



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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Roy Searle reminds us that

For everything there is a season

I love the seasons. Autumn, that season of 'mists and mellow fruitfulness' with its turning and falling leaves, its warm, clear, rich yet mellow light, farewell to swallows and migrating geese, carries a beauty in its passing and a reminder to both prepare for the future, let go of what cannot be kept and to acknowledge the beauty, fragility and limitations of life. Winter with its stark naked beauty, bejewelled with frost, chills the air and brings both crispness and Christmas, winter tyres and curling, snow and constellation-laden night skies. Springtime, captured so eloquently for me in the words of the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins:



*"Nothing is so beautiful as spring –
when weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;
thrush's eggs look little low heavens...."*

"What is all this juice and all this joy?

A strain of the earth's sweet being in the beginning in Eden garden."

Spring speaks of new life, regeneration and renewal, of patience rewarded, of potential realised. It's a season of resurrection. A season of delight. A time to join with the dawn chorus to sing and celebrate and return to the tennis courts!

And now it's summer - and lying by the side of a glistening stream in my shorts and T-shirt and watching a young family of blackbirds emerge from the radiant, blossoming hawthorn bush learning to fly, feed and bathe, there is something about summer that not only warms the body but relaxes the soul. I used to go down to my cousin's farm in Norfolk and spend two or three days cutting the set-aside. Sitting in the air-conditioned cab of a John Deere tractor, trundling along at walking pace, the world appeared to slow down and the busyness of previous months found a counterbalance in the slackened pace and leisurely activity. There was something intentional about slowing down and embracing a discipline that creates time and space for rest, recuperation and reflection.

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Scotland Gathering

The West Lothian Group will be hosting a gathering again this autumn on Saturday 27 September (see news page for details). We plan to share time together centred on the story of Caedmon. All are welcome.

Here is some feedback from last year's event based around Brendan's story:



"I really appreciated the gentle ambience of the day, the welcome and hospitality from the West Lothian Community Group; the music; the visual effects of the real coracle and the setting of the scene, then sitting under a banner of blessings at the end of the day; the meditative craft activities; the prayer

walk in the afternoon where the question "Have I the faith to leave old ways and break fresh ground with God?" became planted in my soul and keeps surfacing every so often."

"We found it refreshing that the children were included in various ways. They were obviously very 'secure' and comfortable among us."

We look forward to welcoming you if you can join us.

North-West Spring Gathering

The May Gathering drew Friends and Companions from a wide area of the northwest and Cheshire on an idyllic late spring day. The glorious countryside bathed in sunshine allowed us to make the most of the attractive outdoors for walks, meditation, and a final gathering for Evening Prayer under the trees in St John's churchyard.

After gathering for Midday office and an excellent shared lunch, Bill Simmons (from Southport) led us in a very well prepared theme of 'I AM'... amazing the number of bible references! It prompted discussion and gave us much to think about. Those of us who were able to stay in the area over teatime rounded off our fellowship by enjoying fish and chips in Arnside, overlooking Morecambe Bay – what better way to conclude the day!!

Do join us for our next gathering on Saturday 16 August - see News page for details.

Lee Johnson (Bolton)

'Beacons of Hope'

Women who brought light, life and hope to Europe



Ilona and Rainer Waelde, German Friends of the Community, have released 'Beacons of Hope' – a film documentary about saints like Teresa of Avila, Bridget of Sweden, and Catherine of Siena.

The film is a journey throughout Europe, seeking to understand why these women still fascinate and inspire people even today. It takes one to the important places of these women's lives in Sweden, Italy, Spain, and even Jerusalem. Also, in this 60-minute quest, fellow travellers and experts alike are brought into the conversation, translated by Joshua Searle, voiced by Community Companions and recorded by Jeff Sutheran.

Two of the three women have been called 'patronesses of Europe' and are regarded as great examples of charisma and courage. They were strong personalities who consistently swam against the current of their times. Yet, what these women have in common is a deep longing for a life in the presence of God.

