

Continuing the Journey

Newsletter November 2008

What a rich conference we enjoyed in the Spring! We are delighted that you want to stay in touch with us, really continuing the *Touch and Go* theme, and trust that the experience of the conference will continue to enrich your lives, as it has ours. There was so much to experience, to savour, to dwell with, to encourage us to re-examine long-held beliefs.

In this newsletter three participants share their experience of Conference 2008, and there are a number of quotes from the feedback forms. It is our hope that these memories will encourage you to continue to draw on the material of the conference, whether you were able to be there or not, in order that you may continue your journey fruitfully.

This has been a rich
and immensely
valuable experience

My first time and I
shall definitely be
back

**CONFERENCE TALKS ARE NOW ON
THE WEBSITE**

www.continuingthejourney.com

SYMBOL AND CYMBAL

It is 40 years since I learnt to drive, but I can still remember how I felt, driving into Central London for the first time just two days after passing my test. I had similar feelings as I travelled to Swanwick in April; this was my first taste of CPD and I had not long thrown away my counsellor's L-plates.

The welcome pack was reassuring, especially the CPD certificate – everything taken care of, everything wonderfully well planned and thoughtful. This care was shown in so many other ways throughout the course – things like the arrangement at the front of the lecture hall that was added to each day, first the draped cloth, then the bowl....

All the presentations were superb, more of the same thought and care and inspiration. But best of all were the workshops. The most lasting impact on me came from *Percussion and Prayer* - experimenting with an Aladdin's Cave of instruments, so many wonderful ways of speaking without words, Psalm 150 in action or voicing my concerns for another in a new way of interceding. I continue to use my own Djembe drum to express the kind of feelings that words cannot reach.

The dominant spirituality of the conference was very different from my own, and so the high spot in worship for me was the hand and feet washing at the final evening Eucharist. It felt especially good to have this towards the end, when strangers had become friends.

Yes, the presentations were superb, but what touched me most in those five days was wordless - images and

symbols, Sophie Hacker's paintings, the care of the Planning Committee, praising and interceding with percussion, the sacrament of hand-washing. These are the most precious things I took with me. And maybe I left those L-plates behind.

Marie Jelley



"We need your help in making conference more widely known and we want to stay in touch with you. Many have not yet responded to the mailing request to be in touch with our administrator, so we have included your details again. Please complete and return the form by post or e-mail, even if there are no changes, so that we can confirm and update our list and then use email wherever possible to keep costs down.

Conference Dates
3rd - 7th May 2010
Starting on the Bank
Holiday Monday

CTJ Conference Office:
55 Prospect Way, Brabourne Lees,
Ashford, Kent TN25 6RL;
Tel: 07759475687 Email:
admin@continuingthejourney.com

SWANWICK 2008

As I settle to write about 'Continuing the Journey 2008' on a glorious afternoon of Indian Summer, I find myself as warmed by the memories as by the sun - reflecting on how the conference was 'sold' in literature dispensed in preceding weeks. The appetite was whetted by promises of "sanctuary", "space", "opportunity to bring together.....both the continuity and the tension between world and church, nature and grace, psychology and theology". All this, and promise, too, of beautiful Derbyshire countryside, free time to enjoy it, and, wondrously, "attractive en suite accommodation" with lift access! For me, the latter contributed hugely to fulfilling the "sanctuary" and "space" promises as well as the lift meeting my (temporary) mobility needs following two orthopaedic operations.

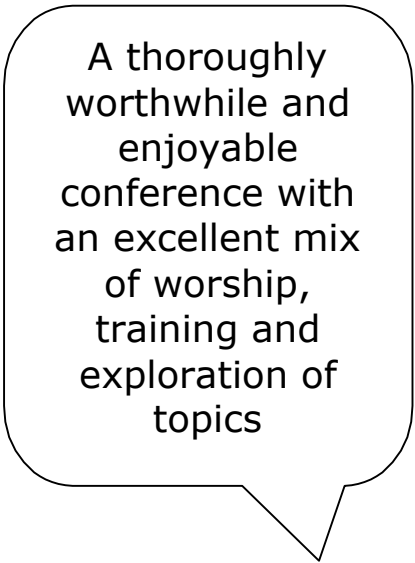
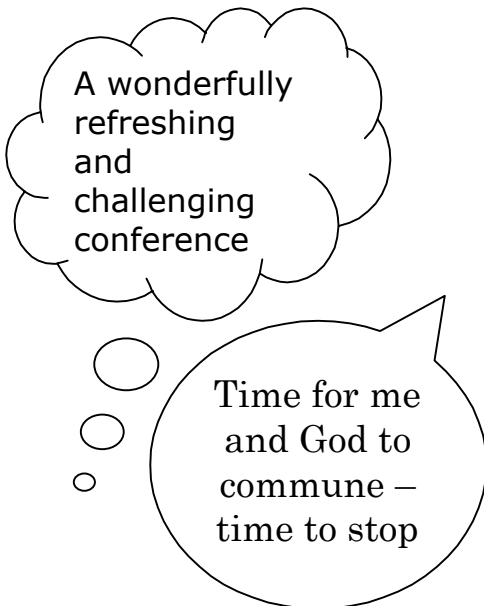
A seasoned 'Continuing the Journey-er', I have learned that promise is fulfilled, plus a plethora of serendipitous experiences and insights which could not be foretold but which arise out of well-prepared ground and the meeting of minds and spirits ready to focus. This conference is unique: it fosters an atmosphere of acceptance which, far from being soft and patronising, promotes an environment which gives and accepts challenge, where honest doubt can be expressed and co-exist comfortably with affirmation of faith expressed through shared worship.

