



Creating a community of Christ at the edge

Open and radiant

This is Contemplative Fire's commitment: to create a community of Christ at the edge. This is no small task over a dispersed network! However, just as the celtic trefoil's pattern of prayer, study and action informs the common pattern of our life, so the Open Cross expresses something of our shared values.



The space at the centre is a visual representation of the openness with which genuine love can meet another and enable an honest questioning and deep listening. This means that I need to own what I say as my belief in language with which I feel comfortable and recognise that another might see and believe differently. It means an openness to

learning, to re-thinking some theology and knowing that wrestling with the questions is at least as important as finding answers (as the Companions on the Way in Hemel who are exploring baptism are discovering!)

Yet the love which is the dynamic at the heart of the Trinity - God as creator, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit - invites you and me to let its fire and its energy radiate out to others even when such loving is costly.

Susan Blagden

Power in Pause: Awakening to the Kingdom

Christ was a master of what I call the "power pause". Regularly and consistently, before and after great teachings and healings, Jesus stopped what he and others were doing, took them out from the hurly burly of things and into the beauty of nature. He encouraged his followers to take time and space to look with loving focus at something organic (the Greek word in the New Testament is "emblepo")

- lilies, birds, a person in need, whatever. In the pattern interrupt he knew a consciousness shift would be likely to happen. And so it did, and so it does.

Pattern interrupts are essential ingredients in the tool kit of any trainer, educator, parent, consultant or spiritual companion. Our everyday awareness easily gets into a rut and the miraculous - an orange, a flower, a new moon reflected in a pool - rapidly loses its zest, colour, texture, appeal for us and merges into the hum drum. Even the face and character of a loved one can all but disappear into the functional landscape of the daily round. We need waking up regularly, not just weekly or daily, but hourly and perhaps even on the half or quarter hour. Actually, why not every second?!

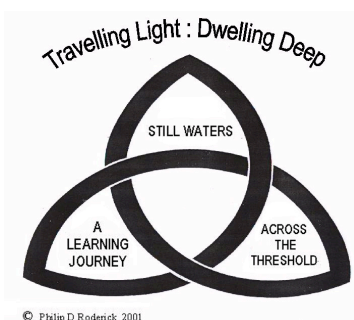
Jesus' entire life, teaching, death and resurrection was about the kingdom - the realm of God's acknowledged presence, the zone of divine life in the middle of things. The invitation to awaken to this profound yet playful reality lies at the heart of

his every moment and movement, of his words and wordlessness, of his actions and absences. This is the call to contemplative presence that guides The Quiet Garden Movement, Contemplative Fire and many other retreat and reflective ministries.

If I'm honest, I am a recovering hyperactivist and I know and enjoy the allure of unstinting busyness. But my soul also knows her need for slow pace, for mindful, attentive resting in the wild glory of the present moment. To pause or not to pause, that is the question for our Church and our culture. The power that comes from pausing is the vulnerable power, the gentle authority, the wise abiding that Jesus modelled for his disciples and those who were drawn to living the paradox.

This pausing, this awakening is not merely an optional extra, it is a vital and vibrant essential in the kitbag of consciousness and in the engagement of life in Christ. Traffic lights on the Way: let's go; let's pause; let's stop.

Philip Roderick



Rhythm of Life

Over the last couple of years I have noticed how the rhythm of life expressed in the Contemplative Fire trefoil is enabling a deep grounding in the presence of the Divine, both for personal journeys and in community life; a versatile tool for balanced and centred living, through which inspiration, invitation and gentle challenge can be received.

Each leaf of the trefoil has its own quality – its own sound and poetry.

Still waters – encountering the present moment in quietness;

A Learning Journey – equipping, exploring and accompanying others;

Across the Threshold – engaging with wisdom on the boundaries. There is a sense of balance, each aspect being equally weighted, inviting attention, offering its gifts. And in the centre, the place of Unknowing and Wordlessness, the whole trefoil centred and held together in mystery.

Journey is also reflected in the trefoil. On retreat last year in Wales as part of a group of Contemplative Fire Companions, a huge trefoil, drawn out in the sand on the beach, provided a reflective path along which to walk; this rhythm has a dynamic – one of journeying along a connecting, flowing, interweaving conduit, with no beginning and no

end – the path resonating with each of the different aspects of being, knowing and doing – or if you prefer, prayer, study and action! I remember standing, bare-footed, feet straddling the line at the tip of the Across the Threshold leaf, looking out to sea, sensing the question – what is the invitation here – and what is the challenge?

Just as the trefoil invites each of us to consider our journey – so the trefoil also invites the same consideration as a community. As we prepare to meet in September for a CF community weekend, I am struck by how in being still & silent together, in listening & learning together, centred in the mystery of the Cross & Resurrection, expressed in the breaking of bread and sharing of wine, we are called, equipped and sent, like seeds, to cross thresholds and to be agents of love and healing in this broken and beautiful world.

