



**Living Spirituality Connections**  
Resources for spiritual journeys

## **Newsletter Winter 2022-23**

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## **Introduction by Petra Griffiths**

In this edition we address first of all a burning question for many of us: where does hope lie? We draw on well respected authors on this topic, **Cynthia Bourgeault** and **Brian McLaren**.

Following the COP27 Climate Summit in November, we move on to themes connected with how both humans and the earth can flourish together. Victoria Looz talks about restoring our relationship with the sacred earth, and the new Wild Spirituality Centre. Lisa Barrott recounts a visit to the Gaia installation at Southwark Cathedral in September and the diverse reactions to the exhibit. We then have an account of two small books arising from the Loving Earth Project's craft making events. Chris Roe's poem, Sanctuary, completes that section of the newsletter.

Commentary on Neil Douglas-Klotz's new book on the Aramaic Jesus open the section on spiritual journeying, followed by an account of the Tree of Contemplative Practices produced by a multi-ethnic project.

Our section on InterSpiritual themes starts with an invitation to participate in Interfaith Harmony Week in February and throughout 2023. We end with experiences of the Lifelines Interfaith Hedgerows Project initiated by St Ethelburga's Centre for Peace and Reconciliation.

### **Mystical Hope**

#### **Mystical Hope for Today Cynthia Bourgeault**



Cynthia Bourgeault distinguishes between ordinary hope, “tied to outcome . . . an optimistic feeling . . . because we sense that things will get better in the future” and

mystical hope “that is a complete reversal of our usual way of looking at things”. Hope is not intended to be an extraordinary infusion, *but an abiding state of being*. We lose sight of the invitation—and in fact, our *responsibility* ...to develop a conscious and permanent connection to this wellspring. We miss the call to become a vessel, to become a chalice into which this divine energy can pour; a lamp through which it can shine. . .

The good news is that this deeper current does exist and you actually *can* find it. . . . For me the journey to the source of hope is ultimately a *theological* journey: up and over the mountain to the sources of hope in the headwaters of the Christian Mystery. This journey to the wellsprings of hope is not something that will change your life in the short range, in the externals. Rather, it is something that will change your innermost way of seeing. From there, inevitably, the externals will rearrange. . . .

The journey to the wellsprings of hope is really a journey toward the centre, toward the innermost ground of our being where we meet and are met by God. Hope is the patient and trustful willingness to live without full closure, without resolution, and still be content and even happy because our satisfaction is now at another level, and our Source is beyond.

On 5 November 2022 Cynthia gave a talk for the **Spirituality and Practice Network** entitled **Mystical Hope for Today**. It was an inspiring talk for our times, that are so affected by multiple crises. To listen to it, please donate to Spirituality and Practice and listen here:

**Spirituality and Practice** <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/> is a network based in Canada, with a great range of resources for those seeking a spirituality for our times. Their e-courses are led by many of the wisdom teachers who mean a lot to us in understanding Christianity in contemporary ways, such as Richard Rohr and Cynthia Bourgeault. Cynthia’s talk on 5 November was a fundraising event to help them launch a new website. If you would like to listen to the talk on Vimeo, do also donate to Spirituality and Practice here:

<https://spiritualityandpractice.networkforgood.com/>

Video of the talk: <https://vimeo.com/767683648/c06505ca61>

You will need to sign up free of charge to join Vimeo first: <https://vimeo.com/join>

**Cynthia Bourgeault’s own website** is: <https://cynthiabourgeault.org/>

**Cynthia** is author of many books on spirituality such as *The Wisdom Jesus*, and *Eye of the Heart*. She runs wisdom schools.



# **A spiritual movement that encompasses everything. . . labouring for the birth of something new.**

**by Brian McLaren**



*Photo by Roberto Salinas on Unsplash*

Center for Action and Contemplation teacher Brian McLaren invites us to participate in a spiritual movement of the future instead of one that tries to return to the past:

Since between 3000 and 4000 BCE, when the first human civilizations were born, we have been part of one meta-movement we might call the old humanity or imperial humanity. . . . [But] what happens when a meta-movement runs its course? . . .