The very nature of faith is to admit uncertainties and to allow questionings. This is my sort of faith and Swanwick 2008 again fulfilled my expectations of nurture. How was all this achieved? The answer will be different, both in nature and degree for each participant. For me, the title 'Touch and Go' engendered a sense of lightness and potential for freedom and it was fascinating and challenging to hear the multiplicity of interpretations of this phrase from our plenary and

workshop speakers/leaders - the touch of a kiss, capable of both passion and betrayal, therapeutic touching (or not!), traumatic 'goings' and abusive touchings. These and many other interpretations of 'touch and go' stimulated reflection and heightened awareness as well as the paradoxical invitation to linger and gaze in the context of visual and spiritual stimuli.

To conclude, one of my most profound personal insights came in a light moment of semi- frustration - a large group of women queuing for the loo at coffee-time. I commented "it's not the going , it's the getting ready to go that takes the time". This **touched** the group to a shared giggle before **going** to the next session. Later, I realised the profundity of the comment and its relevance to my 'now' situation. Profound integration through lightness of touch sums up 'Continuing the Journey 2008' for me and I look forward to 2010 (and its innovative title?) with anticipation.

Jean Whittle



LOST FOR WORDS – PERCUSSION AS PRAYER.

“Why is it?” I asked myself, when, having agreed to write something about Richard Dormandy’s workshop on drumming and percussion, I found myself, lost for words.

Like a well-trained therapist, I looked to the subject matter to give me a clue. Of course! What Richard was offering us was a way of prayer, and in particular of intercessory prayer, for those times when we cannot find words, when language eludes us, or frustrates us; when words will not serve.

So I will now try to put into words what was for me an experience both deeply spiritual, and deeply physical.

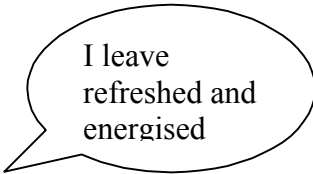
I went to Richard’s workshop because I felt a need to get away from words, a need to sink into something more profound than language. I wanted to explore a way of prayer that would by-pass words, because sometimes words only served to get in the way. Perhaps in the back of my mind was the teaching of one of the Church Fathers, to “put your mind into your heart, and stand in the Presence of God” – a saying which has always intrigued me.

Richard, told us of the difficulty he himself has with finding the words for prayer. It is through drumming and percussion that he finds he is able to pray for others. He allowed us to share in his “drumming prayer” and, as his prayers for other people flowed from his heart into his fingers, and he beat and strummed and stroked his drum, sometimes softly and insistently, sometimes passionately, sometimes very gently, he spoke the words.

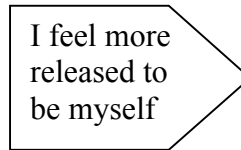
He encouraged us to choose our own percussion instrument from his collection, and to experiment for ourselves in this form of prayer. It is in writing about this experience that I feel lost for words; that words become inadequate.

I felt as though I was somehow being liberated, but from what I cannot say. I experienced a number of emotions: helplessness, anxiety, and trepidation among them – and finally a deep sense that God is utterly trustworthy; that it doesn't matter all that much if, in my desire to please Him, I sometimes get things wrong, because in the end He is in control; that I can let God be God, and I can rest in Him and allow Him to lead me: in prayer, in action, in my thoughts and my words. I was set free, because in my helplessness and wordlessness I was able to allow the Holy Spirit to pray in me and through me, with, or without, words.

Claire Peppiatt



I leave
refreshed and
energised



I feel more
released to
be myself

The Journey to become your Newsletter Editor

The last two conferences convinced me that *Continuing the Journey* is the way for me to find refreshment and spiritual growth and depth appropriate to current activities, so I offered to help. Now I have been asked to describe my journey to conference involvement.

In the 1970s, as a qualified social worker in child care, I was aware of limited opportunities to use counselling skills developed during my training and post qualifying studies. Contact with Myra Chave Jones led to my becoming a volunteer counsellor with Care &

Counsel (see www.continuingthejourney.com *Our journey so far*) and subsequently a member of their management committee. My Christian fellowship was attached to Westminster Chapel, and consisted of evangelical young professionals seeking to integrate faith and work.

By the time of the Bristol conference, which I attended, I was married, involved with Social Workers Christian Fellowship (SWCF), and employed part time as a tutor at Royal Holloway, University of London, while continuing in social work practice. Gradually Social Work education and training became my main focus. My church family for the last thirty years has been with Queens Road Church, Wimbledon (www.qrc.org.uk).

Widowed suddenly in 1996, I retired three years later. My journey continued with a three month trip around the world visiting friends and social work projects, four years editing SWCF's journal and a range of increased opportunities for writing. Mentoring and supervision of Christian women in the integration of their faith and work has kept supervisory and counselling skills alive. I also lead a fortnightly inter-denominational group for seniors and enjoy archiving my own church's history.

Touch and Go gave expression and stimulation to all the senses through worship, workshops and companionship. Solitude was recognised as a necessary component of our journeys. There was time for reflection, while action, laughter and good food were important components. These are also found in the Planning Group, who have been exceptionally kind in their welcome to me.

While this newsletter mainly looks back on *Touch and Go*, already the group is working at plans for the next conference. I look forward to bringing you the fruit of our deliberations. Do visit the website to see who is involved. Please make sure the dates 3rd – 7th May 2010 are in your diary, as I hope to meet you there.

Claire Wendelken