

CONTINUING THE JOURNEY NEWSLETTER - MARCH 2018

Continuing The Journey

Exploring continuity and tension between the world and church



Conference is now only two months away and planning group preparations are in full swing. As usual the most common answer to 'How did you find out about us?' is through a friend, so please do be inviting others. To help you do this we are creeping into this century with a new Facebook page, of which you'll find more details in this newsletter. At present we need at least 14 more bookings, but would love more!

For me, conference offers an opportunity to step out of the normal busyness of life, to pause and reflect. My hope this year is that it will be an opportunity to look afresh at how we are living, to think about what balance and health looks like for each of us, and perhaps to regain, if we've lost it, a sense of wonder.

Rainer Maria Rilke puts it like this:
'Most people simply don't know how beautiful the world is and how much splendour is revealed in the smallest things, in a common flower, in a stone, in the bark of a tree or the leaf of a birch. Grown-up people, who have



occupations and cares and who worry themselves about mere trifles, gradually lose the eye for these riches, while children, if they are observant and good, quickly notice and love with their whole heart.'

(Quoted in Sunrise of Wonder, Michael Mayne, p.123)

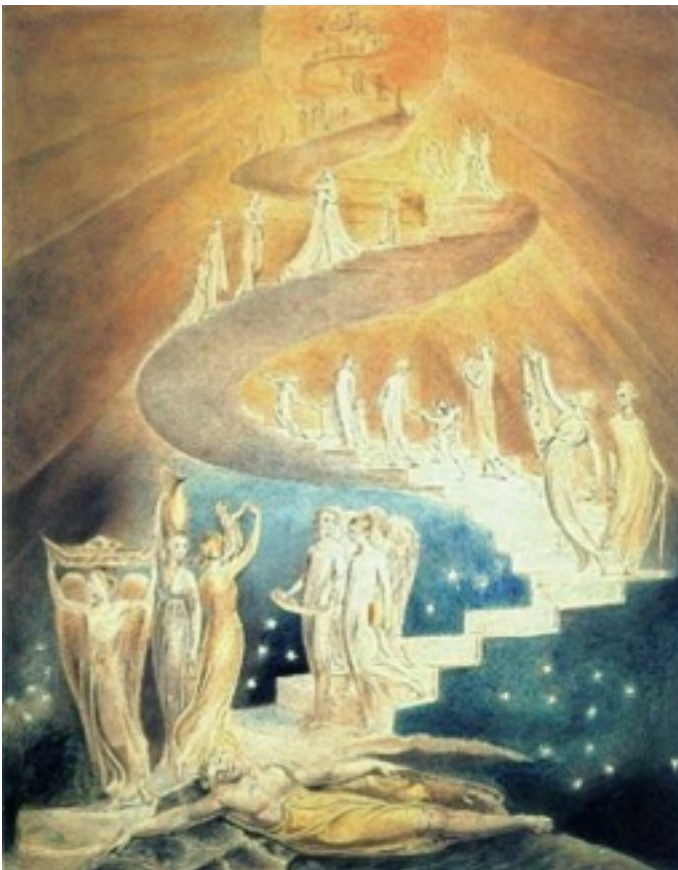
In this newsletter you'll get a glimpse of worship at conference, an opportunity to get to know our speaker Mark Oakley a bit more, and, if you have Facebook, you'll be encouraged to follow, like and share!

I look forward to seeing many of you at conference in May and wish you a Happy Easter.

Kim Gooding, Chair of Planning Group

Worship - Half way up the stairs...

It has been my joy and privilege to be involved with planning our gathered worship times for conference over the past 4 years. As a church minister I am used to planning church services, but often, due to time constraints, I only have a day to reflect and create a service which I think will help my church community feel connected to one another and to God. At Continuing the Journey we have the joy of spending two years reflecting on the past conference, allowing a new theme to emerge and creating a new conference including our times of worship together. It is this luxury of time which helps make the worship at conference feel like it has many layers, meanings and depths which can be explored by participants.



Two years allows for us to really let the theme of the conference gestate within the planning group and for ideas to bubble around, so they can shift and change, be moulded and developed into something rich with meaning. We have a small group which focuses on planning the worship. Each one of us in the group tends to think in a different way and this helps refine our ideas and helps us to think carefully about the best way of making our ideas happen in the context of worship. Thinking therapeutically whilst planning worship is really important: we aim to make our times of worship together as accessible as possible, with

out losing creativity or playfulness, but at the same time to be sensitive to how people may experience certain things. Choice is hugely important when it comes to presenting worship

experiences: people are free to participate as little or as much as they like, and time for silence is crucial, allowing individuals space for thinking, reflecting and meditating in a shared space.

This year's conference theme of 'Halfway up the Stairs' has provided us with a vast amount of really interesting material to chew on. Of course we will be visiting Jacob's ladder, ideas of ascending and descending, and reflecting on different levels of awakening - and, as always there will be plenty of opportunity to sing, pray and play together in our worship. We really hope you will join us as we gather together again in May. Our two year journey in planning our worship has been really fascinating, and it will be interesting to see where else we go with it during the conference. After all, worship by its very nature is full of surprises - who knows what we might find halfway up the stairs if we dare to venture up there!

