



CAIM

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

CAIM is the Celtic word meaning 'encompassment' or 'encircling'

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Differing Journeys

A rush hour commuter train in London, we're packed in like sardines, with no communication or sense of community. Detached humanity, devoid of any connectivity with your real neighbour. All aboard, ticket in hand, yet no-one caring who you are, nobody knowing your name; you're just another commuter on the train. I play that wonderfully subversive game of trying to get someone to speak to me, or at least make eye contact. I'm trying to imagine that image in scripture, of heaven being a city where people of every tribe and nation, language and tongue are living in a redeemed and restored world. It seems so far removed from this self-orientated mass of anonymity, commuting but not communing.



Another journey - courtesy of a January sale, I travel first class from London to York for £20. I find myself around a table with some very wealthy people: London houses, country estates, hunting and shooting at home and in Africa, representing clients in the High Court - enough to indicate serious wealth and influence. They are extremely pleasant, intellectually engaging, and have impeccable manners - yet by their comments in conversation they reveal an insensitivity and ignorance which misrepresents the realities of life for the vast majority of people outside their privileged cocoon. I saw a postcard once with this caption: *They raised their glasses to those less fortunate than themselves; those who lived a life of bleak solitude, loneliness and desperation. Or, 'northerners' as they were also known.*

My next journey was thankfully a short one. Choosing to avoid the lively and intimidating hen-party carriage, I was condemned to stand in a cramped compartment dominated by a group of drink-fuelled men at full volume, who 'treated' the rest of the passengers to what they thought was funny but in reality was a torrent of disgusting, obscene, and offensive language. I am no prude but the heinous language and the attitudes underlying it were hellish.

With my travel experiences fresh in my mind, the next day I was sitting with other travellers, not on a train journey but on the journey of faith; fellow passengers, Companions and Friends, sitting opposite one another, in our new chapel at Nether Springs. With other leaders, trustees, house team and guests, we sat around another table, to celebrate Eucharist and mark the chapel's beginnings.

We were, alone and together, on a journey, a journey of seeking God and discovering a way for living that is life-giving for ourselves and other sojourners. Here was Community, where all were valued, all gathered on an equal footing, no first and second class, in one sense - no rich and poor; some hobbling as they came forward to receive, others sure-footed; no foul and abusive language but words of praise and adoration, thanksgiving and intercession. Words of blessing, not abuse or curse. Here were people of different nations, ages, backgrounds, temperaments, life and faith journeys, men and women, sharing around the one table, journeying for the love of God, sharing, seeking and serving together.

If this is a foretaste of heaven, then I know what it means to travel first class.

Roy Searle

Journeying with Caedmon – at Easter and beyond

The resource for this Easter is now available to download [from the Home page of the Community website](#). If we have an email address for you, we'll also send it to your Inbox directly!

As mentioned in the last Caim, we will be using the Caedmon liturgy as a focus for reflection and discussion, and to stimulate our creativity. Thank you to those of you who have contributed poems, songs, and other creative ideas to help us in our exploration.



Please do have a look through the booklet. There are around 50 different activities to choose from which will suit a range of ages and learning styles, and which can be done individually or in groups. Some activities are linked to songs by Companions of the Northumbria Community, in particular, those on the 'Alone, Together' album. This is available from the Community shop as a CD or MP3 download. Other activities draw on poems and stories, including those written by Community folk, to inspire our thinking and responses.

As a demonstration of our togetherness and common calling, may I encourage us all to prayerfully consider what we might share with others in Community resulting from our journey with Caedmon, whether in person, or virtually on the forum or in Caim. Thank you and bon voyage! Anita Haigh

Please do let us know how you get on with using these materials and/or the previous ones on Hild and Brendan. We hope to include an article in the next issue of Caim highlighting how you have been able to explore and build on these resources.

We would also like to include as many accounts as possible of the Renewal of Vows. Whether you were alone or able to gather together, we'd love to hear from you. Please include a photo if possible and send to caim@northumbriacommunity.org



Welcome to the Spring edition of Caim!

Although Spring is springing here in Northumberland, this week we've had pictures sent from Community folk of wintry snow in NE USA and tropical rainstorms in Australia!

Putting this issue together, we were struck (again) by the 'international' resonance of Community ethos. We have content sent from Canada, Australia, Singapore and the Philippines - it seems remarkable that a spirituality from the edge of northern England can 'make sense' for believers in different cultures and traditions. Those values of simplicity and authenticity transcend all else, and help us to be rooted in a God who does, too.

Enjoy this edition of Caim! Jeff & Ingrid

Occasionally we send important notifications or information by email, and it's frustrating to find so many 'bounce' back because those addresses have long since been left behind...

If you have an email address which may have changed in recent years (or maybe you just got one!) then do please send an email to office@northumbriacommunity.org or call 01670 787645 so that we can check that your record is up to date. Don't worry - we'll never pester you with unwanted email, and we promise never to divulge your personal information to anyone. But we wouldn't want you to miss out on things we consider important enough to tell you about!

