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# contemplative **fire**

creating a community of Christ at the edge

# **Contemplative Fire Post**

## January 2020 - no.39

### Welcome to the first of the 2020 Contemplative Fire Posts

which I hope will be informative, contemplative, and perhaps a little bit warming or enlivening too.

The wonderful Gill, who has been editing and collating CF Post for many years, has stepped back to enable her to focus on home, family and other things and I'd ask you all to hold her in your thoughts and offer thanks for the great service she has done for Contemplative Fire and for all of us who have been blessed and encouraged by her work in producing The Post...

Now it is my task and privilege to take over the collating, editing and producing of Contemplative Fire Post for our community. I only hope I can do half as good a job as Gill has done! So an introduction... And a plea... My name is Melanie and I've been a companion since 2016. I facilitate a group called CFLincsinthecity which is a new type of expression in the ethos of Contemplative Fire that meets most months in Lincoln. Being a Companion of Contemplative Fire is of great importance to me, and I can honestly say that as a dispersed community member who due to work commitments has not often been able to make other community meetings and activities, I have found Contemplative Fire Post to be an invaluable resource in helping me maintain the connection to the wider community that makes us dispersed companions rather than solitaries on the way... It was this that meant I felt called to step up and offer my services to keep CFPost going and supporting the wider community.

So that's a quick introduction and now on to the plea...

I work full time and am involved in a number of other activities - not least preparing and leading CFLincsinthecity monthly - and so the time I have to do CFPost is limited, and I won't have a lot of time to be chasing for articles and pieces to include so I'm asking you to please, please, send me your thoughts, prayers, poems, images, write ups of sessions you've led or attended... I'm asking you to let me have reviews of books and resources that you'd like to share with the wider community, send me your discussion starters for the group,

send me your ideas for sessions that others could use...

Send me anything you think might be of interest or worth consideration (Be brave, don't second guess yourself, or be reticent, if you found it interesting then almost assuredly others in the community will!).

A fire is kindled by a small spark, but for the small spark to be kindled it first needs action and activity to generate it...

And to become a full and ongoing fire it needs fuel to keep it alive - and that my Companions and Friends is what we do, and can do, by our sharing here in the space that is the Contemplative Fire Post! (As well, of course, as on our website, forum, and Facebook pages and group!). So please share your material, your activities, your insights, contemplation, and fire with me so we can be a warm, vibrant community dispersing our energy out through the pages of CFPost.

## Contemplative Fire - Wisdom on theWay

## Growing into a Life of the Spirit



On Saturday 16th November a group of 19 CF members and friends of members met at Greenacres;- a natural burial woodland site with a beautiful glass walled "Gathering Hall" as its meeting or ceremony point.

It was good to see Companions who had travelled from quite some distance to attend this event!

We are so lucky to be able to take advantage of Companion Tom Hinds extensive knowledge.

For this event he talked to us about the spiritual growth in the short, dynamic and FULL life of Etty Hillesum, recorded in her diaries and letters.

Etty, a non -religious Jew, lived in Amsterdam during the Nazi occupation and

ended her life, aged just 29 years old, at Auschwitz.

We devised a new body prayer from her writings, and spent time in stillness and in sharing.

I loved the new knowledge and insights that were offered on the day. A truly inspiring story, and inspirational day. Today I can't stop looking at the sky from my window and the greenery-mostly the russet gold, orange and red tones of the beech trees at the end of the garden.... *Elizabeth Okey.* 

### Welcome to new Companions of Contemplative Fire

A very warm welcome to 2 new Companions:

-Cath Williamson from Sheffield

-Tim Moore from Huddersfield



We are Companions on the Journey with God and with each other. 'Then their eyes were opened and they recognised him... They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"' Luke 24: 31, 32, NRSV.

### **Trustee Meeting**

Contemplative Fire is an Acknowledged Community of The Church of England and as such we have a nominated Bishop Visitor. Many of you will have had the pleasure of meeting Bp. Anne Hollinghurst of Aston, our visitor, at the Community Weekend, at Shallowford House.



In our normal cycle of business meeting the trustees met on Friday 10th Jan at the home of Bishop Anne in Sutton Coldfield. We of course are very grateful to Bp Anne, for not only providing a venue and a lovely lunch, but in particular for her presence as she joined the trustees for the morning session of the meeting.

