

## Men's Group ~ The nature of faith

Lord, You have always spoken  
when time was ripe;  
and though you be silent now,  
today I believe.



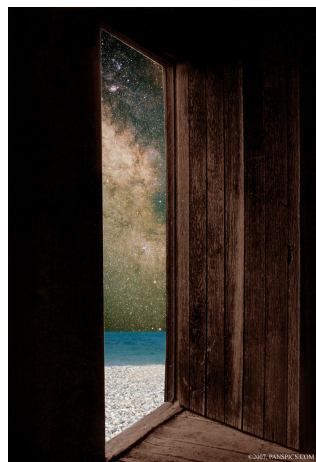
Recently Paul Lugton led us in a liturgy taken from the Northumbria Community prayer book. We were led and we followed. Words read out in simple fashion received an echoing response from within, from somewhere. They gave expression to thoughts that had barely broken the surface of consciousness and clothed previously unformed impressions. It felt like a ancient voice had snapped me back into place, my head lifted and I was re-oriented towards life again. Such liturgy mirrors and moulds faith, holding paradox and respecting experience.

Lord, You have always marked  
the road for the coming day;  
and though it be hidden,  
today I believe.

A well trodden path had come up to meet my feet. I reflected that good liturgy is always real and always true; good for and good through all seasons.

## And finally ....

Lord, help me now to unclutter my life,  
To organise myself in the direction of simplicity.  
Lord, teach me to listen to my heart;  
Teach me to welcome change, instead of fearing it.  
Lord, I give You these stirrings inside me,  
I give you my discontent,  
I give You my restlessness,  
I give You my doubt,  
I give You my despair,  
I give You all the longings I hold inside.  
Help me to listen to these signs of change, of growth;  
To listen seriously and follow where they lead  
Through the breathtaking empty space of an open door.  
*Celtic Daily Prayer*



October 2012

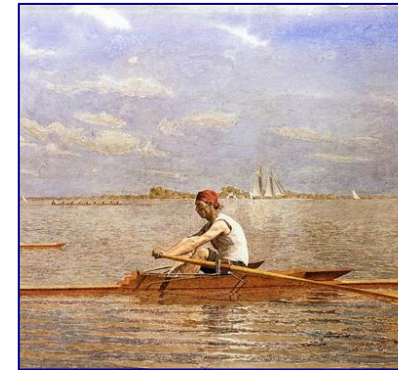
The Coracle Trust



## Faith in 'journey'

### Winning and losing

A little over a year ago, we watched in astonishment and dismay as riots broke out in various cities in England bringing devastation and destruction. Twelve months later, we basked in the afterglow of the Olympic Games, a rather extraordinary display not only of athletic excellence but logistical mastery and creativity on a pretty grand scale. Only a cynic would cavil at the immense enjoyment these Games brought to many and even as someone not in the least interested in sport, I found it all an intriguing and intermittently moving spectacle.



John Biglin in a  
single sculls,  
Thomas Eakin

But the nature of sporting competition itself, as well as the proximity in memory of the riots in our streets, have set off a whole train of thought about winning and losing or being a winner or a loser and what that means for us in our society set adrift as we are, in many respects, from signifiers which would give larger meaning to our 'winning' and 'losing'.

The scoring of sporting 'perfection', and the sheer (to me) unimaginable effort and dedication that goes into achieving it, is fascinating. But it also reminds me of (another) brilliant quote from Richard Rohr:

Perfection is not the elimination of imperfection, as we think. Divine perfection is, in fact, the ability to recognize, forgive, and include imperfection! - just as God does with all of us. Only in this way can we find the beautiful and hidden wholeness of God underneath the passing human show.

Gus MacLeod, Chair of the Coracle Trust

## News from the Macaulays

They stand tall and silent now,  
like lighthouses to the land's  
subconscious.

Markers to the underground work  
of our forebears  
who dug deep into the rock  
and themselves  
to search in the darkness of dream  
and dread.  
To search in claustrophobic  
danger  
for seams of colour in the  
labyrinthine ways,  
of a land that was themselves.

To exchange light and air  
for soil and sweat and smallness,  
with only a Davy-lamp's  
discernment.

To risk the collapse of  
inner terrain  
and the drowning rise of  
sea and emotion.  
To dare this internal adventure  
to see  
awe and ore  
brought up to grass.