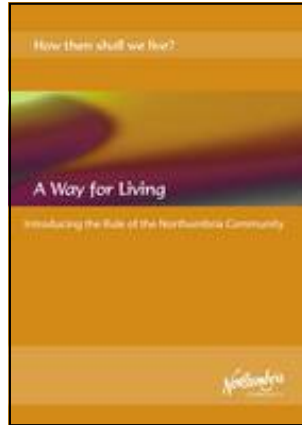
Everything we say about email addresses is equally true of your bricks-and-mortar address of course. Is it possible that you have moved and forgotten to tell us? Now's the time to check!



Nancy Nordenson writes from USA about

The Rule and the Vocation of Writing

Several years ago my husband and I attended a gathering of the Northumbria Community. I'm sorry to say we didn't travel to England for this gathering, but some people from the 'mother house' came to Minneapolis, Minnesota. As a working writer, I was so struck – and continue to be struck – by how well suited the Community 'Rule' of availability and vulnerability is to the life of the writer.



I came to understand that the 'Rule' is not a list of do's and don'ts that one must follow, but rather it is a way of being. It is not a code of conduct but a framework of identity, a scaffold on which you build your days so that you can be who you are. Most religious orders have some variety of a Rule by which they characterise themselves. I came to understand that availability means first and foremost availability to God through time in solitude and then availability to others. It's a word for the inner and the outer journey. Vulnerability means refusing to change reality so that things are easier to deal with. It's a willingness to face and confront things as they are, intentionally and deliberately, a preparedness to find truth – or God – wherever it exists.

These two words and the meanings conveyed directly speak to the vocation of the writer. To be available to God is the spiritual discipline of writing. To be available to others is the hospitality offered on the page and the sharing of one's life with others on the page. To be vulnerable is that need to be open to where the writing leads us and where it pulls us in the first place, that need to struggle as we write. Learning about the rule of availability and vulnerability started me thinking about it as a framework of my identity as a writer, as a scaffold to help shape my days and my work.



Writers commonly have a credo, whether it's a formal written document or an inner working reference carried only in one's head or heart, which guides them when making decisions about what they will write about and how. That credo might contain one's core beliefs, thoughts about what brings the world benefit or harm, thoughts on what is important to attend to in living a human life, a recognition of personal interests and passions and what one uniquely can contribute, and so on. Having both a credo and a Rule gives the writer a plumb line and suggests a means of accountability when pursuing the craft in a vocational and spiritual sense. I'm grateful to the Northumbria Community for the Rule of availability and vulnerability and the ways it helps me and challenges me in my work. *Nancy Nordenson*

North West Winter Gathering

In February, a gathering of 28 Friends and Companions took place at Yealand, near Carnforth. On a wild winter's day we enjoyed hospitality together in the cosy, welcoming village church. A theme of Gratefulness was explored, based on the teaching of David Steindl-Rast, both from his book (Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer) and a film clip of him speaking ('TED' talks). We were challenged to consider the idea that gratefulness produces happiness rather than the reverse. Our time together included excellent worship from our music group, discussion in groups, plus the all-important quiet times.

Do join us for our next gathering at this lovely country church – Saturday 17 May at mid-day (when many of us hope to continue fellowship at teatime, over fish and chips in Arnside).

More info and directions from Di Smith: tel: 01524 782341 dianesmith1@me.com
Lee Johnson (Bolton)

If you have any items for prayer which you would like to have included in our Community Prayer Guide, then do please email it to prayerguide@northumbriacommunity.org

Remember that the Prayer Guide is published three times per year, and so we need to plan well in advance - send your item in good time, and the team will endeavour to include it appropriately!

Did you know? All of our regular mailings - Caim, the Prayer Guide, and the Programme - are available to you in print format or as emailed versions (which come in glorious technicolour!)

You can even choose to have Caim mailed to you (we know you like to have it on the coffee table!) whilst the others arrive by email - or whatever combination you might choose! (The PG comes in a very useful week-to-view pdf document so you can print off one sheet per week very conveniently.)

If you'd like to review your mailings and how they arrive, please contact Ellen or Charlotte in the office. They're waiting to help!

New Companions

Rich and Bobbie Johns



Due to a last minute change of plan, the Cotswold Community Group Christmas 'do' was moved to the beautiful conservatory at Nature in Art near Tewksbury. After an excellent meal provided by the group it was an ideal setting to welcome Bobbie and Rich into

Companionship. They each shared a little about their journey and the significant part the novitiate process had played in this. It was a real privilege to welcome them officially into Companionship acknowledging the



tremendous musical gifts they have offered to Community over many years. It has been a special

time journeying with them as their mentors, not least the meals we shared at the pub as we discussed the modules together!

