Keynote Speakers

Pat Gaffney
Pat Gaffney has been General Secretary of Pax Christi, the International Catholic Movement for Peace, since 1990. Her work involves lobbying and campaigning within the church and political networks on peace and security-related issues, support and facilitation for church-related groups on Christian peacemaking, and co-ordinating the day to day running of Pax Christi in Britain. Between 2005-2006 Pat was on the core group that raised awareness and undertook advocacy work on behalf of Norman Kember, the Baptist peace worker who was kidnapped and held in Iraq for 118 days. In 2012 she was involved in a project entitled 100 days of Peace, an education programme to bring the Olympic Truce ideal into the 2012 Olympics. Currently her campaigning involves work on drone warfare and attempting to engage the Church in critical thinking on the morality of drones. Pat is on the UK working group for Global Day of Action on Military Spending. In 2002 she was given the first Peacemaker Award of the Sisters of St Joseph of Peace at their international Chapter in London, and in July 2005 she was nominated for the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize in the 1000 Women for Peace Project. In April 2012 Pat was listed in the Independent on Sunday’s Happy List (in contrast to the Sunday Times Rich List) of people who make useful contributions to society.

Gordon Oyer
Gordon holds an MA in history from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He recently retired from his administrative position with the University of Illinois, and currently researches and writes about the life and thought of Thomas Merton. His book Pursuing the Spiritual Roots of Protest: Merton, Berrigan, Yoder, and Muste at the Gethsemani Abbey Peacemakers Retreat received the 2015 International Thomas Merton Society ‘Louie’ Award. Gordon’s life-long participation in the Anabaptist Mennonite tradition encouraged his interest in faith-based dissent and raised questions about the priorities that drive Western society. He currently lives in Louisville, Kentucky.

The full Conference programme will be available on the website from mid-March 2018

Twelfth General Meeting and Conference

Facing the Life-and-Death Issues

6-8 April 2018
Oakham School, Rutland

Pat Gaffney      Gordon Oyer

£230 (members)  £250 (non-members)

To book, or for further details, visit the website or contact:
Booking Secretary:
Liz Hanvey—TMS2018
10 Godwin Close
Winchester
SO22 5JN

bookings@thomasmertonsociety.org.uk

Mixed-media image by Ric Scott
artist in residence for the conference

www.thomasmertonsociety.org.uk
Facing the Life-and-Death Issues

During 1961 Merton faced increasing opposition from the Trappist censors to his outspoken writings on the Cold War. It brought into sharp focus Merton’s inner conflict between his monastic vow of obedience and his own conscience. In a letter to Dorothy Day of August 1961 he wrote that:

I don’t feel that I can in conscience, at a time like this, go on writing about things like meditation, though that has its point. I cannot just bury my head in a lot of rather tiny and secondary monastic studies either. I think I have to face the big issues, the life-and-death issues.

And face them he did throughout the 1960s, most importantly the issues of war and of race, until his death in Bangkok.

Indeed, on the day he died, 10th December 1968, in his final lecture ‘Marxism and Monastic Perspectives’, he saw the monk as not only one seeking transformation of consciousness, but also, leading on from such a liberation, as ‘essentially someone who takes up a critical attitude towards the world and its structures’. As he saw it, one could no longer rely on structures as they may be destroyed at any moment by a political power or force. For us, fifty years later, Merton’s concerns seem ever more prescient.

Oakham School — In 2018 we return to Oakham School for the eleventh time. Built over 400 years ago and set in some of the most beautiful countryside in England, Oakham is the school which Thomas Merton attended between 1929 and 1933.

General Meeting — The conference includes the Eleventh General Meeting of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland with reports on activities, finance, membership and the appointment of the committee. This will be an opportunity for members to discuss ideas for future conferences and activities.

Worship — A programme of worship and meditation is provided throughout the conference culminating in a celebration of the Eucharist on Sunday.

Conference Dinner — This takes place on Friday evening.

Contemporary Art — Throughout the conference there will be an exhibition of artwork by the artist Ric Stott who will be introducing his work to the conference and the works will be available throughout the conference for your enjoyment and discussion.

The Conference begins on Friday 6th April with registration from 10.30am and lunch at 1pm. The first session takes place at 2pm. The conference closes with lunch on Sunday.

Bursaries — Some small bursaries are available for people on low incomes — primarily students and those on income support. For further information please contact Liz Hanvey (contact details on other page).

Our Keynote Presentations in 2018 will be by

Pat Gaffney      Gordon Oyer

Concurrent Papers and Workshops are to be given by

Mario I. Aguilar
Merton, Life and Death: The Hermitage Years

William Apel
The Gospel According to Thomas Merton:
On Facing the Big Issues, the Life-and-Death Issues

Quentin J. Broughall
Tweeting from the cloister:
Modern monasticism and making the trivial meaningful in an age of social media

Nass Cannon
Concupiscence or Caritas: A Choice of Guiding Spirits

Kirsty Clarke
My Sister Wisdom:
Thomas Merton’s Engagement with feminism and the feminine-in-God

James G.R.Cronin
Burn his books: American opposition to Thomas Merton in 1968

Stephen Dunhill
Thomas Merton & Christian de Chergé – a shared interfaith vision

Peter Ellis
Merton and the deep Amerindian past

Fiona Gardner
Towards Crisis and Mystery: Merton and the Vietnam War

David Golemboski
The Familiar Perspectives of American History:
Thomas Merton on Black and Indigenous Oppression in the United States

Daniel P. Horan
Beyond Bystanding: Thomas Merton’s Guidance In the Age of Trump and Brexit

Farai Mapamula & Gary Hall
From Birmingham, Alabama to Birmingham, UK

Sonia Petisco Martinez & Fernando Beltrán Llavador
Unseen until words end: Rethinking language with Thomas Merton

Paul M Pearson
Contemplation in a World of Violence:
Thomas Merton’s Monastic Approach to the Life-and-Death Issues.

Ric Stott
Conference artist — presentation of the works in the show