



An open temporary community, exploring continuity and tension between the world and church, nature and grace, psychology and theology.

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Date of next Conference
28th April - 2nd May 2014 in Swanwick. Put the date in your diary today!

Editor's note

Linda Watkinson

"My fifth time and the best ever."

"A unique conference that is difficult to find elsewhere."

"....its unique blend of professional, stimulating input with plenty of space for reflection and its quality caring/nurturing community."

These are just a few of the comments received about our last conference 'Minding the Gap' back in May 2012. Many of you, I am sure, would agree with the above comments. It was a great conference!

As a 'first timer' at conference, I was struck by its warmth, integrity and authenticity. It felt a safe place to be. Along with others perhaps, I was left with mixed feelings at the end, when it was announced that all but four



of the planning team were standing down. The planning group faced a difficult and challenging dilemma in deciding when to make this announcement to delegates. Ruth Dormandy writes more about this, explaining some of their thinking behind the decision.....and the good news is that enough people came forward to form a new planning group! So we are delighted to confirm that the next conference will be **28th April to 2nd May 2014**. Put it in your diary now and be sure to keep the date free. If you would like any cards to circulate amongst your friends and colleagues please contact one of the planning group. Kim Gooding, our new Chair writes about some of the joys and challenges of working with a new team. You can also read of two delegate's experience of the last conference and a moving and thought provoking poem inspired by the talk given by Roly Riem.

We hope that you like the new format for the newsletter and would welcome any feedback from you.

If you were unable to attend the last conference or would like a reminder of the 2012 conference talks they are all available at <http://www.continuingthejourney.com/conference-history/2012-2>

Over the next few weeks keep an eye on the CTJ website as we will shortly be updating it with details of the 2014 conference planning group.

On behalf of the new planning group, I would like to thank you for all the feedback you returned at the end of the conference. Your comments are valued and will help us as we plan over the coming months.

L.S. Watkinson



Passing on the Baton.

Passing on the baton successfully is no easy matter. The British men's sprint relay team have now made a mess of baton changes in five of the last six major championships and were bitterly disappointed to be disqualified at the Olympics this summer for miss-timing one of the handovers. What is needed, besides a solid competent team are steady hands whilst running, good timing and awareness of when to let go and when to hold on.

The CTJ Planning Group has recently changed considerably to a mostly new membership. Of the twelve who ran the race preparing for the 2012 conference only four people are continuing, so there is a very real sense of passing on the baton to a new team. For all those who are letting go for various personal and professional reasons, it feels that it is timely to do so. The decisions were all individually made and it was then quite a shock for us to realise the implications this might have for the future of the CTJ conference.

The outgoing planning group pondered long and hard over the best way to communicate to the conference and others about this. We wanted participants to benefit from the conference without feeling constrained by the knowledge that 2012 could, potentially, be the last one. Therefore, we consciously decided to wait until the end of the week before making the situation known publically. We also hoped this would give people the opportunity to reflect and respond away from the intensity of the conference. As I spoke in the final plenary, I was aware of the shocking impact on people as they absorbed the news and consequence of so many departing the planning group. I imagine people left Swanwick with a range of emotions, perhaps feeling doubtful about the future of CTJ. I want to acknowledge how difficult this would have been for some, especially those who have appreciated the conference over many years. For a while there had been uncertainty and fear that the baton might be dropped!

Instead, I am delighted, relieved and grateful to say that the baton has been grasped firmly by fresh runners. I hope that those joining the Planning Group this year will also share

a sense that the timing is appropriate for them to be committed to co-creating the conference for 2014. I trust that they will be inspired to hold to the task with steady hands, energy and courage. I am sure that my friends from the previous relay team will share with me in sending our blessings and prayers for all those running the next leg of the race. The baton is safely held and the race continues. Continuing the Journey enters another developmental phase and I look forward with anticipation and excitement to seeing what emerges.

Ruth Dormandy



Taking up the Baton

'You keep us waiting. You, the God of all time, want us to wait for the right time in which to discover who we are, where we must go, who will be with us, and what we must do'

Iona Community Worship Book, 1988

After conference this year, the job of holding the unknown became the job of a 'remnant' of four people who spent the summer not knowing if the baton Ruth talks about would be dropped. It's good to be able to tell you that all of the places on the planning group have been filled. We are viable again and can begin the exciting but challenging task of building new relationships and creating the next theme. Over the coming months we will introduce you to the new group.

