

Community Building in Britain Newsletter

Number 64

August/September 1998

The newsletter is issued by a growing network of people in Britain who are committed to developing community building beyond that originally described in Dr. M. Scott Peck's book, 'The Different Drum', and as further developed by the Foundation for Community Encouragement in the USA (FCE).

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From the Editor

There are a variety of contributions to this edition - several in response to my suggestion that people share things that they are involved with, whether or not it is directly 'community building' or not; and several are from books that seem relevant to me. I hope that you find some of them interesting and appropriate.

I was at a holding group meeting recently, and by the time the newsletter is printed there will have been another meeting of the Facilitators Training Group (FTG). I hope we will hear something about what happened at both of those meetings in the next edition.

I do hope I will see a number of you at the Confluence in a few weeks time. If you are able to come and not yet booked, why not call Teán and book a place? I hear there are still some places left. See the details later in this edition.

A personal note

Lastly I need to say that I feel that it is time for me to hand over as editor of the newsletter within the next few months. If you might be interested in doing something for the newsletter, possibly as one of a team, and would like to talk about what is involved do give me a call.

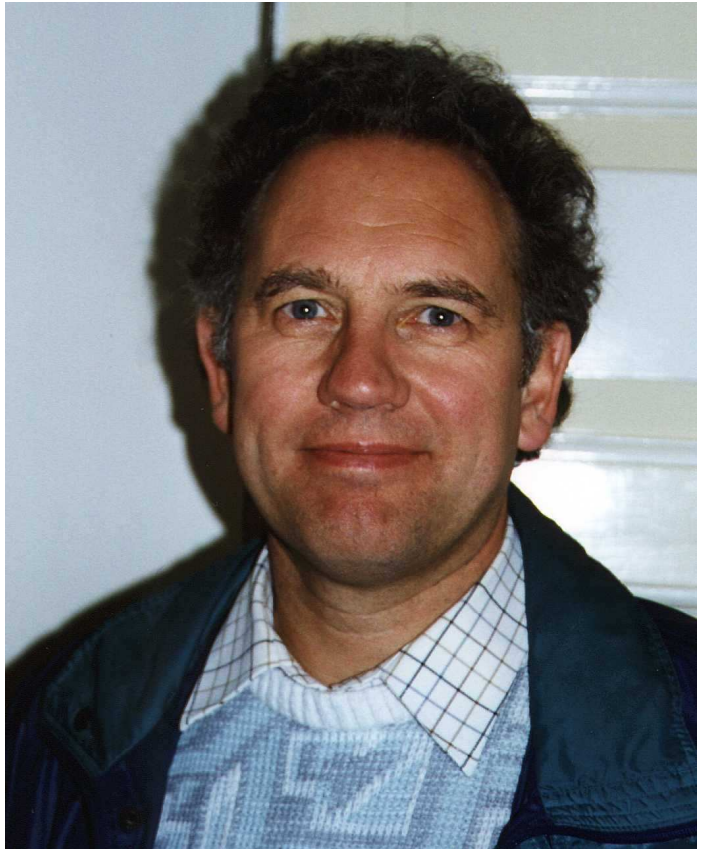
I would be glad to support any individual, or group, who takes over if I can. I still quite enjoy the technical aspects, but feel that the editorial side needs a fresh approach, and I need more time for myself.

My experience has been that there are no traditions to keep to, no standards to meet, no expectations - except those you set yourself. I changed a number of things when I took over, and I hope that the new person or people who take over will change things again. I believe in the value of variety, and difference.

Finally I have been bold enough to print my own picture here (taken at our last gathering of the network in Unstone Grange). This is so that you can recognise me at the Confluence, and so that I do not have to write much in this editorial!

Do give me a call if you might like to consider taking over

All the best
Peter Cooper (01438 813765)



Community Building in Britain Events

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Fee</u>	<u>Notes</u>
17-20 Sept	Unstone Grange near Sheffield	Teän Stuttaford 0121 420 4390	£90	Confluence (see later page)
5-8 Nov	Othona, Dorset	01308 897130	£150 (residential)	CBW
1999 15-17 Jan	Grt Massingham Norfolk	Sue Hirst 01328 862940	£120 (residential)	CBE
27-28 Mar	Edinburgh	Ian Davidson 0131 445 3381	TBA	CBE

Note: - **CBE** stands for “Community Building Experience”, which provides an opportunity to build community in a large group over two days. In a “Community Building Workshop”, or **CBW**, a third day is added so that not only can participants experience the building of community but they can also learn about the process through discussion and reflection.

There are two other sets of initials you might hear about (although neither types of event has been arranged in the UK for a while). **CBSS** stands for Community Building Skills Seminar, which deepens understanding of community principles and behaviour; it focuses on the skills of facilitation and leadership and teaches how to evaluate and monitor the processes of community building in ongoing groups. **LEP** stands for the Leadership Education Programme.



Who cares about a North London CB monthly group?

Anyone at all interested is invited to a one-off meeting in my flat on Sunday September 13th 1998.

Usual format, 1-2 lunch, 2-6 community building, with the express purpose of trying to discover why the North London group keeps collapsing and how we can proceed.

Ring Margaret C. Walsh on 0171 794 9158.

CBiB Confluence

17th to 20th September 1998

The time of the Confluence is nearly upon us, so why not come and meet other people interested in community building and explore different aspects and perspectives of the experience?

As well as spending time in diverse special interest groups and workshops, we will be facilitated in meeting in a circle as a whole group at least once a day.

We especially wish to support and encourage public event organisers, and this will be one of several focused sessions.

See news from the organisers on the next page.

The location is a country house near Sheffield, with indoor and camping accommodation. We will be offering vegetarian cuisine, and children are very welcome.



