

## Contemplative Fire Post

October 2019 – no.38

Community Weekend  
13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> September  
Whaley Hall



*The Trellis and The Rose*



*Charlotte Wright writes:*

The rose pictured here is called “Compassion” and it sits within the trellis of the Trefoil, the symbol for Contemplative Fire’s rhythm of life with its integral Vision and Values. The invitation was to contemplate this imagery, portrayed in the large floor trefoil, with its threefold aspects of the rose – the bloom, the thorn and the hip.



As thoughts and insights came to us, we were invited to take a small card and write on it a word or a simple phrase that expresses the significance of these symbols for us at this time. We could then place it in the meaningful part for us of the floor trefoil – the bloom, the thorn, the hip or the centre place of mystery.



*Sister Rosemary spoke to us about the Trellis and the Rose:*

Here is a story from the desert fathers:

Abba Lot went to see Abba Joseph and said to him, “Abba, as far as I can I say my little office, I fast a little, I pray and meditate, I live in peace and as far as I can, I purify my thoughts. What else can I do?” Then the old man stood up and stretched his hands towards heaven. His fingers became like ten lamps of fire and he said to him, “If you will, you can become all flame.”

Fasting, prayer, meditation, living in peace and, as far as you can, purifying your thoughts – these are excellent spiritual disciplines, a good trellis, but the point is ‘becoming all flame’. In that story it is clear that the point is to become all flame, and we can say that the flames are the roses.

*Is that what Contemplative Fire is about, ‘becoming all flame’? Is that why you came this weekend? Or if not, how would you put it? What do you want from Contemplative Fire? Is there a word, an image, a memory, or a mood that expresses it? For now just ask yourself the question, ‘what am I wanting from Contemplative Fire?’ And if you feel there could be more behind your first answer, try wondering, now or later, why you want this or that.*

## The Trefoil

Contemplative Fire does not have a Rule of Life, but it does have the Trefoil which indicates the character of the life you are seeking to live and the sort of practices which shape it. It is not as simple, I think, as saying that the Trefoil is your Rule, your trellis, and your lives are the roses; the Trefoil is, sort of, *both* roses and trellis. It doesn't set out requirements for being a Companion, and it doesn't give a set of structures to support Companions, Friends and others in their spiritual lives; rather, it delineates a vision which can be expressed in, and accompanied by, a range of practices.



© Philip D Roderick 2001

The leaves in the Trefoil give three different sections to explore and suggest a variety of ways in which to do so. There is a whole range of options. Thus, like most monastic rules, the Trefoil vitally allows for the differences between people, and how we are different at different stages of our lives – there is room for everyone. One of the most noticeable characteristics of Contemplative Fire is the stress upon proper respect for each person, their values, language, experience and aspirations. To undertake all of the suggestions on the website, and even to try them out for a bit, would be to take on too much, and would be unlikely to bear fruit. But you are invited and expected to make all three elements, and the central inner space, recognizably part of your lives. I wonder how you do that and whether it is something you discuss with each other? The vision set out in the Trefoil is simple and difficult, requiring a good deal of self-knowledge, discernment and, probably, help from each other in order to make the most of it.

Probably each of you will have found one or other of the 'leaves' of the Trefoil more congenial than the other two, but it is *not enough* to stay in what comes easily. As a friend of mine used to say, getting stuck in a rut is like being in a coffin with the ends knocked out! So

the ribbon or pathway threading through the Trefoil, weaving up and down, creating and defining the pattern, is vital. The Trefoil invites you to move steadily through each of the shapes in a rhythm of embracing and letting go, so as to maintain and deepen the still centre. By breaking and re-finding the balance you can yield to the rhythm with increasing confidence.



