

Wild Goose Festival

A festival inspired by Greenbelt - Wild Goose describes itself :

There is no litmus test beyond an open heart. There is no creed required beyond a willingness to meet respectfully across lines of difference, to share wisdom and listen to each other's stories, and become more than the sum of our parts ...

Ultimately, Wild Goose provides space for courageous, imaginative, and participative social justice work, creative expression, spiritual practice, and astonishing music.

We are called to embody a different kind of religious expression than has often dominated our institutions and culture. We believe that the best criticism of the bad is the practice of the better; so we refuse to merely denounce the shadow of the tradition and abandon it. Instead, we humbly seek to both tear down and build up, walking a path that embodies love of God, neighbor, and self.

... We are intentionally building a space in which we invite everyone to value, respect, and fully affirm people of any ethnicity, age, gender, gender expression, sexual identity, education, bodily condition, religious affiliation, or economic background, particularly the marginalized. We are committed to fair trade, gift exchange, ecological sanity, and economic inclusion. We strive for high standards of mutual respect, non-hierarchical leadership, and participative planning.

<http://wildgoosefestival.org/about/the-wild-goose-invitation>

The Wild Goose Festival
June 26th-29th, 2014,
Hot Springs Campground in Hot Springs
(near Asheville) North Carolina

<http://wildgoosefestival.org/>



... a one of a kind festival of faith and the arts in Cheltenham, England to which the Moderator Gary Patterson took 100 United Church people to join 20 thousand other people of faith in the summer of 2013.



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Hamilton Conference Pilgrims share from their experience of the Greenbelt Festival...

for more info. see the 'Daring Discipleship' publication



The Greenbelt festival 2013 Cheltenham, England

Hamilton Conference participated in Greenbelt 2013 in Cheltenham England this past August in a moderator-led pilgrimage. We joined this Spirit-filled festival of worship, justice and the arts as it celebrated its fortieth birthday with hundreds of workshops, worship opportunities, lectures, and arts experiences. Approximately twenty thousand attendees were given the opportunity to engage their faith in a multitude of ways.

In this brochure we will hear from some of our pilgrims about their experiences and the impact it had upon their spiritual journey.

The question is often asked ... what do we do with these mountain-top type experiences when we are called back down the mountain to continue in ministry? It is difficult to find appropriate ways to introduce new ideas and inspiration and to share the shift that sometimes takes place in understanding or faith.

What we do know is that these experiences feed us, sustain us and are a part of necessary leadership development for a lively and responsive church.

I hope that as we hear these voices, here, at Presbytery, in our local churches, we will recognize the opportunity offered us to allow the Spirit to shake us up, wake us up and bring us new life and hope.

For more information about specific experiences/workshops please see this month's Daring Discipleship publication.

"Greenbelt is ... Engaged with culture, inspired by the arts, sustained by faith, we aspire to be an open, generous community."

<http://www.greenbelt.org.uk/>

Reflections on Greenbelt from The perspective of faith formation and leadership development

Lorna MacQueen

Something happened to me at Greenbelt.

I became more conscious of how 'product'-focused and 'task-oriented' we are in both the church and our Canadian and corporate culture, and I began to experience Greenbelt as indeed a *Pilgrimage*.

A pilgrim does not return from a pilgrimage with a *product*, but hopes to return having made an inward journey that accompanies and reflects the outward journey. A Christian pilgrim hopes to encounter transformation, a deepening in relationship with God, a new encounter with themselves.

We might wonder how the church could spend money on a festival visit, when the church is in a financial crunch. Perhaps it is at times like this, however, that we most need to make these investments: in the hearts, and souls and minds who minister to and care for our church... whether they be in our pulpits, or pews or parlours.

We can call it 'leadership development', or 'investment in ministry', 'faith formation', 'life long learning'... whatever... it is the stuff that feeds our leadership and enables them to carry the ever-increasing load of a church that is in the stress of transition.

What a beautiful gift this would be to a tired and breathless servant/leader—a gift of renewal. The church that would give such a gift would reap the harvest of the seeds planted by the Spirit. Be ready for new plants.

From the desk of Lorna MacQueen
Minister-Faith Formation for Discipleship

Reflections on Greenbelt from

Sheryl Spencer

supply minister to Mount Forest-Woodland

I can still feel the rope in my hand. It was a worship experience called “Mapping the Celtic Cross,” and that’s what we did – about 50 of us – outside one morning at Greenbelt, all of us holding on to the rope, guiding it to form first the circle, then the intersection of the Celtic cross, then with poetry and scripture, chanting, movement, silence and prayer, finding our own special place on the cross.