Costs (for Thursday evening to Sunday lunch) are:

- Adults in the house£90
- Adults camping or non-residential£55
- Children under 16 sleeping on the floor, camping or non-residential ..£15

Book early to avoid disappointment
(there are only limited spaces available in the house)

For further details please contact Teän Stuttford at:

Flat 2, 136 Poplar Avenue, Edgebaston, Birmingham, B17 8EH (tel 0121 420 4390).

More about the Confluence

Workshops

The workshops and discussion sessions at the Confluence offer an opportunity to build community with each other in many different ways, and to learn from each other's experiences and knowledge.

Some of the workshops will be very practical - for example, in 'Voice Improvisation', offered by Anne Monger 'we will begin by using some simple voice exercises to loosen and relax our voices. We will then work as a group to explore our voices and the sounds we will make together'.

Some will be experiential and explore ideas which are relevant to community building - for example, in 'Value Systems in Action' offered by Christopher Cooke. 'The session will draw upon the work of Professor Clare Graves and helps understand where and when the community building approach is most likely to be effective. This session is of use for those interested in working with all types of organisations.'

Other sessions

Some of the discussion sessions will aim to share information, such as how to go about sponsoring a community building event or running an ongoing community building group, whilst some sessions will simply offer an open space for ideas, thoughts around a theme.

Some of the sessions will be suitable for older children, and this will be indicated when you are choosing which ones to join.

Workshops/sessions already confirmed:
Community Theatre and Community Building;
Similarities and Differences; Playtime; Value Systems in Action; Voice Improvisation;
Sponsoring a Community Building Event;
Running an Ongoing Community Building Group.

We are also planning to have sessions on: the Learning Opportunities Group; Community Building and Business;

Sustainable Communities; and Open Space Technology.

Other ideas

It has been suggested that a session round the themes of Community Building and Family, and Community Building and Relationships would be interesting - so if anyone out there thinks they could contribute to sessions on these themes please call me.

A big thank you to all those who have agreed to run workshops or take responsibility for sessions - I'm really looking forward to the Confluence as a result.

If you would be interested either in leading a workshop, or contributing to an information sharing open space session at the Confluence, please give me a ring as soon as possible on 012657 69139 or fax me on 07070 602963

Gerri Moriarty

The programme

My excitement and enthusiasm for this event is growing as places fill up and plans for workshop sessions crystallise.

We, the event sponsors (Cliff, Gerri and Teän), have put together a programme which I hope offers structure and some flexibility and choice. Circle time twice a day for adult participants, optional workshop sessions twice a day, and an evening entertainment/fun slot (at the time of writing this stands as a DIY project...). Children may be able to attend some workshops, but will otherwise be offered a separate activity programme.

The event is open to anyone interested in community building, whether they have previously attended a public event or not. It seeks to cater both as an introduction and opportunity showcase for deeper involvement in the network, as well as a networking forum and chance to meet up with old and new friends!

*See you there
Teän Stuttaford*



Water, water?

Has anybody got experience with appropriate technology in tropical countries? Especially irrigation systems? All information (also book titles) greatly appreciated.

*Jutta Ried
Camphill Ballytobin, Callan, Co Kilkenny,
Eire*

CBW Hamburg October 1998

This event is now fully booked and may stretch to 40 places, owing to popular demand!

It is, as far as I know, the first to be held in Germany, and, in setting it up initially, Regina Haß, the event sponsor, received a lot of support from individuals she knew, especially Peter Laxton, a member of CBiB. For various reasons arising from this, and after lengthy negotiations, there will now be two American facilitators, Jerry Hampton and Carol Langston, with Peter and one other making up the team.

While Regina is very happy with this arrangement, she had hoped that more support and the main facilitation would come from this side of the pond, namely CBiB. She regrets the lack of more substantial 'official' outreach early on and finds it hard to fully understand the process by which this has come about.

People in Germany interested in community building seem to know very little about CBiB but Regina is happy that they will be able to benefit from the geographical and cultural proximity in future, and is looking forward to building closer ties with members of the British network.

Having said this, Gerri Moriarty and I will be participating in the circle as CBiB representatives and staying on to form part of a sub-group to help set up a more tangible CB network in Germany and an embryonic FTG. One of the aims of this new entity will be to relate closely to all members of both US and UK networks.

Regular readers of the newsletter may remember Regina's dream (September 1997) of the full-rigged ship making preparations to sail. She says it is now loaded and ready for the voyage!

*Tein Stuttaford
Flat 2
136 Poplar Avenue
Edgbaston B17 8EH
0121 420 4390*

community building publicity

The Publicity Group needs new members.

Do you have an interest in publicising community building?

Can you spare some time?

Have you got any ideas, or energy, or possibly even relevant experience?

If you would like to consider playing a part in the network's publicity group please give me a call - *Peter* (on 01438 813765)



Balance

Dear Peter,

I spoke with Anthony Kirke two days ago about the CBiB Newsletter, and the possibility of saying something about the workshop I'm running in London in November entitled 'Holistic Community'. He said to speak to you. And then yesterday the Newsletter arrived in the post.

I have participated in two CBW's (one with Anthony), and am quite devoted to the reconstruction of community within our culture. About four years ago I set up a project called 'Balance' in the Totnes area of Devon. Essentially you could say it combines Scott Peck-type work with Mythopoetic work within a kind of sociological framework. You might have heard about us, or perhaps read an article that came out recently in Kindred Spirit Magazine.

What I would like to know is if I could say something about the November Workshop (at Neals Yard Meeting Rooms from 27-29 Nov.) in your Newsletter.

I look forward to hearing from you.

*Many thanks,
Mark Josephs-Serra.
Palston Park
South Brent
Devon TQ10 9JR
Tel: (01364) 73248*

(Editor's note: see more details later in this edition, about 'Balance'. For information about the workshops being run in London contact Mark direct.)

Do You Feel Loved By Me?

Dear Reader,

I would to take this opportunity to tell you about a book that I have written called "Do You Feel Loved By Me? Practical suggestions for more caring relationships." which is based on my experiences in my own relationships and also in my work as a therapist and meditation teacher.

