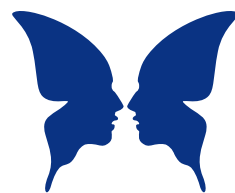


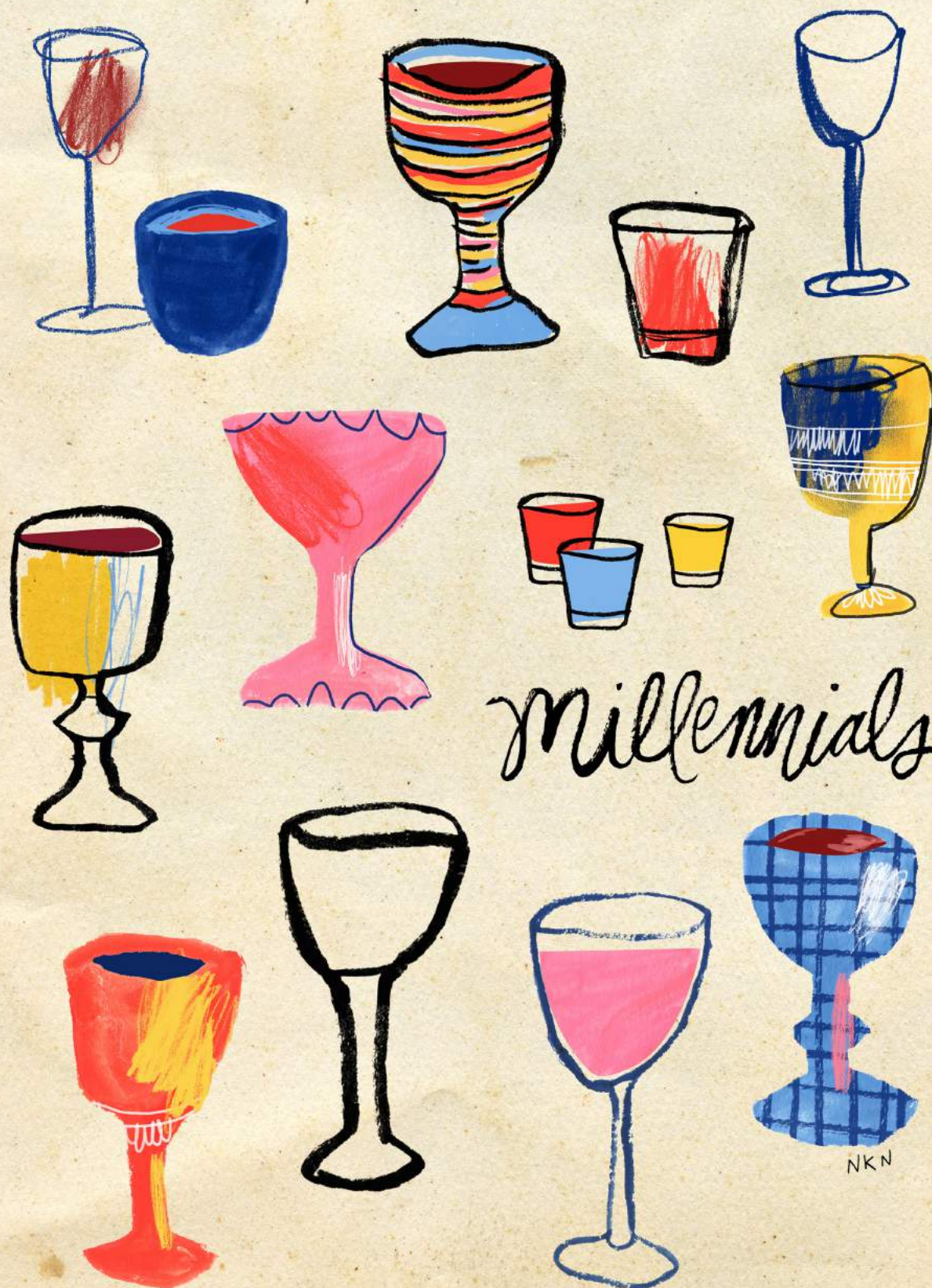
CONVERSations

A FORUM FOR *Authentic* TRANSFORMATION FALL | WINTER 2015



volume

13.2



NKN

This article originally appeared in
Conversations Journal:
A Forum For Authentic Transformation
Fall/Winter 2015, Issue 13.2: Millenials



