

WFWP Scotland/UK Interfaith Ministry "The Call of Spirit"

Keiko Fraser-Harris
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"This month's coffee morning was held on 25th. We invited Clare Gately, who works as an interfaith minister, to give a talk. When she thought about the topic for her talk, she had to reflect deeply. She ended up reflecting on her whole life and decided on the topic, "The call of Spirit". At the beginning each person herself introduced briefly as usual and then Clare gave a deep talk about her life and how much she had been guided by her inner voice (please check the attachment for more details).

The One Spirit Interfaith Seminary was started in 1981 in New York by Rabbi Joseph Gelberman, who wanted to do something to prevent another holocaust. Interfaith ministers conduct ceremonies like weddings or funerals for people of different faiths or no faith. For instance, Clare has done a wedding ceremony for a Muslim husband and Christian wife, reading from the Koran and the Bible. She received 2 years' training to become an interfaith minister. The first year she studied the major religions. The second year she learned how to do ceremonies and spiritual counseling. After her talk, Clare asked each person to tell about their own religious background. Despite being a smaller number this time, everyone appreciated Clare's talk. We shared a relaxed time with tea, coffee and snacks afterwards.

Here are some detailed notes of Clare's talk and reflection that she shared with us:

"The Call of Spirit"

In order to give a talk, Clare had to reflect on her life and discovered that she always made decisions by following her gut instinct. She spoke of 3 areas that she listens to: the voice of her head, the voice of her heart and her gut feeling. Sometimes one is stronger than the other, but only when all 3 are in agreement will the right result come about.

For example, Clare liked to do drama with children and thought it would be a nice job for the future. However, when she reflected more deeply and reached the bottom of her heart, she felt that she wouldn't grow through it, so she decided to do something else.

Clare comes from a Catholic farming family and used to go to church regularly. As a teenager, she felt a calling to become a nun, but on reflection discovered that it wasn't for her, so she put that feeling to the side. At university she studied geography and sociology and was thinking of becoming a teacher. One day, at her friend's house, she heard a voice clearly saying "You won't always teach" and wondered what that was supposed to mean, but continued to train as a teacher.

4-5 years later she felt a need for change. She thought about studying acupuncture, but the study of the body didn't work for her; she realized that she wanted to work on the level of the soul, but she couldn't find anything. Later she met her husband and moved to Edinburgh. One day, whilst sitting in a cafe, she picked up a leaflet from EIFA, the Edinburgh Interfaith Association, which advertised a training program as an interfaith minister. She was surprised that something like that existed and felt that this was it, so she enrolled in the program and was ordained in 2010 as an Interfaith Minister.

Clare's father passed away during her first year at university and she never took time to grieve, which she found out much later when she tried to deal with some physical issues. She believes that love goes beyond faith and feels, like Gandhi, that we must be the change we want to see in the world and that in the Western world we are too focused on external things. Also, as women we are used to serving and nurturing others; in the past women were expected not to think about themselves and as a consequence they got burned out and became resentful. We have to learn to say 'no' and take time to listen to our heart and soul.

She also mentioned Rumi's words: "The more we purify ourselves, the more we can do great things." She believes that great people can heal others just by their presence without the need of physical efforts and she explained that light will show up false things and eventually will make darkness disappear.

Clare feels strongly that all her life has been guided by listening to her inner voice, "The Call of Spirit".