Meditative texts, read by Shirley Searle, turn the film into more than a documentary – prayers such as those of Teresa of Avila, one of which has also found its way into our Midday Prayer, make the film a contemplation on the women's lives and words.

'Beacons of Hope' is the third film of Ilona and Rainer Waelde, who previously produced films on Celtic Saints in Ireland, Northumbria and Europe ('My Journey to Life: On the Trail of the Celtic Saints' and 'Blessing Europe: The Legacy of the Celtic Saints'). These films are available to buy in the Community's online shop.

The new film can be rented (£5.80) or downloaded (£8.80) on <http://vimeo.com/ondemand/beaconsofhope>

Daniel Sikinger



Welcome to the Summer edition of Caim.

The sun is shining, and the sky is blue here in Northumberland. Summer is truly here. And yet, whatever 'season' your heart carries just now, we pray you will know the peace which the Lord's embrace brings. Enjoy this issue!

Jeff & Ingrid

Maurice Johnson writes:

For over two years I've had the real blessing of providing the articles for the 'Saints' Days' section of our website.

When I was first asked it appeared to me to be rather a daunting task. I'd been using a computer since the late 1980s, particularly for word processing, and I'd been used to accessing websites - but only for information for myself, and the occasional booking or order. The thought of accessing a website to add something to it gave me real butterflies. What if I messed up something already on the site?! What if my contributions were considered Northumbria Community heresy?! It took me some time to pluck up courage to say 'Yes.'

Jeff, our 'webmeister' was a great help. He assured me about safeguards that were in place to prevent me (or anyone else) from messing up the site and the contributions of others.



He trusted me to remain true to Community ethos, and said he would look at my contributions from time to time to assure me that all was well in that department.

He also helped me to get started, using a 'gee whizz' program which enabled him, with my agreement, to control my computer remotely while I watched and learned. It was really weird to see the cursor being moved around as if by magic! And to watch as someone else worked on the screen in front of me. Anyway, it worked - and I only needed one more session with Jeff after that before I was fully 'up and running' with it.

You can easily access the Saints' Days articles from the Home page of the website (bottom right corner). As you will see, all the saints in 'Celtic Daily Prayer' are included. There is also a significant number of others, especially Celtic saints from other countries and areas not already included. If you feel that there are more who should be included, please let the folk at the office know and they'll make sure it's passed on to me. I won't promise, however, to include all the suggestions that are made.

I hope the articles bless you as you read them, as they have blessed me in researching and writing them. May God's peace and love enfold you. *Maurice Johnson*

Editor's note from Jeff: It has been an absolute pleasure working with Maurice as he's expanded our compendium of Saints' Days' articles. He's quietly and diligently beavered away, to create a really rich resource for us.

I know that he has found strength and comfort in this task as he's wrestled with ill-health in recent times, and as he continues to live in that reality, we assure him of our prayers, and our grateful thanks.

Cont'd from pg 1

Summer can help us to slow down; it's a season that invites us to consider the art of being rather than doing. The longer, warmer days encourage relaxation. I love the way in which John Lennon's widow, Yoko Ono, put it:

*"Spring passes and one remembers one's innocence.
Summer passes and one remembers one's exuberance.
Autumn passes and one remembers one's reverence.
Winter passes and one remembers one's perseverance."*

Recognition of life's seasons, rhythms and patterns can lead to a healthier, more balanced life, and encourage an awareness and appreciation of each stage of our life and faith journeys. In the book of Ecclesiastes we are reminded, *'there is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens... a time to plant and a time to uproot... a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance.'*



One of the inherent dangers and damaging traits of Western consumer society, with its 24/7 culture, is a failure to recognise these seasons. Our Western, predominantly secular and arrogant mindset, assumes that our technological advances can overcome the natural processes, the patterns and seasons that God has created for our well-being. For all our achievements, we are still uncomfortable with mourning and the prospect of growing old is rarely relished. Botox cosmetic surgery cannot ultimately mask the reality of the changing seasons of life. Denial, avoidance or our own failure to appreciate the gifts and beauty, and the opportunities as well as the challenges, is to miss the good things that are to be found in each season. Ecclesiastes 3:11 reminds us that *'God has made everything beautiful in its own time'*.