Additional articles, back issues
and subscriptions are
available on our website at
www.conversationsjournal.com



We invite you to join the
conversation on our Facebook page
www.facebook.com/conversationsjournal



or via our Twitter feed
[@conversationsjl](https://twitter.com/conversationsjl)

CUSTOMER SERVICE/SUBSCRIBER INQUIRIES:
CONVERSATIONS
PO BOX 292378
KETTERING, OH 45429
800-607-4410
SERVICE@CONVERSATIONSJOURNAL.COM

COMMENTS & QUESTIONS:
CONVERSATIONS
1900 THE EXCHANGE SE
BUILDING 100
ATLANTA, GA 30339
800-607-4410
CONVERSATIONS@RICHMONT.EDU

CONVERsations

volume
13.2

IN KEEPING WITH THE IDEA OF THE SOUL AS A UNIQUE REPRESENTATION OF UNITY AND DIVERSITY, THE FORMAT OF CONVERSATIONS INCLUDES FIVE CONTINUING THEMES, EACH REPRESENTING AN ENDURING ASPECT OF THE SOUL—THOUGHT, EMOTION, BEHAVIOR, RELATIONSHIP, AND INTENTION.



PG 4

FRONT PAGE

A SLAVE TO
EVERYONE
BY TARA M. OWENS

PG 6

JOIN THE
CONVERSATION

PG 7

DEFINING
OUR TERMS

HOLY
COMMUNION
BY ADELE
AHLBERG CALHOUN

TRANSFORMATIONAL
THEOLOGY
FORMING THE SOUL

10

TECHNOLOGY
AND
TECHNIQUE

THE TEMPTATIONS OF
THE MILLENNIAL (AND
EVERY) GENERATION
BY JAMIN GOGGIN
AND KYLE STROBEL

16

A
GENERATION'S
THORN

MILLENNIALS AND
THE PROBLEM OF PAIN
BY MATTHEW GREEN



HONESTY
ABOUT THE JOURNEY
DARK NIGHTS AND BRIGHT MORNINGS

24

THE EDGE OF
BELONGING

MILLENNIALS AND
CHURCH MEMBERSHIP
BY ERIN LANE



30

BOOMERS
BEFRIENDING
MILLENNIALS

STEPHEN MACCHIA IN CONVERSATION
WITH ALAN FADLING

LIFE
TOGETHER
FRIENDSHIP AND DIRECTION

36

NOMADS
AND EXILES

WALKING THE WILDERNESS
WITH MILLENNIALS
BY TARA M. OWENS

42

A CRISIS OF
COMMUNITY

LIFE WITH THE DISCIPLES,
THEN AND NOW
BY CHRISTINE SUH AND
DAVID LEMLEY





PG 92

BACK PAGE

THANK YOU,
MILLENNIALS
BY HOWARD BAKER



S

features

62

O TASTE AND SEE

**A Meditation on Natalie
K. Nelson's *Millennials***

BY ACREE GRAHAM MACAM

68

AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE

**An Interview with Lee
Abbey Warden David Rowe**

BY JOANNAH SADLER

87

Conversations Guide

BY ROBERT RIFE



POETRY

Hide and Seek

BY ENUMA OKORO

INTENTIONALITY
OF THE HEART
WILLING TO CHANGE

50

WHAT WE ALL HAVE IN
COMMON WITH MILLENNIALS:

AN INVITATION
TO SMALL-
MOMENT
LIVING IN A
FAST-MOVING
WORLD

BY EMILY P. FREEMAN



56

PILGRIM
STABILITY

BY BEN BARCZI

CLASSICAL
SPIRITUAL EXERCISES
HABITS THAT TRANSFORM

74

MYSTERY AND
MILLENNIALS

BY LAURA TURNER

80

SPIRITUAL
FORMATION
WHEN GOOGLE
FAILS

BY JULIE BARRIOS



online

FOR FRESH, UP-TO-DATE CONTENT INCLUDING ARTICLES, AUTHOR INTERVIEWS,
AND MORE, VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT CONVERSATIONSJOURNAL.COM.





AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE



AN INTERVIEW WITH LEE ABBEY WARDEN DAVID ROWE

BY JOANNAH SADLER

>> EDITOR'S NOTE: When *As for Me and My House* debuted as a feature column in *Conversations*, we wanted to create space to help us explore the issue theme through the lens of family formation. Because family life takes many forms—from singles to large nuclear families to those living through divorce or loss to new parenthood to end-of-life issues with aging parents—we hoped we could speak broadly to the ways that living in close community together with family by blood or love shapes our souls, and how the particular angle on formation (community, flourishing, prayer, pain) impacts not just the individual but the whole.

For this issue on millennials, we are excited to take a closer look at what “family life” can be like in the context of an intentional community composed mostly of the eighteen to thirtyish demographic. Our founding editor, Gary W. Moon, spent time at Lee Abbey, in Devon, England, earlier this summer with the Renovaré London cohort and had wonderful things to say about the setting and the people in this particular intentional community. Much to my dismay, I was not able to conduct this interview on site, but I am very grateful to David Rowe for taking the time to share with us what makes Lee Abbey such a special place for formation. His description of the community and the lovely pictures he shared with me has added another experience to my bucket list. Now to decide whether I'll take this trip with young children in tow or as a retreat with my husband. Decisions, decisions!

JOANNAH SADLER: *David, tell us a little bit about Lee Abbey and the rhythm of life as a community.*

DAVID ROWE: I am the director of an international Christian Community in North Devon, England, called Lee Abbey. The residential community consists of eighty people from twenty-one different countries. All are committed Christians and come to share in our rhythm of prayer and rule of life. Most are between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. Our ministry together is to be God's welcome to all that he brings on to our estate. The estate is situated in a place of outstanding natural beauty between Exmoor and the sea. Lee Abbey owns 280 acres of land, and the community farms on the land and runs a retreat center that welcomes some eight thousand guests every year for retreats and conferences and many other thousands who pass through the estate as walkers and holiday makers and who use our beach in the summer.

As part of their intentional discipleship, all community members commit to being part of a formation group whilst living with us. We use the Renovaré template to help our members be open and transparent about our spiritual journey and create a cadence of accountability. The members of each group are diverse both in nationality and in denominational heritage. My own formation group consists of a charismatic Catholic, a Pentecostal, a Baptist, a Calvinist, a Mennonite, an Africa Inland Church and Assemblies of God member, and an Anglican. The sharing and accountability, the Bible study and prayer, produces a rich and beautiful cocktail leading to deeper Christlikeness.

JS: *Thank you so much for this introduction. It's given me a lovely picture in my mind of what Lee Abbey must be like. I only wish I were there in person for this inter-*

The residential community consists of eighty people from twenty-one different countries. All are committed Christians and come to share in our rhythm of prayer and rule of life. Most are between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five.

view! Would you share with us how the community practices the discipline of prayer and what the rule of life looks like at Lee Abbey?

DR: We meet together as a community first thing in the morning to reflect on the day before and pray for all that is happening with our guests. One of the community will share a reflection on a Bible passage, and we will pray by name for all guests and members of our community. We will also highlight a world issue to pray for each morning. The community will then come together again just after lunch for afternoon prayers to refocus and pray for an aspect of our rule of life. This lasts about fifteen minutes, and guests are invited to join us. In the middle of the week we celebrate “Corpus,” which is the community Communion service where we break bread together.

