



The Newsletter of Contemplative Fire

Issue 7

Summer/Autumn 2007

HEAVEN IN ORDINARY

Contemplative Fire returns to the radical Christian arts festival Greenbelt at Cheltenham this year with a programme of workshops and worship that reflects its own 'happening spirit' as a community of Christ at the edge.

As a Fresh Expression of church, Contemplative Fire resonates with Greenbelt's 2007 theme of 'Heaven in Ordinary'. CF's guiding rhythm is the Celtic trefoil, whose threefold cycles of being, knowing, doing – or prayer, study, action – undergird and help to make sense of our contemporary desire to rediscover everyday life as a Christ-centred journey ever deeper into God.

Morning Worship, CF-style

Each festival morning (ie Saturday, Sunday and Monday) at 9.00 am, Morning Worship with CF will seek to balance the Trinity of the Self – body, mind and spirit – by combining stillness and listening with gentle movement, chant, percussion and sacred posture.

Rhythm and Drumming

On Friday and Saturday evenings, CF founder Revd Philip Roderick is running experiential rhythm-and-drumming workshops (see Greenbelt Insert for details), using Afro-

Celtic rhythms and an eclectic array of instruments (including the body and the voice!) to create celebratory worship-spaces that invite joyous participation.

Embodied Mysticism

On festival Monday, Philip and his colleague Ruth Harvey-Regan take an idiosyncratic, improvisational journey through conversation, percussion and performance poetry to explore the places where scripture, the Christian wisdom tradition and personal experience meet and interact.

Ruth's first class degree in Contextual Art Practice, and distinction in performance poetry at MA, combined with Philip's skills as theological educator and percussionist, inform this authentic bid to 'embody' knowledge, rather than simply talking about it...

For times and locations of the above, please see the "Festival insert" accompanying this issue, or consult the Festival Programme.

Revd Philip Roderick is an Anglican priest, educator and drummer! He is the founder and leader of Contemplative Fire, a Fresh Expression of church supported by the Church of England and the Methodist Church. He is also the Founder-director of the Quiet Garden Movement, a

worldwide ministry of hospitality and prayer, and an experienced speaker and workshop leader.

His book 'Beloved: Henri Nouwen in Conversation' is published this autumn in the UK and US, and he has also released a DVD ('Sacred Posture') teaching body prayer.

Philip Roderick also features on two music CDs, 'Sheer Sound' playing the Hang drum and 'Songs of Presence,' a collection of contemplative Christian chants (please visit our website www.contemplativefire.org for details). Philip's blogsite is at: rodericksrambles.wordpress.com

Being...at the edge: the adventure of contemplative ministry

From October 2007, Revd Tessa Holland will no longer be attached to a parish church. A new General License from the Bishop means that Tessa will be exploring what it means to live her ministry as a 'contemplative in action'.

Tessa and her husband Mark lead the local CF community in the West Sussex, Hampshire and Portsmouth area. Tessa describes the new License as 'a venture-some journeying into the unknown, deeply grounded in things that are familiar': taking deeper her existing practice of prayerful stillness, study and silence, while drawing on her own contemplative journey to enable and encourage others in 'being and knowing' on the way of Christ.

Meanwhile, there is also the anchor of the known: caring for their family of three daughters and two cats at their family home 'Wild Fortune', at Storrington – which also opens monthly to the public as a Quiet Garden, for stillness and quiet; seeing people for spiritual direction;

and continuing to play a role in the local community, while keeping the Contemplative Fire flag flying. As well as giving talks and leading workshops locally, Tessa will be contributing to the nurture of groups and regional events in the Sussex/Hampshire region and to the work of the leadership team for the whole CF Community.



"I'm not sure exactly how this is going to work out from day to day!" says Tessa: "it's going to be a journey of discoveries and of learning as I go, on my own and in the company of my fellow seekers and spiritual travellers."

"I hope to visit other places and groups who practice contemplation, and also to meet those who are interested, intrigued, or just curious - to share stories and questions, to listen, and together to be open to the presence of the divine, in each moment and place."

Reaching In, Reaching Out – Partnering Local Church

As 'Fresh Expressions of Church' start to play a significant role in outreach at local and regional level, there is increasingly the opportunity for creative interchange between leaders of mainstream churches and those, like Contemplative Fire, committed to working at the frontier of the contemporary search for an engaged spirituality.

Contemplative Fire's own mission is to practising Christians seeking a more reflective and integrative framework for their faith, as well as those from any tradition or none, looking to learn about the radical and contemplative way of Jesus Christ.

As many have discovered, Contemplative Fire's rhythm of life, with its emphasis on 'prayer – study – action', is eminently compatible with a leadership role, helping to ground and balance the demands of vocation and offer-

ing a context for self-awareness, discovery of 'other' and a deepening learning journey for themselves and those around.

Contemplative Fire is developing its 'Reaching In, Reaching Out' programme for local churches, deaneries and districts in the denominations formally supporting the Fresh Expressions movement. The modular small-group and large-group processes offer creative ways to engage with the mystery at the heart of the Christian story, while being inclusive enough to speak to diverse, non-traditional catchments.

We are keen to hear from lay or ordained leaders interested in being collaborative partners with CF on the 'Reaching In, Reaching Out' programme, and / or being equipped and commissioned to establish a local Contemplative Fire presence. Please contact Philip Roderick on philip@contemplativefire.org, or 01494 758878.

