to failure. Graham spoke about “dynamic fidelity” – being loyal to the charism requires a demanding fidelity, like a marriage. And allowing our creativity and new context to explore what “fidelity” means now.

What is our inheritance? What is the distillation of what really matters? Aidan came from Columba's community in Iona and would have brought Columba's rule. Then, after 16 years, it became Aidan's rule, then Ced, Chad, and Hild's rule. There was a family likeness.

(Antonio Ramano – *The Charism of the Founders*, 1994).

Some quotes

"Problems emerge at a time of transition....we can learn from how First Order communities honour and love their abbots/abbesses but not romanticise them...we are never going to know what it took to found a community....God is more interested in growing the person than the thing...the journey into Christ and wholeness can't happen for an individual in isolation, it works in relationship...Christian community is/can be a painful place...we want to be nice but we're not when it gets under our skin – James and John, Peter putting his foot in it, this is Christian community."



Nightfall over Saint Cuthbert's Island, with the Cheviot in the distance

Core Group – 24th February

The Core Group meeting at St Alphege Clergy House was open to Companions and was Philip's last meeting. He spoke to the paper he'd written entitled "*Foundation Stones and Core Values*", which has been sent to all Companions.

Chair Charlotte Wright writes:

"As a token of respect and gratitude for everything that Philip has given us over the past twelve years towards the formation and building of our Contemplative Fire Community the Trustees have agreed, on behalf of the Companions, to grant him an honorarium as a resource to help him to deepen and develop his journey and enable him to discern and shape this next chapter of his life and ministry. We are indebted to him for giving us the foundation stones of Community on which we continue to build. Thank you Philip."

The meeting welcomed the update from the Companions' Review Group, discussed transition arrangements in the light of Jill and Philip's retirement on Monday 29th February, asked for an update on the bursary fund and considered ideas for possible approaches to leadership.

Charlotte adds:

"In the spirit of transparency and open communication, the Trustees want to make available to Companions documents from the Core Group meetings, including finance reports. And a reminder that, as mentioned in CF Post 8, the Annual Report and Accounts up to 31 May 2015 are available".

Communication

From 1st March, the interim email address on the website for Contemplative Fire is:

Contemplativefire2016@gmail.com

Interim office phone numbers will be:

0114 230 7706 and 07896 342 907.

Please check any CF literature for old contact details.

A Life of Peace and Power *

That's what I want – a life of peace and power. Our world is turbulent and unsettling. Not only are there the tragedies that make the news stories, we know too that there is an underground world of war, poverty, oppression, slavery, espionage, cyber warfare etc that never make the headlines. I know you know that.

In the midst of ALL....I believe Jesus calls us to a life of peace and power. When I engage with his stories I see these two qualities reflected. He had a deeply grounded peace and clearly he had Power with a capital 'P'. How can I, as one of his followers, live, as he did, a life of peace and power? Is this even possible, or is it some unattainable dream?

Everything I have encountered of Jesus speaks to me not of some impossible carrot that he dangles in front of me but of real change, heart wrenching, mind-turning, life-cleansing change. I believe in him and his Spirit and their ability to work in my life to bring me to a place where I too can bring into this world Peace and Power.

So far, the pathway that I've discovered is paved with trust and surrender; a radical willingness to trust that the Spirit of God is present, active and loving, and an ego-releasing surrender that is soul cracking, as in learning to breathe underwater.

Who walks this pathway?

This is for Real People who long to bring Real Change into our Real World. And I know we're not all ready for it, but our world needs more of us to be there. Will you join me in praying for 'A Life of Peace and Power'?

Love and prayers
Anne
Community Leader Canada

*I happened on this phrase from Evelyn Underhill's retreat "Sanctity: The Perfection of Love" 1924.



Pacem in Terris

Goa

Has anyone visited Goa in the south western region of India, or have any contacts there? A potential CF Companion is travelling there later this year and would be interested to be in touch with anyone who has been. Contact Gill Greenwood.



Tessa Holland sent this link:

<http://us12.campaign-archive2.com/?u=107eb5b7694908bf1b559cf6e&id=dfdb0b78f6&e=a38ce539fb>

Lent art trail opens across the city of Manchester.

Our theme is 'BE STILL' looking at themes of wilderness, silence, mindfulness and simplicity within the everyday.

Our intention is to call our city to Be Still for a few moments every day for the 40 days of Lent, to step off the constant wheel of activity and noise and to give space to listen to the still small voice that whispers an invitation to us to belong, to love and be forgiven.

We will be exhibiting art works in six iconic city centre venues from 10th February until 2nd April, inviting people to engage with the Easter story and the Lenten experience in new and creative ways.



"Planning Our Route" Day, 12th March

Boxmoor Trust, Hemel Hempstead,
<http://www.boxmoortrust.org.uk>
a mile from the station at Hemel, just off the A41.

Gill Greenwood writes:

At the end of January/beginning of February I went down to Saltdean to stay with Jill and Philip, to finalise with Jill the handover arrangements for the CF office. As well as having bracing walks along the seafront, coffee at Molly's (their "local seafront café and daily temptation!"), lovely meals laced with conversation and the occasional bit of singing, we did manage to complete most of the tasks! Thank you both.



Thank you too to Tessa and Mark Holland for a warm welcome and lunch at Wild Fortune on the way to Brighton, to Diane Rutter for her generous hospitality over two nights, and to the Companions of the Open Circle which met in Chesham and introduced me to J Philip Newell's *Christ of the Celts*:

"I explore the Celtic image of Christ as the Memory of what we have forgotten. He remembers the dance of the universe and the harmony that is deep within all things. He is the Memory also of who we are."



Tom Hinds sent this:

Open Faith

Saturday 4th June 2016



Do you ever wonder what Christianity has to offer our pluralist world?

If so, the Windsor and Maidenhead group of PCN warmly invites you to a day for sharing, exploring and discussing with Emma Percy and David Pollock.

Time: 9:30 for 10.00 to 16.00

At Desborough College, Shoppenhangers Road, Maidenhead SL6 2QB

Admission: £20 (£17 concessions)

Contact: Susan Hinds

Phone: 01753 858123

Email: sathindsbc@waitrose.com

Emma Percy is the Welfare Dean & Chaplain, Trinity College, Oxford, and David Pollock is a Trustee of the British Humanist Association and sometime president of the European Humanist federation.

The day will be chaired by Adrian Alker, the national chair of PCN Britain and includes refreshments and a light buffet lunch.