Enjoy your summer - and for those in the southern hemisphere, may your woodstoves, woolly hats and gloves keep your heart and home warm! *Roy Searle*

Embracing and celebrating being single



“I wish I had heard and understood what I learnt on this retreat years ago” was the feedback of a person who took part in a weekend retreat for singles in August 2013 at Nether Springs. On reflection about the weekend I realised again that so often the experience of single people both in society and church is that they are regarded as sadly not yet married or without a partner. It is not rare that this view is then internalised, often resulting in people putting their life on hold or thinking that they have missed God’s blessing.

We hardly ever hear the message that in God’s view the married and single life are equally valued and worth pursuing, both with challenges and blessings, rather than being married as the Christian default and better way of living. Jesus does not give a command for either marriage or not marrying but he says that both forms of life are gifts that carry a mystery within which can only be found by those who live in them: the mystery of marriage as an expression of God’s will and order of creation to those who are married and the mystery of staying single as an expression of the reign of God, for those “who can accept it” (see Matthew 19.1-11).

I do have of course my own and unique journey with being single. Very early on after I became a Christian as a teenager I met celibates in different communities who in my eyes lived an attractive life of following Jesus. This probably contributed to me feeling called to celibacy when I was 18 years old with a view to joining a sisterhood in Germany after my studies. However, joining the sisterhood did not materialise and after getting through this first major crisis in my faith I was left with the question whether God actually had called me to celibacy or not. Never dating, I had good and hard times living as a single person and didn’t get a clear answer from God to my question which often was in the back of my mind. Many, many years later in 2011 I unexpectedly and very clearly heard God’s loving invitation to celibacy again and during a silent retreat shortly afterwards gladly accepted it. In hindsight it seemed that after living this question for 20 years, God finally had brought me to a place where I was able to live the answer and could

wholeheartedly, joyfully and without any fear say “yes” to giving myself to God in this way. A year later I publicly celebrated my commitment to celibacy. It was also in 2011 that I first got in touch with the Northumbria Community and now find that over these last three years my calling to celibacy and being part of the Community with a Rule of Availability and Vulnerability has been knitted together more and more.

Seeing that the monastic (mono = single) life traditionally has been shaped and formed by communities of celibates, to me it seems appropriate to consciously explore, value and encourage life as a single person in the context of our Community as part of a new monastic movement. Just to avoid any misunderstandings, this does not mean I think all single people are called to a lifelong commitment in celibacy! Having said this, I do want to make known that to live as a committed celibate outside a traditional monastery is a real and attractive possibility in God’s kingdom. How a conversation about singleness and celibacy in the Community can continue in practical terms needs to be further explored and I hope that something will have been started through this Caim.

Christine Strohmeier

Christine will lead another retreat for single people this year in August. She has written a liturgy for a commitment to celibacy which will be part of the next volume of Celtic Daily Prayer.

“I wish I had heard and understood what I learnt on this retreat years ago. I found the weekend challenging and yet incredibly encouraging and liberating... God has used the weekend to make sense of many things for me in quite a profound way and I can go into the future knowing that I am not alone. I have a new appreciation of how blessed my life is and has been when I have often thought otherwise. I would recommend this for anyone who is trying to understand how to live a fulfilled life as a single person.”