I think it may be of interest to you because it talks about several things that are very important in CBWs. For example, chapter 2 is about learning to listen without judgement, which I found to be a constant exercise for myself during the CBW experience. I think of it now as "How can I include rather than exclude" and it depends on suspending judgement and being willing to listen patiently.

There is a chapter on emotions that discusses the need for us to know clearly what we are feeling and to value emotion in its appropriate place. This is another strong connection to the CBW, which I found to be an arena for strong emotions which was at times quite beautiful to me and at other times very irritating. Was it chaos or community? It depends who you ask!

Another chapter is entitled "Are we natural born liars?" and looks into the importance of distinguishing between truth and deceit and developing this within ourselves so we can find a balanced place between naive trust and suspicion.

The ideas in the book are, I think, close to the values of Community Building and each chapter ends with a practical exercise which I consider to be most important. I don't know

Living Well

Life-affirming resources for you and your world:

- Workshops and seminars
- Mail-order books and tapes
- Individual counselling
- Counselling skills trainings
- Living Well directory (Green Pages)
- Self-help correspondence courses

how many readers of the book will try them but I do know that those that do will learn a lot about themselves, as we do when we enter into the live experience of a CBW. It isn't enough to be theoretical - we have to be practical, too.

Peter Cooper is arranging for a review to appear in the next newsletter so you can hear what the reviewer thinks of it then. If you can't wait you can get more information or a copy for £5.99 plus 75p ~ from the address below.

If you do read it I would be very interested to hear from you with any comments or thoughts.

*Best Wishes,
Philip Rogers
27 Earl Street
Oxford, OX2 0JA.
01865251252*

Maintenance or Death?

Dear Peter,

Peck wrote in *The Different Drum*,

"Since its virtues are so great, the maintenance of genuine community over as long a time as possible is an ideal. However, it is an ideal on general principle, which means it is not necessarily virtuous for each and every community to attempt to be immortal.

Communities, like individuals, are living organisms with differing life spans. The longevity of a community is no more an adequate measure of its success than the length of an individual human life attests to its fulfilment. Communities have a proper, natural life span that will vary according to the reason(s) for their creation.

Some communities do seem to fail to live out their potential. Others degenerate into institutional senility for a lengthy period after they seem to have outlived their usefulness. How can a community discern whether it is properly ready to die or whether it is simply in a slump from which it can recover by making a change that will recaptures its spirit and help it to maintain itself."

Principles

There are a few principles that can help:

First, ask the question. To bear in mind the possibility of death does not hasten one's demise so much as help one live more fully. A long term community willing to routinely face the frightening prospect of its death is likely to either strive more vigorously for vitality and renewal or get on with the business of dying more efficiently and gracefully.

Second, take time over the discernment.

Avoidance

Lastly, in relation to its task, the community in slump should ask itself whether it is avoiding a task or whether in any longer has a task. It is not always an easy question to answer. Sometimes a group can be so frightened of its task that it would rather terminate itself than face up to what it is avoiding.

If it can remember to ask itself seriously whether it is avoiding a task, it is not likely to fall into the pit of committing suicide rather than doing the work of remaining vital until the time comes for its natural death."

(Editor's note: I received this a while ago, and I am sorry that I omitted to note who sent it to me. Please accept my apologies, and if you want to contact me I would be happy to acknowledge your contribution.)

The meaning of 'Support'

Dear Peter

I find myself exercised by the meanings we give to that word 'support' within the network. This arose for me out of a recent Holding Group meeting when we discussed what support we wished to give to a particular event.

I think I see support used in two ways:

1. Sentiments of encouragement sent out to an individual or endeavour. Roughly akin to supporting a political party or a football team - acknowledging with enthusiasm.
2. Active support negotiated between supporter(s) and supportee(s) along the lines of 'what support do you need', what support can I/we give'. This kind of support has boundaries, contains the possibilities of reservations and differences being aired and involves dialogue.

Tendencies

I think that within CBiB and society in general we are increasingly using that word support in the first sense and that we are enabling ourselves not to express reservations and

qualifications that could emerge were we to offer support in the second sense.

Support 1. seems to me to be easier by not necessarily implying action, and often the word is used in the meaning of 1. when 2. is what is required. Support 1. seems to me to be more of an attitude, support 2. to be more about action.

So although I am clear that what I would like us to offer within CBiB is often support 2, with its honest expression of qualifications and reservation, and negotiation of needs on both sides, what I sense to be expressed in our use of the word support is often support 1. which I often do not wish to subscribe to.

I'm always keen to reserve the right to disagree or hold a more complex view. For me it's a bit like not wanting to be an MP because I would not be prepared to accept the party whip.

Yours, with best wishes

*Suzy Adderley
1 Park Farm Cottages
Reading Road
Goring
Oxfordshire RG8 0LJ*

Community Building in Ireland.

A few people have expressed interest in workshops in Ireland.

I am willing to be a contact person for this purpose.

To assess the level of interest would those interested in participating in such an event in 1999 let me know, mentioning if you have already attended an event.

Donal O'Callaghan

*Coolgreen,
Whites Cross
Co. Cork
Irish Republic*

Email: djocallaghan@moorepark.teagasc.ie

Foundation for Community Encouragement (FCE) Community Continuity Conference (CCC) 'Leadership in Community'

Alderbrook Resort, Washington USA, July 16-19 1998
A personal report from David Saunders

What is a Community Continuity Confluence?
The Foundation for Community
Encouragement's annual get-together in the
USA.

Is that enough? How to describe an event that is mostly emotional? How to capture the moments of tears, boredom, elation, empathy in the circle? New friends made at a depth that will last a lifetime? A flood of experience and ideas? A subtle but real shift since then in the way I look at everything and do everything.

A journey to 'Mecca'

I have wanted to live in community since I was around 25 - half my life. I have lived in intentional communities meditation on and off for about eight of the last 15 years. These have had ups and downs which I wondered about, so discovering Scott Peck's books around 10 years ago was a stunning revelation - someone had developed some models about how to create community, it's stages and what goes right and wrong. Wow!