What would it mean for us if we happen to live during the decline of the old humanity, when a new humanity is in the painful, fragile process of being born? . . . What if the growth of the new movement, the new humanity, the new social creation or construction depends on the old one losing its hegemony?

As I write those words, I can't help but feel a flood of resonances with the Hebrew Scriptures. [1] I feel echoes of Isaiah, speaking of God doing a new thing, something fresh springing forth, so that there will be good news for the poor, recovery of sight for the blind, freedom for the incarcerated and oppressed. (Oppression of the poor is one of the hallmarks of the old humanity.) I hear the prophet imagining a promised time when weapons are recycled into farm equipment because nobody studies war any more. (War is one of the hallmarks of the old humanity.) I hear Ezekiel's oracle about a new heart, a heart of flesh that replaces the heart of stone. (The hardening of hearts in the name of self-interest and in-group interest is a hallmark of the old humanity.) I hear Amos envisioning a time when a river of justice rolls down from the heights, filling the lowest places first. (A concentration of power and wealth at the top is a hallmark of the old humanity.) I hear Micah relativizing everything in his religion except doing justice, loving kindness, and

walking humbly before God. (Hoarding power, loving money, and walking in racial, religious, or national pride are hallmarks of the old humanity.) . . .

And so I imagine: in the middle of the old meta-movement of empires, domination, extraction, and exploitation, what if a long succession of prophets, including Mary, John the Baptizer, Jesus, Paul, and others, were giving us a vision for a new movement being born?

Whatever this new emerging meta-movement is, it is bigger than any single religion. In fact, it is bigger than religion as a whole. It issues an invitation, perhaps even an ultimatum, to all religions, all economies, all educational and political systems, all arts and trades, all sciences and technologies, everything. It is, we might say, *a spiritual movement that encompasses everything*. . .

Wherever you invest your life, I hope it will be in this larger movement labouring for the birth of something new. Embrace the long view and find the deep current, the infinite flow.

[1] The scripture passages mentioned here are Isaiah 43:19, 61:1, 2:4; Ezekiel 11:19; Amos 5:24; and Micah 6:8.

**Brian D. McLaren**, author of ***Do I Stay Christian? A Guide for the Doubters, the Disappointed, and the Disillusioned*** (New York: St. Martin's Essentials, 2022), 185, 186, 187, 191. Other well known books include: ***Faith after Doubt*** and ***The Secret Message of Jesus***.

***Image inspiration:*** *We cannot see the wind, but we feel it. We recognise its presence by watching the world around us move in response to its power. At times, the movement of Spirit towards justice feels invisible and interminably slow, but like waves slowly shaping the shoreline, in time we see the fruits of God's movement.*

The above article by **Brian McLaren** appeared as part of the series of reflections from the **Center for Action and Contemplation** <https://cac.org/> Copyright © 2022 by CAC. Used by permission of CAC. All rights reserved worldwide. Thank you to the Center for Action and Contemplation for permission to make this material available here. You can get daily emails from Richard Rohr at the Center for Action and Contemplation. Free of charge, donations welcomed: <https://cac.org/email-sign-up/>



## 2. The Flourishing of the Earth and All Life

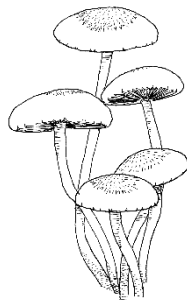
**Restoring Relationship with a Sacred Earth. Call of the Sacred Wild.**

**By Victoria Loorz of the Center for Wild Spirituality**



**A Movement is Emerging...**

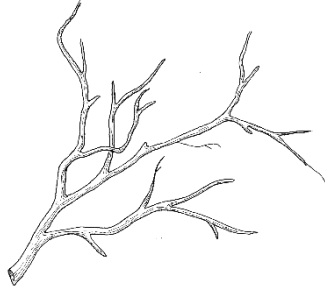
*From isolation to connection.  
From detachment to immersion.  
From dualism to interBeing.*



Popping up all over the land, like wild mushrooms after a spring rain, Wild Church communities are responding to a call from deep within to change the way we relate to the natural world, moving *"from a collection of objects, to a communion of subjects"*