*Have you found that? Or do you find that is it more the case that they come together as one thing? Does the Trefoil indicate a form of spiral learning, and if so what do you learn? Are you being deepened and enlarged in the process? And is it this combination of doing and being and learning that forms you into a distinctive community? Let's pause again so that you can reflect for a moment, in silence, on your personal experience of living the Trefoil in the ups and downs of your life.*

### *Walking the talk*

The Trefoil has a certain runic quality, but it is not magic and it may not always work for you. As you were reflecting just now, it's possible that some of you found yourselves asking whether the Trefoil is enough to keep Contemplative Fire together, and enough to bring wholeness and integrity to your personal life. The obvious answer to that is, 'Of course not!'

I say that from my experience of trying to live the Rule and Way of Life of the Sisters of the Love of God. I've had plenty of time to try and I hope to have a good few years more to keep trying, but I don't think it is ever going to be do-able. Realizing that is quite a relief! I'm not just talking about monastic life or the life of a community like mine. This is about Christian

life, and we cannot 'do it' because Christian life is a matter of grace, grace upon grace, and the grace to receive the grace that is given. Not what we can do or achieve but *what God gives us* is the mystery that reveals and sustains our life in Christ. In an important sense, grace is the 'foundational component' of our lives and it is grace which, together with our determined commitment and the particular circumstances of our lives, brings forth fruit, and roses. Hence the space in the centre of the Trefoil.



As I have gone on thinking about it, I have come back again and again to the importance of perseverance in order to allow grace to work. Growth takes time, we are time-bound creatures and we just have to come to terms with that and be patient. Every spiritual tradition is aware that this is how it is - we are on a spiritual journey. We have a goal and we set out, or like Abraham we set out in faith not knowing where we are going. Either way we have to make the journey. Long and tested tradition identifies three stages, or states of soul, along the way: purgation (purification), illumination and union. We may touch briefly into each of them, not necessarily in the prescribed order, even in a single day, and more than once as our pilgrimage continues and as we go deeper. It seems that having known the merest touch of union we never entirely lose our longing for its fullness, however obscurely we realize that. We may not be ready yet, it takes time to integrate our intuitions, but the first touch is enough to lure us on until we learn how to bear 'the beams of love' (William Blake, *The Little Black Boy*). God is in control of the process and God always deals with us gently, with due order, and in the way that is appropriate for each person, as St John of the Cross affirms in the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* (Book II, chapter 17).

-----

## AGM

Jack McBane opened the AGM, saying that this was the first AGM under the new Constitution. The following Companions were re-elected as Trustees: Francoise Pinteaux-Jones, Hilary Garraway and Jeremy Timm, each receiving over 90% of the votes. The Annual Accounts to year ending 31 May 2019, which had been independently examined, were presented by Treasurer Sally Livsey and were approved. Sally also presented the budget for 2019-20, which included a development fund open to bids to nurture and enhance the community and bids for outreach for growth in membership.

### Acknowledged Religious Communities

Diane Rutter spoke about on her role of Acknowledged Community Liaison with other "Communities of Christ on the Edge" within the Anglican Church. This has included attending consultation events helping to shape the new canon law and its underpinning. These were born out of the need for all of us to protect vulnerable people who come into contact with any form of faith communities, and in particular those with a link to the Church of England, and the support that this gives us in terms of our own safeguarding is incredibly valuable. But it brings us much more too!

Diane Rutter and Jeremy Timm found themselves amidst the great privilege of enjoying the company of 75 others from Anglican communities in what turned out to be a high octane, deeply moving, few days away at the Anglican Religious Communities conference immediately before our Community Weekend. Diane says: "On the first night we threw ourselves into becoming a Rock Choir and we performed "O Happy Day" with great gusto and hilarity!

The theme of the conference was "Difference in Common", and there was a spontaneous sense of deep resonance between us all, and a joy in discovering in each other the depths of our varied community life. There was no need to build bridges between us, as the sense of "deep calling to deep" was very much in evidence amongst us. So rather than building bridges, we all talked about our delight in bridge walking as we make contacts across our communities and share our practices and fellowship with each other. For example someone asked if she could film me doing the Lord's Prayer Body Prayer in order to help her to remember it and use it in her own practice, and she has since been in



touch to tell me how she is using it and how she's teaching it to others too! Jeremy and I loved our time with other religious communities and would encourage anyone who has the chance to do some "bridge-walking" themselves to go for it!"