The Lee Abbey Rule of life can be summed up in seven promises:

- To worship him and seek his will (through regular prayer, biblical reflection, and joining with others for fellowship and communion)
- To deepen our personal commitment (recognizing that our minds, time, talents, possessions, and relationships, as gifts from God, are to be increasingly surrendered to him)
- To share his saving love (through our attitudes, lives, and relationships.)
- To live in openness and honesty (being open to be known for who we are, accepting one another in love, and saying nothing of others that could not be said to them personally if love and wisdom required it)
- To help build community (where we live, work, and worship)
- To respect and serve all others (welcoming the stranger, being a voice for the voiceless, and working to alleviate poverty and injustice)
- To cherish and protect God’s creation (which God the Father loves and entrusts to our care)

DR: I walked through the Lee Abbey Estate in 1974, before I had become a Christian, just after seeing the film *Jesus Christ Superstar*, which had turned me into a seeker. Seeing the life and joy in the faces of the people sitting in the grounds and an expression of hospitality to us as walkers passing through the estate made me say “I would love to be part of something like that one day!” Thirty years later I received an invitation to speak at one of the conferences. The same happened again in 2006; and in 2008 an anonymous envelope dropped through my door in Nottingham inviting me to apply for the post of warden. So I find myself forty years later being an answer to that half-prayer!

JS: *What a cool story! I love that God gave you a glimpse of his plan for your life—a taste of his goodness before you were even a committed believer!*

How do the residents of Lee Abbey cultivate a sense of family and communal spirituality? Many retreat centers focus on the individual’s needs or spiritual exploration, but it sounds like you all have found a space that allows for deep communal accountability and commitment to each other’s spiritual formation as well.

DR: We share in times of worship and prayer together; there is a lot of laughter and fun. The community puts on an international entertainment evening every week for the guests who are staying with us. We have communal tables in our dining room that encourage fellowship and community. We go down to the beach together, and we hold a community meeting each week. There is a football pitch [soccer field] and many community members play football [soccer] together each week. The families on community join in and by so doing model family life... that’s not always easy, of course! Community members share in babysitting or have meals with families and share in their life together. And then each week we meet together in formation groups to share with one another our joys and struggles, our aspirations for our spiritual journey.

JS: *How did you discover and then come to be the warden of Lee Abbey?*

JS: *I loved that you described your spiritual formation group as a “beautiful cocktail that leads to deeper*

Christlikeness.” It sounds like a pretty diverse group. Can you share with us some of the benefits and challenges (opportunities!) in doing life with people from such diverse backgrounds?

DR: There are huge benefits—because of the different cultures we gain a richer perspective of Jesus from different parts of the world—from Hungary or Uganda, from Ukraine, Mongolia, or Pakistan. People have different ways of interpreting Bible texts from their own perspective, and you learn that your own perspective is through Western filters. The sharing enables a clearer encounter with the living Jesus. We also learn from each other’s different ways of praying—whether silently or out loud with passion! Many of the Africans who come to us come from strict denominational boundaries that are rarely crossed. It is a huge eye-opener for them to share Christ across our many different church backgrounds and be blessed in the process. For some it takes a while to get used to the different points of view... to work through firmly held prejudices of convictions. But through praying (and laughing together) we are drawn closer to Jesus and thus closer together.

Our commitment to be open and to be known for who we are is crucial in this, as is the commitment to not say anything of others that could not be said to them personally. Learning from each other’s worship styles is interesting too. When the Africans get going, it challenges the British reserve, but Africans have a way of helping Brits lose their inhibitions!

Sharing in people’s pain is also such a moving aspect of community life. We had two girls from Pakistan, from the town where Bin Laden was found and killed. It’s not easy being a Christian in Pakistan, and our community travels with those in pain. We have a recent convert from Egypt with us, and a girl from Kenya who agonized when all those students were killed in her country. The same for the community members from Ukraine.

JS: *In America, millennials have quite the reputation—I won’t say more for fear of asking a leading question. What has been your experience in living in a community where the majority of residents are in the eighteen to thirty-five age group?*

DR: The most notable thing about our young people is their passion. Their passion for God, their passion

for worship—and, of course, their passion for one another!

It helps that most of the young people who come here are intentional about their faith. We do see a lot of relationships formed here, sometimes giving us the reputation of being a match-making service. But I think that the international dimension often tempers the hormones. Many internationals are more reserved and more discrete in their forming of relationships. We have a good pastoral team that helps give a Christlike perspective on the kind of choices we make. But we are also in community and in each other’s faces, so it is not easy to hide and not easy to pretend for long. Energy is the other great characteristic! It is such a joy to channel energy into spiritual formation and exploration of God’s calling for one’s life.

