



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

Newsletter

First encounters

Barrie Hopwood and Helen Walley enter the flow and describe their first experiences of joining the conference.
Page 2

Joining the planning group

Conference regular Jane Foley finds herself becoming part of the planning group for the next conference.
Page 3

Book Review

Marie Calvert reviews Richard Dormandy's 'Unauthorised Liturgies.'
Page 3

A blog about the conference

Pat Marsh takes the time to reflect personally on the flows and ebbs of her conference experience.
Page 4

Photo gallery

Marie Calvert captures some photographic moments from the 2014 conference.
Page 4

Date of next Conference

25th April - 29th April 2016 in Swanwick. Put the date in your diary today and watch out for the next newsletter!

Greetings...

...from the planning group to all of you who were at the last conference back in April, and to those who might be picking up this newsletter for the first time.

We hope it will bring back memories and perhaps even tempt you back, and for those of you who have not yet attended, it will be an encouragement to consider the 2016 conference.

The planning group have started the process of working towards the 2016 conference and roles have been allocated. Jane Foley, one of our new planning group members writes about her experience of two conferences and her decision to join the planning group. We have also been joined by

Malcolm Foy and Tim Haggis. You can read about them at <http://www.continuingthejourney.com/next-conference/conference-team>

Keep an eye out on the website for more details on the 2016 Conference!

Living on the edge Lord, meeting the struggling and the angry on the shore's edge.

Sitting in the shallows where the water is warm.

As it ebbs and flows, washing around my feet, tantalising me, refreshing and yet not challenging. Safe enough to enjoy something of the vast ocean. It beckons yet I can remain sitting with the waves petering out. With each ebb and flow comes another sense of the waves of your love.

I can stand and feel the waves come over my feet and sense the lowering temperature as I venture out. Tougher yet beckoning.

Toes, ankles, shins, just below my knees now. Washing and caressing.

More of a sense of your love and powerful presence. With my eyes on the horizon knowing that one day I can swim but not yet. Need time to acclimatise.

Helen Walley September 2014

First Encounters

with Helen Walley

'You really must go on the conference next time! It was wonderful!' exclaimed a friend of mine in 2004. It only took me ten years to finally book and make it! I am so glad I did and I know, that although I would have liked to have experienced this week a lot earlier, the timing for me this year was right. It was just like coming home!



The theme of the conference took me quickly to the beach and the sea, places and images with which I connect, with which I feel at home and yet which brought new meaning. I was able to express myself creatively early on and was grateful for this way of being in touch with the feelings and thoughts that needed to be listened to. I found myself making a scallop shell from clay. It didn't mean much more to me at that moment but as the week went on, I realised just how important the theme of journeying or pilgrimage was to be for me. I realised that the grooves in the shell, which come together at a single point, represented the various routes that pilgrims travelled on the route of St James, eventually arriving at a single destination. For me, being part of the small group on the conference expressed this. We in our group had all come on different routes, emotionally, physically and spiritually and we were meant to be there together for those five days of encounter. This group became very special to me and was a place where I could safely explore. At the end of the week in the final communion we were given a real scallop shell, which

was a joyous confirmation to me of God's presence in all that I had experienced.

Another aspect of the week that I loved was the music. Led by a small group of gifted musicians who sensitively led us through the different moods of each day, expressing something of the depth and height of our lived experiences to a God 'whose life is written in bold strokes of love.'¹ Singing 'If I rise on the wings of the dawn...' and 'Fall Holy Spirit', alongside the more vibrant 'On that day', whilst being given the opportunity to play on the drums were memorable moments of worship for me.

"When I arrived I was anxious, exhausted, empty ... when I left I felt filled up, exhilarated, peaceful"

The creative times of corporate worship, the space, the working silence, workshops and the talks were all times that fed me on many different levels. To have a few different speakers bring their own particular flavour to the week was so appreciated. When I arrived I was anxious, exhausted, empty and at the end of one journey in my life that had, at times, felt disappointing. When I left I felt filled up, exhilarated, peaceful, my joy had returned and I was ready to continue my journey.

¹A liturgy of gathering : Dorothy McRae-McMahon used at St Andrew's on the Terrace, Wellington , New Zealand, 29th Sept 2013

Continuing the Journey

with Barrie Hopwood

My friend Julie had been on at me for years to come to the conference and when I checked in with her, I remember issuing her the silent challenge of 'this better be as good as you have led me to believe!'. It was!



I loved the ecumenical nature of the conference, the power of the worship and the liturgy, the variety of workshops on offer and the spiritually holding and developmental nature of the theme of 'Ebb and Flow'.