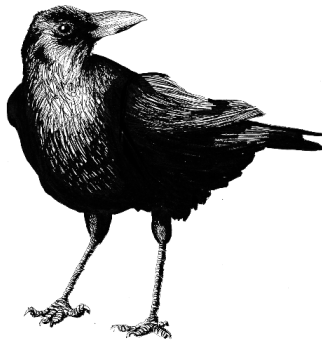
*Thomas Berry*





In this age of mass extinctions, we feel compelled by the love of Christ to invite people into intimate relationship with some of the most vulnerable victims of our destructive culture: the land, waters, and creatures with whom we share our homes. New Wild Churches are emerging all the time, offering invitations to reconnect with the natural world. As kin. As sacred. As beloved co-participants in a larger story of grace and inter-being.

Wild Church gatherings offer opportunities for contemplation, grief and praise, movement and song, solo wandering and wondering, advocacy, ecological restoration and activism on behalf of and in collaboration with the beloved others in our watersheds.



*A larger beloved community.*

Repairing the great conversation between humans and the rest of the alive and sacred world is essential to midwife the changes our culture and our planet desperately needs. A 'new story' of equity, regeneration, kindness, and reciprocity -- a *kin-dom* of God -- will require a new kind of spiritual leadership. Click here to read on:

[https://livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Wild Spirituality.pdf](https://livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Wild_Spirituality.pdf)

**Victoria Lorz** is author of *Church of the Wild: How Nature Invites Us into the Sacred* and founder of the Center for Wild Spirituality. <https://www.wildspirituality.earth/>



# Containing the Earth: Perspectives from a visit to see the Gaia installation at Southwark Cathedral

by Lisa Barrott



Sure, Southwark Cathedral is a big building. But big enough to contain the Earth? The Gaia installation had journeyed around the world and now had arrived in Southwark Cathedral. The people who had seen it had been deeply impressed and affected by the experience. We were intrigued: what would it be like to see the Earth squeezed into the church?

A group from the Eco Church at St James' Piccadilly and Living Spirituality Connections visited Southwark Cathedral on a damp October day. For some it wasn't their first visit, others had signed up as soon as they could, others just turned up to see what was going on. We arrived at the cathedral in various frames of mind. What would we make of it all?

Firstly, some facts. *Gaia* is a touring artwork by UK artist Luke Jerram and

provides the opportunity to see our planet, floating in three dimensions. Pleasingly there are several Gaias on the go at once. A specially made surround sound composition by Dan Jones is played alongside the sculpture. There is more information here:

<https://my-earth.org/>

The sculpture is based on a seven metres helium balloon made by Cameron Balloons, covered with 50 panels of printed imagery of the Earth's surface from multiple satellite images. The artwork is 1.8 million times smaller than the real Earth with each centimetre of the internally lit sculpture corresponding to 18 km of the Earth's surface. By standing 211 m away from the artwork, the public can see the Earth as it appears from the moon. The installation aims to create a sense of the *Overview Effect*, experienced by astronauts, common features of which are a feeling of awe for the planet, a profound understanding of the interconnection of all life, and a renewed sense of responsibility for taking care of the environment.



**Luke Jerram**, the creator of the Gaia exhibition said: *'I hope visitors to Gaia get to see the Earth as if from space; an incredibly beautiful and precious place. An ecosystem we urgently need to look after – our only home. Halfway through the [Earth's sixth mass extinction](#), we urgently need to wake up, and change our behaviour. We need to quickly make the changes necessary, to prevent [run away Climate Change](#)'.*

To read about the wide range of responses to the installation, go to:

<https://livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Visit to the Gaia installation.pdf>

Article compiled by **Lisa Barrott**, with contributions from Deborah Colvin and Petra Griffiths who are also involved in Earth Justice at St James's Piccadilly; David Carter who is on the core group of West London GreenSpirit, hosted by Kensington Unitarians; and Heather-Jane Ozanne who is on the core group for Living Spirituality Connections. We understand **Earth Justice at St James's** as rooted in loving and understanding the whole world and all its inhabitants (human and other-than-human) so that we act from a place of belonging.