Duncan and Lesley MacLean

Paul Langley

Excellent beer, food, and company – such was the privilege of meeting over the course of a year or so with Paul, in the convivial surroundings of Nottingham's Malt Cross pub. Listening and reflecting with him on his call to Companionship in the Northumbria Community, we both gained a deeper understanding of how God is moving in Paul's life, and directing his steps.

The weekend that Paul was welcomed as a Companion at Nether Springs was marked with a group of his friends, some visiting Acton for the first time, and involved much celebration, music – and of course, if you know Paul – drumming. Please continue to pray for Paul as he considers his future direction, and as he seeks to love and follow Christ, at work and home, alone and together.

Julie Lazonby

Barbara and Andrew John



At the Advent Gathering of the Exeter Community Group, Barbara and Andy were welcomed as Companions having completed their novitiate studies

in November. After a time of reflection and discussion, the sharing of tea and cake led into the welcome for Barbara and Andy. They had sought the Community group out some years ago and been regular attenders, until they began to feel that the time had come to start a group in their home in the Torbay area and they were much missed. They made their vows before the assembled group and then spoke appreciatively of the Northumbria Community and how the Novitiate course had helped and would continue to help them in their Christian discipleship.

It was an afternoon of beginnings and endings, Andy and Barbara's beginning as Companions, but the ending of the group's association with the house that Peter and Elizabeth had named Poustinia when they moved there fourteen years ago and where the group has been meeting since it started about ten years ago. After a time of prayer, a gift of flowers was presented to Elizabeth and Peter as a gesture of thanks for their hospitality and leadership through the years together with good wishes to them as they move to the Bristol area.

Elizabeth and Peter Webb

Peter and Jennie Barrow



The Marches Community Group Christmas social was the backdrop for the 'Welcome' to Companionship for Peter and Jennie. They very kindly hosted the event too! Jennie has managed to be part of three Community Groups, Peter, two and their

home in Gloucester was an ideal venue so that each of the three groups could be represented – Marches, Cotswold and South Wales. Following a time of sharing from members of the groups around a Christmas theme, it was Peter and Jennie's turn to share about their journey through the novitiate process and what it meant for them, particularly as the last year has been one of significant change for them. This was the last event they were hosting in their home before moving to Wales in the New Year which added to the significance of the occasion especially



as we shared the Welcome liturgy together. No Community gathering is complete without food and the afternoon was rounded off

with a sumptuous bring and share meal around the refectory table in their kitchen.

Duncan and Lesley MacLean

Here's a short snippet from Bridge House, Shillingford - a bit of history, and an outline of what goes on; we will hear more about the life there in future updates.

On 5 May 2012 Bridge House was recognised as a Northumbria Community House. There was a great gathering of Friends and

Companions; Roy Searle spoke about the history of Community Houses and the value of Community, a liturgy of blessing and recognition was celebrated, and there was food and laughter together.



For Philip and Rosemary Mader-Grayson this was the culmination of several years exploration with the Community around the Community House initiative. However, the story of Bridge House had begun back in the 1990s.

Rosemary Grayson had moved into Bridge House with her husband, David, and their 5 children in September 1993. At that time Philip Mader was living in nearby Warborough with his wife, Catherine, and their 3 children and was beginning training for the Baptist ministry at Regents Park College, Oxford. Although the children were at school together, the families didn't really know each other. Tragedy struck both families in January 1995. David Grayson died from a heart attack in his sleep and Philip and Catherine separated, later to divorce. Later that year Rosemary and Philip met, and out of their shared experience of pain and loss, the vision for Bridge House emerged. (And they fell in love!)

They both felt that God was asking them to reach out to broken and hurting people, having experienced something of the world's pain in their own lives.

Philip had been introduced to the Northumbria Community when Roy led a quiet day for the ministerial students at Regents Park in 1993. The Evening Office was part of the glue that drew Philip and Rosemary together: "Lord, you have always lightened this darkness of mine, and though the night is here, today I believe."

They married in 1997 and their first real experience of living in community was of bringing their two families together under one roof and trying to recover from all

that they had been through. In the context of wider ministry Isaiah talks about "Not neglecting your own flesh and blood" (Isaiah 58:7) and this has been a foundational aspect of life and ministry at Bridge House.

As they tried to work out living the Rule in everyday life, the shape of life at Bridge House developed. Day 31 meditation has also been a great inspiration. There is very little advertising, either for visitors or helpers, but God sends people of His choice, for His purposes.

It has been thrilling to see the way folk who have come seeking help and support have become helpers and supporters. There is now a small community of folk who support and contribute to the life and ethos of the House. Interestingly, some are local folk who simply connect with what's going on, some are Community Friends, some Novices, but whether overtly or not, Availability and Vulnerability are hallmarks of all of their lives.

The Oxford Community Group meet at Bridge House for monthly Transformation Weekends: an opportunity to live and work together with the intention of allowing God to do His transforming work in lives whilst in Community. These weekends are open for any visitors though accommodation is limited.

Some folk visit for a few days rest or retreat, other come because they need a refuge from the ravages of life.



