

Autumn 2015 Newsletter

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1. Introduction

In this newsletter we have rich theological and spiritual reflections in the substantial articles by Professors Lisa Isherwood and June Boyce-Tillman.

We also focus on people’s responses and actions in relation to some of the significant issues of the present time, which is what we mean when we talk about being a “hub for engaged spirituality”.

The Thames in London has figured in two recent imaginative events drawing

attention to the perils of climate change and the inter-related problems of poverty and inequality. We report on the **Millennium Bridge Vigil** and on the **Rising Tide** apocalyptic horses on the South Bank at Vauxhall.

LivingSpirituality held its annual joint event in partnership with St James’s Piccadilly on 27 September, which was chaired by Rev Lucy Winkett.

Professor **Lisa Isherwood** gave a very striking and challenging talk entitled **Wanderings in the Cosmic Garden**, which addressed the theological and spiritual

issues underlying the planetary problems that we face. We include the introductory section of that talk here, and you can read the complete talk through a link to a pdf on our website.

We publish a review of the book **Love for the Future: A Journey** by Rev Prebendary David Osborne, brought out by Wild Goose, the Iona Community publishers. This book forms the basis for a course which we plan to make available through the *LivingSpirituality* website in the future to help people to find their personal focus in relation to the large scale of issues in today's world. More about that in our next newsletter.

LS Steering Group member Heather-Jane Ozanne does some very challenging **peace-building** work in the Middle East through her charity, **Spirit of Peace**. We report on the recent bridge-building concerts in Jerusalem and Nazareth.

At the Holy Rood House Summer School, which was on the theme of *A Cosmological and Ecological Approach to Healing*, Rev Professor June Boyce Tillman gave an excellent talk. You can read the opening section of June's talk on **A Cosmic View of Music** in the newsletter or read the full transcript as a pdf on our website.

Another interesting activity at Holy Rood House is the **Men's Spirituality** workshops which are a regular part of the programme.

Rick Butler has written about his experiences participating in these

workshops, and the impact they have had on him. In our next newsletter we aim to have a longer article explaining the background to the men's spirituality movement in the UK, which is just as important in overcoming patriarchal understandings of the divine as the more widespread feminist theology and women's spirituality activities.

LivingSpirituality's Art & Spirituality Special Interest Group held its first **creativity day** in September. You can read here about what emerged.

Our final report is on the recent **pilgrimage day** to Canterbury arranged by our **Journeying Together Group**.

In the near future we will be making available **guidelines for people who want to set up groups** similar to Journeying Together.

We are grateful to LS Steering Group member, Jenny Sandler, who has been running a spiritual sharing group for a long period, and is drafting guidelines for people starting out on a similar venture.

With all good wishes,

Petra Griffiths

LivingSpirituality Coordinator

Details of the members of the LS Steering Group are at www.livingspirit.org.uk/who-we-are/steering-group.

2. Lighting the Way – a global vigil

A group of us from St James's Piccadilly and **LivingSpirituality** were among the 2,000 people who waved lights for the Global Goals, at the Lighting the Way vigil on the Millennium Bridge in London on 24 September, when the Pope was about to address the United Nations.



The group from St James's Piccadilly and LivingSpirituality

More than 100,000 people took to the streets around the world, from Afghanistan to Brussels, and Kampala to Johannesburg. On 25th September a group of supporters handed a photo from the London event to Downing Street. It will be hung as a reminder to politicians of their responsibility to achieve the Global Goals.

Footage from around the world is also part of a film which has been shown to world leaders at the UN.

You can watch the film here:
www.youtu.be/PmNBJGwRKVc

Lighting the Way was organised by Action/2015, a coalition of over 2,020 organisations around the world who are committed to fighting for a better future. The aim is to maximise pressure on world leaders and ensure that 2015, when the Millennium Development Goals are being negotiated at the UN, is a year of action and change on the interrelated themes of climate, poverty and inequality.

You can find out which organisations in the UK are part of Action/2015 at www.bond.org.uk/advocacy/action2015#the_uk_opportunity.