**"I will give you the treasures  
of darkness and the hoards  
in secret places that you may  
know that it is I the Lord,  
the God of Israel, who calls  
you by name."  
Isaiah 45:3**

Bridget wrote this poem back in 2008 in the summer we took our sabbatical in Cornwall. It was a reflection on the landscape here in the far south west of the celtic fringe, which is littered with the remains of the mining industry seen in the abandoned engine houses and underground tunnels, some of which stretch miles out from the rugged coast under the sea bed. We'd been in ordained ministry for 10 years then and the last 8 years of that had been setting up and developing The Coracle Trust. That summer we applied for and were offered the post of resident Warden of Epiphany House in Truro. Our hope had been to establish in Cornwall something similar to Coracle either in, or alongside, the work at Epiphany House.

We had anticipated that moving to Cornwall would be a significant transition but little did we know how painfully and personally we would embody some of the imagery of this poem. It has without doubt been the hardest four years of our lives. Like crawling around in the dark spiritually, losing our sense of direction, depression, vocational crisis, family bereavements and a feeling of being cramped and claustrophobic in roles and volumes of work in which it has been difficult to be ourselves. Coracle in Edinburgh and the hope of setting up something similar here seemed a long way away ...

Like little flickers of light in the tunnels we have read the Coracle reflections on line and a number of you have held the Christ-light for us by keeping in touch and visiting when we've had little to offer in return. And up ahead there's been the faint glow of the possibility of a Coracle-type community again through the promise of seed money from the Coracle Trustees. A community to 'be' in and travel together through is 'ore' for us and we're so grateful for the way Coracle continues to be that for many through the work of the Trust, and Kirsty and Andrew's wonderful reflective input.

## Treasures of darkness...

As we had sought to offer friendship and support in setting up the Coracle Trust we now feel we have been offered relational and financial support from Coracle, and it means a lot. We trust and pray that the resources the Trust needs to enable Kirsty and Andrew to continue the work will come. This is important work!

Rowan Williams wrote that the experience of the desert calls us to be human. A few months ago we realised that we had almost forgotten how to live reflectively as human beings before God, as parents, as priests, as men and women and that (in danger of mixing too many metaphors) it was time to get into our wee vessel again and set sail. So we have handed in our notice at Epiphany House and will be finishing at the end of October. This is a leap (well actually probably more like a crawl!) of faith as alternative sources of income will not seamlessly be taking over in November! We believe the way forward is to live for a short while on a small endowment policy that has matured while we set up the equivalent of The Coracle Trust here in Cornwall, building on the Motherhood and God groups and Men's Group already started. We are also exploring other means of income alongside this. All being well we will be starting to build our own house shortly which will give us a settled home and through which we will be able to offer a space for others like ourselves who want to learn to be human beings before God, in a world and church in deep transition.

As the Cornish tin-miners began the long journey back up to the surface from the depths of the earth they had to haul by hand, or simple barrow, the lumps of rock which housed their ore (silver, tin, even gold). This process of coming back to the surface with their treasures from the shadowy depths was called "bringing up to grass".

Thank-you for your care and interest as we make our way to the surface.

**Kenny and Bridget, Kayna,  
Chirstin and Evie Macaulay are  
presently at:**

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## The Two Halves of Life—Mid-life spirituality

### Being Read

Sometimes a man stands up during supper  
and walks outdoors, and keeps on walking,  
because of a church that stands somewhere in the East.  
And his children say blessings on him as if he were dead.

This was the first part of a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke which I read during the two halves of life group on the subject – ‘Ways of Knowing’. I was completely thrown by the depths it managed to touch in me. Since then I have been reflecting on how many ‘things’ in life have the ability to ‘read me’ and contribute to my journey as I make a pathway for God, as he comes to me in ‘all things’.

This poem connected me somehow with decisions made that have changed my spiritual landscape, but the connection was so deep, I was at that time, unable to analyse or reason and neither did I want to. Almost two years ago I stood up from the ‘table’ of my wonderful spiritual family of 33yrs and stepped outside the door and kept on walking. This took courage but I knew that in order to deepen my faith, the first step had to be taken.

Two months on since my first impression of this poem, I now realise that as it ‘read me’, by which I mean spoke, affirmed and encouraged me on, at this point, in my spiritual journey, that I had been unaware of the need for the words of a companion to cheer me on, in what at times, had been a lonely place, as I kept on walking.



Still reflecting on the fact that I had been somehow ‘read’ by this poem, I came across a postcard previously mislaid of St Michael by Crivelli, a significant piece of art to me and I found myself saying “oh there you are where have you been?” As I allowed this ‘icon’ and phrase to speak to me I found that I was going beyond the present, on a journey, not about my landscape this time, but on a journey of relationships from family to Jesus and finally to my True Self. As I repeated this phrase I was surprised by suddenly receiving, at a deep level, a healing of a family relationship. From there, again meditating on the card and repeating the phrase I was drawn from standing at a distance to sit on the knee of Jesus which felt like a true homecoming and freedom to be myself.

