



The Newsletter of Contemplative Fire

Issue 6

Summer/Autumn 2006

Redemption Songs: Greenbelt 06

Welcome to our Summer/Autumn issue of 'Burning Bush', the Contemplative Fire newsletter... and summer, for 18,000 people last year and an anticipated 20,000 people this year, means Greenbelt!

Every August bank holiday, Cheltenham Race Course in Gloucestershire is converted into a gigantic party-cum-campsite for the four days of the Greenbelt all-age Christian arts festival (www.greenbelt.org.uk). Billed as 'one festival, many faces', the theme for Greenbelt 06 is 'Redemption Songs', and the line-up includes everyone from international musicians and peace activists to poets and theologians.

For the second year running, Contemplative Fire has a presence alongside its sister-organisation the Quiet Garden Movement, whose garden space in the heart of the festival's exhibition area, 'The Pulse', provides an oasis for festival-goers.

Travelling Light, Dwelling Deep ... the Contemplative Fire Guide

After months in the making, we are delighted to announce that our new guide to the Contemplative Fire community and its rhythm of life is now available, by email or in hard copy.

For people who feel drawn to our Trinitarian rhythm of being-knowing-doing, prayer-study-action, the Guide is designed to be a resource for our companions on the Way, and one model for a Christian life of 'contemplation-in-action'.

We hope to follow up shortly with a resource-pack which allows for further reading, discovery and practice, individually and in community, of ways to support a contemporary active/contemplative Christian way of life in the world. Our website is currently being rebuilt and

When and where to find us at Greenbelt...

- Come and meet us on the **Contemplative Fire stand in 'The Pulse'**, in the Centre Racecourse area, alongside the Quiet Garden – we'd love to see you!
- Friday night only! To get yourself in festival mood, join Philip Roderick's **Rhythm & Chant workshop at 9.00 pm on Friday in the Soul Space (the Panoramic Café at the top of the grandstand)**. Afro-Celtic rhythms from some unusual sources (from the extraordinary Hang drum to ordinary cardboard boxes), leading into syncopated body prayer and new chants with a contemplative Christian flavour.
- Join us first thing **every day in the Soul Space** (Sat 26 – Mon 28 Aug) at **9.00 am for Morning Prayer, Contemplative Fire-style**. Gentle rhythm with percussion and sacred posture to inspire and awaken new patterns and resonances for you, out of the ancient liturgies of morning prayer: a reflective and imaginative beginning to the day.
- **Evening Prayer, 6.00, Saturday and Sunday in the Soul Space...** a refreshing re-working of traditional Evening Prayers, with thoughtful stops along the Christian Way.

in due course we want to make these new resources available online for our dispersed community, as well as in print format.

The Guide explores what it means to be a member of the Contemplative Fire community; 'Travelling Light, Dwelling Deep' as a rhythm of life; and how to support us with practical giving and prayerful engagement in our processes.

If you would like a copy, please email, telephone or write to the Contemplative Fire office (contact details on the back of this newsletter) with your request.



Back by popular request... 'Living the Mystery' 2006-7 at Thame

An ongoing commitment to study and learning is part of the Contemplative Fire rhythm of life.

During 2005-6, more than sixty people gathered regularly every two months at Thame, near Oxford, to take part in 'Living the Mystery', our unique programme exploring the Christian tradition of mystical theology and contemplation.

By popular request, we are re-running the 'first year' again, on six Saturdays (see dates below) during 2006-7, and adding a new 'second year' to build and deepen the experience. The primary themes are 'seeing, knowing, loving', echoing Meister Eckhart's mystical experience of God and of all reality as 'one seeing, one knowing and one love'.

New programme starting Sept 06

Why not join us for the start of the next programme, in September 06? Whether you are a curious enquirer, a spiritual director, or an experienced contemplative practitioner, you will find something here to deepen both your knowledge and your experience - and, therefore, your contribution to the lives of others.

'Living the Mystery' engages with the transformational texts of scripture, and with the life and ministry of Christ and of Christian saints and mystics across the centuries. It draws on different styles of learning, theological input, silence,

natural beauty and body prayer, for a rich and replenishing experience that informs the whole of daily life.