“Firstly, I felt relieved beyond measure that being single is not only OK but a valuable gift just as much as marriage is. ..I do not need to be able to justify why life turned out to be like that for me. Secondly, it dawned on me that I want to be single – I want to be a wonderful attractive woman and be single. And nothing’s wrong with that! Sharing stories and worries, laughter and tears in a very safe place played an essential part in this journey... Therefore this weekend marks a turning point for me: I enjoy my life as a single at a deeper level than before because I can hold on to the beauty of it without denying the pain that sometimes goes with it.”

Duncan & Lesley MacLean write:

House of azar is ten years old



Sitting here in the sunshine, looking at the hope expressed by the perennials and bushes that are in bud, it seems hard to believe that House of azar will be celebrating its 10th birthday in a few weeks time. The house, the garden and the chapel, so sad and neglected when we arrived in 2004, are now (retreatants would have us believe) places of welcome, peace and hospitality.

When we settled here ten years ago our prayer then was that we would never take the beauty of this place and county for granted; that we would always feel that sense of wonder and gratitude to God for bringing us here. It still remains our prayer. Our guests help us because their expressions of delight at the view, and particularly the variety of birds we have, help us to see our home through their eyes and rejoice.

So as we look back over the last ten years and reflect on the original vision we realise that a lot of it has come to fruition, not always as we had thought, but certainly as God had planned. When we began we had not

discovered Northumbria Community but when we did we were suddenly blessed with a language and a Rule for what we were trying to do, which is now the DNA of House of azar.

We have made a conscious decision not to advertise (although we do have a simple website) but simply to welcome those whom God sends to us. People come via a variety of different routes but at a steady pace. Some come for the day, some stay, some come once and some come regularly. There is also a long list of those who intend to come but never get round to it, a sign perhaps of the frenetic lives of many for whom time out is a longed for but unrealised dream. We have been blessed to host small groups who book for a quiet day and we have recently begun experimenting with 'Monastic Days' where we offer an opportunity to experience the rhythm of the day and provide a simple lunch.

Part of the vision was to create a safe space for those struggling with traditional church and so about five years ago 'The Well' was born. Meeting monthly, we endeavoured to create a worship environment where there was time for the alone and for the together. We thought about ending with a simple lunch, but this part of the dream only became a reality two months ago, when people who have to travel quite a way to get here started to connect with The Well. In the last six months we have also offered a monthly opportunity for a less structured Sunday morning commencing at 10 am with Morning Office, ending at 12 noon with Midday Office; in between there is coffee, chat, conversation and alone time.

So, we look back with thankful hearts at all that God has done and we look to the future, holding House of azar in open hands before the One who is Lord of the past, the present and the future. *Duncan & Lesley MacLean*

Dan Hazen sent news of the first meeting of a new group in Puget Sound, Washington State, USA

Thanks for your prayers! Our first meeting was a success.



We had two couples who cancelled last minute, but 16 of us gathered for a shared meal, Evening Office and a discussion of what it means to live by a Rule. I've got to tell you, it was great! As the Meditation for Day 28 was read, we could hear actual swallows singing their

own Evensong outside. A couple of our members who have felt very alone on their own contemplative journeys reported feeling a great sense of camaraderie. One person even used the oft-heard phrase of being "at home"....wonderful when you think about the 4500 miles that separates us geographically from the Mother House. It speaks to the true nature of Community! We meet again in June! *Dan Hazen*

Have you checked out the Nether Springs programme lately?

Having read this Caim you might feel you'd like to follow up on some of the themes:

7-10 July – The gifts of monasticism for everyday life

22-24 August – Embracing and celebrating being single

15-18 September – Nourishing the inner hermit

10-13 November – Seasons of the Soul

These are just a few ideas; to find out more or see the whole list, go to the Community's website at www.northumbriacommunity.org

We asked one or two folks to tell us their

Stories of Easter

South West Gathering. Planning an Easter Gathering is so easy now thanks to the wonderful resources compiled by Anita Haigh. It is no longer a question of what shall we do but what must we leave out when it is all so meaningful! We were spoiled for choice. We shared together in some of the resources culminating in unwrapping the cross in the style of pass the parcel reminding us that the gospel must always be accessible.

