

thomas merton society  
of great britain & Ireland

# Life is on our side

1-3 APRIL 2016  
OAKHAM SCHOOL  
RUTLAND



Eleventh General Meeting & Conference

## Creative arts at Oakham 2016

### Exhibition of Contemporary Artwork

Throughout the conference there will be an exhibition of artwork by Jean Lamb in the foyer of the Wilson Auditorium.

*Cover image: English Cross, 2006, by Jean Lamb.  
Oil paint and linseed oil carved from a single piece of  
hawthorn with chestnut base*

# Life is on our side

Life is on our side.  
The silence and the Cross of which we know  
are forces that cannot be defeated.  
In silence and suffering,  
in the heartbreaking effort to be honest  
in the midst of dishonesty (most of all our own dishonesty),  
in all these is victory.  
It is Christ in us who drives us through darkness  
to a light of which we have no conception  
and which can only be found  
by passing through apparent despair.  
Everything has to be tested.  
All relationships have to be tried.  
All loyalties have to pass through the fire.  
Much has to be lost.  
Much in us has to be killed,  
even much that is best in us.  
But Victory is certain.  
The Resurrection is the only light,  
and with that light there is no error.

*Excerpt from a letter to Czeslaw Milosz, 28 February 1959,  
rewritten as a poem by Christine Bochen.  
Included in her book Thomas Merton—Essential Writings*



*Image: Tree of Life  
by Jean Lamb*

*Welcome* to the eleventh Conference and General Meeting for the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland and the eighth to be held at Oakham School.

You will find here all the information you will require to navigate your way around the conference, including a comprehensive outline of our programme and biographical information about each of our speakers.

### Keynote, Concurrent & Workshop Sessions

The location of all sessions is shown in the programme timetable. Last minute alterations will be clearly indicated. Please note that a short period of quiet meditation will precede and follow each of the keynote addresses. It would be appreciated if you could make every effort to be in the *Wilson Auditorium* a few minutes before the start time.

### Meals and Refreshments

All our meals and refreshment breaks will take place in the dining hall in Barraclough.

### Bar Area

In the Merton Room, upstairs in Barraclough, you will find a comfortable area where you are free to relax during the conference. The bar will be open in this area before and after dinner on Friday and Saturday.

### Conference Bookshop

In Barraclough the Christian Resources Bookshop from Leicester will be providing a conference bookstall which will be open on Saturday.

### Prayer times and Worship

Morning meditation and prayer and Evening prayer and reflection are offered as part of the programme. The worship will be very simple based on silence, a short Scripture reading and reflection with some intercessions. The Sunday morning Eucharist is traditional and you are welcome to participate as fully as you wish.

### Quiet space

A quiet space is provided in the Common Room in Stevens. Please feel free to make use of this at any time, except when it is being used for one of the sessions or for meditation/worship.

### Security

Please note that access to your accommodation is by door entry code. The codes needed for the conference are listed on the inside flap of your conference pack. Doors must be closed at all times. It is advisable to try to keep ground floor windows closed. Individual bedroom doors do not lock so valuables should not be left unattended.

If you have any questions at any time please look for someone wearing a coloured badge who will help you.

Before you leave the conference please complete and post your evaluation form (included in your conference pack) in the box which will be available at lunch on Sunday, or give it to a member of the committee. There will also be a sheet about ideas for the future of the society and the format of events in future years. Your ideas are very much welcomed.

We hope you enjoy the conference and have a comfortable stay while at Oakham.

# Conference Programme

Friday 1st April

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10.30am  
**Registration**  
*Barracough*

1.00pm  
**Buffet Lunch**  
*Barracough*

2pm  
General session I  
*Wilson Auditorium*  
Welcome to the conference

2.15pm  
Keynote Address  
John Dear  
Life is on our side:  
Thomas Merton's lessons in  
Peace and Non-violence

4.00pm Tea

4.30pm  
**11th Biennial General Meeting of  
the Thomas Merton Society of  
Great Britain and Ireland**  
*Merton Room*

5.30pm  
**Evening Reflections & Prayer**  
*Stevens Common Room*

6.00pm **Wine Reception**  
*Wilson Auditorium Foyer*  
*meeting the Keynote Speakers*  
*conference Artist*

7.00pm  
**Conference Dinner**  
*Barracough*

8.30pm  
**Andrew Nicoll**  
Thomas Merton and Oakham School  
*Wilson Auditorium*

Saturday 2nd April

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7.30am  
**Morning meditation & Prayer**  
*Stevens Common Room*

8am  
**Buffet Breakfast**

9am

General session II

*Wilson Auditorium*

Keynote Address

Fiona Gardner

**Raising 'strange suns for your  
new mornings':**

Thomas Merton on rebirth,  
renewal and resurrection

10.30am Coffee

11am

Concurrent Sessions I

**A** *Wilson Auditorium*

**Gary Hall**

**Siding with Life: the journal of Merton's  
escaping**

**Detlev Cuntz**

Thomas Merton and Paul Celan –  
Poetry after Auschwitz

**B** *Stevens Common Room*

**Daniel P. Horan**

**Thomas Merton's Model of 'Ecological  
Conversion' in the Age of Pope Francis**

**Peter Ellis**

What is *with* me? What am I *in*?