Although Philip and Rosemary are the only full time residents, several people have come to live for longer periods to share in the work. The four acre smallholding offers plenty of opportunity for physical work and it is evident that this work on the land can be very therapeutic for hurting people, relaxing (though hard and tiring) and enjoyable. One of the 'group' has experience in

therapeutic communities and horticulture therapy which is proving very valuable to the community centred at Bridge House.

This is all very much the 'Monastery' aspect of Bridge House. The 'Mission' part includes the Bed and Breakfast, the campsite, the Labyrinth (which is connected to the Quiet Garden Trust), connections with the local Baptist Church and the local Churches Together group. Philip and Rosemary also visit other local churches, leading and preaching, support the SANDS charity, and engage with the local community in many different ways. More information can be found on the website www.bridge-house.org.uk

Andrew Philip wrote us this lovely note:

"I wondered whether you'd be interested in using the attached for Caim? It's a Maundy Thursday/Good Friday hymn in Scots written to the tune of "Ae Fond Kiss". Indirectly, it's a product of the Flodden pilgrimage, as it came about in what felt like a reawakening of music in me after that experience.

My friend David McNeish, a trainee Church of Scotland minister and a member of the Iona Community, has recorded a guitar arrangement. I have sent it to the Community office, so it can be requested from there if anyone is interested. Blessings!"

Ae Fause Kiss

(To the tune of "Ae Fond Kiss")

Ae fause kiss and then they seize him;
Nae fareweels as freens, they leave him,
But the Prince o Peace gangs quately
Till the hauns o Caesar's army.

Graith and gear agin his graces;
Swords and clubs tae hain their status.
Aw his lane they lead him onward
Frae the gairden till the courtyaird.

Nane jalouse whit God is daein
While the sodgers' scourges flay him.
Aw oor pain the Saviour carries
While the pouers o Hell he harries.

He, the Faither's first and fairest
Here maun pay the price that's dearest:
The livin breid for life is brucken;
The wine is skailt for aw tae sup on.

Gin I'd been amang their number,
Wid ma een hae closed in slumber?
Wid I hae flown, gaed intae hidin
Or hae follaed and denied him?

Ae fause kiss we aften gie him;
Aften, we're the freens that leaves him
But, ey leal, he maks his pledges
Tae end the war oor weakness wages.

Glossary

Ae fause kiss one false kiss; *nae* no; *freens* friends; *gangs* goes; *quately* quietly, calmly; *till/tae* to; *hauns* hands; *grraith* equipment; *hain* protect; *aw his lane* all alone; *nane* none; *jalouse* suspect; *whit* what; *daein* doing; *sodgers* soldiers; *aw* all; *oor* our/hour; *pouers* powers; *maun pay* must pay; *breid* bread; *brucken* broken; *skailt* spilled, poured; *gin* if; *wid* would; *een* eyes; *hae* have; *gaed* gone; *follaed* followed; *aften* often; *ey* always; *leal* loyal, faithful; *maks* makes.

Norma Charlton sent a few lines about the recent Community Group Leaders' weekend

This photo was taken on the Sunday morning when we lit candles for each of the people at the weekend and their groups. Then each of them prayed for another group and laid the name of those groups around the table.



We had a weekend of fun and friendship, sharing about the joys and difficulties of our roles in the groups as well as giving and receiving personal support. Pete Askew joined us on Saturday morning and gave us an insight into some of the developments in Community and around Nether Springs. Catherine Askew masterfully MC'd our Saturday night ceilidh, when we enjoyed a good selection of brilliant stories, songs and poetry. (I got the chance to 'play God' when Norma Wise and I did a sketch on the Lord's Prayer). Over the weekend, as well as following the rhythm of the day, there were also times of prayer and sharing in twos using a variety of prayers which we then used for our final liturgy. Once again we were 'sent out' by Pete anointing each one to the task within their group.

A comment from one group representative who joined us for the first time may encourage others to come next year - "I had not known what to expect but came away so full and uplifted with many things to continue to think about and work on in my faith journey." *Norma Charlton*

**The renewal of the church
will come from a new type of
monasticism... it is high time
men and women banded
together to do this.**

Alison Herbert tells a story:

“You could become a missionary...”

Those words from my father on the day I qualified were music to my ears. I had thought God calling me to the mission field but had no idea how, where or when. But I did not expect to hear them from my father.

Fast forward to November 2013... I was working with Samaritans Purse in South Sudan as part of a surgical team carrying out cleft lip surgery. We were based at the main University hospital and were on our penultimate day of surgery when we heard about the super typhoon that had hit the Philippines. Immediately we began to pray as a team for the people there and for the aid workers that would become involved in helping the local population.

On our cleft lip team was the medical director for emergency response for Samaritans Purse. Lance was going to Bangkok for a meeting but already was having discussions about going on to the Philippines and anticipating what the medical needs might be there. As I left him at Nairobi airport to fly back to the UK I just mentioned that I was free for the next few weeks...