It was lovely to catch up with old friends, make new ones, and share together in the fun and in the seriousness



of the occasion. We shared together as two novices said 'yes' to availability and vulnerability before we all participated in the service of renewal of vows.

No gathering of Community is complete without food and this was no exception. We ended our time together with a sumptuous bring and share 'feast', and then we banded together to share the clearing up before heading home in a torrential thunderstorm.

Lesley and Duncan MacLean

L'Abri à Suvigny. As the Easter season finishes, I am moved to reflect on the Easter retreat at

L'Abri à Suvigny, Normandy. This was a weekend of well-constructed and organised activities which made me question myself and others, dig deep for creative inspiration, and have fun with all the visitors.



The program started on Maundy Thursday with the traditional foot-washing, where we all took the role of servant and person being served in a

relaxed, yet significant act of fellowship. Good Friday continued with a chance to be creative with origami and glass painting and then a meditation from a book called 'Jesus Christ - the Alpha and Omega' by N G Wright that informed the Quiet Hour meditations for the whole weekend. This relaxed beginning got us all into the right mood for the contemplation and introspection demanded by the afternoon watch at the foot of the Cross - a well-

organised programme of music, meditations and musing on the Seven Last Words of Jesus. Brought to modernity through disasters of the twentieth and twenty-first century, the activity made me feel engaged with the suffering of Jesus, and the way he suffers now, through human pain, bringing new meaning to the day for me.



Saturday started with a wander through the cascades of Mortain, a beautiful area that was the perfect setting for the Stations of the Cross walk. Everyone came and took part, even one of our number who struggled with some of the uneven and slippery paths. I feel blessed that she allowed me to help her and somehow, the fellowship in those actions contributed to the whole spiritual experience. The readings for each stop were stark and blunt and brought home Jesus' suffering in a way I have never felt before. The afternoon was full of more creative opportunities, which allowed me to mull over the powerful experiences of the events so far that weekend, time I needed. That evening, we watched a film: 'Of Gods and Men'. This true story of monks in a North African country facing the threat of terrorists made me question my own faith and how I live it. I wondered whether I could truly lay my soul into God's hands, as Jesus did, and so many others have since - a reflective end to a valuable day.

Easter Sunday, the day of joy, of Christ's resurrection, started with a special service where we sang, prayed and heard God's word. The contrast between this morning and the previous days was vast: suddenly everything was happy again, though the questions and the musings of the previous day still percolated in the back of my mind, somehow adding a sharpness to the fun. After an extremely enjoyable Easter egg hunt, we travelled to Mont Dol to renew our vows in a little chapel set up by pilgrims on their way to Mont St Michel. A picturesque spot with a thoughtful history. Walking around the Videgrenier (car-boot sale equivalent) in Dol de Bretagne was a lovely and peaceful end to a challenging weekend.

I feel I experienced Easter far more deeply than ever before though this inspired series of events: the pain, the fear, the joy and the relief. I would definitely recommend it for next year! *Sarah Perkins*

Nether Springs. The narrative of the Easter story was the thread upon which precious moments



were strung like pearls for me over the course of the four days of Easter Workshop this year. Quietness. Conversations. Challenging sessions. Sunsets. The Stations of the Cross. Songs and poems. Silliness. Sunrise service on the bridge (and bacon butties). Time together but space to be alone - so the journey, though shared, was intensely personal. My words can't do it justice. You had to be there. I am so glad I was.

But for those of you who couldn't be there, much of the work in sessions was based around the

Caedmon liturgy resource with its challenge to be

prepared to tell God's story and our stories to a world that needs to hear them. The resources are available on the Community website - take a look.