David talking to journalism students at the Gaia installation



Lisa and Petra before the COP26 demo



Deborah

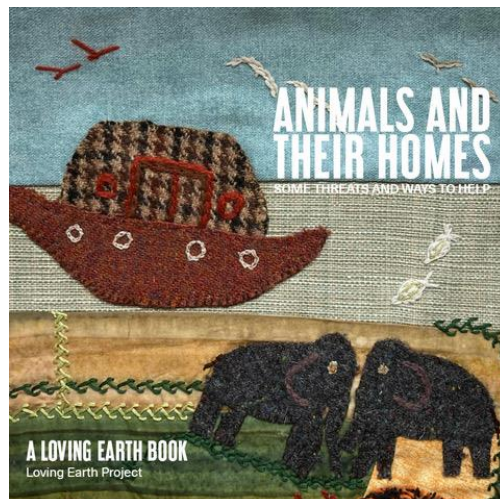
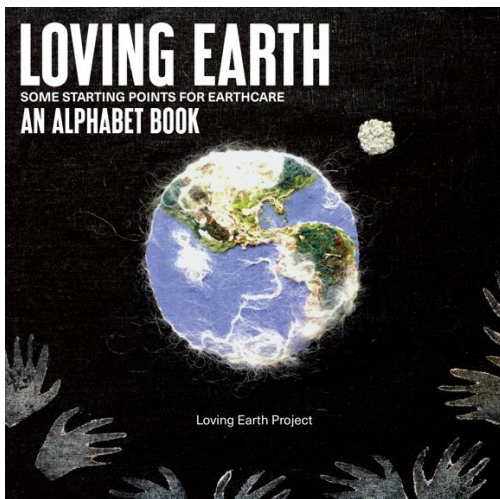


Heather-Jane

**Gaia Prayer**  
**by The Very Revd Andrew Nunn**  
Dean of Southwark Cathedral

Creator God,  
with awe and wonder  
we look on the beauty of the Earth;  
with tears and sorrow  
we see its brokenness and pain,  
with hope and commitment  
we look to the future  
to a greener, cleaner, peaceful world,  
an Earth that speaks of Heaven,  
Amen.

**New Books from the Loving Earth Project**  
**By Linda Murgatroyd**



We now have two books beautifully illustrating some of the many ways in which people are engaging with the environmental crisis. These little books feature photos of some of the beautiful textile art panels made by people all over Britain and beyond for the Loving Earth Project. They illustrate some of the things people love or actions they are taking to help minimise harm to them arising from environmental damage and climate change. Over 400 panels have been made, by people of different faiths and none, include small children and very elderly people, who have used a wide range of skills, styles and materials in their creations. These books draw on the texts of many different panel-makers and a range of other sources, offering simple practical information about the issues, and illustrating actions that people are taking in response.

Everyone can take some action whether it's learning more, making small changes to daily habits, a more radical personal change, campaigning and organising with others, or spiritual practices. And everyone is welcome to join the project - there are lots of resources and events on the project website [lovingearth-project.uk](http://lovingearth-project.uk). We will be holding some informal textile workshops at Friends House on alternate Monday mornings in the new year, for people who would like to join with others as they make their own panel. All welcome.

These small books could make inspiring and unusual gifts for yourself or others and at £4 each they are extremely good value. More details about each the book and ordering details are at <http://lovingearth-project.uk/shop/>. The books are also for sale at the Quaker Bookshop, Friends House, 173-177 Euston Road, London NW12BJ, and the bookshop at Southwark Cathedral.

## **Sanctuary** **by Chris Roe**

Shafts of light  
Through cathedral windows.  
Dappled shade  
Upon the leaves  
Beneath my feet.  
Bird song  
In the branches above.

In the distance  
Hind and fawn  
Cross the forest track.  
The sweet fragrance of autumn

*Continued...*

Fills the misty air.  
A gentle breeze  
Moving colours  
To the forest floor.  
So precious  
Such beauty,  
So hard to find  
Such peaceful sanctuary.