This was good as the Bishop could listen to our deliberations and learn more of our life as a community, but she also had the opportunity to share some of her own insights and wisdom, a rich contribution to our deliberations.



### **New Trustees**

It may seem a very long time away, but at the Community weekend in September, the Community elects people to the Board of Trustees who are charged with ensuring we meet the stated objectives of the Community, that our finances are handled responsibly, and planning for the continued resourcing and development of the Contemplative Fire community.

Currently we number 6 trustees, but would love to see some new faces join us in the work. We meet four times a year and new trustees would bring fresh energy, vision and insight.

The reason we are raising this so far in advance is because we would like you to seriously consider whether you could serve our Community in this way for a period of time?

If you do feel drawn to ask more questions as you consider this then please contact any of the current trustees to find out more; we would be happy to chat with you about this particular way of supporting the community we all love.

Jeremy Timm

### **Trustees Meeting 10 January 2020**

The board was in full attendance at our last meeting held, at the invitation of Bishop Anne Hollinghurst, our bishop visitor, in the oak-panelled splendour of the Lodge's dining room.

After a time of stillness led by Jack around a fine poem by Wendell Berry, The Peace of Wild Things, points raised at our previous meeting prompted a decision to alert Companions to the need for new trustees early enough to invite the whole Community to attend to it in prayer and volunteering. The effects of our attendance at Greenbelt, in terms of membership and further developments for this year were reviewed. Bishop Anne appreciated our presence there and looked forward to connecting again in 2020 while Steve, her husband, would assist in integrating us into the programme.

Early plans for the Community Weekend are being headed by Peter.

The rest of the morning was dedicated to a discussion on leadership as raised in the plenary at our last Community Weekend. The pièce de résistance was a paper written by Simon Musgrave alongside considerations the Trustees had exchanged in prior emails. Simon invited us to envisage several possible models, (and inspired other, non- hierarchical possibilities). Underpinning our reflection were an awareness of the gap left by Philip and the acknowledgment that a founder cannot be replaced; the role of the tradition and the need to keep the vision and to grow it materially and spiritually. We noted that we have a structure established by the 2016 review and the existence of several regional nuclei, which need to feel involved in the decisionmaking process, while keeping the structure and leadership light touch and respectful of our diverse and independent membership. The Board has held this loose leadership role in parallel with its legal obligations, guarding the flame and carrying it onwards, but acknowledges the need for a dynamic development on this foundation, preferably inspired and guided by our trust in God.

Bishop Anne pointed out that the Board had operated as an eldership fully attuned to Contemplative Fire's visions and values and she saw the potential for this model to work, with Companions willing to take their turn and contribute the skills needed by the Community at the time. With prayer and discernment, the Trustees in this role need to consider what is missing to continue evolving the vision, drawing inspiration from the Community and steering a course without squashing individual aspirations. Such a leadership supposes the involvement of all members and a true appreciation of their input.

This would be best achieved through the Community Weekend, when the opportunity is there to comment on the vision and its development. Simon's paper took us to the conclusion that the Trustees constitute a team leadership but as such need to work on spiritual enrichment. To this end, the first Board meeting after the Community Weekend will focus on visions and values as discussed at its plenary session, raising the total of annual Board meetings to 5, not to encroach on the business of the Board. There is a need for more trustees to share responsibilities and to ensure a better representation of the regions. We are clearly much indebted to Simon for his thorough and thoughtprovoking analysis and for the fruit it is already bearing. After a delicious meal, Bishop Anne left us early in the afternoon proceedings – not before being thanked for her valuable input and splendid hospitality.

We went on to keep tabs on the events on the calendar which included Helen's pioneering hosting of Brandon Robertson in Cambridge on 8 February with Peter and Caroline in attendance, the February 14/16 Silent Retreat and the experimental Whaley Hall Working Party Retreat (March 11/16).

Preparations for the Community Fellowship Weekend are under way, with Elizabeth Carrington taking on a leading role and Jeremy Timm in support, around the Creation as a possible theme.