Ten days later I joined him, along with other medics with whom I had worked elsewhere. I joined a medical team of about 8 people, a mix of doctors and nurses, all with different skills.

Our team was based at a hospital in Palo about 30 minutes drive south of Tacloban. The hospital had lost its roof and so all the patients were housed in the outpatient areas. We were able to provide large tents and give them the space to have outpatient and treatment areas in the



tents. A third tent gave them space for 12 paediatric beds. We worked alongside the staff helping them to manage the hospital as best they could. We also took our vehicles out to more remote villages and ran mobile medical clinics.

At one of our morning devotions, I shared how I had journeyed with the Community through the previous two years as a novitiate and how I had learned to see God in the everyday and to intentionally seek Him each day. I used the Morning Office blessing to close the time of prayer.

As communications improved I was delighted to receive a copy of the Winter Caim on my iphone! Sat in large operations base room with only fans to move the already warm air I was reminded of the wider community who were praying for me. I had managed a quick email to the office to say I was going but had no more information than that.

I found it so refreshing to read of what had been happening within the Community. As I read of the new companions my thoughts were with Bobbie and Rich Johns - with whom I should have been welcomed into the Community - but I was still in the Philippines.

That will have to wait, for me. But it doesn't make me any less of a Companion - just not formally 'welcomed' yet. I felt I was welcomed when I received a delightful email from Catherine Askew back in September, looking forward to me being officially welcomed as a Companion. That gave me real joy and a sense of belonging.

But to have the touch of 'home' in the midst of the chaos of the Philippines was wonderful and uplifting. I had a copy of the December readings as I have the offices loaded on my Kindle. It was a good way to make sure I sought God intentionally each day as I read these each evening.

I had one patient that I was able to connect with in a different way. He had had to have a leg amputated because of injuries sustained during the typhoon. God very wonderfully not only gave me opportunity to serve him with nursing care, but also to find him in his home some weeks later and share some of the gifts that I had been given. It was a special moment. God in the everyday and yet allowing me to be available and vulnerable.

Alison Herbert

Community Companion Paul Moore wrote to one or two of us who know him well. But we thought his cause was worthy of an inclusion here in Caim. Here's an excerpt from his email:

A group of us are riding our bikes from our church (in West Leigh, near Southend) to Paris, in June. We are in training now, preparing for long days of up to 8 hours in the saddle, hoping to cover 80 miles on some days!

I'm looking for sponsors to raise some funds for a little Charity, who want to buy six cows to help sustain their feeding programme in the slums of Nairobi. I think I told you about a young Kenyan pastor, who made a profound

impression upon us when we met him some years ago, who was at that time keen to return to his home - well, he now heads up this programme, and it's just so humbling and inspiring to hear from him regularly.

It's so easy for us to give just a little, which can change lives in a very real way. If you'd like to sponsor Paul, or learn more about the project he's supporting, please email him directly:

home@allthemoores.com



Adrian Smith writes of

The Felton Parish Church Window

In September 2011 I took a prayer retreat with the Northumbria Community. On the second day, when not a lot seemed to be happening, I was walking alongside the River Coquet towards Felton when, as recorded in my journal, I had a strong spontaneous thought – “You are deeply loved.” It was one of those moments when what you know in your mind from scripture settles deeply upon you. On retreats I have often had a sense of God affirming me or inviting me to let him love me, this was one of those moments of receiving and embracing.

I like to have a reference point when things like this happen so I continued to Felton Parish Church, St Michael and All Angels, and stopped there to pray making that place for me an altar, somewhere I could come back to remember what God had said to me that day.

In January 2013 I came back for another retreat and decided to pick up from where I left off at St Michael’s. It was a cold Monday afternoon, after stopping at one or two places in the church I sat in the Lady Chapel on the right side of the nave in front of one of the stained glass windows. This particular one has a circular rose window at the top, with an image of the Lamb of God in the centre and eight ‘petals’ radiating out containing images of sheaves of corn and passion flowers. Between the petals there are small stars and towards the bottom two triangles containing trees - of life and knowledge. Below the circular window are five panels showing biblical scenes.

It was the circular rose window that caught my attention, and on that afternoon and during the following two days I experienced God giving me more ‘spontaneous thoughts’ which have subsequently become a piece of beautiful artwork, drawn by a friend, Tim Sokell. While sitting I also read through Paul’s letter to the Colossians, particularly chapter one which speaks of Jesus as being the one through whom all things were created, “He is before all things and in him all things hold together.”