I wrote to CBiB in 1992 but somehow didn't get a reply, and only finally went on a Community Building Experience in February 1998, by which time I was doing research on Leadership and wanted to learn more about 'A Group of All Leaders'. It was a fascinating and rewarding experience.

I quickly got more involved in CBiB. But FCE would still be the Mecca, the home of some very special knowledge and experience about building a better world. And as for every Muslim whose goal is to make the Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca, FCE's annual 'Community Continuity' conference became my goal, and this year I made it to Mecca.

Checking in

I got a cheap flight to Vancouver, made my way downtown in drab grey slow rain to a sleazy downtown hostel where I stayed

overnight, and then via shuttle coaches the next day over the border to the USA, where I'd lived for 9 years -- first time back since 1989.

I used to get a great sense of freedom when arriving in the US; this time was no different. More shuttle coaches to Alderbrook Resort on The Hood Canal, which is actually a natural waterway in the complex of islands and waterways around Seattle, all part of Puget Sound. (So that's where Puget Sound is!).

Call of the outdoors

Beautiful views of hills, forests and mountains all around, with snow clad Mount Hood in the distance. The weather had broken, the skies were clear, the water was inviting. And suddenly I didn't want to spend the next three and a half days sitting indoors talking and listening to people bleeding their emotions.

What to do? I had a swim and felt grateful to be near water again. A seal surfaced nearby, and it felt like a good omen. I went briefly to the reception for arriving guests, munched on goodies, had one great chat, and then to bed in what felt like a log cabin - Alderbrook is a nice old rustic resort for golf and boating in the canal, very comfortable and relaxed.

The next morning the program was explained. We would spend the next day and a half in circles, in three groups so everyone had a chance for airtime. Meeting as one group in the evenings and second afternoon for reports and case studies on 'Leadership in Community', the conference theme. Then a day of 'open space' - breaking out into a kind of guided free-form of groups and workshops. Then back into circles to wind down for the last half day.

The circles

So. A day of circles. With sun outside. I didn't really get into it. I didn't fit in. People

were talking and were moved, and I wasn't. When I finally did speak it was as if I put my foot in my mouth, it was completely out of place. The facilitators were excellent, but when they talked about what they saw happening in the circle, it didn't apply to me. I needed something different. What to do?

When we broke up I rushed to the beach, put on my swimmies, jumped off the pier and just swam outwards, aiming for the other side of the canal, maybe a mile. Not sure what I'm doing. I just keep swimming. Maybe



I can get to the other side? By the time I'm halfway across I'm enjoying the challenge, but feeling a bit cold and tired. What if I get cramp? How do I get back - have I strength and stamina for the return?

I am starting to feel a little foolish and frightened. It's definitely further than a mile, but I finally arrive on the beach, feeling disoriented, and cutting my feet on barnacles on the rocks. Good to be alive, but exhausted. Some people in a nearby speedboat are cruising around checking crab pots, and I hitch a ride back across the canal.

New circle

Somehow this personal challenge changed everything. That evening Ann Hoewing talks about her work with FCE in Bosnia, training people to break the vicious circle of conflict that leads to violence over and again. We are invited to walk the new circle that breaks this cycle, and think about each of the stages, and even stop at one if it means something special. I stop at 'justice' and sit and cry quietly for Bosnia, for mankind, for injustice, for me.

And the next day in the circle everything is different too. I share my challenge and feel deeply connected with everyone in the circle. An ancient hatred between two races is

surfaced and healed. Childhood sexual abuse surfaced and dissolved. A once-bigoted fundamentalist talks movingly of opening up from closed beliefs, and we are moved and healed. Truly this is a sacred space. My respect for the facilitators is complete; I want to be able to help create such spaces. I don't want to leave, but we have to move on.

Leadership in community

Case studies of leadership. Tex Gunning, chairman of Van den Bergh foods in Holland, gives a very powerful presentation on how he has been working with FCE to build 'Highly Effective Teams' in his business, since February. I have been working with this company for two years, and this is a project I was involved in, so the presentation is very interesting for me. I think it's also interesting for FCE (and CBiB) that the chairman of part of a huge multinational company (Unilever) finds community building is the most powerful way to build effective teams.

I'll be putting more about this on my Internet web site at <http://dns.org.uk>, but a question that is still open to me is whether adding community building to a business helps change it's values and goals towards sustainable development and building communities, or whether it just helps them pursue narrow economic goals and the exploitation of consumers. Answers on a postcard.

The Open Space sessions seemed more fragmented and less purposeful to me, though I enjoyed the sessions I attended on CB in business and in our own physical communities. And we had some great creative theatre the next morning when four groups creatively synthesised and presented the fruits of their sessions.

'Project Return'

For me the most powerful session of all was on the last night. A video programme was shown that had been made about the work of Bob Roberts on Project Return. He is a dentist who sold his practice to practice community building in American prisons. Project Return is also a university research programme about rehabilitating prisoners. How can they return

to society, when prison dehumanises them, strips them of dignity, and does not give them any tools or skill for a useful re-entry into society?

The video gave some pretty horrific insights into the American prison system, which seems more like a war against youth, and illustrates the worst of American garbage culture: "When you're through with something or don't like it, you put it in the trash and it goes away." We're no better, of course. Bob's approach is to build community, and of course in the circles people get to process their pain, and of course their self esteem grows. Just as important, they ask prisoners what they need to get back in society, and provide it. Bob's partners are ex-prisoners themselves and are very real.

Grass roots

The video was riveting and incredibly moving. At the end no one spoke or moved for at least 10 minutes, but it could have been much longer. Here is a great man doing what needs to be done at the grass roots level. Normally, over 90% of released prisoners return to prison; of the 600 or so who have had a chance to go through Project Return, more than 90% have stayed out. This is remarkable.