The fall in attendance at retreats, which exist for the purpose of furthering community and contemplative life, has resulted in financial losses and has led the Trustees to conclude that this offer is not valued and so to bring residential events down to 3 in 2021, namely the Community Fellowship Weekend, the Summer Retreat and the Community Weekend. The possibility of a week-end pilgrimage will be explored at our next meeting.

The quest for affordable venues for these events falls to Tina. Any suggestions welcome.

The poor attendance at retreats has had a deleterious effect on our finances and Caroline had to report those losses. She reassured us that the current deficit will be corrected in line with the reduction of retreat offers and after one off payments and funding for developments eventually result in anticipated savings (e.g. the setting up of Sage). The budget will be discussed in detail at the March Board meeting.

It was good to hear of all the diverse activities taking place in the North,

the Chilterns, Nottinghamshire and Gloucestershire, echoes of a living Community brought at its heart by local Trustees.

I had a heartening chat with Jo-Anne Raynes who, among other news of (re)development in Canada, mentioned that they were refreshing their website, hopefully easing communication between our Communities.

CF Post is now in the capable hands of Melanie Carroll – for which much gratitude – and is probably waiting for this very piece to go on line – in which case many apologies. The Rhythm of Life Resources book has been reprinted and is available via Regional Contacts or a Trustee or by contacting Tina.

As I confirmed my intention to stand down after six years of trusteeship, the exact length of terms of service came under discussion and will be clarified in the context of our appeal for new trustees. I am not "quitting" but making room for others to do great work, imaginatively, and in wonderful company, this to support and enhance our Community. Being a trustee has been a privilege. Don't miss the opportunity.

Francoise Pinteaux-Jones

It is with pleasure that we share with you the latest news from 'Friends of Kianjai' - a wonderful charity that is very much the work of some of our own Contemplative Fire Companions...

Hello Dear Supporter

Thank you for your commitment to our work and for sharing your resources with those in challenging circumstances. We are delighted to report that during 2019 our Phase one Special Units completed work on their sustainable farming plots and harvested food. Work to complete phase 2 is ongoing and the waterpans collected the October rains. The farms are nearing completion and all the teachers have received permaculture training , guidance and support. We are so happy with the positive response and energetic work and enthusiasm from students and teachers alike.

Kunene Special School harvesting water melons for market.





Under the water-collecting roof is a large pan. The water is pumped from here into the tank and irrigates the field.

In order to give you a fuller idea of our work this year I attach a wonderful **annual report from Nkanata** who volunteers his time and skills with the special units. He is a special unit teacher himself and works to co-ordinate our work across the units. He has also been a key player in the development of our Rehema respite centre and the vision we hold to provide respite, support and care for families and their disabled children. Funding has been raised over the years to build this centre and following a generous gift from the UK and some fundraising in Nairobi we were able to finish a dormitory and washing facilities plus build the kitchen. To celebrate this milestone we hosted our annual disability day here which was very moving and a huge load of fun with food for our 700 visitors including local chiefs, education officers, families and children.



Mum and daughter at our annual funday- this year at the Rehema Centre !

Banners were displayed for each of the 14 special units celebrating the day

In 2020 we hope to start using the centre to make good use of the facilities that are now ready **with the provision of day care**. At our meeting in December the trustees decided to give the go-ahead for 3 carers with a group of 10 children for 5 days a week for a three month term. We will ask the parent to give one day a week as a volunteer and there will be no fee for the child. In this 3 month period we hope to train the parents , assess the child, provide physiotherapy and measure for aids from our APT workshop. To be able to provide such individualised attention and support for parent and child is rare to find in our area and we are very excited to be at the beginning of this new adventure and we have confidence in the wonderful volunteers and professionals involved.

This project will need new funding and we are making it our **Christmas Appeal** this year. Please consider how you may support us in this. The budget stands at about £4500-£5000 per annum and we hope that you will choose to help us. There is a DONATE NOW button at the end of this email that gives you an opportunity to support us both as a one-off and also on a monthly basis. Please be assured that 100% of your gift will go to this project !

Our Annual report and accounts has now been filed with the charity commission and can be found on their website.