Here are some of the things I wrote in my journal over those three days:

- The stars around the edge of the window, and its circular shape, speak of the created universe. In the centre is an image of Jesus as the Lamb of God – he is at the centre of all he has created and he is the present moment. Take away the Lamb from the centre and none of the rest makes sense.
- The ‘petals’ radiating out from the centre with their images of sheaves of corn and flowers speak of work and beauty. The petals point in two directions – the inner direction speaks of the past, while the outer direction points to the future and new creation.
- The two trees set within triangles represent knowledge and life. They are rooted on the earth and are sources from which we draw life and knowledge from God which in turn feeds the creative activity depicted in the petals.
- To begin with I felt that God was inviting me to be part of his big picture – illustrated by the window and what it was revealing, but by the third day this changed to sensing him

saying “You are part of my big picture.” How do I fit in to this big picture – I am deeply and wonderfully loved. My conclusion after those three days was that this was why God had drawn me to this window and used it together with Colossians to speak to me – to see his big picture interpreted and to realise that I am part of this.

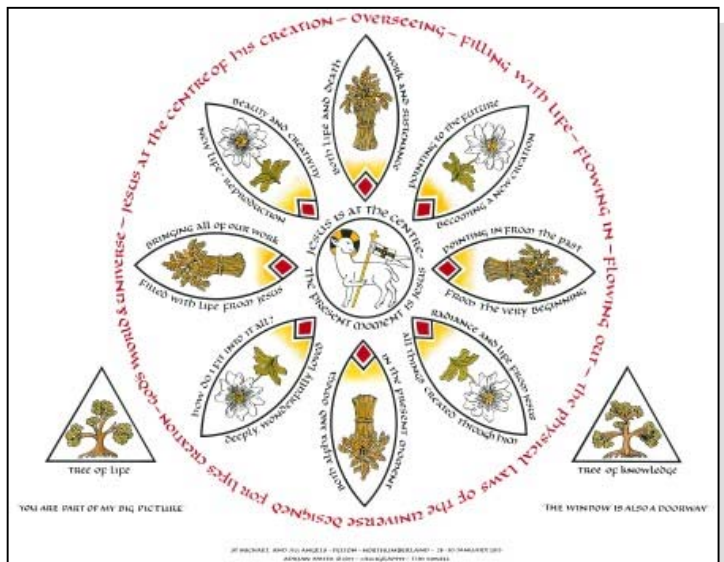
There was a great deal more I wrote over those three days, the words I sensed are now included within the artwork, around the centre, the petals and the edge of the circle.

In April 2013 I returned and again sitting in front of the window saw how it is framed within a stone archway which could also be seen as a doorway – something to look at but also pass through and beyond. Perhaps this ties in with the Tree of Knowledge - as we see and understand where we fit in we can pass through the doorway leading to life’s daily challenges, knowing who we are and more importantly who is at the centre of all things.

Since then the image of the window and the words I sensed have been an ongoing source of further revelation. In October I realised that what I received deals with some of the things that cause me to question. What science is telling us about creation is both awe inspiring and challenging, how to make sense of this in the light of what God has said about who Jesus is – in Colossians for example. I had not entered St Michael’s asking God for an answer to my questions but he gave me one anyway and it was reminiscent of God’s dealings with Job. Not ticking off my questions one at a time, but showing me who Jesus is and that I am part of his big picture. That’s more than sufficient, and I can still be inspired by science as well.

By nature I am analytical and organised, I like everything to be thought through and tied down; these are some of my strengths. This year I’ve come to realise that God often comes to me in ways that by-pass my strengths – in dreams, images and spontaneous seemingly random thoughts. God does not answer my questions on my terms, but on his, and he often uses my weakness to reach me on a more personal level. That’s what I think was happening back in January and other times.

As well as the value of this experience and the artwork it has generated there is something more widely applicable here as well. As we seek God, he will come and relate to us on his own terms and in ways that by-pass our strengths and speak directly to us. **Adrian Smith**



Irene Alexander sent news of Community development in Brisbane, Australia:

Since 1999 some of us have had long-distance contact with the Northumbria Community, primarily through Celtic Daily Prayer. Several years ago this connection deepened and eleven of us in Brisbane went through the Northumbria formation material. In 2013 Northumbria Community Brisbane was established. The Community publicly meets once a month, others members meet more regularly around various ministry tasks, and others are novices in formation. There is a vision for the establishment of a daughter house in Brisbane.

The Community sees its role as living the Rule of vulnerability and availability, fostering prayer and the spiritual disciplines, living as exiles in a post-Christendom world, contributing to the life of the church and seeking to be God's missional people at a time when our societies need cultural, moral and spiritual renewal.

Members of the Community are presently involved in a range of projects: working with refugee claimants, reconciliation with Australia's indigenous people, artistic work, theological and counselling education, working with people who have mental health challenges, formation in spiritual direction, writing, conducting retreats and teaching in the Philippines and Myanmar.

The Community in Brisbane is made up of six Companions, eight Novices and a number of Friends. An introduction to the Companions gives a sense of the diversity of involvement in availability and vulnerability.