12.45pm Buffet Lunch

2pm

Concurrent Sessions II

**C** *Stevens Common Room*

**Lars Adolfsson**

The Joy of Community and Sacramental  
Friendship

**Mark C. Meade**

Merton's censored struggle with suicide

**D** *Wilson Auditorium*

**Sonia Petisco**

The seduction of the divine: Thomas  
Merton's experience of love as self  
abandonment

**James G. R. Cronin**

The poetics of history: Thomas Merton's  
use of the past to guide possible futures

3.30pm Tea

4.00pm

Concurrent Sessions III

**E** *Wilson Auditorium*

**Susanne Jennings**

Living Comprehensible: Thomas Merton  
and the Necessity of Silence

**Phil Garrity**

What is Left When All is Lost? : Merton and  
**Eckhart's Apophatic Unknowing as Entry**  
into Divine Mercy

**F** *Stevens Common Room*

**Larry Culliford - workshop**

Merton, Arasteh and Final Integration:  
Exploring Personal Pathways to Spiritual  
Growth and Maturity

5.30pm

**Concurrent Sessions III**

**G** *Buchanans Common Room*

**Nass Cannon**

A Certain Victory: Thomas Merton and the Journey of Personhood

**William Apel**

This Yes to God: Merton and his Gospel of the Living Christ

**H** *Stevens Common Room*

**Paul M Pearson**

In Silence: Merton's Invitation to Victory

**Gray Matthews**

This Heartbreaking Effort: Contemplative Critique & the Struggle to Express Life

6:15pm bar open for drinks

7.00pm **Buffet Dinner**

8.30pm

**Our conference artist**

Jean Lamb

*Wilson Auditorium*

9:30pm

**Visit to a local hostelry for refreshment and fellowship**

Sunday 3rd April

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8.00am

**Morning meditation & Prayer**

*Stevens Common Room*

8.30am **Buffet Breakfast**

9.30am

**General Session III**

*Wilson Auditorium*

Panel Conversation

Sonia, James, Mark & Gary

Where next with Merton?

chaired by Paul Pearson

with open questions from the floor

11am **Coffee**

11.30am

**Conference Eucharist**

*Buchanans Common Room*

with **Rev'd Maureen Pickering** and the formal ending of the conference by the Chair of TMS GB&I

12.45pm

**Buffet Lunch** and depart

# Keynote Speakers

## John Dear

John Dear is an internationally recognized voice for peace and nonviolence. A priest, pastor, retreat leader, and author, he served for years as the director of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the largest interfaith peace organization in the U.S. After September 11, 2001, he was a Red Cross coordinator of chaplains at the Family Assistance Center in New York, and counseled thousands of relatives and rescue workers. John has traveled the war zones of the world, been arrested some 75 times for peace, led Nobel Peace prize winners to Iraq, recently visited Afghanistan, given thousands of lectures on peace across the U.S., and served as a pastor of several churches in New Mexico.

His many books include:-

The Nonviolent Life  
Walking the way  
Thomas Merton Peacemaker  
A Persistent Peace  
Transfiguration  
You will be my witnesses  
Living peace  
The questions of Jesus  
The God of peace  
Jesus the rebel  
Peace behind bars  
Disarming the heart

[www.johndear.org](http://www.johndear.org)

# Fiona Gardner

Fiona Gardner is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist, a spiritual director and a writer. She is a previous chair of the TMSGBI and was co-editor of *The Merton Journal*. She is currently on the board of the International Thomas Merton Society and was a recipient of a Louie award in 2015.

She is the author of a number of books including :-

Journeying Home  
The Four Steps of Love  
Precious Thoughts  
The Only Mind Worth Having,  
Thomas Merton and the Child Mind

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



*Image: Four Trees by Jean Lamb*

# Concurrent & Workshop Session Presenters

Lars Adolfsson is a priest in the Church of Sweden and an international advisor to ITMS. He has presented papers both nationally and internationally and lectured on Thomas Merton at the Newman Institute (a Jesuit University College at Uppsala, Sweden). He is closely linked to the monastic community in Mirfield UK.

William Apel is emeritus professor of religion and spirituality at Linfield College in Oregon. His two books of interest to Merton studies are *Silent Conversations: Reading the Bible in Good Company* and *Signs of Peace: The Interfaith Letters of Thomas Merton*. **Apel's** articles appear in various Merton publications and he is on the editorial board of *The Merton Journal*.

Nass Cannon is a Clinical Professor of Medicine at the University of Alabama and clinician at Cooper Green Mercy Health Services, Birmingham, Alabama. He has a particular interest in the writings of Thomas Merton on contemplation and the formation of the contemplative with their implications for integrative medicine.