Coming up over the coming year: a focus on Leadership, with communities needing to be able to articulate what our approach is to the leadership of our community. And a focus on bridge walking - sharing in the joys, practices and companionship with others who are journeying deeply with Christ at the Edge.

**CF Canada** Jo-Anne Raynes, Chair of the Board of Directors for CF Canada, spoke to the meeting (page 7).

**The Trustees' Annual Report**, including reference to the merging of the Hub with the Board of Trustees, a new initiative in Lincoln – CF Lincs in the City – and CF retreats, is available from Tina, [info@contemplativefire.org](mailto:info@contemplativefire.org) Caroline Newton reported on the CF presence at Greenbelt (see CF Post 37).



### Pilgrimage Walk and Body Prayer

After lunch, Simon Musgrave led the Pilgrimage Walk around Whaley Bridge. A session that Jo Howard and Diane Rutter have used to introduce Body Prayer to groups outside of Contemplative Fire was shared with Companions at the Community Weekend. It included an extended meditation "This is My Body" as well as trying out various forms of body prayer, and creating our own. We are trying to get this onto the website as a resource, but in the meantime, if any Companions would like to know more then please contact Diane directly (details are on the Companions' list).



### Saturday's Evening Prayer and Reflection

*Philip Roderick writes*

The late Jim Cotter and his work as priest, raconteur, liturgist and poet/prophet on the edge, helped many find and awaken to faith in a new context, in the rawness of suffering and in the delight of experience, language and meaning, symbol, soul and silence. In the Saturday Evening Prayer and reflective exercise, we used Jim's *Out of Silence...Prayer's Daily Round*. This led us to explore hints and guesses, intuitions and insights relating to our weekend theme – Trellis and Rose.

In the preparation of this material, I found myself to be intrigued by the expression and pragmatic reality of **the Trellis** as framework, form and structure on the spiritual and creative path. Accordingly, we examined all too briefly some of the texts in the evening's prayer and in our community engagement at different levels that resonated with this idea of the trellis of things.

I found myself to be equally intrigued by the expression of **the Rose** as aspects of freedom, flow and spontaneity on our spiritual and creative path. Again, we began the process (to be completed after the weekend by those participants who wished and who were struck by different clues and pointers in the session). (Fuller details are available from [info@contemplativefire.org](mailto:info@contemplativefire.org)).

### Open Forum

#### What do we need to grow?

#### *Hummingbird Retreat*

Hilary Garraway spoke about the progress of the plans she and her husband have made to move to Grenada in a few years to run a Retreat space. They are currently renovating premises. The vision is to provide therapeutic, creative

and spiritual retreats. It will be run by Christians but will not be a specifically Christian retreat space. Not only will the Retreat space offer restoration to those burnt out by their lives but will also reach out to help/ be involved in the local community. A charity has been set up and the website is now live. This is a big step in faith as there are continuing finance issues. Currently a further £150,000 is needed. Hilary asked for the Community's prayers and that if anyone knew of any fundraisers/ funding which might be available to let her know. [www.hummingbirdretreat.org.uk](http://www.hummingbirdretreat.org.uk)

Other Companions reflected that this was an example of how to nourish others and that the Community needs to think about how to create a state of readiness to welcome new people. What would this model/ process look like? It was said that Community get together of all types were opportunities to draw closer to God and to 'practise for Heaven'.