The view from above the Millennium Bridge

3. The Rising Tide - an art installation on the Thames



One of the four sculptures

The Rising Tide is an art installation on the river bed of the Thames in London, commissioned for the Totally Thames Festival - www.totallythames.org/events/info/jason-decaires-taylor-rising-tide - held over the month of September.

The four horsemen of the apocalypse, close to Houses of Parliament, are a political comment on impact of fossil fuels. They were placed slightly upriver from the Houses of Parliament, only visible at low

tide. As the tide came in, the horses and riders were submerged by it.

Created by underwater sculptor Jason deCaires Taylor, the piece is a statement about climate change and the ignorance of politicians. The horses have petroleum pumps instead of snouts. Jason deCaires Taylor told ITV News London that the exhibition is about asking questions about our dependence on fossil fuels.

The artist stressed he did not want dictate what impression people take away, but hoped his work would raise some critical questions: "Currently our oceans are facing critical threats due to carbon dioxide and so I wanted to ask questions about fossil fuels and how this dependence can change...I want people to think about how fragile humanity is when faced with the greater things such as the river, and the oceans.... I want them [politicians and business people] to be aware of the critical timescale we have to affect change."

Born in 1974 to an English father and Guyanese mother, Taylor grew up in Europe and Asia.

His pioneering public art projects are not only examples of successful marine conservation but works of art that seek to encourage environmental awareness, instigate social change and develop an appreciation of the breath-taking natural beauty of the underwater world.

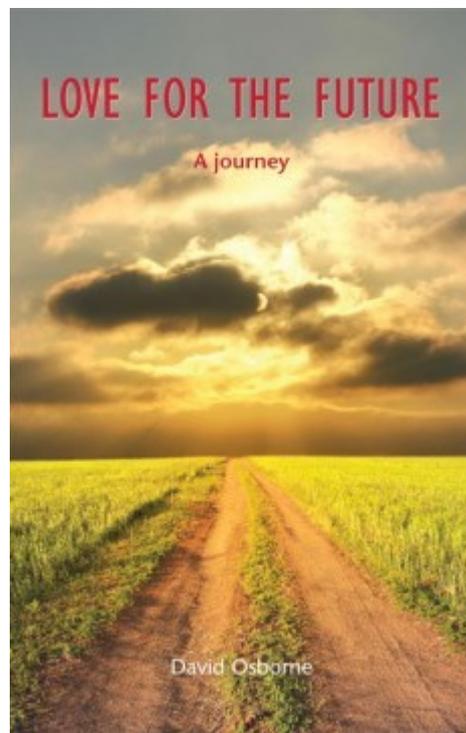
[deliberate use of the word] above all else.

The origins of this arrogance lie in the interpretations of the Eden myth where the disembodied word of God commanded that the world be brought into being out of nothingness with a hierarchy of creation set in place ending with humans [Gn1:27], man [Gn2:7] or woman [Gn2:22]. As the crown of creation the humans are given the task of subduing [Hb, kabas=stamp down] and dominating [Hb, rada=trampling] the world [Gn1:28] which is signalled by the power of naming [Gn2:19]. While man appears to get on with the task woman takes a different path and communes with nature exploring all, even what has been forbidden. In the patriarchal myth, women, nature, the wise serpent and the procreative process itself are seen as suspect.....

To read the transcript of the whole talk, go to: www.livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/lisa_isherwood_wanderings.pdf.

Lisa Isherwood is Professor of Feminist and Liberation Theologies at the Institute for Theological Partnerships at the University of Winchester. Her work explores the nature of incarnation within a contemporary context and includes the body, gender, sexuality and eco-theology.

5. Review by John Reader of Love for the Future: A Journey by David Osborne



In 1992 whilst still a rural parish priest in the Diocese of Lichfield, David Osborne took time out of his formal ministry to walk from his home parish to Iona. This book is the result of his reflections upon that journey, which was spread over a 6 week period, and took him through Cheshire, Manchester and parts of Lancashire, up via Scargill House and the Borders and on to his final destination. 1992 was also the year of the Rio conference on the environment, and although the text has been written mainly after the event, the theme of our responsibility for creation features significantly throughout the book.