Karen Stallard - member of the worship planning group
(Image: Jacobs Dream; William Blake)

Can anything good come out of Nazareth?

A place of no interest

A place which has so little to offer

defenceless, poor, voiceless

Yet Nazareth finds me under a fig tree

Me, a grain of sand

Imagine that?

To be seen by something which is nothing special.

A nobody calling a nobody

A nobody calling a nobody a somebody

***It is difficult to see something when it appears there is nothing
but I have a feeling there may be more to it all than meets the eye.***

I know something good can come out of a fig tree

perhaps if I shelter under one for a while

perhaps I may climb up into its branches

***half way up I may be able to see more clearly where goodness might be
found.***

There I might hear the call from nowhere.

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An interview with Mark Oakley



Why did you accept our invitation to conference?

The title intrigued me! I then explored Continuing the Journey on-line and thought that the conversation between various disciplines and interests it enables is really important and something I'd love to be part of.

What has your experience of conference been in the past?

I haven't been to Continuing the Journey conference before but I'm already impressed at the careful reflection of the organisers in their planning

Halfway up the stairs, what first springs to mind?

I see myself as a small boy sitting on a staircase in a home that wasn't mine. I have never known my mother and my childhood days were sometimes spent in various houses as my father went to work and left me with kind couples who looked after me. I'm not sure whose stair it was but I was sitting there in semi-darkness waiting for the lights on my father's car to shine through the window telling me he had arrived and would now take me home.

Do you have an experience of sitting halfway up the stairs?

I'm always struck by John Donne's comment that 'to vex me contraries meet in one'. Life is not for beginners. It is an increasing experience of contradictions, ambiguities and bafflements. Wisdom, it seems to me, is about being able to appreciate this rather than resist it. The image of sitting halfway upstairs speaks to me of this middle space between extremes, of double perspective and of the need for discernment as how next to move.

What would you like us to know about you before you come?

I'm originally from Shropshire. I have a wonderful wirehaired dachshund called Fritz. I try to read a new poem every day. I'm learning more and more that Christian spirituality is the unapologetic business of learning to speak up for other people, especially those a Church, community, government or world would like to make invisible.

CTJ is on Facebook!

We have finally found our way on to social media, and bearing in mind the rather limited knowledge about such things amongst us in the Planning Group, it seems quite a significant step. 'Why bother?' you may be asking. The aim is really to broaden general awareness of our forthcoming conference, and in particular to connect with those who are much more inclined to search for events online. So it is with some surprise and trepidation that I found myself 'climbing the stairs' of learning how to create a Facebook page. Having done it, I'm excited about the possibilities. As with any Facebook page, it is quick to read, visual, easy to update regularly with snippets about conference, and best of all YOU can also engage with it, by adding comments or 'likes', and clicking to 'follow' it. In

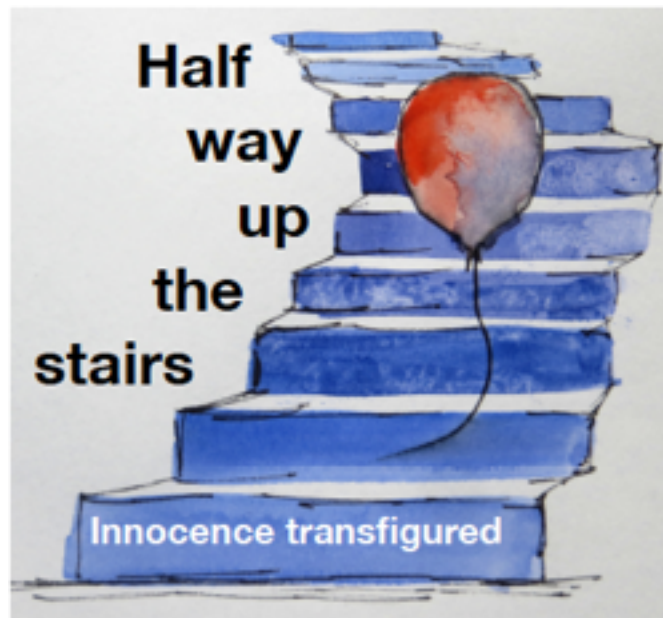


fact, this page will only work if lots of people get involved, as there is no other way of advertising it. So if you are willing to 'share' it on your own Facebook page, that would be wonderful. The more 'likes' we get, the higher up google we will go, and more people will hear about us. It's also easy to direct people to our page, ideal for those friends or colleagues who may be curious to find out more about conference – just cut and paste the web page address into an email. And the good news is that you don't even have to be on Facebook to access it (although it's ideal if you are). But if you type 'continuing the journey conference facebook' into any search engine our page should come up.

Alternatively you can follow this link: [Continuing the Journey on Facebook](#).

We really hope you will join us in this new adventure, and help us to spread the word further. Do have a look at our page, and share/like / follow us. There are still some spaces available for this year's Conference, let's see if we can fill them!

Marie Calvert (the unlikely techy)



There are still a few places left so book now!
Join us for our next conference on 21st - 25th May 2018
Download our booking form by clicking [here](#)