### ***Opportunities for Open-Ended Community Discussion and Exchange of Ideas***

A Companion said this forum was the only time set aside for discussion in the whole weekend, that he felt that the Community was 'stuck' on incarnation and there was not enough thinking or sharing about what happens after incarnation. The following points were made:

- Opportunities and ways to learn and discuss together should be explored by those planning programmes and events both regionally and nationally
- Care must be taken not to alienate people by 'demanding' participation in discussions and meetings/ events. The Community must maintain an invitational approach when devising events and programmes. We must also trust that those who do attend events such as the Community Weekend are those who are meant to be there and are representing those who are not.
- Personality and temperament affect people's willingness and ability to share and discuss. Also some need time to process ideas/ talks etc on their own.
- Philip pointed out that there was a continuum: hermit – activist. And Community members needed to follow the 'clues'; to keep alert for what they are being called to be and do.
- In terms of Knowing, CF has available teaching and sharing between ourselves and also drawing on other sources of wisdom outside the Community. Relationships with other organisations/ communities are being built and strengthened e.g. ARC Conference.

-The need to widen/ broaden what the Community offers in terms of ways and opportunities for people to discuss and explore spiritual matters is something Trustees have already taken on board e.g. the Mount St Bernard's Community Fellowship Weekend offer which has proven accessible and fruitful to both long-standing Companions and new enquirers. People gravitate to what feeds them most.

### ***Next Generation***

A Companion said she hoped that the outreach at Greenbelt would lead to a new generation joining Contemplative Fire. She had been given by and had given a lot to the Community, but getting older was inevitably bringing health and energy issues. It was important that younger people be encouraged and drawn in to bring fresh energy and impetus.

A Companion said that she was of a younger generation but felt she and her peers were tired and subject to being burnt out by the demands of family and working life. She had found the Weekend to be a place of refuge. But it was very much on her heart that many people she worked with/ came in contact with did not have 'a place where they could be fed' and were desperate. Although she wanted to 'feed them' herself, she recognised that it was not doable (as Sr. Rosemary had pointed out) in her own strength. She posed the question "How can we support my generation to be where they need and are meant to be?" Companions discussed this and made the following points:

- It is a Christian thing to wonder/ be concerned about the welfare of others, but we can only do things one at a time, starting with nurturing ourselves.
- At a local level, many people like what CF offers but may never come further in towards commitment. We can only provide the 'sweet water well' for them to dip into.
- Grace is what holds everything and everyone and enables everything and everyone to be.
- We need to keep the Well clear and fresh and to provide freedom and accessibility to it. It is always invitational – Jesus said "Come!" The pain and lament for others prompts us to pray through that pain and to be available for them. We need to keep offering and rest in grace.
- The realisation that "We can't do it!" is a physical release from the 'weight on our shoulders'. We need to wait on Christ for grace – "Lord, do your grace thing!" It is countercultural to be not fixated on achieving things.

-Understandably there is worry about the absence of a 'trefoil' – a meaningful and recognisable spiritual structure of life for the next generations. But the evidence is that the Holy Spirit is at work, just in a different way. We need to journey alongside, invite, be open and stay aligned with God, trusting in His slow work.

-The evidence is there that younger people are spiritual, not religious; they are loving, respectful of themselves and others, non-discriminatory, non-judgmental.

-We can build nurturing, loving relationships at home and work, supported by our Contemplative Fire community, where we are experiencing such relationships.

### ***Building Bridges with Other Communities & Organisations. Whaley Hall – Support***

A Companion said she had been very moved to hear of the burdens and trauma Fr Jamie and David had gone through during the local Dam emergency and wondered whether CF could do anything practical to help. It was agreed to explore possibilities of offering practical help to Whaley Hall e.g. a team of volunteers to come back to do some gardening. Someone said the idea of offering practical involvement to Whaley Hall was an echo of a thought at the end of the ARC conference – “How do we build bridges, work together and really help each other as Communities”? Bridge walking was to be explored and encouraged.

### ***Faith Bridge***

A Companion said that the Christian thread of Extinction Rebellion were organising a Faith Bridge as part of the Climate Change Action planned for October in London. At Greenbelt, Contemplative Fire had been invited to hold a space as part of the Faith Bridge. A notice on this had been included in CF Post for August. Many Companions expressed support for and interest in CF's participation in the Faith Bridge. However concerns were raised. A Companion said that she was very unhappy about CF as a Community taking a role in acts of civil disobedience and was worried that the Community might be brought into disrepute. She did not wish to have such actions taken in the name of the Community, although she absolutely supported the beliefs and energy behind the actions. She said she felt people should take part as individuals, not in the name of Contemplative Fire. Someone suggested that if asked, those participating could say “I am a

member of Contemplative Fire, but I am not speaking/ acting for the whole Community.”

