

Felting as a spiritual practice by Linda Courage



For the last thirty years I've been facilitating expressive art workshops in one form of another to help people experience how potent the creative process can be in connecting us with ourselves and our lives.

In recent years, Living Spirituality Connections, in association with St Bede's Pastoral Centre in York, UK, have used online zoom meetings to extend and deepen this experience. Groups have worked through Abbey of the Arts (<https://www.abbeyofthearts.com>) publications over a six month period and this has given us a rich and safe space to experience and explore transformative contemplative practices.

Even more recently I've been moving through the threshold of 'retirement'. For me it is a process rather than an event. A process that is turning out to be different than I had planned. Earlier this year an artist friend at an open studio event asked me about showing my own work. His question stayed with me; I hadn't made any of my own work for some time and I was weary. I pressed pause on my tidy plans for retirement...

Recognising I hadn't made my own work for some time had me gathering all my resources together and making a felt just for me from all my very best and precious fibres; oh so soft mohair, glossy silks, with linens and curly wools. It has been a happy time of remembering and re-learning, uncovering and amazement; a conversation into the unknown that will only reveal itself during the process.

This has been a great reminder of how felt making can refresh, restore, accompany and open me. I liken the process to how life can often be. We might arrange things beautifully and then life puts us through the wringer. The work of letting go of how we imagined life, and seeing beauty from how things are is a process that takes time...sometimes decades or a lifetime.

The photographs show a few stages in the lengthy process of preparing, gathering, choosing, placing, holding, drenching, rolling, tumbling, drying, stripping, dissecting, revealing, seeing, imagining, transforming, decorating, appreciating, commissioning, using, sharing.



Invitation

If you'd like to make your own felt in a group setting over a period of days in the beautiful new art space in the basement of St Bede's Pastoral Centre in York, (<https://www.stbedes.org.uk>) accessed by stairs, I will be facilitating a 4 day series after Easter next year called '**Felting Connections**'. The dates and timings are 10am until 3pm on 17/4, 24/4, 1/5 and 8/5. Each day will begin with a catch up and a heart centred meditation and there will be time to journal and gently share thoughts about the process. All felting materials will be provided. People will need to bring a journal/notebook, and large towel and plastic bag to take home their wet felting to dry between sessions.

Pricing details will be available soon. Booking will be through <https://www.stbedes.org.uk/> or by phoning 01904 464900. If you have any questions about the series before choosing to register, please email me at Linda.courage60@gmail.com

Linda is relishing retirement from a varied career in nursing and science. She has used and facilitated expressive arts workshops for half her lifetime.

She is a member of the Holy Disorder of Dancing Monks in The Abbey of the Arts, and a lifetime friend of St Bedes Pastoral Centre in York.

She is glad to be a member of the Work and Steering Group of Living Spirituality Connections where she coordinates our arts and spirituality work and has helped curate a number of art galleries on our website.