Like all good pilgrims, Osborne engages with the context through which he passes and brilliantly brings to life not only the world which he discovers as a result, but also his own feelings en route. The fear with such a project would be that one loses interest towards the end and the narrative becomes repetitive, following a stimulating and rewarding start. Osborne however avoids this both through the quality of his writing and the depth of his insights.

Each chapter takes us along part of the route, but then offers a series of resources for further discussion: often the story of a historical figure who illustrates the theme such as Benedict, Cuthbert or John Newton, followed by questions for discussion, some recommended biblical references, possible actions one might take, and then finally some further books to follow up.

As such this is a book to be used rather than just read, and could easily form the basis for a parish study group. Having heard David use the book for a presentation I was eager to obtain a copy and will consider using it for a Lent group this year. The themes which emerge - and they do emerge rather than feeling artificially imposed, and that is a great strength of the book – include community; compassion; repentance; hope, wisdom and love.

To take just one chapter as an example (Chapter 10, Songs and Stories), David

paints a powerful picture of his trek through the Southern Highlands, the dangers and difficulties encountered, and then closes with a helpful discussion of hope: “Hope is a conviction that the pain, the grief, the struggle and the suffering of the world is taken into a greater reality where the wounds are not removed but healed. Out of loss comes new possibility” (p.221).

As one might guess, this comes out of personal experience of losing a child, so has its own authenticity as a struggle to make sense of the bereavements which are part of everyday life, but is also highly relevant to the challenges currently being faced by those of us concerned about environmental matters.

The insights and theological reflections are introduced in such a way that it is easy to identify with them, and to see what Osborne is getting at, even though one might not always agree with him. The other joy is that he is not dogmatic about any of this - he is not suggesting that we should all go on such pilgrimages or follow his particular journey - so one feels encouraged and accompanied on one's own particular path rather than being forced down someone else's.

I would recommend this book heartily as one of the best and most accessible pieces of spiritual writing I have encountered for a long while. Buy it, spend time with it, return to it and then share it with others.

The review was written by **Revd Dr John Reader** - Ironstone Benefice, Diocese of Oxford, and William Temple Foundation. It was first published in **Crucible, the Christian Journal of Social Ethics**.

Love for the Future: A Journey by **David Osborne**. Wild Goose Publications 2013; pp284; pbk, £10.99; download, £8.50. www.ionabooks.com

6. Music at the Intersection: Two bridge-building concerts in Jerusalem and Nazareth by Heather-Jane Ozanne

"A Sufi, an Armenian and a Jew walk into a Scottish Church." To me this sounds like the beginning of a joke on a stand-up comedy night but in fact it is the introduction to a write up on the Music at the Intersection concerts in the Israeli Newspaper Ha'aretz!

It has me waiting for the punch line, but in this case if there is a punch-line it is that in the midst of conflict, people who represent different groups in the conflict can find common ground by sharing from their rich musical traditions.

This is surely what happened in Jerusalem and Nazareth late August this year at the concerts organised by the UK Charity **Spirit of Peace** (founded by a member of the LS team). These well-attended musical events brought together singers and musicians from different

communities and featured Armenian folk singer Hasmik Harutyunyan, in this centennial of the Armenian Genocide.



Hasmik Harutyunyan, singing at St Andrews, Jerusalem

Other artistes included Abed Alsalem Manasra and the Nazareth Sufi Ensemble, Jewish vocalists, Hanna Yaffe and Deborah Shayovitz and Fr Fuad Dagher (an Anglican priest near Nazareth). They were accompanied by musical instruments which included the Oud, Kanoon and Duduk as well as the guitar and various hand drums.

We were honoured that these concerts were hosted by the Scottish Church in Jerusalem and Christ Church, Nazareth - both of which were stunning settings which contributed to the magic of the evenings.

The process of bringing these concerts to birth demanded deep collaboration across many communities and lands and this in itself was a journey and lesson in building networks for peace beyond cultural differences.

This was not always an easy process, but this is part of the purpose and value of such events; learning to work together in the face of differences that can sometimes feel threatening.