A Companion said that what was important was that people go if they wished, take part and hold a space; it didn't have to be in the name of the Community. A Companion reminded everyone that the Vision and Values is worded as “I think... I feel” – therefore people would be acting individually/ taking individual responsibility. A Companion said that taking opportunities to state “I am a member of Contemplative Fire...” would be important because then people could be signposted to the website and all the resources there. A Companion added that she had previously signed a protest letter on the subject of Palestine referencing that she was a Member of the Third Order of Franciscans. It was suggested that perhaps Companions could start to use the initials C.F. after their signatures on letters etc.

*Thank you to Tina for taking notes of the session.*



### **Eucharistic Celebration**

Sharon Roberts and Diane Rutter led us in the Eucharistic Celebration. At the end, we were each given the name of a Companion or Friend, who we were asked to pray for over the coming week. We were given a Recommitment card to mark our recommitment to Contemplative Fire for the coming year, with the words: *“I am the secret fire in everything, the living breathe in my sweet perfume” (Hildegard of Bingen).*

.....





St Martin in the Fields -portal to eternity? A cross? A cosmic egg?

## CF Canada

*Jo-Anne Raynes, Chair of Board of Directors, CF Canada, writes:*

Recently I had the great privilege of being part of the Community Weekend and visiting throughout England. Thank you for your wonderfully warm hospitality! Francoise has since (gently) twisted my arm and asked me for my thoughts and perspective as one of the leaders of Contemplative Fire in Canada - so herewith my humble thoughts and observations.

The location of the Community Weekend was the eccentric and funky Whaley Hall in High Peak. Much time was spent finding the bathrooms! I learned from Brother Jamie who runs the facility that Contemplative Fire was in fine company, as the Hall has also hosted senior delegations from the Vatican and the Methodist Church. Suffice it to say, Contemplative Fire rocked the Hall.

I stayed on after the Community Weekend and learned that our community had created quite a stir. As we relaxed by the fire, Brother Jamie and a Methodist colleague asked me many questions about Contemplative Fire. Interest in contemplation is indicative of our times.

Jamie's colleague shared with me that he wants to bring more contemplative practices into his churches. He told me he knows this is needed. Similarly I see this happening in the church in Toronto where we hold our weekly Finding Stillness and monthly Way Beyond Religion gatherings.

Unusually, we have a Brother from a Holy Order leading the church as it goes through a transition to a revived congregation. Recently two Centering Prayer groups who meet at the church asked if there could be a Contemplative Communion. This is now underway and an ongoing dialogue has led to the positioning of the church as "a place for stillness and reflection."

We are now engaged in joint outreach to the local community, inviting folks to engage in Contemplative Fire offerings, Centering Prayer, and a Contemplative Communion. Fortunately these are all spread throughout the week. As someone noted, these offerings together make up the semblance of a monastic life, although the (brick) walls are still in evidence!

Is contemplation and stillness how those outside the church generally want to connect, or at best, able to connect with church or Spirit today? I think so.

Feedback from folks who join us at Contemplative Fire tell us they are nourished and that we may be one of the only venues where they can discuss faith (the intuitive experience of truth). They appreciate that they can express doubt, and not told what they have to believe. Several references were made during the weekend to Contemplative Fire as a Sweetwater Well. It is indeed.

This was brought home by one of the weekend's participants, who made us vividly aware of the challenges of her generation, struggling to do a "huge amount". A generation tired and burnt out. "Most feel desperate." How can they be fed? She described Contemplative Fire as "feeling like heaven" because of how we treat each other. "We talk lovingly to each other," she observed, an experience not felt elsewhere. Does this not inspire us to do more?