Titles and dates of the 2006-7 sessions are:

9 September 06 *Wonderstruck Beholding: Revealing God*

11 November 06 *Burning Bush: Shining at the Heart of Matter*

13 January 07 *Garden of Awakening: Desert of Unknowing*

10 March 07 *The Play of Wisdom: Learning Delight*

12 May 07 *Wounded Healer: Divine Intimacy*

14 July 07 *Fire of Love: Audacious Longing*

'Living the Mystery' will be held in Thame Barns Centre, Thame near Oxford on the above dates from 9.30 am to 3.30 pm. The course is led by Revd Philip Roderick, his staff team and guest presenters. Within the host diocese of Oxford, the course has been eligible for a CME grant, and other dioceses have in some cases offered funding for clergy from CME budgets.

The cost of the course is a recommended £40 per session, or £210 for all six pre-booked. Places are limited - don't miss out on this unique opportunity. Please register in advance by sending a cheque payable to 'Contemplative Fire' to the address on the back page.

Learning Sketes - a glimpse of the future, out of the past

The Christian mystical tradition, today as always, affirms the existence of a direct relationship between each person and God. It began with Jesus himself, who shows how his intimate sense of God as 'abba' did not remove him from the ordinary realities of daily life.

But scripture is not our only source of a sense of God. Words, images, the natural world, each other - all open doors in our understanding of the divine relationship.

Sharing that journey of deepening understanding - that 'journey in Presence' - is part of the rhythm of life for Contemplative Fire members.

In addition to 'Living the Mystery', Contemplative Fire's foundational series for exploring the riches of the contemplative and mystical Christian traditions, and the various retreats and Quiet Days available to Contemplative

Fire members, we are currently exploring a new vehicle for peer learning and shared study.

Following the successful launch of our Community Guide, 'Travelling Light, Dwelling Deep', we are preparing a set of resources for members, including tools for the practice of silence, creative ways of deepening our relationship with God (through, for instance, journaling, art, photography, movement and 'being' in the outdoors); and booklists and study packs for members' personal use.

Learning Sketes

But Contemplative Fire is also deeply committed to being a 'learning community', and so a new model is needed to allow our dispersed members ways of accompanying each other on the learning journey.

In the early Egyptian monastic tradition, people living as solitaries gathered together occasionally in 'Sketes' for

Equipping more Pioneering Leaders

Contemplative Fire has submitted outline proposals for a new training programme designed to equip young leaders of the future with life skills that draw on the contemplative and mystical Christian tradition.

Expanding on models developed for Contemplative Fire's own internal focaliser training, "Pioneering Leaders" is a process for training, equipping and mentoring young adults (defined for funding purposes as aged 20-40) to flourish as leaders within their communities, both Christian and secular.

The programme is based upon the Contemplative Fire metaphor of "Travelling Light and Dwelling Deep", with its Trinitarian pattern of "Still Waters", "Learning Journey", and "Across the Threshold" (the 'trefoil' that underpins the Contemplative Fire Rhythm of Life). The process synthesises the three elements of our core Trinitarian expression of Christian faith: the stillness of being within ourselves; the shared journey towards wisdom within a learning community; and the active expression of God's inspiration to compassionate action and entrepreneurial excellence.

Stillness, storytelling and sending

Jesus' methodology of using real experience to develop thinking, learning and attitude is applied within the

companionship and for discussion of the contemplative life. Members of Contemplative Fire are not 'solitaries' in the literal sense, but we are geographically scattered and it can feel solitary to be seeking independent learning and growth in God in a contemplative rhythm.

Learning Sketes – groups meeting online, or face to face, in a prayerful environment – offer the opportunity for people to share, from both their hearts and minds, their understandings and problems, excitement, doubts and the enormous unanswerables that this work necessarily generates.

We are still some way from delivering the materials to support this exciting new way of traveling together, but we are indebted to Richard and Sheila Newman for the time they have already spent on this important project and look forward to updating members on our progress.

"Pioneering Leaders" model, which explicitly draws on the example of the apostolic ministry of the first disciples, the inspiration of our scriptural heritage and the discipleship of young adults through storytelling, sending and returning.

Philip Roderick, Anglican priest, educator and percussionist, is the initiator and leader both of the international Quiet Garden Movement and the Contemplative Fire community. For the past thirty years Philip has worked in the fields of young adult formation and education, as a teacher and trainer with schools, in training ordinands, as a lecturer in theology and spirituality and as an international public speaker.

He describes the training programme "as part of our vision for the world: we want to equip and build a new generation of Christian leaders to be agents of dynamic Christian change and a source of deep wisdom within their own communities".