It has been known for me to sit at the traffic lights listening to a classical piece of music on the radio, and the opening bars touch such a deep place that tears begin to fall. On one such day I found myself drawn back from future concerns and into the healing present –the reality of being, which reverberated through my body as I listened to the music.

So having tasted the companionship of ‘being read’, like living books, there seems to me an invitation for us to be seen, to be surprised and transformed by God who is never limited or tied to any one image but is keen to speak to us through all things.

I leave you with lines from Tennyson’s Ulysses through which you might allow God to speak:-

Tho’ much is taken, much abides: and tho’  
We are not now that strength which in old days  
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are

Mags Bryan

## E-Reflections and Pilgrim Blog —weekly reflections via email.

Of late we have alternated between reflecting on love, beauty and suffering, often observed as being a means of transformation and of healing, and a Pilgrim Stories blog, on the theme of the dislocation of soul and modern life (sample below). Here we halt to share our discoveries, to sense and judge what they might mean to us. Have a look and leave your comments!

### The cost of prosperity



Pittsburgh 1874, Otto Krebs

Our industrial systems, which bring short term benefits to (largely) Westernised economies, are highly destructive to the environments and natural systems that humans, and all other species, depend on to survive and thrive. Current economic systems, dependent on growth and expansion, are unsustainable in a world of finite resource. Animal, vegetable and mineral resources are exploited, depleted – lost, and poor people in poor nations look at this ‘prosperity’ and rightly ask why they can’t have it too.

Many look at the Industrial Revolution and see it as the source of this trouble. It was the time when the division of mass labour to produce goods efficiently became possible, drawing families from the countryside to work in the industrial centres. There was a massive exploitation of other peoples’ labour to accumulate capital into the hands of a few. (It’s still happening today.) The price paid for this was a loss of agrarian communities and a fundamental dislocation from the seasons, the weather, the Earth. Then, as now, the true cost is not reflected in the retail price of the product. However, much of the life we now know would not be possible without the advancement it brought. Like it or not, as children of the industrial age, we have to live with a paradox.

### Downsize, Move Out, Drop out?

It is this paradox that is at the centre of the environmental debate today. We are living beyond our means but unable to change because our political and industrial structures won’t allow it. By and large, because we humans tend to be short term thinkers, we ignore these bigger problems, and do our recycling. It can seem a hopeless and dispiriting task to think of changing much else. I admire the activists who have the energy and vision to keep going. Most of us don’t get started.

So how do you and I grapple with it? Downsize, move out and drop out? Possibly, but this is probably self serving, and it won’t necessarily change us deeply or have an impact on our society. Maybe we start to ask. What happened (is happening) to our souls? What are the voices of our grandfathers and ancestors saying, or warning us about?

I want my activism to grow out of finding my soul again, and this is a journey inward. If we travel this way we might come back with a gift to our community, which impacts other souls, and helps us all to connect to deeper truths. The fruit of this? Fulfilled lives, simply lived I hope - which may be the antidote to conspicuous consumption. I think going on this journey is to take part in what Jesus called the Kingdom.

Ewan Mealyou

## Look well to each step

### A whole journey

I am caught between thinking of journey as a tired metaphor and the conviction that it is a much needed one. It holds together the whole of life, from childhood through to old age, and offers a metaphor of layered meaning for the passage of faith.

Our day out in August at the Ben Lawers Nature Reserve outside Killin reflected some of this chronological reach with young children to 50 year old olds walking, talking and eating together—a merry troupe of 23 in all. The theme was developed materially for us as we listened to Tom Ingrey-Counter describing the new installation that replaced the much derided Visitor Centre. Discreet and sunk into the landscape at the base of our walk up to the Tarmachan ridge there is a new shieling. This shell of a dwelling is made of turf, stone, thatch and mattress. Within its walls, open to rain and wind and sun, stand a variety of chunky stonelike pieces of art. Text is chiselled into their surfaces reflecting on the rich heritage of journey that is mapped through people's movements and in the seasonal variations in the landscape of peat and bog, lochan and rare plants. They, plus the flowing floor-stones, bear the messages of journey: **'Shelter'**, **'nourishment'**, **'extreme highs'** offered by the terrain and **'adaptation'** and **'pioneer'** required of its travellers. Its thresholds encourage us to pause and reflect. They welcome and wave off walkers with their final words 'look well to each step'.