Her experience of unconditional love is part of the Sweetwater Well we offer to others. Others noted that: "We are all about being, so others can be." "Pray into the lament." "Grace over and over."

I am inspired and excited about where you are as a community. A period of "storming, norming and forming" has coalesced into talented leadership. You have resources (often not the case with a non-profit organization) and a very capable Treasurer able to guide you as you commit resources to outreach and building the community. You have the glue of a strong Administrator which is essential in a community of volunteers, in my humble opinion.

The challenge now I imagine will be ministering to those that come to the Sweetwater Well, in a simple and effective way. Will this require a part time resource to engage, mentor and support leaders/facilitators of small group offerings? We are asking ourselves a similar

question about how best to develop our community, knowing that we are stretched.

I am reminded by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin to trust in the slow work of God. May this year continue to be fruitful and blessed!

### Song and Silence

*Gill Greenwood led our Song and Silence on the Friday evening, which included this prayer:*

May the Father of Life pour out His grace on you; may you feel His hand in everything you do and be strengthened by the things He brings you through; this is my prayer for you.

May the Son of God be Lord in all your ways; may He shepherd you the length of all your days, and in your heart may He receive the praise; this is my prayer for you.

And despite how simple it may sound, I pray that His grace will abound and motivate everything you do; and may the fullness of His love be shared through you.

May His Spirit comfort you, and make you strong, may He discipline you gently when you're wrong, and in your heart may He give you a song; this is my prayer for you.

May Jesus be Lord in all your ways, may He shepherd you the length of all your days, and in your heart may He receive the praise; this is my prayer for you, my prayer for you.

Northumbria Community

*Thank you to Francoise for holding the weekend, to Tina for all the administration and to everyone who was able to come.*

---

**Pilgrimage to Now/here  
Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October  
Whirlow Spirituality Centre  
Sheffield**

Jane Johnston and Cathy Nutt led the Pilgrimage. Jane began by quoting from Parker Palmer's "Let Your Life Speak" about Autumn. "Autumn is a season of great beauty, but it is also a season of decline: the days grow shorter, the light is suffused, and summer's abundance decays towards winter's death. Faced with this inevitable winter, what does nature do in autumn? It scatters the seeds that will bring

new growth in the spring – and scattering them in amazing abandon". Reflection questions included:

-what do I need to let go of to enter this time apart? Are there demands that call me away, or ideas, attitudes, tasks, responsibilities, relationships?

-hold on to something tight and let it go in the wind.

-when did an ending bring a new beginning into my life? What did it feel like to experience that ending? And then that beginning?

-is there something in my life that is beginning to break away from me, something that is coming to an end, something that no longer serves me?



*Cathy Nutt writes:*

Entering a small, darkish woodland, there was some simple seating arranged in a circle. We had a small lantern that was lit and placed in the centre.

"One of the paradoxes of Autumn is that although we are now going down (at least I always think of it as going down) into the darkest part of the year, it is interesting that in the Celtic Wheel of the Year, for example, this season, moving towards Samhain, is actually seen as moving towards the beginning of the year. Because the dying and then the seeding or reseeded that takes place now is seen as the true start of the yearly cycle. The state of lying dormant in the dark is as important as the moving into the light.

So, whilst we are here, in this darkish place, let's go inside for a few moments.



*"The seed is in the ground, now may we all be blessed, whilst darkness does its work"*





Think of one thing, no matter how small, that you can do to begin to nourish that quality.”

Let’s drop down through all the layers of thoughts and fears and emotions that usually block our connection to Spirit..... And invite the Holy Spirit to guide us to see what Quality feels like it wants to be seeded ...or planted ...in your life at this time. Try not to judge what comes to you, no matter how unusual or challenging it might seem.

Staying in this quiet place, now consider what might need to fade or die or in some way decay in order for that seed to take root and flourish...Again try not to judge what comes to you, no matter how unusual or challenging. Here we had about 5 to 10 minutes of silence.