Tessa Holland

Some comments from the Ely Group on walking the trefoil:

'it was 'like a dance' feeling unbalanced and then perfectly balanced at different points along the way' 'I wanted to sit at the centre in the quiet space where the Trinity and soul, body and mind meet.' *'I appreciated walking round it in it's entirety and taking the three modes in.'*

Local and Regional Contemplative Fire

The Gatherings

The community extends a warm welcome to anyone who would like to share in contemplative worship and discover more about the reflective dimension of Christian faith. There are monthly Gatherings for the sharing of Communion. These follow the ancient patterning of the Eucharist and seek to re-imagine in language and symbol the Christian story. We celebrate the festivals and creativity, giving opportunity to experience contemplative prayer and conviviality through shared stillness, and song and so build community.

Pilgrimage to Now/here

An opportunity to recover the ancient understanding of pilgrimage by discovering the holy in the every day without the need to journey to a holy site as an end point.

We re-discover how to walk slowly, to be attentive to what is 'here' and 'now', treading lightly on the earth.

Play in the Mystery - Drum 'n' Chant

Evenings exploring syncopations of the heart with Philip Roderick and Nik Marten.

our play is circular
our earthiness sacred
our source the beloved
our language is older than words

Improvise with the divine in the mystery of creation.

Rekindle the body and spirit through drumming and chant.

We give space to ancient and modern celebrations of sound and rhythm as we explore drumming into the heart of silence. Bring drums, shakers, rattles, boxes, voices, yourselves in the spirit of delight!

We draw from the contemplative Christian tradition and celebrate opportunities to welcome those of different paths or none.



Local Groups

One of the challenges facing a dispersed spiritual community is to find ways to deepen our spiritual journey in the company of others. Nurturing a network of small groups gathering together in a home as microcosms of the larger community enable companionship through the sharing of silence and stories; food and friendship. The format adopted by different groups varies to include groups meeting for extended periods of shared silence (**'Still Waters'**); those who share a simple meal and liturgy, with space for silence and reflection on a set text (**'Way Beyond Religion'**); and those who gather to reflect together on a wide variety of material from the Contemplative Tradition (**'Open Circle'**). Whatever the form, the common experience seems to be that the whole becomes much more than the sum of the parts. The promise of the presence of Christ amongst those who are gathered is evidenced in the depth of experience shared.

If you would like to join, or establish, a small group in your area then please do let us know.

Buckinghamshire

Jo Howard: everyone@the-howards.freeserve.co.uk

Gathering

3rd Sunday of each month at the church of St Mary and St George, High Wycombe, 6 30 pm
2008: 21 September, 19 October, 16 November, 21 December

Cambridgeshire

Susan Bowden Pickstock: smellingofroses@hotmail.com

Gloucestershire

Jo Rowbotham

Hertfordshire

Charlotte Wright: charlottewright@hotmail.co.uk

Gathering

2nd Sunday of each month (except September) at Abbots Hill School, Hemel Hempstead, 6 30 pm
2008: 12 October, 9 November, 14 December

Play in the Mystery - Drum 'n' Chant

Friends Meeting House, 298 High Street, Berkhamsted, HP4 3EQ

Fridays, 7 45 - 9 15 pm

2008: 26 September, 24 October, 28 November

London

Frances Diamond

diamondfrances@hotmail.com

Oxfordshire

Rev'd Susan Blagden: susan@contemplativefire.org

1st Thursday evening of each month:
Way Beyond Religion or Open Circle

South Downs

Rev'd Tessa Holland: wildfortune@btinternet.com

Gathering

Come and experience in an ancient church at the water's edge:

- Stillness and silence
 - Spaciousness and wonder
 - Sacrament and story...
- Holy Trinity Church, Bosham,
2008: Sun 28 September, Sun 9 November, 6 pm

Also beginning at St Mary's Church, North Stoke, West Sussex

• Sacred space in the heart of the South Downs; Gathering for simplicity & stillness, story & sacrament;
Sunday 12 October, 6 pm

Pilgrimage to Now/here

A reflective, accompanied walk along shoreline and through woodland
Emsworth, Hants
Saturday 4 October
9 30 am to 2 pm

Resources to support your journey and the work of Contemplative Fire.

Order via the website or the office.

Beacon Series - practical and theological resources for spiritual searchers seeking illumination and focal points for the integration of prayer, study and action. No 1 Stillness by Richard Newman. £3

Sheer Sound: CD of Hang drum music played by Philip Roderick Great to listen to in its own right. Also use for personal or group meditation. £10

Sacred Posture: DVD - £15. Inspiration to let your body pray.

Beloved: Conversations with Henri Nouwen
by Philip Roderick £9.99
Read the book and/or listen to the CD as you travel to and from work. SCM Canterbury Press

Contemplative Camera:
Sayings of the Christian Mystics Cards £1.75 Mounted & framed prints £75 by Susan Blagden
www.contemplativecamera.org

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