Walking the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday was for me the gateway into the stripped and empty place of the tomb on Holy Saturday preparing for the joy of resurrection in the Easter vigil and Sunday morning. One of the strengths of the programme was the space given which allowed each of us to find our own balance between engagement with others and withdrawal over the course of the weekend.

And the sun shone for the renewal of vows on Holy Island ... miracles happen.

The ceilidh on Sunday evening was typically varied and comfortably chaotic - demonstrating again the depth of talent across all the generations of folk present.

All in all a rich and multifaceted experience. Thanks to all that made the weekend possible whether on the team running it or as participants. *Rob Holden*

Roy Searle dropped us a note:

One of the privileges of meeting people on the road or at Nether Springs is to hear something of their story. Most of these conversations are private and remain confidential but some are able to be shared. John Arthur is an occupational psychologist. His life and faith story is a fascinating one and his recently published book, 'Gadfly ~ reading church through reading Jesus', is a thought-provoking and stimulating read and is available through the Community resources. Here John shares something of his personal story behind the writing of Gadfly.

My church collapsed. Not literally of course - that would have been easy and, ironically, would have brought us closer together.

The leadership collapse I was a part of wasn't caused by a sudden moral lapse for any one of us, but by an endemic spiritual one, a long term relational one, for all of us. One day it simply unearthed a core fragility and everything fell to bits.

When church collapses, everyone, at some level, is diminished. It was such a sad story, the aftermath of which left me with many burning questions about that fragility. Was it our practice of august - nay biblical - Christian leadership theology, and our levels of accountability to Jesus and to each other within that - hush don't say it - actually *caused* it? In the years of repair that followed my questioning proved the spiritual rule of 'broken bones'. As anyone who has broken a bone knows, they never entirely heal. They permanently retain a soft fault-line and, with the right forces in play, they ache to break again. The 'meaningfulness of traditional Christian church' became my soft fault-line.

Whilst over time others' spirits rallied impressively, mine simply ached. In their repaired hopes I could only see them gluing back together that same fragile core. My church collapsed on the eve of what would have been its greatest achievement; an unfinishable mourning defined my loss.

There isn't a proverb that reads: "A man with little hope damages his friends", but there should be. Seeing the effect I was having on those who wanted to rebuild the church made me realise the only thing more unthinkable than leaving, was staying. So, still unfit for the open sea, I set sail and made harbour elsewhere. For a time I could be free to worship without role and to talk without agenda. It was a time to effect critical repairs and take on supplies. A master shipwright for my life at this point was a man named Mark Greene, whose unrelenting confidence in me was a conspiracy of grace. Years after my church collapsed, and part of me with it, it was grace that called me to account by insisting I define my hope for the church.

So it was in the cafe of the National Gallery over eggs and salmon one morning, I laid out my stall for my friend. I told him of my impossible ache for a church whose Jesus was just bigger; whose purpose was to give God our first not our best; whose community was made from the risky, intimate and accountable friendships required by our master; whose life was sustained by the feeding on Christ He had instructed;

whose sacrament modelled the appalling intimate risk of the God of the crucifixion; whose joy was reading itself into being in the bible, not through conservative doctrines and orthodoxy, but through the unrelenting intimacies of our Jesus mandating the kingdom He requires us to complete. An ache for a church that would not seek to endure in fragility, but would reflect the great divine risk of Jesus, to journey in Him.



And Mark said: "There's a book right there". So my ship was re-christened: Gadfly.

John Arthur

"To Behold the Beauty of the Lord"



**We have just
cycled home
from Morning
Prayer in
Cedd's church
at St Peter's
Chapel,
Bradwell.**

It is six weeks
since we moved

here from Hackney, East London, our home for 40 years, after nigh on two years in the planning. 40 years it was, but Hackney was no desert, with friends and live community; we swam in a rich and wonderfully diverse world. (With a narrow boat in our old neighbourhood, we haven't severed ties, staying there when working in town).