Other programmes that try to teach skills do not get this result -- community building seems to be the crucial ingredient. Interestingly, to my knowledge, only teaching TM (Transcendental Meditation) in prisons yields anything like the same results. Someone pretty high up should be noticing and supporting this work -- at the very least it's so cost-effective compared with keeping people locked up, but instead Project Return (and the TM prison programmes) have to fight for life and funding.

What more to say. Somehow Project Return eclipsed all the other session. It was an incredible validation of the community building process, and somehow a challenge to all of us. The need is there, and this tool works. Why aren't we applying it everywhere it is needed?

The answer of course is that it's not just enough to have a great idea, or a great

technology, it requires communication skills, planning and leadership to put it in practice where it's needed. The sort of skills that businesses have. Hmm, thinks: what if you added (for instance) Van den Bergh to Project Return? You could really make things happen. What if FCE had a few dozen clients like Van den Bergh not just one, and a few dozen Project Returns...?

The people

It was great to meet the people who run FCE, who were amazingly helpful, ran the conference smoothly, and were fun to be with. It was good to meet up again with the FCE team who I met up with at Van den Bergh. But what was best was making new friends, and the fun we had together. Community Building seems to create the ideal environment to meet people beyond the superficial. By the end I felt a great sense of joy and freedom, and love for everyone there.

My own personal take home feeling was captured perfectly by a (new) good buddy an email:

"For me, the conference was VERY powerful and transformative. I found my male power source and it has made an incredible difference in how I carry myself in the world -- a lot more inner strength and calmness, yet strangely, also a lot more energy and volatility. I feel on the verge of some major changes, a true spiritual and personal transition time."

I couldn't put it better myself. And another new friend summarised the conference in another email like this:

*"One thing you *didn't* hear at the conference was a lot of vapid small talk, or a lot of talk about business, or sports, or even religion. The mode of FCE is acceptance, and people there are free to be who they are -- yet 'be open to the Spirit' and follow their call, and listen deeply to other people. I could go on and on ... but suffice to say that the environment at the conference was very open, and meaningful -- something I've of course never seen before at a 'conference'. (Conferences in my world are always people*

posturing with one another to get what they want)..."

"... One thing I walked away with from the conference was a sense that I really want to devote more time and resources to participating in, and helping with, FCE and/or people associated with it. I've seen firsthand the very real, and very good, changes that

community brings to people -- and I've also seen how many VERY different types of people it applies to -- another attraction to me. I'll be working, and experiencing, more with FCE in the future."

Amen to that, too.

David Saunders

Clinical Theology is Alive and Well (Forty Years on)

Ian Davidson says: You sometimes ask for articles about activities of members....I will be using community building themes for my daily addresses at the conference of the Clinical Theology Association in Leicester.

The following is taken from a leaflet about some Clinical Theology seminars.

Definitions

'Clinical what?' a new generation might ask. C.T. was launched on an unsuspecting church by maverick psychiatrist Frank Lake back in the mid fifties. He was motivated by a missionary evangelical zeal, a love of Christ and a good measure of frustration at the ineffectiveness of the church to address the more personal and emotional issues which beset people, with any degree of understanding or competence.

'Clinical?' (Latin 'cline', a bed) means in effect, let's get particular and specific, no waffle! Let's address personal problems with a degree of skill, knowledge and insight. And let's do so in the very privileged context of a one-to-one caring relationship. Let's, in the first instance, really learn how to listen.

'Theology?' (Greek, God's word). Every therapy has a conceptual framework - a basis of assumptions and beliefs which are taken for granted. Ours is the Christian faith. We fully respect everyone's views and life-experience but base our teaching on the values and meanings implicit in the gospel of Christ.

Facing one's own stress

Seminar members set out with a wish to become more useful as 'people-helpers'. In doing so, we become more self-aware and realise the help which we ourselves need. 'Do-gooders' are weeded out; C.T. folk are those who have faced their own stress, and inadequacy and know His strength made perfect in weakness.

They may include pastoral care givers, elders, counsellors, therapists, clergy, health-care professionals, social workers, teachers, members of befriending organisations, and church people who wish to develop their own pastoral-care resources.

Experiential teaching

Counselling courses proliferate nowadays. C.T. was a pioneer, in some ways the granddaddy of them all. It still has significant features which are different and unique. Frank Lake's ingenious model 'The Dynamic Cycle' is irreplaceable. His insistence on experiential teaching and personal growth is still central and essential. Jesus Christ is throughout a 'norm' for human nature and his work on the cross - his identification with our predicament and pain - is seen as the normative context for our helping relationships and self-understanding.

Alive and Well? Yes. Next year three weekends of seminars are planned at Carberry. Between January and April you can experience an Introductory Module and the learning opportunities of Year One (of the 3 year syllabus). The teaching is in the hands of four experienced tutors, Anne Boyd, Ian Davidson, John Weir Cook and Kristel Schrempf.

For further details phone: Mrs Gill Shilland on 0131 667 5368.

"All Human Life is Here - Please apply if you want to change, to grow, to extend your understanding of your own inner world, and to find your way into the Lord's army of wounded healers."

Natural Grace

Dialogues on Science and Spirituality

by Rupert Sheldrake & Matthew Fox 1996

an excerpt starting at page 100 - by permission of the publishers - Bloomsbury (ISBN 0 7475 2627 3)

Ed: I found this a very interesting book, and thought some others might too. I have heard a little about 'Creation Spirituality' before, and wondered what it was about. It seems to be relevant to those who believe in God, and to those who do not. This selection gives a flavour, and links into meditation, and the importance of 'relation'.

Perhaps others would like to add a little bit from their experience, or to tell us their response to what is written?

In this excerpt Matthew Fox is writing.....

The via positiva

The four paths of creation spirituality identify the four dimensions of prayer in a richer and deeper way than Classical theologies of prayer have done. Very briefly to make my point here: the first path of creation spirituality is the via positiva, a classic term which is not used very much, but is about our experience of awe. Rabbi Abraham Heschel says, 'Praise precedes faith.'