We then moved slowly out of the woods and out into an open space overlooking the city of Sheffield and the hills surrounding it.



We stood silently there for a few minutes.

“Now that we have moved into the light, let’s consider another aspect in the trefoil of CF- crossing the threshold.

Recall to mind that seed, that quality that is asking to grow within you-you can even picture it as a small plant, seedling or bulb- and as you look out - at the world outside our eyes, as it were - take a moment to choose a specific place, action, situation or relationship where you can plant this seedling and begin to give expression to this quality in your world.



### ***The Falling Leaves***

The Falling Leaves  
with a constant chorus of cicadas  
the leaves tumble down,  
from long, thin silver poplars,  
they twirl to the ground,  
dancing the Autumn death dance  
beneath the great blue sky.  
the leaves seem glad at the going.  
(is there something I don’t know?)  
Sparkling in the October sunshine,  
they fill the air with gentle rustling.



One, then another and another,  
on they skim down from above,  
bedding the forest table before me  
with comforting crunches and crackles.  
this gigantic death scene of leaves  
does not smell of sorrow and sadness,  
rather, the earth is coloured with joy  
and the leaves make music in the wind.

why is this dance of death so lovely?  
why do leaves seem so willing to go?  
are they whispering to each other,  
urging one another to be freed?  
maybe "you first and then I'll follow"  
or: "you can do it, go ahead"  
supporting one another gladly  
in their call to final surrender.

I have not yet discovered the secret  
of the serenity of sailing leaves;  
every autumn I walk among them  
with a longing that stretches forever,  
wanting to face that death-dance  
and the truth of my own mortality.

Joyce Rupp

---

### **Contemplative Fire in the North- Agape Meal**

*Jacky Stride writes:*

The group in the North meets at Whirlow on a monthly basis and in various ways - Still Waters, Open Circle etc. In October we were planning a Gathering but then realised we didn't really know how to do it, and didn't have time to do it, so we changed the evening to an Agape Meal, which is not, of course, a regular Contemplative Fire process.

About 20 of us met in the Chapel at Whirlow – three of them serious enquirers, and in fact one of those had become a Companion that very day, the other two intending to soon, and also one interested person. The theme of the evening was "Story", and to begin we sat in silence together around an outline of the trefoil decorated with glorious Autumn leaves and fruits reflecting, perhaps, on the bigger stories and story inside which we all live. Still in the circle we broke bread and passed it round, serving one another, and then moved to pour drinks for one another, before gathering around tables set up at the other end of the Chapel. We raised our glasses to "story" and then proceeded to eat together, sharing the delicious food that everyone had brought. Stories were told around the table as we ate.

Afterwards we moved back into the circle and invited Joy Tobler, a Companion who has recently moved to Sheffield, to share some of her story with all of us. It was wonderful to hear from her how she had been in Contemplative Fire from the very beginning, and also exciting to hear one of her poems and look at her books. Another story teller had been planned also but was not able to come,

but that will be a story to hear on another occasion.

Reflecting on the evening, it contained many elements celebrated by Contemplative Fire, sharing silence and food together and listening to one another. The presence of Joy, a long time traveller, and others at the very beginning of their CF journey felt very special. It may be something we do from time to time to deepen our fellowship, and I share it here as something others may wish to consider doing.

---

### **Contemplative Fire - Wisdom on the Way**

**Sat 16<sup>th</sup> November, 10am - 3pm**

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



Growing into a life of the Spirit  
Reflection on the life of Etty Hillesum

**A day of reading and reflecting in  
meditation and walking together.**

**CF Friend Tom Hinds will share with  
us some of his knowledge of Etty  
Hillesum's extraordinary life under  
Nazi occupation in Holland, 1941-43;  
her diaries, and her letters from  
Westerbork Transit Camp**

**Please bring a packed lunch**

**Suggested donation for the day  
between £10 and £20 per person by  
BACS transfer: sort code 09-01-27,  
account 78891209 ref 'WOTW', or  
cheque payable to Contemplative Fire**

***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)***