"Land, Sea, Sky"

An associated project, "Land, Sea, Sky", has Christian leaders working with other young adults to develop their sense of spirituality. Outreach-focused "Land, Sea, Sky" is committed to supporting young adults to enable them to engage with modern life in a way that reflects spiritual wholeness and joined-up living. This programme, which has an important outdoor-learning component, emphasises the notion that life is lived out in the relationship between the seemingly constant (the land), the ebb and flow of constant change (the sea), and overarching mystery (the sky).

The aim is to establish both programmes as resources for the wider church, potentially in the US as well as in the UK, for the development of young adults facing the challenges of 21st century outreach.

Contemplative Fire Retreat September 2006

There are still a couple of places left on our retreat – 'The Quality of Seeing: The Fullness of Being'. Join us at The Sheldon Centre in the beautiful, secluded Teign Valley in Devon for 6 nights from 15 Sept. Through a daily rhythm of silence, prayer, reflection, creativity, companionship, good food, exercise (and a little work!) find yourself being restored. Be awakened to see more of the mystery of God in the beauty of nature. Cost: £365.

To secure a place, please contact the office (see back page).

About Contemplative Fire

Contemplative Fire is a 'Fresh Expression of Church' supported by the Anglican and Methodist traditions, and mandated by Archbishop Rowan Williams. It is also one of Oxford Diocese's authorised Cutting Edge Ministries.

Whilst Contemplative Fire also attracts those from different Christian (or non-faith) backgrounds, it is accountable to and in creative dialogue with the Church of England.

Wherever Contemplative Fire establishes itself as a praying, liturgical community, the blessing of local and diocesan leaders is sought. Such a context allows for two-way prayer support and the opportunity, along with the inherited Church, to share and wrestle with theological, missional and pastoral issues.

Contemplation-in-Action

Members of the Contemplative Fire community commit to a life of contemplation-in-action. Our rhythm of life is both local and global. It encourages a personal relationship with God, a deep sharing with others, costly giving and an offering to the wider community of our own specific gifts. Contemplative Fire resources both individual members and its network of local groups, through a combination of learning materials, experiential processes, creative worship and the training and equipping of its local and national membership.

If you would like to support the work of Contemplative Fire, or to explore membership, please pick up one of our postcards or contact the office – details on panel opposite.

Where (else) to find us!

Contemplative Fire Monthly Gatherings

Share contemplative communion, music and chant, body-prayer and simple movement in a reflective prayer process that seeks to integrate creative arts, wisdom and worship.

Our monthly gatherings at **Dorchester Abbey, near Abingdon, Oxon** take place **at 6.30 pm on the first Sunday of every month.**

Our FINAL monthly gathering at **Wick Farm Barn, Wigginton, Bucks** (near Tring – see the downloadable map on our website) takes place on **September 10 at 6.30 pm.**

From **October 8 at 6.30 pm, and on every second Sunday of the month** after that, we will be celebrating in a NEW VENUE, at **Abbott's Hill School, on the edge of Hemel Hempstead** – once again, for details see the Events section on our website, or telephone the office on 01494 758878.

Around the Hearth - Local Contemplative Fire

Local groups continue to meet in Buckinghamshire (Cholesbury, Penn, Amer-sham); West Sussex (Storrington); Hampshire (Bosham, Emsworth) and Gloucestershire (Stroud). If you would like to be part of a local Contemplative Fire group meeting 'Around the Hearth' as a Three, a Seven or an Open Circle, please in the first instance contact Jo Rowbotham (jo@contemplativefire.org / 01453 766497) for details of any meetings in your area.

Member Event: Contemplative Fire Quiet Days at Elmore Abbey

Good news for those who were unable, for reasons of space, to attend the first cycle of three Quiet Days for members of the Contemplative Fire community at Elmore Abbey, near Newbury, last Winter. A repeat of the series has now been arranged, to take place on **18 November 2006, 24 March and 26 May 2007.** The days include talks, reflection and questioning, as well as 'breathing space', solitude and silence in the abbey and its environs.

Themes range from the Benedictine Rule to great monastic thinkers of the 12th century such as William of St. Thierry, Abbot Aelred of Rievaulx and St. Bernard of Clairvaux. Anyone who is interested in joining one or more of these days is asked to contact Sheila Newman on DrSMNewman@aol.com, or telephone the office on 01494 758878. A follow-up 'series 2' is already fully subscribed. Our thanks once again to Sheila and Richard Newman for instigating these sought-after day-retreats for our members.

For further details on any item in this issue of 'Burning Bush', please contact the Contemplative Fire office at:

The Old Smithy, Hawridge Common, Chesham HP5 2UQ

Tel: 01494 758878 Email: info@contemplativefire.org

Website: www.contemplativefire.org