That's such an important sentence. In other words, without praise there is no faith. Praise precedes faith yet we cannot presume praise any more in an anthropocentric urban-centred civilisation like ours. There's no praise in a machine as such. We've lost the via positiva. I will always maintain that for Westerners the via positiva is the hardest, the most difficult of all the four paths. Praise is about awe and wonder and the joy that goes with it; it's harder than suffering for Westerners to understand. This is because we have denigrated the sources of awe: nature and creation.

This is prayer: rendering ourselves vulnerable to awe, wonder and gratitude. It's the first stage of prayer. As Meister Eckhart says, if the only prayer you say in your whole life is thank you, that would suffice.' Gratitude, gratefulness comes from that.

The via negativa

The next path is the via negativa. The negative way is the way of darkness, suffering, silence, letting go and even nothingness. Emptying. All these are prayer: experiencing silence; being emptied of images, verbal, oral, and imaginative; letting go; and the experience of suffering. It's not just about asking to be relieved from our suffering, it's about entering

into the process in order to learn. Suffering is one of the great teachers, one of the gurus of our lives, and the West is very bad on suffering. We want valium or surgery or anything to block it or 'make it go away'. The letting go process is prayer.

The via creativa

The third path is the via creativa: entering into the creative process not to produce a product but to honour our images by paying attention to them and giving birth to them. Thereby we honour our deepest experiences: our passions, our joy and our sorrow, the cosmic Christ in us who is not only the light in us but also the wounds in us and in all beings. Creativity is itself a prayer process. One of my favourite passages about creativity is from Leonard Bernstein. He talks about how you can sit at a piano for hours trying to compose a piece and you're playing with the notes and the chords and nothing happens. Then all of a sudden, it happens, and the way he describes it is so beautiful. He says you forget all time and all space and you don't know where you are but you know you're part of something bigger than yourself. All you can say, he says, is 'Deo gratias', which is so fascinating coming from a Jew, because he breaks into the Latin mass in the moment of being struck by the lightning of the creative process.

The via transformativa

The fourth path is the via transformativa, the transformative way. This is a path of compassion which is about the realisation of our interdependence and the action that results from it. The first response to interdependence is, 'Wow, we're all here, let's celebrate.' The second response is healing, which is another word for justice-making, because the biggest ruptures are injustice.

All four paths are prayer. Our struggle for justice, our yearning to celebrate, our entering into one grief, our creating forms that allow us to celebrate - all this is prayer. This is a radical response to life because it comes from the depths of our living.

Meditation

Now I want to say a few words about meditation. There is a group in England called the Study Society, and they invited me to speak a while ago. For years they have been practising whirling dervish prayer. A very interesting group - artists, philosophers, scientists, poets and all. I drew up this little reflection on meditation and what it does for us.

What do we learn from meditation? To be still; to be empty; to be with being; to be with non-being; to be with nothingness. Therefore we learn about relationships from all of this being-with.

The essence of everything

The Lakota people when they pray always pray 'Aho Mitakye Qasin' - all our relations. That's the essence of prayer, it's purifying our relationships. Remember we said earlier that the soul goes out, it's all-encompassing. There are a lot of relationships out there to pay attention to. Eckhart says, 'Relation is the essence of everything that exists.' That is today's physics! He said it in the fourteenth century. No wonder he was condemned! He destroyed in that sentence the previous two and a half thousand years of Western metaphysics: looking for the substance of things. They're still looking for the thing inside the thing inside the thing. But as Eckhart said, relation is the essence of everything.

What if he's right? Then that would mean that that practice that gets into relation - purifying it, honouring it, praising it, and energising it - that practice is the heart of things. I propose that practice is prayer and meditation. It teaches us to be familiar with process. Is all relation process? Is all process relation, relation in motion?

Relationship and process

It seems to me all beings are both relationship and process. Meditation teaches us to be with darkness, to be in the present. It teaches us to be fully in the present which means to let go of the past and the future, all schemes, all projections, all projects and all patterns. Therefore, it means to be open to the future pattern, to the 'not yet', to the unborn.

Eckhart tells us to become our unborn selves. That's what happens when we return to the origins. We become our unborn selves. That is such an incredible invitation! Why? There's freedom. We can start all over. We have the capacity through meditation to return to our unborn selves.

Return to the beginning

This is about learning to play, learning to laugh, to be youthful. Eckhart says, 'God is novissimus' - the newest thing in the Universe. If you return to God you return to the beginning. This is why the Bible begins with the words 'In the beginning', not only in Genesis but in John's gospel as well, because God is always in the beginning. Where are we? We've gone wandering. As Eckhart says, 'God is at home, it's we who've gone out for a walk.' Meditation is this return home to our origins.

We learn then to be at home in the dark and in the light, in suffering and in joy, in riches and in poverty. We learn surprises and openness to the spirit. We learn stillness and the silence that is behind all things. We learn to be with awe and to let it fill us. We learn from the God of darkness and chaos, to be with chaos.

Chaos

The most important thing I can say about chaos is to trust it: it's all over the place now. Even the physicists are on board. It's certainly in our psyche. There is this effort by the human to want to control. That patriarchal morphic field that we've developed so well is especially about control. We are ill at ease with chaos and we want to pretend it isn't there.

Interesting Words

The following is taken from Jerry Hampton's July newsletter to participants of the Ft. Worth/Dallas CBE - thanks Jerry for yet another interesting contribution.

Abraham Maslow, who is best known in management circles for his 'hierarchy of needs', was thinking about community back in the 50's and more so towards his death. He wrote many other things that are all about community principles just months before he died in June 1970 of a heart attack. His writing is paraphrased.

Reaching Out

The FCE model of Community is based largely on emptiness. Henri Nouwen has some interesting words about emptiness in his book *Reaching Out* by Henri J. M. Nouwen, Doubleday, 1975.