**Chris Roe** writes “I have always loved living and working within a rural community. Much of my working life has been spent in agriculture and more recently as a self-employed gardener. Through my poetry I endeavour to capture the spiritual peace and beauty of rural landscape, so precious and important to us all and which, since childhood, I have been so privileged to enjoy.” Chris is author of *In Search of Silence, a collection of poems*.



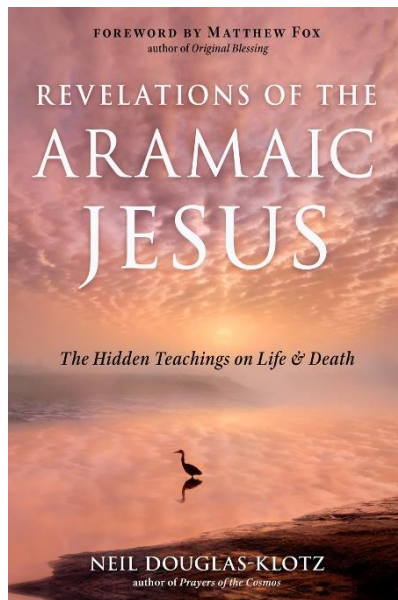
### 3. Spiritual Journeying

#### Revelations of the Aramaic Jesus - Neil Douglas Klotz' latest book

Neil Douglas-Klotz, award-winning author of *Prayers of the Cosmos* and *The Hidden Gospel*, here brings together forty years of research to update his pioneering work on the Lord's Prayer and the Beatitudes, and to take readers further into Jesus's healings and inner transmission. Through expansions of Aramaic's multiple meanings, as well as guided contemplations, Douglas-Klotz's new book provides a guide to transformation. It shows how Jesus's deepest teachings address contemporary challenges, such as our relationships with nature and each other, as well as the purpose of life itself.

From the book's Introduction:

“The challenges we face today are not in essence different from those of our ancestors: relationship, love, knowledge, work, and purpose still claim our main attention. Yet the implications of these challenges for the survival of humanity and the



planet seem more acute. We seem to know more, yet our consciousness has evolved in such a way that makes it difficult to see what the purpose of life really is. How do we live more fully in the moment, solving the problems before us?

Jesus's teachings have been used historically to fuel what became modern Western culture, with all its pluses and minuses. At the same time, viewed through his native language, the same teachings provide a solution to our culture's greatest challenges, pointing the way toward a proper use of our human individuality and will.

The book receives high praise from some well known prophetic voices for today.

**Matthew Fox**, author of *Original Blessing*:

*Much too much of religious language has become rote. Religion easily dies when it succumbs to rote. The Aramaic translations of Neil Douglas-Klotz cut through the rote and bring us to the **deeper meanings of Jesus's teaching that can still touch our hearts, move our souls, and ignite our action.** This book displaces rote with profound discourse and insight. It can open our hearts anew. My original foreword to **Prayers of the Cosmos** thirty-two years ago began with these words: "Reader beware: though this book is brief, it contains the seeds of a revolution." I do not think history has proven me mistaken.*

**Professor Jean-Yves Leloup**, author of *The Gospel of Thomas: the Gnostic Wisdom of Jesus* and *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* (translation and commentary):

*Neil Douglas-Klotz is not only a scholar but also a man of the desert, where **the breath and energy of the words join the prayer of the sands to trace a path in the heart of what remains without path.** Revelations of the Aramaic Jesus takes us step by step*



towards the promised Beatitude, already everywhere and always there, if we have eyes to see it, ears to hear it, a heart to know it and to love it.

**Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee**, author of *Prayer of the Heart in Christian and Sufi Mysticism:*

*Revelations of the Aramaic Jesus* returns us to the original Aramaic of Jesus's words, where the breath, the body, and the soul are part of a living wholeness in which nature and the divine are not separate. Here language is a part of the creative flow of the seasons and our inner being, awakening us to the Holy Wisdom that is within. Neil Douglas Klotz's depth of study gives new life to these great teachings, helping us to be in harmony with our original nature, our own connection to Sacred Unity. An invaluable book.