This is just one of the experiences that has informed my ministry since returning from Greenbelt. In general, I’m bolder, braver, more willing to experiment, and much more willing to fail. Having been just ordained last spring, my tendency had been to try to do things “right.” However, having been exposed to all manner of creativity at Greenbelt, I realize there’s lots of ways to do things, and the more relationship, the more beauty, the more generations involved, and the more conversation and honest sharing one can facilitate, the better.

Our creed tells us “we are not alone,” and after Greenbelt, I feel this much more deeply. The atmosphere of the festival often seemed what we might imagine the kingdom of God to feel like -- peaceful, beautiful, alive, dynamic – and having met so many colleagues from within the United Church and encountered such inspiring thinkers and artists at Greenbelt, I feel much more part of a “movement,” not one that bears a name or particular orientation, but a movement characterized by the sense of radical relationship that Jesus taught about over and over again

Reflections on Greenbelt from

Aaron Miller

Selkirk

I came away from Greenbelt with a renewed sense of hope.

I didn’t experience anything in particular that I thought would be especially transformative for the United Church of Canada—besides the grace, power and ongoing work of God, of course. This, in fact, is what I think I found most hopeful. There were no silver bullets; there wasn’t even the expectation that we might come across one. What there was, was example after example of people and communities hearing God’s call, walking humbly as disciples of Jesus, being attentive to the Holy Spirit, and responding appropriately in their time and place bold in discernment and risky in faith. We all were invited to join in, to listen and learn. That, for me, was the treat and the challenge.

Evidently, thousands and thousands of others felt so, too.

What Greenbelt demonstrated to me was that if we are willing to risk the presence and power of the risen Christ among us, and in turn to make his presence and power known with the kind of reckless joy and unexpected love that the gospel demands, people will at very least be intrigued. They might even join in the fun.

Greenbelt Festival 2014

<http://www.greenbelt.org.uk/>

Northamptonshire, England August 22-25

Reflections on Greenbelt from

Barry King

Glen Abbey

What I sensed over the course of my days at Greenbelt was that this was a place in time where the world was intersecting with people from all walks of life gathering to learn “how we can make the world a better place” for all human beings. I had the chance to converse with people who were engaged in new forms of ministries outside of the institutional church – bread making, outreach, prayer, the new monastics, and Goth ministries- to name a few. As well, new expressions of worship and music were uplifting and powerful. For me these were great new expressions of hope for what it means to be church in the 21st century.

My Greenbelt experience touched me on a very deep level. It gave me a vision of what can be for the future church that excited me and filled me with hope. “It saved my life” - it restored what I have always believed about the core message of the gospel of Jesus. It lit a new fire, and I will spend the remainder of my days stoking the flames so that others in this world can experience the truth called *love* as being with them at all times. Its impact is still being worked out inside me so that it can be shared and lived out.

This was the gift given to me by the United Church of Canada for which I will be forever grateful. I said to Moderator Gary Patterson on our last day together – “*Gary do you realize what you have done – you have set 100 people on fire, who will return and in many ways to transform the church in new and exciting ways. The United Church better watch out.*”

Reflections on Greenbelt from

Jane Capstick

Silver Spire

My experience of Greenbelt profoundly changed my perspective of church. I can no longer believe that the church is dying or needs saving. We are living in a time of change and emergence. At Greenbelt I saw the edge of something new. Thousands of Christians who are engaged in their faith through art, justice, music and theology. At Greenbelt I saw church and faith lived out fully in people’s lives as they engaged new ways of worshiping, sang traditional hymns and listened to profound speakers. Greenbelt included the old and new, traditional and post modern.

My six year old son accompanied me to Greenbelt. In the children’s area was a massive metal whale whose mouth opened and you could climb inside to hear a story. As we waited our turn we learned that the parents in the family ahead of us first came to Greenbelt in their twenties and now return every year with their children. The mum told me that Greenbelt gives her hope for the church. Finally, it was our turn ...I expected to hear a story about Jonah. Who wouldn’t? Instead we heard a story about a cat.

My moment inside the whale taught me that Greenbelt will always surprise you. I already knew the story of Jonah. Greenbelt offered me a new story. It is story of hope. At Greenbelt I saw the Christian faith thriving, alive, growing and renewing. Truly the Spirit is at work among us.