"In our world full of strangers, estranged from their own past, culture and country, from their neighbors, friends and family, from their deepest self and their God, we witness a painful search for a hospitable place where life can be lived without fear and where community can be found. Creating hospitality for the other is a starting place.

"Hospitality means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. Hospitality offers people space where change can take place. It opens wide the spectrum of options for choice and commitment.

Paradox of hospitality

"The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create emptiness, not a fearful emptiness, but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and discover themselves as created free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances; free also to leave and follow their own vocations.

"Creating space for the other is far from an easy task. It requires hard concentration. Empty space tends to create fear. From a distance, it appears that we try to keep each other filled with words and actions without tolerance for a moment of silence. Silence (chaos) is a difficult task. So we try to create a friendly empty space where we can reach out to our fellow human beings and invite them into a new relationship. This is hospitality (community)."

Future Visions

From the book: *Future Visions: The unpublished Papers of Abraham Maslow*, 1996, Sage publication. *Fostering Friendship, Intimacy and Community* (somewhat paraphrase to shorten the article):

"The major question facing us today (1968) is how to learn to overcome alienation and distancing among people. One of the main causes for this situation is the breakup of the permanent and enduring, face-to-face relationships common in the past, at least in the rural areas, villages and extended families. People feel unfulfilled in their basic need for togetherness, closeness or deeply rooted relationships.

"How can we bring people back together again? How can we overcome the divorce between the home and the workplace that is so common today? How can we foster families that are more extended? Obviously the first task would be to increase grandparent involvement.

Tourism

"The phenomenon of modern tourism offer an example of how people are distanced from each other —truly alienated in the sense of being made alien instead of intimate toward each other. For most people, travel consists of being a spectator and a hurried one at that. They go to look at something instead of to live someplace, this is, to look at the new culture rather than to experience it.

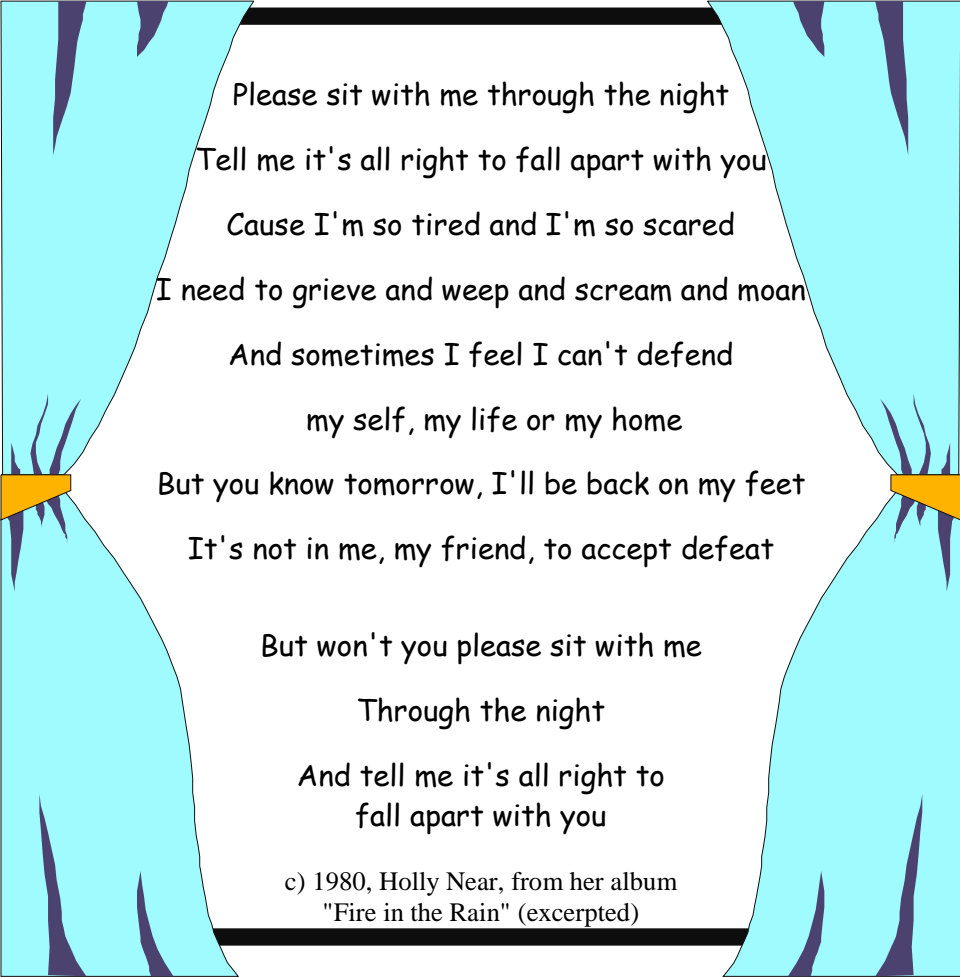
"I think back at my fieldwork with the Blackfoot tribe in 1938. I really lived with them. Tourists corrupt the corruptible aspect of the culture at which they have come to stare.

"What are we to do about this situation? It comes necessary of having some equivalent of the old family as a center from which can fan out all sorts of other work relationships, acquaintances, colleagues, friendships and the like. I think we are all gaining the viewpoint that our society, or any industrial society, has the characteristic of destruction of intimacy and therefore a perpetual yearning for it and consequently various kinds of psychopathology that may result from this deprivation. There are methods available for recovering some sense of intimacy, candor, honesty, self-exposure, and feedback, and, then, the good results that follow.

Love and Survival

This quote taken from Love and Survival by Dean Ornish from Albert Einstein:

"A human being is a part of the whole that we call the universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest — a kind of optical illusion of his consciousness. This illusion is a prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for only the few people nearest us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living beings and all of nature."