Abed Alsalem Manasra and the Sufi Ensemble, Christ Church, Nazareth

The result was more than worth it - two beautiful concerts, which touched many hearts and relationships engendered which can lead to further collaboration on the road to greater peace and human flourishing in an area of unrest and tension.

In the words of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, "**Hope is the faith that, together we can make things better**" and music has great power to bring people together even in difficult circumstances as demonstrated by these concerts.

N.B. More information about the concerts and rationale behind the concerts can be found here: www.indiegogo.com/

[projects /music-at-the-intersection-concerts-for-peace](#). If anyone would like to contribute retrospectively - or towards future concerts - please do be in touch via www.spiritofpeace.co.uk.

Similarly please do get in touch if you may like to be involved in future similar concerts in the UK or Middle East! Many thanks, Heather-Jane Ozanne and the Spirit of Peace team.

Heather-Jane Ozanne is founder-director of Spirit of Peace, and a member of the *LivingSpirituality* Steering Group.

7. A Cosmic View of Music by June Boyce-Tillman

Opening Song

CHORUS

Sing us our own song the song of the earth,
The song of creation, the song of our birth,
That exists in belonging to you and to me,
To the stars and the mountains, the sky and the sea.

1. Listen! You're hearing the song of the earth,
They sing it who know of their value and worth,
For they know they belong with the sea and the sky,
To the moonshine at midnight, the clouds floating by.

CHORUS

2. It is not one song but patchworks of sound.
That includes all the pitches that people have
found
That includes the vibrations of earthquakes
and bees
Of the laughing fire's crackling and
murmuring bees.

CHORUS

3. All blend together to make the earth song,
Fragmented parts separated too long,
True notes and rhythms and colours and beat
Make sacred spaces where we all meet.

CHORUS



June Boyce-Tillman

From June Boyce-Tillman's
A Rainbow to Heaven

Framework

I start with this song as it represents my attempt to restore the connectedness of music including its connection with the heavens. Throughout the history of Western music spirituality or the heavenly and music have been associated – from

the ancient goddess traditions through Plato and on through Hildegard of Bingen. It was seen, as the opening song suggests, as connecting human beings to one another, to God and spiritual or heavenly beings and to the earth.

Inspiration was seen for the vast majority of Western history to come from some heavenly source, whether it be the Muses, Angels or God. It was in the hands of the philosophers of the Enlightenment that the link between music and the heavenly became weakened and the search for the spiritual became an essentially human search located in the unconscious rather than one rooted in the essentially exterior spirituality of the heavens.

The spiritual became associated with notions of self-actualisation and self-fulfilment in Maslow's hierarchy of human needs in which he included the aesthetic – the need for beauty, order, and symmetry. As Western culture edged towards an aggressive individualism, a sense of finding some place in a larger whole – the cosmos – became a priority in the human search. But this was now to be sought by exploring the heavens materially rather than with the imaginal mind.

This process of objectifying the cosmos associated with the advance of science had not happened in the same way in Eastern cultures; and it was on these cultures that the New Age and some areas

of rock and jazz traditions drew, in order to offer the desired sense of relationality. This included a more holistic view of the mind/body/spirit relationship, with transcendence approached through physical practices such as chanting or dancing.

This paper will look at the heavenly through the lens of the spiritual. It will use a phenomenography of the musical experience to examine different dimensions of the musical experience. It will draw largely on western classical traditions which will base them largely within a frame of Christianity. To read the full article with references, go to:

www.livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/june_boyce_tillman_talk.pdf.

Rev **June Boyce-Tillman MBE** is Professor of Applied Music, University of Winchester, Artistic Convenor of the Winchester Centre for the Arts as Wellbeing and Extraordinary Professor of North West University, South Africa.

8. Men's Spirituality at Holy Rood House, Thirsk - A personal view by Rick Butler

This is a personal view of spirituality and the recent men's spirituality weekend at Holy Rood House. Whilst the content of what was shared remains confidential, the case for enhancing men's spirituality is not. This article is about my own views and subjective experiencing of spirituality.