James G.R.Cronin is a member of the School of History and Adult Continuing Education at University College Cork, Ireland and Honorary Research Associate in Information Studies, University College London. He is researching discourses of resistance in the social writings of Thomas Merton.

Larry Culliford is a retired psychiatrist, spiritual writer and blogger from Sussex. The author of *Love, Healing & Happiness*, and *The Psychology of Spirituality*, his latest well-received book is *Much Ado about Something: a Vision of Christian Maturity*. Larry has presented numerous papers on Merton, and is a seasoned workshop presenter.

Detlev Cuntz lives in Herzogenaurach in Northern Bavaria. He is a retired executive of an International sportslifestyle brand. He served the ITMS for ten years as an International Advisor for Germany.

Peter Ellis **was one of the editors of the Society's recent *Universal Vision***, and has contributed papers to previous TMS conferences. He was a professional archaeologist for 40+ years - now retired.

Phil Garrity is a Master of Divinity candidate at Harvard Divinity School, where he is studying theological anthropology and contemplative end-of-life care. As a recent cancer survivor, he is particularly interested in the intersection of spirituality and the care of the sick. Prior to his graduate studies, he worked with Partners In Health, an international NGO that delivers health care in poor communities worldwide.

Gary Hall is a Methodist Minister and theological educator at the **Queen's Foundation, Birmingham, UK**. **An editor of the Merton Journal**, he has regularly written and presented on Merton, and was a keynote speaker at the 2014 Oakham Conference.

Daniel P. Horan OFM is a Franciscan friar from Boston, USA, a columnist for *America* magazine, and a member of the ITMS Board of Directors. He is the author of six books, including *The Franciscan Heart of Thomas Merton*, as well as dozens of scholarly and popular articles. He is currently editing the correspondence of Thomas Merton and Naomi Burton Stone, his agent and editor, for publication.

Susanne Jennings read theology at the University of Cambridge and previously worked for the Diocese of East Anglia in a role which included responsibility for adult religious education and interfaith work. She currently works part-time as Art & Architecture Librarian at Cambridge and teaches theology and religious studies and English Literature.

Gray Matthews is an Assistant Professor of Communication at the University of Memphis; he has served the ITMS as co-editor of *The Merton Annual*, site coordinator for the 2007 ITMS conference, member of the Board, coordinator of the Memphis ITMS Chapter and has presented papers at ITMS conferences since 2001.

Mark C. Meade is the Assistant Director of the Thomas Merton Center in Louisville, Kentucky, and Vice-President of the International Thomas Merton Society. He has delivered lectures on Thomas Merton in the United States and Argentina, and his essays on Merton have been published in the United States and Spain.

Andrew Nicoll completed his DPhil at the University of Oxford and undertook postdoctoral research at Brown University. He now teaches Biology at Oakham School where he undertakes occasional research on Merton in the school archive.

Paul M Pearson is Director and Archivist of the Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University, resident secretary of the ITMS and chief of research for the Merton Legacy Trust. He edited *Seeking Paradise: The Spirit of the Shakers, Thomas Merton on Christian Contemplation* and *Beholding Paradise: The Photography of Thomas Merton*.

Sonia Petisco PhD in English Studies to the University Complutense of Madrid and MSc in Applied Linguistics to Edinburgh University. Her main research interests focus on language, mysticism, and the discourse of identity. At present she is preparing her second book entitled *Thomas Merton's Poetics of Self Dissolution* which will also be published this year by University of Valencia Publishing Press.

## *2016 Conference Artist*

*Jean Lamb* was awarded a BA Honours in Fine Art from Reading University in 1979, the Oxford University Certificate of Theology in 1984, and a MA in Fine Art from Nottingham Trent University in 1988. She is an Associate Priest living and practising in Nottingham.

**“As an artist working in and alongside the Church, I explore through paint and wood, the spiritual understandings which undergird our faith in the God who reaches out to us all in our common humanity. Using the symbols of shape and colour, I hope to reflect the mood and mode of the commissioner, whilst adding the transformative value of **Biblical mythology and Christian experience.**”**

# Oakham School in Rutland

In one of his earliest attempts at autobiography Merton explains that Rutland is the smallest county in England and that Oakham School, set in the ancient county of Rutland is surrounded by some of the most attractive countryside to be found in England. Built over 400 years ago by Robert Johnson, Archdeacon of Leicester, the original schoolroom of 1584 remains in use today. The buildings of the school, both traditional and modern, together with its extensive playing fields, blend naturally with the town, spreading over 60 acres. Thomas Merton attended Oakham School from 1929 to 1933 and is probably still its most famous pupil.

## the thomas merton society of great britain and ireland

aims:

- to promote interest in, and study of, Thomas Merton and his concerns
- to encourage the formation of local groups or chapters of the Society
- to organise national meetings of the Society
- to encourage publication of works by or about Thomas Merton in the Great Britain and Ireland
- to issue twice a year the *Merton Journal*.

[www.thomasmertonsociety.org.uk](http://www.thomasmertonsociety.org.uk)