

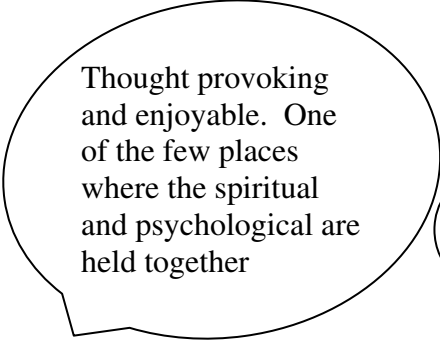
Continuing the Journey

Newsletter – Winter 2010


Psst!...



What a good conference we had!



Thought provoking and enjoyable. One of the few places where the spiritual and psychological are held together



The best retreat seminar all rolled into one that I have ever attended

If you were not able to be at conference, do listen to the talks on the website. Our hope is that this newsletter will encourage you to continue your journey with us. For those of you who were there, the challenge is to continue to listen to the voices around and within you; may your listening still have an enhanced quality as a result of the 2010 conference. Three articles by participants remembering and sharing what they gained, and a poem that was written by another during the conference, aim to capture the flavour for you. Comments from participants have been greatly valued by the planning group, encouraging and informing future conferences. The worship was especially appreciated in a number of feedback forms and the poem brings back some of the very special quality experienced during the evening worship sessions and communion.

CONFERENCE TALKS ARE NOW ON THE WEBSITE

www.continuingthejourney.com

✦ 🎁 BEAUTIFUL THINGS 🎁 ✦

For someone who is inclined to say “I don’t do” conferences, I seem to attend rather a lot. I don’t cope well with large numbers of people, am a Myers Briggs introvert, live in my head more than in my feelings...so why do I do it?!

There is always something that attracts, and I gather my courage to attend. Often I am slightly disappointed, have unrealistic expectations, but so often am surprised and overwhelmed by the delight of the days.

I knew little about CTJ but the attraction of time out to hear what God just might be saying to me was great. I was at a crossroads (still am really, but a better one!) seeking direction with an openness to what might happen. I needed to listen.

I had perhaps expected direct divine insight and answers from the amazing speakers but, fantastic as they were, that was not to be! What I did receive was some clarity about direction through beautiful and thought provoking words and sounds. I took a bouquet of these home and take joy in considering them from time to time.

I was entranced by the crystal sounds of the chimes used when we were singing, and could have listened to them all day. Sometimes the singing seemed very spirit filled and wonderful sounds filled the room.

I love words and some were beautiful such as the conference being “a place to rest my soul”, or “there is a unique song between God’s heart and ours. Listen for it and respond”. Rachel’s exquisite reading of 1Samuel 1:1-20 was so very moving and the admonition “we will not offer to God of things which cost us nothing” spoke to me strongly.

Other words were thought provoking and wise such as those in one of the prayers: “we will speak up for those who have no voice, for the rights of all who are destitute”. Margaret Silf’s words “Feed what brings us closer to God, and don’t feed what does not” spoke to my heart.

One final memory illustrates how words can sometimes do so much harm. In one of the workshops I was in a group where we spoke of times when we had not been accepted for who we are and where words had been used which hurt...thoughtless, unkind words which in some cases had remained with us all our lives. But by using different, kind words the group offered acceptance to everyone and reflected God’s acceptance of us all, a God who uses beautiful words.

The outcome was that I ended the conference with so many questions, but they were better questions than those with which I had arrived! This was my conference. You will have attended your own.

Aileen Garden

*Certainty divides us
Mystery unites us*

Margaret Silf



CONFERENCE DATES
30TH APRIL – 4TH MAY 2012

Put them in your diaries NOW!!

My experience of 'Continuing the Journey' 2010

Spacious bedrooms, promising programme, and a bar (not that I'm an alcoholic, you understand). Something told me this was going to be a good conference, and I was right. I so relished the whole cocktail of 'food' for heart, mind, soul and body, the spaces for reflection alongside the sparky interaction, and times of worship. Oh, and the red shoes...

One of the most significant times for me was Isabel Clarke's talk entitled 'Voices beyond the Threshold'. As a fairly recently qualified integrative arts psychotherapist I am currently working towards UKCP registration, the final hurdle in this process being a 20 day observational placement in a psychiatric hospital. I have to confess I was totally terrified at this prospect, and had been consistently putting off making the phone calls to set it up. Much of the fear has been due to my fantasy of the gloomy Victorian asylum, complete with screaming wild-eyed patients and doctors. (I have a very vivid imagination!) I also feared getting sucked into that strange land beyond the threshold and losing my own sanity. Scary stuff. So I was both longing for, and dreading, Isabel's talk, hoping it would help, yet aware of my enormous resistance to facing this area at all.

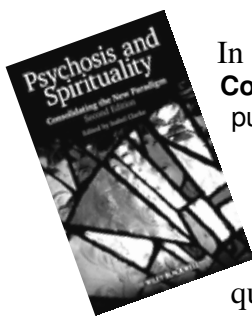
It turned out to be a life-changing experience for me. Her refreshingly down-to-earth manner impacted me most. Here was someone who *knew* this strange 'other-worldly' territory of the transliminal, who had charted these waters with many people, and who knew where the edges were. She was very, very clever, and at times I struggled to keep up with every brain-bending twist of her talk (which is why I pounced on the last copy of her book in the bookstall). But overall, I felt safe. I was reassured by the refreshing way she spoke about the different ways we can suddenly find ourselves over the threshold (by drugs and also through a really good Charismatic service), the overlap between spiritual and mental processes, and her very practical suggestions of how to work with

people who are classed as psychotic – e.g. through normalising, validating, grounding, and helping them *want* to come back across the threshold by finding positive everyday things to focus on.