Thank you so much! For further information on the project please email FKK Chairperson Caroline Newton caroline@mulhouse.co.uk

With Greetings from the trustees

Caroline Newton , Jonathan & Elizabeth Gichaara, Sally Livsey and Gladys Gesage

## Greenbelt Friday 28 August to Monday 31st August

Dear Companions and Friends, With the start of 2020 we are looking forward to the summer Greenbelt festival and our CF presence there. Building on the interest in CF we experienced at the 2019 festival it is intended that we take a small space this year, to make people aware of our community and how it can support them in their own unique journeys. Last year we had 6 people representing CF who took turns in pairs to man our area.

Due to the high level of interest and the number of conversations we engaged in, we would like to extend this number up to 10 this year.

This will enable each person to both support our Community stand and also have time to take in other aspects of the festival.

For CF representatives the cost of entry for the weekend is significantly reduced down to £50, and without exception all the CF representatives last year enjoyed the experience and are keen to attend again. Would you be interested in joining us?

If so and you'd like more information please do contact me on <u>caroline@mulhouse.co.uk</u>. Many kind regards Caroline

## **Events List**

#### Saturday 1st February

Pilgrimage to Now/here – Active Hope in the Climate Crisis

Led by Contemplative Fire Companions Ali Dorey and Mike Nutt.

There will be a short walk, including some simple body prayer. Our time together will offer opportunities for us to see the reality of climate change with new eyes and find hopeful ways of living in response.

Sheffield.



Active Hope in the Climate Crisis Saturday 1 February 2020 9.30 for 10am until 3.00pm



Led by Contemplative Fire Companions Ali Dorey and Mike Nutt. There will be a short walk, including some simple body prayer. Our time together will offer opportunities for us to see the reality of climate change with new eyes and find hopeful ways of living in response.

Venue: Longshaw Estate Discovery Centre (next to main car park), S11 7TZ https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/longshaw-burbage-and-the-eastern-moors

Each Pilgrimage to Now/here is open to all, so please feel free to bring a friend You will need a packed lunch and weatherproof wear Suggested donation for the day, between £10 and £20 per person.

It's helpful for us to know how many people are coming, so please book by emailing: info@contemplativefire.org (including your name, contact and details of any donation). Pay by BACS if you can: Contemplative Fire: 78891209 Sort Code: 09-01-27 Reference your payment with "[your surname] PTN"

### Saturday 8th February

### Rev Brandan Robertson on Inclusive Communities: Wisdom On The Way

"True Inclusion: Creating Communities of Radical Embrace"



A chance to hear the pastor and author Rev Brandan Robertson, San Diego pastor, author, LGBT+ rights activist, and executive director of Metanoia, speak at this evening event on this crucial topic. Cambridge.

### Friday 14th February - Sunday 16th February

Silent Retreat Weekend – The Art of Noticing... Exploring the Inner and Outer World This year's retreat will be led by poet and author, Adrian Scott.

Shallowford House, Stone.

# Contemplative Fire

Contemplative Fire: travelling light, dwelling deep



#### "THE ART OF NOTICING..... EXPLORING THE INNER AND OUTER WORLD"

A weekend Silent Retreat led by Adrian Scott Friday 14<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> of February 2020 At, Shallowford House, Stone, Staffordshire, ST15 0NZ

Adrian was raised in South Yorkshire, and trained for five years for the Roman Catholic Priesthood; before his ordination, he realised that institutional Christianity was not for him. He married Wilma, and worked as a community development worker in East London helping local people deal with the imposition of Canary Wharf. Studying for a Masters in Organisational Development, he moved back to Sheffield, and worked across South Yorkshire with people suffering from the effects of post industrial depression. Always simmering in the background was an urge to write which is now his primary vocation, publishing his first collection of poetry in 2011 – "The Call of the Unwritten". He began "The Mark Widdowson Blogs" as a personal reflection on Mark's Gospel, the truth dawning that the story and reality began to mirror each other.

Using poetry and the written word, Adrian will lead us on a journey of heightened awareness.

**Cost:** there are 24 single places at a cost of £99 per person, full board, arriving from 4pm on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> and departing after lunch on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup>.

To book, please complete and return the form on the next page by email or post. Please if possible make a BACS transfer or send a cheque for the total amount of £99, to arrive by Friday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2020 (Address & Payment details below)

www.contemplativefire.org

Registered Charity: 1106392

### **Still Waters**

27th January - Berkshire

**3rd February - Sheffield** 

### 24th February - Berkshire

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