The other area that strikes me is in the realm of opinions. The community kitchen is an interesting crucible for such a variety of views and opinions to be shared—sometimes rather heatedly—but knowing that you have to live with those other people for the rest of the year gives a certain level of accountability.

JS: *Millennials often find themselves returning home to live with parents after “launching”—what does a uniquely millennial spirituality bring to the generation above and below it (parents and younger siblings)? What are the challenges and opportunities?*

DR: This can be true for many of our community. The UK guys may return home, but their sharing of responsibility in community life hopefully will give a more responsible dimension to that relationship. Learning to have the courage to forgive or to not say anything of others that could not be said to them personally develops good disciplines. Africans may be returning home to much greater responsibility in their families; sometimes people from other cultures would find it demeaning to clean floors or bathrooms. I remember a woman from India in great shock when she saw me on my knees cleaning the community floor. Others might find it hard to tell their families that they are working in the kitchen or cleaning. We learn humility through the less glamorous tasks. We learn to be more confident in life with each other and as we interact with our many guests. One Ugandan community member put it this way: “I am tutoring myself for the heavens above!”



The problem is that good role models are hard for millennials to find—especially among those they trust. Learning to live and relate in community is so critical in a world that seems to be disintegrating in relationships at every level.

Certainly I think that our millennials go from here with a more focused sense of discipleship and passion to make a difference in the world. Perhaps we are bucking the trend, but a year of intentional spiritual formation does seem to produce more confidence to model a positive alternative to the present ways of living in our world.

JS: *Millennials are now becoming parents of young children. What are the unique spaces that millennials may feel connected to or disconnected from God as they parent?*

DR: I think that we are always showcasing through the way we parent. Millennials will pick up from modeling portrayed by their own parents—sometimes they will vow not to do it the way that they've seen it done. But they struggle with the DNA of what they have experienced in their own homes. Good alternative role models are key. We have some lovely families in community, and although they may sometimes feel that they are in a glass house, others are learning from their struggles, recoveries, and highs and lows of parenting. The problem is that good role models are hard for millennials to find—especially among those they trust. Learning to live and relate in community is so critical in a world that seems to be disintegrating in relationships at every level.

JS: *Is there anything else you think our readers should know about living in intentional community with millennials?*

DR: Perhaps that millennials respond to transparency and openness in formation groups, and also that they feel free enough to challenge their leaders.

JS: *That's an excellent point. Authenticity is very important to millennials. It's one of the reasons the editors of this publication wanted to highlight this generation—for their striving to be true to themselves, and inviting others to be authentic in relationship.*

DR: One of the great things about our formation groups is the openness in sharing. Our millennials are uninhibited in sharing about difficult experiences—opening up about difficult work relationships before coming to Lee Abbey, leading to bitterness or unforgiveness. The group might encourage a letter to be written expressing forgiveness or asking for forgiveness, then the next week or so, some shared feedback on how things have progressed.

There may be expectations back home in families, say where there is an expectation for an arranged marriage (usually African or Asian countries). Prayer is offered up as people from different cultures share their experiences and stand together in Christ. I am always full of admiration for my group who are uninhibited and unafraid to challenge me in my own prayer walk or some other aspect of my own formation. I can tell they really care about my journey too!

JS: *David, thank you again for your time in answering my questions and sharing with our readers about the importance of invitation, challenge, and authenticity in all relationships, but especially those in our own house. I'm working out a plan to visit Lee Abbey one day!*

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Rev'd David B. Rowe, warden of the Lee Abbey Community in Devon, is married to Pixie, who is from the U.S. They met at Trinity Theological College in Bristol, where he studied for ordination. They have been married thirty-three years and have four children and three grandchildren. To learn more about Lee Abbey visit <http://leeabbey.org.uk/devon/>.



Joannah M. Sadler, managing editor of *Conversations*, lives in Atlanta with her family. She is a licensed marriage and family therapist and has a small counseling practice at Richmond Graduate University. You can continue the conversation with her at contact@conversationsjournal.com.