**Mirabai Starr**, Translator of Julian of Norwich and Author of *Wild Mercy:*

*In this luminous offering, we discover the wisdom teacher this burning world is yearning for: a native Jesus, deeply connected to the earth and her wisdom, a Jesus long-ago silenced by the religion founded in his name, a Jesus who speaks directly to the heart of people of all faiths, and maybe especially to those of us who cannot fit ourselves into the confines of a single tradition. Neil Douglas-Klotz has distilled his decades of rigorous scholarship, deep practice, and revolutionary insight into a potent elixir for our times.*

The book's website: <https://abwoon.org/books/revelations-of-the-aramaic-jesus/>

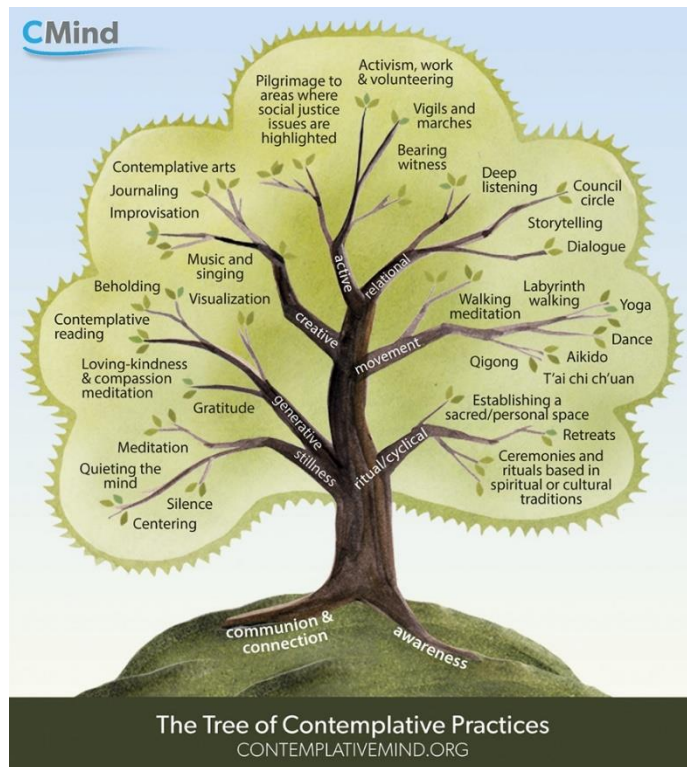


## **The Tree of Contemplative Practices from the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society**

*For almost two decades, this image has been the most popular way to demonstrate a variety of forms of contemplative practice. It illustrates some of the many contemplative practices used in education and secular organizations.*

### **Understanding the Tree (see overleaf for the picture of the tree)**

On the Tree of Contemplative Practices, the roots symbolize the two intentions that are the foundation of all contemplative practices: cultivating awareness and developing a stronger connection to God, the Divine, or inner wisdom. The roots of



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the tree encompass and transcend differences in the religious traditions from which many of the practices originated, and allow room for the inclusion of new practices that are being created in secular contexts.

The branches represent the different groupings of practices. For example, *Stillness Practices* focus on quieting the mind and body in order to develop calmness and focus. *Generative Practices* come in many different forms (i.e. prayers, visualizations, chanting) but share the common intent of generating thoughts and feelings of devotion and compassion, rather than calming and quieting the mind. Please note that these classifications are not definitive. For example, mantra repetition could be considered a Stillness Practice rather than a Generative one.

We understand that your personal practices may not appear on this illustration. The particular practices on this Tree were mentioned by members of our network as being particularly useful to them in organizational and classroom settings. This does not mean that practices which don't appear on the illustration aren't "contemplative." A more comprehensive representation might have thousands of branches!

Any activities not included on this Tree (including those which may seem more mundane, such as gardening, eating, or taking a bath) may be considered a contemplative practice when done with the intent of cultivating awareness or developing a stronger connection with Divinity or one's inner wisdom.