Charles Ringma, together with his wife, Rita, worked amongst Australia's indigenous people, established Teen Challenge in Australia and worked in urban mission for twenty years, served the urban poor in the Philippines and worked in graduate theological education, taught at Regent College in Vancouver and worked with the disadvantaged through the creative arts. They now live in Brisbane. Rita continues her work as a ceramic artist while Charles continues to write and teach in Asia. Charles' many books include *Thomas Merton: Seek the Silences* and *Hear the Ancient Wisdom*.

Peter and Glenda Bryant have been involved in teaching, and working with refugees for many years. At the beginning of this year they moved 100 kms north where they continue to be involved in a variety of ways. Peter writes "Here in Buderim we are involved with SAILS – an Anglican social justice organisation. We support SAILS members in their outreach to two households of men with intellectual disabilities. I have continued to be involved in the Adult Migrant English Programme – this time at Maroochydore TAFE College and we are both involved in pastoral care with folk locally (including Tamil asylum

seekers) as well as in advocacy against the current brutal asylum seeker detention policies of the Australian Government."

Dawn Courtman has been for many years a teacher, a pastor in the Baptist church and involved in spiritual direction. She is part of the team with Irene in Spiritual direction formation – training others to become spiritual directors. She is also involved in introducing a contemplative aspect into her local church with retreats, quiet days and Taize services.

Irene Alexander is a University lecturer in counselling. She is also a spiritual director and has written a number of books including *Dancing with God: Transformation through Relationship* and *Stories of Transformation and Hope: Mary's Gospel*. Irene teaches regularly in Myanmar and the Philippines, and has recently become an elder with Servants to Asia's Poor.

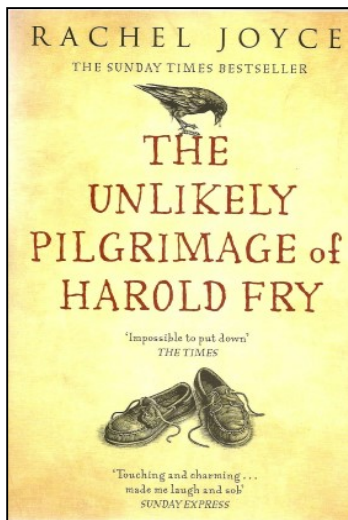
Terry and Rosie Gatfield have been lecturers in business and marketing, also teaching in Asia. They live with extended family in a farm-let on acreage where they have recently built a hermitage. Rosie writes: "Sitting on a hill overlooking Brisbane city and a spur of the Great Dividing Range of Australia lies the 'hermitage' and birds-nest home of Terry and Rosie. Occasional visitors enter the peace of the 'hermitage' (poustinia) as a day retreat, while students completing doctoral dissertations, or in moments of limbo, may share a Japanese room in their home. The environment is tranquil, except for the screech of cockatoos, peacock and peahen, and parliaments of crows. Droughts, floods and wild animals keep their minor farming skills on a very blunt edge, yet the pleasure of the wildlife devouring all that they provide and the quiet space for spiritual journeymen fulfils their hearts' desires."

Several of the Companions meet twice a year on a writers retreat, following the Northumbria rhythm of prayer, writing during the day and reading what they have written in the evening for feedback and critique. Others have now joined them and several books have been published as a result. Irene Alexander



"Last weekend we dedicated the Hermitage which Terry has built on his property for pilgrims to use for contemplation."

Ian Corsie tells about a book he's enjoyed:
THE UNLIKELY PILGRIMAGE OF HAROLD FRY
by Rachel Joyce



You know you hear about some books more by word of mouth recommendation rather than anything else? Well, this book is one of those (though it has also been in the best-seller lists). The story is of a rather sad, hen-pecked man in his later life who sets off one day to post a letter in Kingsbridge (South Devon) to a friend in

Berwick-upon-Tweed who is dying of cancer – and, on the spur of the moment, decides to keep walking instead of returning home. The book is an account of his walk all the way across England and what the journey does to him, his family, his friends, and those he meets along the way.

Rachel Joyce is not writing primarily from a spiritual viewpoint (though inevitably the 'who am I' and 'what am I doing here' questions keep cropping up); but Harold Fry is a sort of Holy Fool who inadvertently and unknowingly speaks deep into the lives of those he meets – and touches themes that resonate across the nation. Ultimately the story is one of redemption.

I won't say more, but recommend you read it for yourself and make your own judgement about whether the word 'pilgrimage' in the title is justified. Here's a taster, after Harold has been asked, by a young man he's just met, whether he really believes he will make it to Berwick:

'I don't push it and I don't hang about. If I just keep putting one foot in front of the other, it stands to reason that I'm going to get there. I've begun to think we sit far more that we're supposed to.' He smiled. 'Why else would we have feet?'

The young man licked his lips, as if he was savouring the taste of something that was not yet in his mouth. 'What you're doing is a pilgrimage for the twenty-first century. It's awesome. Yours is the kind of story people want to hear.'

Do you have a heart for France?

Would you be interested in learning more about L'Abri, the Community House that Andrew and Jane Perkins have established in Suvigny, Southern Normandy, France?