Please sit with me through the night
Tell me it's all right to fall apart with you
Cause I'm so tired and I'm so scared
I need to grieve and weep and scream and moan
And sometimes I feel I can't defend
my self, my life or my home
But you know tomorrow, I'll be back on my feet
It's not in me, my friend, to accept defeat
But won't you please sit with me
Through the night
And tell me it's all right to
fall apart with you

c) 1980, Holly Near, from her album
"Fire in the Rain" (excerpted)

About Balance.....

Balance was founded by Mark and Elisabeth Josepchs-Serra in the Totnes area of Devon, England, at the end of 1994. They had been studying and teaching Buddhism, Hinduism, Yoga, Dance and Psychotherapy for over 20 years – but still felt isolated and somehow overly individualistic. They and their friends were all committed to their individual paths – which was great – but there was little sense of a shared community path. The collective idealism of the 60's had become the very private pursuit of inner-growth. The question behind Balance was whether this deep inner-work could be used to shape a new kind of community.

For the first three years Balance focused on the Totnes area, convening Men's, Women's and Couples' groups, organising conferences, rituals, camps and social events to network the groups, facilitating seasonal celebrations at the solstices and equinoxes – and exploring issues of power, decision-making, dogmatism, hierarchy and form. Balance now offers workshops nationally and internationally, sharing the vision and experience of holistic community.

There's so much talk of 'community'.....what are we really talking about?

We're talking about a sense of 'travelling together' on our journeys of unfoldment. Travelling differently, no doubt, but travelling alongside each other - and supporting each other.... And we're talking about creating Social Structures (rites of passage of birth, initiation, partnership and death, and seasonal celebrations) to hold us, to bond us, as we travel.....

And what do we mean by 'holism'?

We live in an era of transition. A few centuries ago our world-negating spirituality gave way to a spirit-negating materialism. Now that materialism is giving way. It is giving way to despair and fundamentalism, but also to a way of being that values spirit without negating the world and values the world without denying spirit.

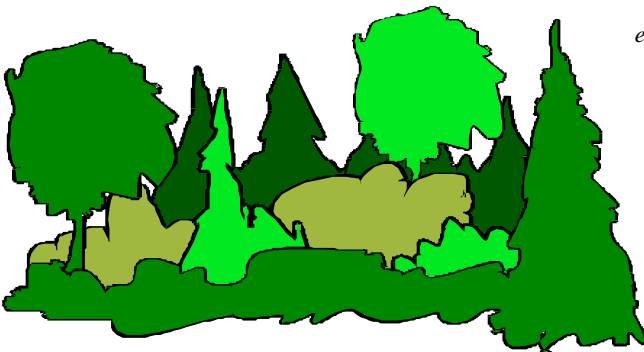
This holistic way of being is the basis of Balance's community development work.

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The Balance Workshops

During these workshops we discuss themes such as the nature of community, the nature of holism, power and hierarchy, individuality and collectivity, masculinity and femininity, elderhood, partnership, birth and death in the community, and community ceremony and celebration. Each day also includes dance/movement, time in nature, meditation and ritual. And throughout the workshop we bring our awareness to the experience of being 'a part of' the group – to the experience of travelling together in holistic community.

Workshop 1: HOLISTIC COMMUNITY ~ FEELING THE CONCEPT

An introduction to both the theory and mood of travelling in holistic community.

Workshop 2: COMMUNITY, WOMAN AND MAN

Looks at menswork, womenswork, the initiatory journey and the relationships between the generations ~ within the context of community development.

Workshop 3: COMMUNITY AND PARTNERSHIP

Looks at the reconstruction of long-term committed relationship ~ and how it both depends upon and contributes to community.

Workshop 4: COMMUNITY AND RITUAL

Looks at co-creative community ritual ~ particularly around birth, death and trauma.

Workshop 5: RESPONSE AND RESPONSIBILITY

Looks at practical application.

A Living Together in Community

Are you committed to personal and planetary healing?
Would you like to experiment in communal living?

My idea is to rent a large house within 1 hour of Central London (e.g. Victoria) and attempt such an experiment using the community building model. If at all interested please ring me.

Margaret 0171 794 9158

Margaret writes: "In a recent community building group someone said they didn't understand why I advertised for people interested in planetary as well as personal healing. Well, it's because I believe that they are one and the same.

We are all droplets in the Great Ocean of Life and the transformation of each droplet profoundly affects the whole - Shakti Gawain (paraphrased)

And according to the theory of morphic resonance (Rupert Sheldrake) if a small percent of the population transforms the rest follows suit."

Local Ongoing Community Building Groups

Some groups are open to anyone interested in experiencing Community Building, some are open to you only if you have already attended a CB event, some are open all the time to new members, some may not be open to newcomers just now; some build community as in the CB events, some are support groups based on The Road Less Travelled... Check with the local contact person.

Brighton: Meets on the second Saturday of the month. Contact Tracy Barr on 01243 775745

Central & North London: The group is having a break for a while - news will be given when it re-forms (see the invitation on page 3)

Leamington Spa: First Monday in the month, 8pm. New members welcome. Prior attendance at a CB event is necessary. Contact Debbie or Armando on 01926 337 409

Malvern Hills: Meets fortnightly on Thursday evenings. Contact Susie on 01684 540138

Oxfordshire: Currently not open to new members. Contact Sharon on 01235 848132

Sheffield: Meets monthly. Contact Alison 0114 263 0177

Other groups exist but are not currently publicised. If you are interested in joining, or forming, a group please feel free to contact Peter Cooper (address below) for information and help.



General Enquiries

.... about Community Building in Britain or Community Building events:

Anthony Kirke, 125 Greenham Road, Newbury, Berks, RG14 7JE Tel/Fax: 01635 47377

Newsletter

Subscription rate [UK] to March 1999: (Apr-Jun) £8; (Jul-Sep) £6; (Oct-Dec) £4; (Jan-Mar) £2.

Please make cheques payable to "Community Building in Britain" and send to the newsletter editor:

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Please send items for inclusion in the next issue to the same address by 3rd October 1998.

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