There is a link to a Webinar with Maia Duerr, creator of the Tree of Contemplative Practices, on the website here: <https://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree>

### **Download details and attributions for the Tree**

For details of how to download different versions of the Tree, with the right attributions, go to the longer version of this article:

<https://livingspirit.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/The Tree of Contemplative Practices.pdf>



## **4. InterSpiritual themes**

### **Interfaith Harmony Week (1-7 February 2023), and beyond By Heather-Jane Ozanne**



Launching in and around Interfaith Harmony Week (1st-7th February 2023), this series of bridge building events will continue throughout 2023 in Oxfordshire, Gloucestershire, Kent, Sussex and London. This project continues Spirit of Peace's community cohesion work bringing together multifaith groups and other minority groups using music, storytelling and healing community artwork from Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu and other traditions. A past participant commented: *'The meeting for me was very warm and intimate, I felt like we're a small family discussing things and issues together; it felt very easy and spontaneous.'*

The programme will involve guest artist Hanna Jaffe, an acclaimed Jewish singer and storyteller from Jerusalem, and art therapist Catriona Alderton, who will lead participatory art activities.

We are now seeking performers (such as musicians and storytellers) from different faiths, as well as organisations and venues that would like to partner with us for an event.

To find out more or to express your interest, please get in touch on 07711 960 644 or [info@spiritofpeace.co.uk](mailto:info@spiritofpeace.co.uk)

### **Guest Performer Hanna Yaffe**



Living the life of an ardent peacemaker, Hanna Yaffe uses music and stories to create healing, peace, love and unity. Hanna presents Jewish stories and music with performers from other faiths. She has produced three highly-acclaimed CDs: ***Birth in a Time of Bloodshed***, ***Lullabies from Jerusalem***, and ***Return Again***. She is one of the Jewish coordinators for The Interfaith Encounter Association, and also regularly contributes the Jewish prayer for “Praying Together in Jerusalem.”

### **Catriona Alderton and Art for Health**

Catriona is a member of our Spirit of Peace team and has many years’ experience working therapeutically with art. She will be working with us again in this project, and her website is [www.artforhealth.org.uk](http://www.artforhealth.org.uk) She can adapt her work for both small groups and audience participation.

### **Spirit of Peace**

Spirit of Peace meets the aspirations of many people in our communities to contribute to a fairer world where both our planet and humanity can flourish together. We create individual and community flourishing and wellbeing for majority and minority groups, bringing people together through programmes such as Arts at the Intersection, and as

founding partner and team member of the Oxford Three Faiths Encounter.

[www.spiritofpeace.co.uk](http://www.spiritofpeace.co.uk)



## **Lifelines Interfaith Hedgerow Project** **By Deborah Colvin**



Connection with land is often established through its living expressions – plants, animals, fungi and the micro-life we so easily miss. With UK biodiversity plummeting and global carbon emissions still soaring, the ‘Lifelines’ project from St Ethelburga’s Centre for Reconciliation and Peace will support community and faith groups to establish these living connections, alongside farmers.

Hedgerows are amazing. They unite and connect habitats. They provide homes and food to thousands of species of birds, mammals, and insects, and they create safe corridors for them to move through the country. They store carbon in their deep roots, improve soil quality, and reduce flood risk. They provide birdsong and blossom, and they transform our footpaths. They are a lifeline for the natural world, and for us too.

Groups will have an immersive experience of nature connection, learn some principles of spiritual ecology, build human relationships across differences, and deepen their knowledge and love for the natural world. Over the next few months, these groups will plant a network of hedgerows and wildlife corridors across the country. We will be working with a mixed faith staff and governance team from St Ethelburga’s itself. Other groups are Sikh, Buddhist, Christian Climate Action, led by Hilfield Priory, Ishmaili, Muslim, Bahai, Hindu, various social justice and community groups – it’s a



proper cornucopia. Participating farms are all over from Midlands, Wales, Dorset, inside the M25 and more...

We've just made it to the end of 3 very productive days of hedge planting on the fantastic interfaith train-the-trainers weekend on the Chettle estate. Ten people from the St James's community will be planting hedgerows on the Chettle Estate in Dorset at the beginning of December. Here's a demo tape showing how it's done:

<https://twitter.com/ecosjp/status/1594771022477430784?s=43&t=cjms4rPVn8zSbqzJ3fSXpA>

**Deborah Colvin** has recently trained as a leader for the Lifelines project. The text above is based on the project description on St Ethelburga's website:

<https://stethelburgas.org/project-area/projects/>