I find myself as the incoming Chair, with that strange mix of excitement and fear. How do

you hold years of history and pass it on and what will we as a new group create? As ever, change brings with it opportunity and loss, but also the thrill of getting to know new people with new skills and experience. This is tinged with the absence of those who've gone before, to whom we are incredibly grateful.

So the first question for the new group has been to work out how we sell the conference? Most people who come along will say this is not your average conference experience. So what is it? A retreat? A CPD opportunity? An oasis in the midst of the complexities of life? How do you put into words the sense of holding, acceptance and richness of creativity and connection that can result? I'm grappling for words as you can see. I know, for myself, I came to the last conference with trepidation; with big unknowns looming in my personal life and knowing that, as a planning group, change and associated loss was ahead. I still face much uncertainty but found through tears, liturgy and poetry, words of wisdom and stillness, a sense of peace and some words and pictures that encapsulated something of my experience. When I first came to the conference in 1990 I was in Christian ministry, in a difficult situation feeling very much on the edge of emotion, the community and my ability to cope. Many times over the years I've heard people with a combined interest in faith and psychology / therapy, talk about finding themselves on an edge of what feels like a large and often painful gap. As a therapist I hear many individuals in my daily life and at conference expressing something quite profound about both their experience of 'church' and society. I sense that many of us are left holding much that is unsaid and difficult and yet when expression can be found, for what Sara Savage described as 'integrative complexities', (<http://www.continuingthejourney.com/conference-history/2012-2>), the results can be life giving and can change ours and others' perceptions.

So how do I want to sell the conference? 'A life giving oasis in the midst of a world in recession', wouldn't be a bad first go!I wonder what you would say?

Kim Gooding



SYRO-PHOENECIAN BLESSING

*The Word was made flesh and dwelt
among us –
Not only in him
But she, too, spoke the word of God.
Her spirit unbowed,
Unchained by labels
And the traditions of men,
She crept in below the radar,
Below the communion table,
And took her place amongst the crumbs,
Waiting.*

*Her feisty words crackled in the light,
Became for him the bread of life:
Bread of a new covenant
that even he hadn't seen,
hadn't tasted.*

Repentance is hard.

*He turned within,
A night-time of wrestling
with his God.
One solitary man
Lost in a garden,
Grappling with grace,
hoping for blessing.*

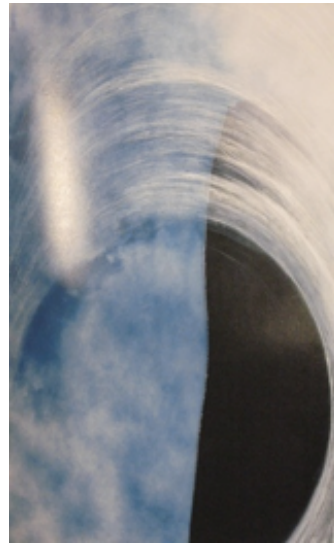
This is my body, given for you.

*Little did she know
That the crumbs hard won
In wit and desperation
Were no cheap leftovers
of Kosher cuisine.
They would cost him his life.
Bread of heaven
Thrown to the dogs,
Crushed in blessing,
A wounding of grace.*

It is finished.

(c) Marie Calvert, 2012, CTJ

From Apprehension to Iridescence



I went with great apprehension to this year's 'Continuing the Journey' conference. This was the second time I had come to the conference. The first time I was fully fit and had really enjoyed the experience. Since then my health had been going through a relapse with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. I knew that I just had to give my nervousness over to God, to allow Him to minister to me in this week. I need not have been anxious. Even though there seemed a lot on the programme, the sessions I attended really helped my energy, such as the lovely worship each morning, giving time for reflection, the tai chi and meditative walking workshop and the communal silence one evening. I found plenty of time to rest and reflect.

As the week progressed I became blown away by the way God was affirming my journey. The two months before conference, I had been discerning with God, the right route for me. There were so many times, in so many ways

that the Lord confirmed pictures and themes that I had been reflecting on during the previous two months. This culminated in the prayer time on the last day when people were asked to speak out pictures they felt God might be showing them. The picture of the butterfly that is often called back to the chrysalis, spoke to me. The picture continued, showing the butterfly becoming more iridescent and stronger each time it came out of the cocoon.