One of the highlights for me was the talk 'Arguing with God' by Trevor Dennis, which got the Conference under way, daring us to 'dive into the depths' with examples from the Old Testament of prayers of protest and lament. The exhortation 'dive deep like a whale and soar high like an eagle' became a leitmotif for me during the conference and Trevor's inspirational teaching reassured me that I was going to be in the right place for the next few days! The talk from Roy Searle of the Northumbria community on 'Rhythms and Seasons' and Ruth Layzell on 'Transposing into a Different Key' also provided depth and challenge and were jewels in their own right.

The experiential Workshops on 'Creativity' and 'Telling our Story' were both fun and thought provoking, as were many of the large group sessions, especially the transformation of the main hall into 'Islands' with different activities and forms

of worship, a brilliant idea which was profoundly spiritual and emotional.

I loved the food and the environment. How wonderful to watch the heron on the lake from my bedroom window and to enjoy fellowship especially over a couple of bottles of Leff in the bar at the end of day! Then there was the efficiency and smooth-running of the conference for which I thank the organising committee. Most of all, I valued catching up with an elderly lady each day at supper. Although not part of our conference, I had the privilege of being allowed into her life-time struggle against injustice and violence. I think the freedom to be on my own or with others, to come and go as I pleased without being hurried but always with the possibility of finding kindred spirits was amazing.

I don't want to give the impression that it was an easy week. Sometimes on my own, I experienced self-doubt, self-loathing, fear and anxiety, however this provided the most significant learning for me as I was forced to 'wrestle with God' and able to scream and shout, cry and blaspheme (inwardly mostly!) and ask 'Why have you forsaken me?' Out of this struggle there was always a stillness and an experience of being held, understood and accepted and I believe the whole CTJ experience helped me get closer to a personal relationship with God which felt more 'real' than I had ever previously experienced.

I had to leave first thing on the final day and missed out on the closing activities but I drove down the motorway content, peaceful and reflective, feeling better able to 'Continue My Journey'.

Jane Foley joins the planning group

I first came to the conference in 2012 and I really had no idea what it was about. I'd found it on the Internet when I was looking for some CPD and thought it looked interesting.....worship, workshops, speakers, food, a comfy bed and five days away from phones, TV, e-mails and noise. Fantastic. I booked it there and then !



On the first full day after a very tasty breakfast, I sat myself on the front row and waited in anticipation for the proceedings to begin. I sit in the front row at my Church - Up Front..... what's the point of sitting at the back ? Sometimes I wish I could take a few rows of chairs out at Church and then people would have to draw closer together, just as God wants us to do. I'd come to listen, to worship, to experience all that the conference had to offer and 'boy oh boy' let me tell you, I was not disappointed. The conference gave me a calm space away from the busyness of life. I felt welcomed, relaxed and accepted by the staff at the Hayes, the organisers and the other attendees. If you come you'll understand what I mean.

The small group I was placed in, very quickly gelled, none of your group dynamics for us ! We were all very different people from very different environments, bringing ourselves and our personalities together for a few hours over the coming days. The small groups offer a place of safety, where people who might not ordinarily speak out feel safe, able and confident to do so. I have to tell you, I cried on our last session together and I wasn't the only one..... CTJ 2012 was amazing.

So I returned in 2014 to experience more of the samebut different. Different speakers, different workshops and new songs to learn.

It was so nice to see faces I knew from last time and I realized that I wasn't a stranger. It made me reflect that, I had felt like a stranger in

a strange place when I first arrived two years previous. However, that didn't last long and anyway strangers are only people who we have yet to meet and have conversations with.

There were many wonderful moments at CTJ 2014, one of which was meeting the Irish poet and peaceworker Pádraig Ó Tuama. His workshop was eye-opening and thought provoking. The way he used words was truly beautiful. He used his words like a rainbow uses colours, to entice you, to draw you in, to pull and tug at your emotions, to make you feel. See what I mean ? Goodness knows where that sentence came from ! He also performed his poetry for us at our Thursday entertainment evening. Now that was emotional. It was like he took you with him inside his head, to the place, to the space, introducing you to the person his prose was about. Just marvellous.

At some point on Thursday evening I found myself in conversation with Bill Bazely from the planning group, I'm not sure what it was that prompted him to say, "Why don't you put yourself forward for the planning committee ?" Desperation, madness, the wine ? I really thought he must be bonkers as I hadn't a clue as to what I could offer to the group who gave us "All This" ! However, come the morning, a good nights sleep and a little chat with Him upstairs, I thought "Why Not ! They could always say no"

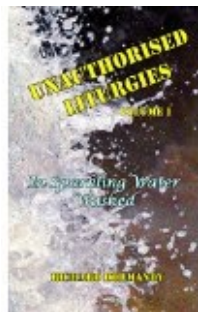
I'm happy to report they didn't and if you decide to join us at CTJ conference 2016, I shall be there to welcome you as part of my duties. I'm also the person that you can come to if you have any problems with your roomlumpy pillows, shower not working, more tea, coffee, sugar, milk, in need of a bedtime story (just kidding)!