What we have begun to do is to begin the task of rooting ourselves here in Essex, on St Peter's Way, with its different sort of beauty: the new silken grass outside the chapel, the glint of the sea beyond the muddy flats, the bird song everywhere, the trees greening, pointing to the sky. We are meeting people, too, who welcome us, in the shop, at the chapel, breakfast at Othona, a neighbour who brings our wandering dog home.

It begins, our life here. Behold the beauty of the Lord!

And threaded through it all is our Companionship in the Northumbria Community: the saying of Offices, morning and evening, midday sometimes, linking Hackney in the East End with East End Road in Bradwell. Now however, the routine begins with a bike ride, romping dog alongside, prior to the gloom of Cedd's thin place.

We behold the beauty of the Lord our God.

We would love Celtic visitors. Stop off for a cup of tea.
We have spare bicycles! *Elizabeth and Ted Sawyer*



Journeying from the Familiar into the Unknown

On 12 May Friends and Companions of the South Wales Group travelled to Lee Abbey, Devon to join with others for a Northumbria Community week led by Duncan and Lesley MacLean, helped by Norman and Ingrid Cumming, and Robin and Carole Moulton. On arrival it was good to see so many familiar faces.

During our week together we prayed the Daily Office and reflected upon the life of St Brendan as we journeyed from the familiar into the unknown, using material from the excellent resources which Anita Haigh had put together last year. As the weather was mild and favourable we were able to take advantage of the beautiful surroundings, walking through the grounds of the estate, lighting a BBQ on the beach and



for some of
our more
intrepid
Companions,
experiencing
the delights
of the zip-
wire!

Each evening before retiring we met for Compline, which on one occasion proved to be rather special as participants from the Northumbria and Scargill Communities, as well as house team representatives, made their way down to the rocky shore line of nearby Lee Bay. Here, an old lime kiln had been converted into a small chapel, and this was our venue for the closing prayers of the day. It was such an atmospheric setting: candlelit and cool, with the music of Ingrid and Norman blending with the sound of the incoming tide. Around 50 people squeezed together; no burning fire as of days of old, but spirit lifting and warming as we called upon God to guide and protect us through the night.



All too soon it seemed our week together had come to a close but we left feeling refreshed and uplifted and we look forward to returning again next year.



Andy Raine sent us some reflections on

'Walcher's Song' event at Jarrow – 14 May (Walcher's Day, Bishop of Durham)

The day started early for me, with the need to leave Holy Island before the tide closed. Eventually we arrived and began moving furniture and unloading the car. Jennifer and Jimmy Guy made us very welcome, and it was lovely finding in Jimmy someone with whom the era of Walcher, Aldwin and Elfwy was already a living story, and who was so aware of the prayerful shadow of Bede. Before long other participants were arriving, hurriedly getting drinks or sandwiches, testing microphones, practicing readings or rehearsing dances. By 7.30 everyone was in place, and I welcomed and thanked everyone, then it began.

Jim Sharp sang 'Take me up the Tyne in a little boat', and Anna followed with another local song, Jimmy Nail's 'Big River'. Next, the dramatised story of Eli and Samuel. Bill Cresswell was so warm and strong and trusting as Eli that he gave us insight into the similar nature of William Walcher – a good man who did nothing wrong, yet failed to recognise and admonish the evil deeds of others around him, with tragic consequences. Chris and Jackie Johnson were at the microphone, John McCrae was Elkanah, with Laura Todd as his wife, Hannah, and young Zachary Yates as a worthy

Samuel. Chris continued as the voice of God, this time singing 'I the Lord of sea and sky..' to the rumble of his bodhran as a dance-team from 'Beyond the Barricades' interpreted it.