The theme of 'Mind the Gap' helped me to see my illness as an abyss, that I was able to look down upon from the edge. I had been exploring how to live a life putting God first and not my health. By the end of the week I felt thoroughly 'swizzled'. From looking down into this abyss, to being turned 180 degrees so I was facing forwards on a path, with the abyss behind me. This has made a great difference to me, along with the comfort of knowing and meeting other 'edge dwellers'. I have come away with a list of things to follow through but mainly the sense of continuing to explore the contemplative nature, spoken throughout the conference to me.



Helen Warwick

Art: Anneke Kaai, 'Seeing a New Song', 2008, Piquant

A first timer!

At last, in 2012 I was able to attend the conference, 'Minding the Gap', having taken early retirement from my job as a counsellor in a University setting. For some years, in my search for CPD, I had come across the Continuing the Journey conference information, often relating strongly to the themes and then lamenting the fact that I was unable to attend due to my term time work commitments.

In hindsight, I may have used that as an excuse? I am very 'split' about conferences. I love the thought of learning new things, spending time in a different environment, meeting new people but there is also a part of me which values the familiar, particularly in the busyness and emotional challenge of working with individuals who struggle with their own circumstances, thoughts and feelings.



I approached the 2012 conference with a mixture of excitement and nervousness. Six months on from leaving my job, I was enjoying the freedom but also experiencing the challenge, for the first time in my life, of having lots of space and time 'to be'. The theme of the conference, Mind the Gap, had intrigued me. At long last, I was going to have the opportunity and space to think about counselling and its relationship to the spiritual journey. As a counsellor, I have become much more questioning of my faith journey, no longer seeing it in its certainties and appreciating the mystery of that which cannot be fully known. Increasingly, I have felt 'the gap' widen in my experience of Church and the growth and development it offers me compared to the growth I have

experienced through working in a therapeutic setting.

My original reason for going to the conference was to feed my mind, to help me understand more about the 'gaps' but also some of the shared philosophies and roots of psychology and theology; to help me to learn how to manage the situation I found myself in. This had been my experience of previous conferences, along with the competitive edge that sometimes comes with a group of professionals and colleagues, the pressure to network and the accompanying exhaustion of it all. The CTJ conference couldn't have been more different. It fed my mind most definitely, but it also fed my 'soul'. From the moment I was welcomed at the Admission desk I felt cared for. The Hayes at Swanwick is in a beautiful setting, a wonderful antidote to the somewhat frenetic drive up the M1. The rooms are spacious, comfortable, warm and quiet. There is a palpable sense of peace. By the end of the first welcome session, I had identified a much more important gap for me to address. The one between the 'working me' and the 'me' that was being hugely challenged; the 'me' yet to emerge; the 'me' who was excited but also extremely fearful of how to use the space which had opened up in my life and the inevitable questions and thoughts around endings. The small group session which followed, was the perfect place to begin to explore some of this. For me, the small group sessions were a very valued and important part of the whole experience.

As someone who sometimes struggles with the predictability of worship in my Church, I was blessed, nurtured and challenged in equal measure by the worship sessions which introduced each day. It was familiar enough not to alienate and there was plenty of space to respond to the morning meditations. The keynote speakers did not disappoint and provided further 'grist to the mill' in our group sessions. I loved the fact there was a ten minute silence after the talks giving time to reflect rather than rushing off to the next activity with thoughts and feelings undigested and perhaps forgotten in the rush.

The conference became a place of retreat for me. I decided to use the free time in the afternoon to be quiet, to contemplate and to walk in the beautiful grounds.

Evenings gave us a further opportunity and space for reflection and gathering with others, culminating in a hilarious and entertaining quiz evening to round off the week. We were no longer strangers and some enduring friendships were beginning to blossom. As a group of individuals we had shared a thought provoking and challenging week in a 'safe' environment which had felt very 'held' by the leadership team.



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An enduring picture from the conference will be of the 'grike' Nicola Slee spoke about (Listening and praying in the gaps – a spirituality for the interstices. Continuing the Journey 2012); a narrow deep crevice, often cold and dark and present amongst the barren landscape of the limestone pavement. In these 'grikes' grow the most beautiful and rare plants. They are not easy to find, but the searcher is rewarded by a glimpse of their beauty. You can listen to this talk and others at <http://www.continuingthejourney.com/conference-history/2012-2>

A small group of us continue to meet up every six weeks or so. We collectively know ourselves as 'edge dwellers', a term which came out of the conference and one which we all related to. For us, our meetings can be 'grike' moments amongst the limestone pavements of everyday life.

Linda Watkinson

Date of Next Conference: 28th April - 2nd May 2014

Further details about the conference can be downloaded from our website

www.continuingthejourney.com

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