But seriously folks, if, I mean when, you come to CTJ 2016, don't be surprised if, I mean when, it does something to you.....it certainly did me !

Unauthorised Liturgies

Volumes 1, 2 and 3 by Richard Dormandy,
Reviewed by Marie Calvert, November 2014

'..Don't worry about tomorrow. The Spirit of God is always winging her way from the future where tomorrow has already passed..'



These words are from one of my favourite blessings in Vol 1, and I remember how they touched many of us at the concluding worship of Continuing the Journey in 2010. Like many others, I have hugely appreciated Richard Dormandy's gifts of music and words and so was glad to have this chance to consider his new online book. 'Unauthorised Liturgies' is a selection of Richard's 'unofficial' prayers, reflections, liturgies and songs, many used during CTJ worship over recent years. I am really glad he gives explicit permission to use (or adapt) the materials for our own contexts. That is a real gift when planning church services.

Each slim volume has a different theme: 'In Sparkling Water Washed', 'The Well', and 'The Hinge of Time'. We are led through prayers of welcome and confession, into an

imaginatively written liturgy / story for a communion service (including visual ideas, excluding the actual Eucharistic prayer), to prayers of blessing. There is then an additional liturgy for a particular day for example, Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday or Ascension Day, and further reflections and songs. The lack of page numbers is compensated for by a clear introduction explaining the structure. Helpful for the easily-confused like me.

I really loved some of the prayers in Volumes 1 and 2 in particular, although each volume contains gems. Richard brings a freshness and simplicity, which invites a thoughtful engagement with God through word, imagination, rhythm and metaphor. Not all his words or theology will suit everyone. I struggled with some of the imagery at times but Richard always makes me stop in my tracks and look at something from a completely different angle. I really like that. This is a rich resource which warmed my heart, stimulated my mind and surprised my spirit.

Pdf versions of the books are available direct from Richard at richdorm@googlemail.com for the same price as the Kindle versions. (www.amazon.co.uk £3.04 per volume). Most pdf viewers, like Kindle, will allow readers to select and copy the text, and then paste it into their own documents.

A Blog about the last conference by Pat Marsh



It shouldn't surprise me, but do you know ... it always does. I'm talking about the way God has a habit of bringing across our path exactly the people we need to meet, at exactly the right time! A recent conference impacted me more than I could ever have imagined it would, and those unexpected encounters were a large part of that.

The Continuing the Journey conference brought together a diverse group of Christians, all of whom were involved in some form of caring role - counsellors, psychotherapists, retreat leaders, pastors, spiritual directors, art therapists, etc ... and some folks with several of those hats on. It was an opportunity to share our stories and (as it said on the advert) to 'explore the tension between world and church, nature and grace, current psychology and Christian theology'. And it changed me.

One of the most beautiful gatherings I have ever been to, within the framework of first class speakers and varied and interesting workshops, the conference managed to also honour the value of shared silence and opportunities for deep reflection. It also honoured the importance of laughter! And a deeply thoughtful, reflective and contemporary rhythm of worship held the whole in a holistic embrace that carried us through the journey.

After an extremely stressful and demanding seven months, during which all my writing and ministry had been put on hold, I arrived at the conference jaded and exhausted. I felt as if I simply couldn't see a way forward. It was only on my return home that I realise how deeply affirming, and in many ways life-changing, the week had been. I am now in a peaceful place, once more deeply assured in my calling, and have re-established the contemplative rhythms that had been seriously eroded by circumstances. And, for me, when those rhythms are in place then I am more able to follow the Spirit's promptings and somehow life just 'flows' ... circumstances, thoughts and feelings.

A tiny Herb Robert flower, which I walked past every day of the conference, spoke into my heart. Each time I paused to admire it, climbing its way up the stonework, I realised that in that location, between the path and the wall, it only became all it was capable of being by holding on to those things that helped it to grow.



There's a lesson for all of us in that!

If you want to hear more from Pat then check out her other blogs: <http://patmarsh.blogspot.co.uk>



The communion well

Every now and then we stopped to play!



Fishes for the journey

Date of Next Conference: 25th April - 29th April 2016

Further details about the conference can be downloaded from our website

www.continuingthejourney.com

CTJ Conference Office: admin@continuingthejourney.com

Tel: 0115 871 8564