Consequently I ask you, dear reader, not to take my words as being representative of the views or interests of anyone else or any organisation.

On that October day three years ago when I first visited, I was fully aware of crossing the physical threshold at the door of Holy Rood House. What became increasingly apparent shortly afterwards was the heartfelt knowledge that I had also crossed a spiritual threshold, assisting me on my journey towards my own subjective spiritual homecoming.

As men and boys we are often isolated, vulnerable, living with fear and insecurity. Despite this most of us go on in life, summoning up the courage to climb our own mountain. In times past and in other cultures men and boys were lionised for this and provision made for them in the men's tent to become initiated and guided along the spiritual path that led to a deeper sense of relatedness, self awareness and fulfilment in their manhood as a husband, father, son, brother, carer, warrior, lover, healer,



teacher, hunter, protector of the weak, builder, farmer, guardian of nature and a being in relationship with the Divine.

In the contemporary, popular culture of Western society, where I perceive that men are often ridiculed, patronized or demonised, we seldom have access to a men's tent and often find ourselves driven further into a sense of isolation.

The jokey, blokey aspect of the male world is no substitute and of no real help, except in maintaining denial of the yearning for expression of that spiritual aspect of our being.

The annual Men's Weekend at Holy Rood House is an opportunity to enter the men's tent and to engage in a spiritual journey supported by brotherhood. The jokey, blokey world is dumped in the porch.

Within the House there is a warm, good humoured welcome to a deeper, more authentic way of being a man. Within this brotherhood one is valued, prized for one's contribution to the collective wisdom, empathised with, listened to and truly heard.

With sensitive leadership from Stephen Wright, together with the presence of Stanley Baxter and Brother John the weekend gives crucial support and encouragement for those of us who are/wish to become more spiritually aware.

The sense of connectedness through greater spiritual awareness is the antidote

to the isolation experienced by so many modern men. Treading that well worn path towards greater spiritual awareness engages us with our brotherhood from all cultures who, throughout all the ages have journeyed towards greater wellbeing in their manhood.

Rick Butler is a non-resident member of the community at Holy Rood House, where he works part time as an Associate Counsellor, as well as having his own private practice as a BACP Registered Counsellor.

9. The Creativity Day led by Linda Pearson

This was the first event put on by our Art & Spirituality Group, and was held in Selby, North Yorkshire, on 19 September. It was led by Linda Pearson, coordinator of *LivingSpirituality's* Art & Spirituality Special Interest Group.



An image created during the workshop

Participants write:

“Thank you so much for the Art and Spirituality Day last Saturday. I didn’t know what to expect, as I have never done anything like that before and hoped it would be relaxing and interesting. It exceeded all my expectations – it felt like I had been given permission to play and express myself at the same time. I hadn’t realised how long it had been since I had done either and I felt quite emotional when I started! I found the whole day a real joy which has stayed with me. It felt like the first small step on a journey of discovery about myself; I would certainly like to do another.”

“The Art and Spirituality day was led in a relaxed and fun way by Linda Pearson. I felt a freedom to explore and express myself through the different activities. Linda guided us through with just the right balance of structure and flexibility. I am already looking forward to the next one!”

Another event is being planned at the same venue to take place in February 2016.

10. Pilgrimage to Canterbury



Our Journeying Together Group went on a pilgrimage (by train) to Canterbury in September, visiting the Cathedral and other sacred sites. This was organised by David Carter, (on the right of the photograph, along with two of our group members, Joan and John).

David’s preparations, commentaries and structuring in of silent periods in each location meant that the day felt like a pilgrimage rather than a tourist visit. We look forward to further days of this sort which add variety and richness to our monthly meetings.

11. Pilgrim – A Poem

We close this newsletter with a poem by Archbishop Helder Camara, liberation theologian and Catholic Archbishop of Olinda and Recife in Brazil, 1964-85.

Pilgrim

When your ship
long moored in harbour gives you the
illusion
of being a house;

When your ship begins to
put down roots
in the stagnant water by the quay

PUT OUT TO SEA!

Save your boat's journeying soul,
and your own pilgrim soul,
cost what it may.