They would love to hear from you by email:

ncinfrance@gmail.com

Do please think and pray about becoming involved. In particular, there is a real need for people who have practical and building skills, (in particular plasterboarding, plastering, electrics, laminated flooring, joinery) and maintenance or gardening skills, who might consider helping Jane and Andrew as they develop and improve the building and gardens. Work has been ongoing since 2004 but there is still much more to be done.



Andy Raine reflects on our

Meditation for Day 3

This beautiful meditation by Rowan Williams is unpleasant and reassuring at the same time. It reminds me of a word God spoke years ago to our friend John Skinner 'Do not be afraid to walk in darkness for I am Uncreated Light'.



We don't instinctively want to be spoken to about darkness and trials. We want reassurances that all ahead is plain sailing, that the worst we have to worry about is a bit of sunburn. Slowly we are drawn to words about questions unanswered, nakedness and vulnerability, wonder and trust. This is the world of a child, struggling and fractious, but reassured by Dad or Mam just being there. We may be indignant or fearful or restless, but God is big and very present.

In the film of Pasternak's 'Doctor Zhivago' Yevgrav is questioning a young woman he suspects is Lara and Yuri's daughter about her memories of her mother. 'What was she like?' he asks.

'Big,' she says. 'Big?' he exclaims in surprise. 'I was little,' she explains, 'she was big.'

Another of our meditations says 'If I may hold Your hand in the darkness, it is enough.'



We all like to get occasional messages which make us feel appreciated :-) Here are a few snippets from our *Inbox*:

Caim came. I love it, with all the responses to events. Lovely. Congrats to you and all who make it happen. I settled down alone on the sofa with mug of green tea and savoured it, followed by Evening Prayer.

Christine Robertson, Canada

I do look forward to reading Caim, even though it is now over 7 years since I was last at Northumbria, before the move from Hetton Hall.

Wendy Gibson – Australia

These are not just Christmas greetings but year long ones as I thank you all for your faithfulness in another year of faithful ministry. It is now about 20 years since I obtained the Celtic Daily Prayer book and commenced using it almost daily. Over that time God has used it to sustain me through some very challenging years of full time pastoral ministry and this year since my retirement from the position of 'pastor' at the end of February into a wider pastoral role community wide. So, thank you for being available to God in being faithful to His call on your lives which in turn has strengthened me in fulfilling His call on my life. God bless you all, in every aspect of your ministry.

Bill Armstrong, Brisbane, Australia.

Greetings! I am from Singapore and have been benefitting greatly from the resources in your website. Thank you!

(Ms) Chong Kwee Leng



The newsy bit



News from Canada

Marion Stephens of 'The Carrying Place', Toronto tells us that on Sunday 8 December, some of the group participated in *Celtic Christmas*, a joyous, musical evening of carols and songs with a Canadian Celtic flavour, including new music composed by members of the musical ensemble. Celtic Christmas was put together and performed by members of both The Church of the Resurrection (The Rez) and musicians from the neighbourhood. Prayers and reflections from the Northumbria Community Advent resource, *'The Jessie Tree: An Advent Journey through the Family Tree of Jesus'* were interspersed throughout the evening. Thanks go to Duke Vipperman for organising the slides, prayers and much of the 'behind the scenes' tasks that helped make this happen.

Dates for Your Diary

May 12-16 – Northumbria Week at Lee Abbey on the theme of Brendan. For further information: www.leeabbey.org.uk

Saturday 17 May is the next quarterly North West gathering at St John's, Yealand Conyers, starting with midday office. More info and directions from Di Smith ~ Tel: 01524 782341 dianesmith1@me.com.

Tuesday 12 - Sunday 17 August - Families and singles are all welcome to come to Northern Ark 2014, a small friendly Christian family camp at Hollybush near Thirsk in Yorkshire. Prayer and worship form the framework of each day, with teaching and biblical reflections and plenty of time to share with one another. Children have their own morning sessions, usually preparing a contribution for the evening prayer. Afternoons are relaxed, an opportunity to explore the area, go swimming or visit the famous 'Betty's' teashop; there are creative workshops and time to simply relax around the campsite or take the opportunity for prayer ministry. For more information contact Norma Charlton tel. 0191 4878065 norma.charlton@northumbriacommunity.org

Walcher's Song

Music, storytelling and dance. After 1066 - a dream of community in the night of resentment and rage, revolt and bloody revenge.

Wednesday MAY 14th 7.30pm Old St Paul's church, Jarrow, Tyneside. *'Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins...'* On the anniversary of the murder of Bishop William Walcher at Gateshead, this event captures the poignant story of Elfwy and the Jarrow monks rescuing the body of their friend.



Those of us who wonder what our esteemed Overseers do on their days off, need do so no more. This truck was spotted in the harbour in Berwick upon Tweed. Clearly, Pete is far too busy to be involved - and if he was, then the Company name wouldn't fit on the lorry...

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