The Bible is etched with journeys, at once both physical and mythical – Abraham's, Moses's, the Exile and Paul's, of leaving and arrival, of endings and beginnings. All or many are about transition. These are reflected upon by scripture itself (as well as by saints down the ages) and regarded as archetypal. They depict spiritual movement as longings of the soul and embed them in the trials and joys of life. Longings leap out of our skin impelling us towards, towards what? The trout yearns to climb, the geese to convoy – our souls too migrate. Journey stubbornly offers the notion that there is somewhere to go, that there is home, yet also that we are destined to roam and wander, as the pilgrims would say, for the love of God.

My muddy boot had come down upon the word 'adaptation', and a mark was left upon me. Do any of the highlighted words above bear a message for you about the journey that awaits you?

Andrew Hook, Senses and Faith Day

## Transitions—Reflection and a new development?

### Holy longings as guide

Changes happen. We get old, we get married, we lose partners. We have kids, they leave home, we lose jobs we gain jobs. There are many, many changes that happen, increasingly so in our culture...changes we choose and those we don't. Our desires and dreams change. But what happens to us in the midst of change, how do we remain in touch with the internal processes? How do we let our deep longings surface?

William Bridges in his book *Transitions* points out that whatever brings about the changes, whether it is by our choice or the choices of someone else that impacts us, the same processes need to happen. We need to observe what is going on inside us to navigate the transition or we end up back where we started.



*Eight Bells, sketching,  
Winslow Honwer*

There are two different things going on, the external and the internal. Whatever is going on we need to be aware of both processes. Bridges observes 3 stages of transition:

**Endings** – we need to say goodbye, lay down the thing we had (maybe the person we were or thought we were) and we may need to mourn. But neglecting the ending, either because it is too painful or because we think we don't need to, will mean we will leave somewhere within us an unfinished ending.

**Neutral Zone** – an uncomfortable, unfamiliar place, where it seems like nothing. Where am I? Who am I? What did I want anyway? There is often an unmaking – of the person I was in that place, in that relationship, without as yet a clear understanding of what I can become.

**New Beginning** – what new person is emerging, what new dream, what new venture/life task, what new part of me can be expressed? If we have not chosen the ending it is really hard to imagine the new beginning but I believe it is God's grace in the world that even in unfair, unwanted endings there are new beginnings for us to step into.

If we can stay with the process a new start, a new deeper personal development, maturity can arrive. Change echoes, invokes, makes place for the true self to emerge. If we ignore this deeper movement the danger will be to return to the familiar way of being.

We believe the journey of faith, deepening our intimacy with God, ourselves and our community, is the underlying story here. Transitions can enable emerging of our deeper holy longings, transform our understanding and relationship with God and ourselves.

Kirsty Hook (with much borrowing from William Bridges!)

See 'Looking ahead' for a new development along these lines



## Inns on roads, islands on seas

### What is Coracle?

Coracle Trust is a small charity based in Edinburgh that seeks to support churches, working ecumenically with small groups and individuals to offer physically and spiritually hospitable contexts for sharing questions, learning together and prayerfully reflecting on faith in and through life transitions as spiritual companions.



A need for inns on roads, islands in seas,  
Halts for discoveries to be shared,  
Maps checked, notes compared;  
(A J S Tessimond)

We also seek to offer retreats, workshops, spiritual direction and resources that assist prayer and reflective practice.

**Looking ahead.** We are currently looking towards:

- † **Publishing** a book or two of meditations that also introduces the work of the Trust
- † **Transitions Workshop, new group?** Change can feel more like storm and turmoil than some spiritual epiphany. Mapping, naming, sharing the journey can help. We are moving towards running an open workshop to share and explore this which may result in the creation of a new group. If you would be interested in this or have thoughts on the subject that may help shape this process then we'd love to hear from you.
- † **New website page : For all seasons.** Stop at any point in your day to reflect upon the day. Set within the context of the changing seasons an audiovisual liturgically based 'altar' for stilling ourselves and reviewing our experience, is under way.

Financially the work of the Trust relies solely upon donations from individuals. We would like to sincerely thank those who have and continue to contribute.

**Web:** [www.coracletrust.org.uk](http://www.coracletrust.org.uk)

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"a safe space", "a place inbetween", "space for exploration", "travelling light", "an open space to grow", "a place of friendship", "a liberty to think and discuss freely", "space to receive", "seeking sacred space", "companionship on the journey", "space to be"

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