New 'Beacon' Series on Contemplative Christianity

Contemplative Fire is to launch its own series of publications on subjects relating to Christian mysticism and the contemplative and monastic traditions.

Titles in the new series will be known as 'Beacons', and the first in the series, due to be published shortly, will be called "Seeking Stillness", authored by Contemplative Fire member Richard Newman.

The publications will be downloadable from the Contemplative Fire website for a small charge online, and available in hard copy for the same price plus postage and packing, from the Contemplative Fire office.

Members' Activities

From Autumn 07, a new series of ***Wisdom on the Way*** launches for members and their invited guests, incorporating the original 3 mile 'Pilgrimage to Now/here' walk through rolling countryside near Henley, as well as storytelling, resource-sharing and community time. Scheduled for 5 Saturdays over 10 months, ***Wisdom on the Way*** explores CF values in an outdoor setting: contemplation-in-action, creative liturgy, celebration of the natural world and the joy of possibly muddy walks in divine company!

Tent of the Presence – the October ***Wisdom on the Way*** event will be extended into a weekend gathering to include food, fellowship and contemplative communion, for members of the Contemplative Fire community.

Quiet Days at Elmore Abbey – day-retreats for CF members, themed around the monastic contemplative tradition and including talks, reflection and questioning, as well as 'breathing space' in the beautiful surroundings of the abbey and its environs. Members interested in joining one of these days should contact Sheila Newman on DrSMNewman@aol.com, or telephone the CF office.

(For more information, for directions to any of the venues, or to find out about becoming a Contemplative Fire member/Companion on the Way, please visit our website, or email or telephone us – details on page 4.)

Coming next year...



Land, Sea, Sky – Journeying at the edge

Are you, or do you know people who are, curious about mystery, beauty, creativity, love and transformation – but suspicious of mainstream religion?

As a Fresh Expression of church, Contemplative Fire reaches out to the pre- and post-church generation and spiritual searchers of any path looking to understand the way of Christ the contemplative.

A new venture starting in 2008, 'Land, Sea, Sky' is a 4-day journey of discovery into the rich, practical heritage of Jewish and Christian spirituality, exploring the interaction of nature, culture and soul, of body, mind and spirit against a backdrop of outstanding natural beauty.

Land, Sea, Sky is about coming home to oneself, letting go, waking up and becoming more fully alive.

Grounded in the integral rhythms of nature, story-telling and stillness, this extended weekend led by Philip Roderick and Rob Husband is for exploration, refuelling and renewal. Taking the natural world as teacher, the group will learn from what is seemingly constant, what is constantly changing, and the all-pervading mystery of the land, sea and sky.

2008 Dates: May 29 – June 1; October 16 –19. Venue: Pembrokeshire Coast. Cost: £398 Non refundable deposit of £75 made payable to Contemplative Fire, The Old Smithy, Hawridge Common, Chesham, HP5 2UQ.

Where to find us

Local and regional Contemplative Fire Groups and Gatherings

Monthly Eucharistic Gatherings in Herts and Bucks

Contemplative Fire members and visitors gather each month in the following two locations, to share communion in a reflective worship environment that integrates music, chant and body-prayer with the creative arts, scripture and the Christian contemplative tradition.

Hemel Hempstead: Abbot's Hill School
Every second Sunday of the month at 6.30 pm

High Wycombe: Church of St Mary & St George
Every third Sunday of the month at 6.30 pm

Other Contemplative Fire events scheduled in 2007

Berkshire

Sun November 18

Reading

The church of St John and St Stephen.
Body prayer, Drumming and Chant workshop, 6pm

Buckinghamshire

Sun September 16

Fingest, Hambleden Valley

St Bartholomew's church
Gathering, 6pm

Cambridgeshire

Sat December 1

Ely Cathedral

Gathering, time tbc

London

Sun November 4

St James's Piccadilly

Gathering 5 pm

Sun December 2

St Ethelburga's Centre for Reconciliation and Peace, Bishopsgate.

Gathering, 6pm

South Coast

Sat October 6

Isle of Wight

Contemplative Fire Open Event,
10am–4pm, venue tbc.

Emsworth

Pilgrimage to Now/here, 9.30 am (a contemplative walk in countryside, followed by lunch and sharing. Bring packed lunch)

Sun October 28

Chichester Cathedral

Gathering, 6pm

About Contemplative Fire

Contemplative Fire is a 'Fresh Expression of Church', supported by and accountable to the Church of England, and mandated by Archbishop Rowan Williams. Members of the Contemplative Fire community commit to a rhythm of contemplation-in-action whose components are being, knowing, doing. Our vision is both local and global, encouraging a personal relationship with God, a deep sharing with others, costly giving, and an offering of self into the wider community. Contemplative Fire resources 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.

Local Contemplative Fire

Local groups meet in Buckinghamshire (Cholesbury, Penn, Amersham, High Wycombe); Hertfordshire (Hemel Hempstead); West Sussex (Storrington, Bosham); SE Hampshire (Emsworth) and Gloucestershire (Stroud). New groups are in the process of forming in London (please see dates, above, for two London Gatherings in 2007) Oxfordshire and Exeter.

If you would like to be part of a local Contemplative Fire group, or to help start one in your area, please in the first instance contact Jo Rowbotham (jo@contemplativefire.org or tel. 01453 766497) for details of any groups meeting in your area.

CONTACT US

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

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