But the image that has stayed with me above all else is of Ariadne's thread. In Greek mythology, Ariadne gave a ball of thread to Theseus, so that he could find his way out of the labyrinth, and Isabel reminded us to hold on to 'the thread' if we ever sense ourselves getting close to that threshold. What a great image of safety. As someone who works with the arts, I have clung to this image, and now have my own mini ball of thread ready in my pocket, to ground and reassure me as I go into my hospital placement. I became quite tearful as I listened to her. It felt as if my fear was being lanced like a boil, as I faced my 'demons', creating new space where I could breathe easily again. What a relief. Thank you Isabel.

Lastly, she mentioned the Gerasene man in Mark 5, who was filled with evil spirits and lived among the tombs until Jesus came and set him free. I found this especially poignant, as I have been to Gerasa (in Jordan) and walked amongst those very tombs, and had been moved to see that even amidst the ancient, broken lumps of rock there were plants growing, flowers blooming, new life appearing in the midst of a burial place. It seems that there is nowhere that God isn't, nowhere beyond the reach of his loving grace, and for this I am profoundly thankful.

Marie Calvert



In September 2010 **Psychosis and Spirituality: Consolidating the New Paradigm, 2nd Edition** was published by **Wiley** ISBN: 978-0-470-68347-7

Isabel Clarke is the Editor. With 5 chapters by new authors, this new edition brings the area right up to date and covers the explosion of new research, qualitative as well as quantitative, and exciting clinical developments. See <http://www.isabelclarke.org/>

Psst... Look who's in the group!

I arrived at the 2010 conference eagerly, full of warm memories of attending, irregularly, across two decades. CTJ stands out for me as a conference thoughtfully prepared and structured to create a community from its participants. Small groups are key to this and I was pleased to be asked again to be an enabler. The added bonus was that the enablers have a daily meeting over lunch, so for one meal a day the faces were familiar and there was laughter and friendship.

The four years since my last CTJ had brought big changes: retirement, a move to the country. Losing familiar roles had produced a loss of confidence. I heard myself being unexpectedly hesitant and nervous as I outlined the purpose of the group and invited introductions. I like to avoid going round in a ring. The anxiety of preparing for their 'turn' makes it hard for some to take in what others are saying. When people choose their turn to speak, they often find a connection or contrast with a previous speaker.

Connections came tumbling out. There were others going through transitions similar to my own. Another frequent theme was the demands of absent family members and the ways that might intrude on the space the conference was providing. There were conference veterans who seemed much at home and quite a few who had been enablers themselves and were good at helping the process along. All but one had some experience as a counsellor, which is higher than average for a CTJ group. As group enabler I was aware that there were a number of ways in which someone experienced being the odd one out. We were able to talk about this as the week progressed, exploring the richness of diversity. We were, however, uniformly female. Men had been allocated to groups in twos and threes or not at all.

When a group is forming seemingly peripheral matters often occupy centre stage. In our case it was the lights. Focus at first was on the harsh strip lighting. Next morning we tried natural light, but found too many faces were in the shadow. The bare walls were then a problem. On day three, a large glass jar with a candle in was placed in the centre of our circle and the environmental problems vanished.

Our daily meetings followed plenary sessions; there were plenty of intriguing insights on which to comment. Sometimes we wrestled with a challenging question; the relationship between prayer and healing came up more than once. More often members talked about things that resonated with stories in their own lives. Woman Cross, a liturgy that was shared for a first enactment at the conference, was significant for many. We had a lively session as group members talked about its impact. Towards the end some people chose to tell us about painful circumstances; things they had been reserving inwardly and working on alone. A gift of chocolate was handed out at one of the meetings, a symbol perhaps of the verbal encouragements given and received in the brief life time of the group.

Vera Sinton

“The Small group - a safe and “holding” place where I could be myself”

“John Bell challenged me to focus on my walk with God, where I worship, and the need to be in touch with the self so that the still small voice of God can be readily identified.”

W O U N D E D H E A L E R

(poem to be read from the bottom of the cross upwards)

I adore you.
Your Majesty.
Of the colours of
To the richness
None compares
Love and Beauty.
And see such
Your eyes
I look
into

Clouds disperse, My face reflects and shines with joy.
Bringing cleansing; refreshing, renewing my mind. The
My heart lifts, is given Hope. A red wave washes over me,
Lift up to look into Your dazzling countenance, full of grace.
My eyes look past the wounds, the roughness of Your hands,

Cup my face.
Reach down to
Your hands
Where to now?
P s y c h e .
A c r o s s m y
Dark clouds swirl
My mind blurs,
Into the cracks,
Dilemmas pour
Into the corners,
Confusion creeps
t u r n t o ?
help? Who can I
tears. Who will
Eyes weep copious
My spirits, my
Worries crush
Weigh me down
Is heavy, cares
Cross. My heart
The foot of Your
To kneel at
O Lord, I come

By Fran Nguyen 2010