Then I read the poem 'Evesham' in which I tell the story of the three men and a donkey who journeyed north to be met by William Walcher who listened carefully as they explained their dream of rebuilding the monastic foundations they had read about in Bede. Fred Stubbs sang 'Jeremiah's Field' which speaks of setting up the waymarks, and Brenda, Marty, Mark and Claire Louise were the wall that tottered and fell, before Hugh came to weep over the stones, began rebuilding and seeing the stones come to life. Then Dave Hay read 'What mean these stones?' as we thought of those Evesham monks sent here to Jarrow to begin their work of rebuilding. Anna's song, 'Ancient Paths' followed, danced by 'Beyond the Barricades', each with a painted pilgrim staff to strike the ground.



The link with the twin monastery at Wearmouth was celebrated with Clare Hunt's song, 'Space to Grow', which is also the name of the garden project being developed by her husband Rob, in Monkwearmouth. Norma Charlton was part of the delegation from Gateshead where Walcher met a

protest-lobby so long ago and was brutally murdered. She led us in a Litany of the saints of the 'House that John built'. Gerri Yates narrated the tragic story of Walcher's death at Gateshead and Elfwy taking a little boat from Jarrow to retrieve his body, and carry him home to Durham for his burial. Jim Sharp's singing gathered up the lament, 'let us weep long for the kind-hearted Walcher'.

Then I led a large group of willing conscripts in 'Mahanaim' a dance of reconciliation. It was very moving to see, especially as we considered reaching across historic divides of pain and misunderstanding, then reached out in blessing to north, south, east and west. Anne Griffith read a letter from France from an intercessor grieving over the massacre in Gateshead that Odo of Bayeux visited on the north as a reprisal for Walcher's death. Gerri summed up the narration of the story, then Anna sang the plaintive 'Walcher's Song' written from his perspective, his reluctance to take on political responsibility, his failure to grasp control of events, his forgiveness of his attackers, his desire for good, for healing, for restoration. The closing blessing was brought by Sir Ken Gibson, focusing especially on Durham, Gateshead and Jarrow. A memorable night. A sad story became a time of great joy. *Andy Raine*



It was one of those times where the air is thick with a feeling of something happening in the heavenlies. Thank you so much for letting me be part of such a truly magical evening. *Hugh Barney*

I absolutely loved the evening. Thank you so much for organising it. What a wonderful mix of song, dance and words! *Norma Charlton*

A beautiful evening. Think Walcher would approve and it felt like the end of a journey for Gateshead.

Anne and Alwyn Griffith, Mulberry House

Just to say - that was an amazing event. It was a historical and significant night. Unforgettable.

Mark Bagott



New Companions

Les Phillips



Unusually, because I am normally very impatient, I was really relaxed while on my novitiate journey and trusted that the process would be completed in God's time, not my own. It was at Sidholme Christian

Retreat Centre in Devon that I was welcomed in Companionship by Lesley and Duncan and local Community friends during our first Bath & Bristol group weekend away. It was a great weekend and the welcome on the Sunday morning made it all the more special. I feel grateful and so fortunate to have come across the Community. I knew as soon as Sarah and Malcolm opened the front door of their home to me on the very first Community evening event that I went to, that the Northumbria Community would play a very big part in my life and I am so grateful to be part of it.

Jenny Bulcraig



Jenny said her vows for Companionship at a meeting of the Birmingham group in March. She brought family and friends and we shared some stories of her journey with the Community, which has

been very winding. I have been Jenny's mentor, but already knew her, as she has been a good friend of my daughter (Ellen). We have shared a church for some of that time too, and I know her family well. Jenny came to Northumbria via Philadelphia, drawn to the Simple Way (Shane Claiborne). This was a good source of life, but they suggested she look up a group closer to home. When she enquired at Nether Springs she discovered that the Northumbria Community was as close as Mary and Lynda (Robinson), longstanding church and family friends. She dealt with this shock very well.

It has been good to walk with her, with other Companions, in the journey through novitiate. She has taken time, and not taken her vows lightly. She is working in London now, as formation director for theology and mission students at a Springdale College campus. Her band 'Jenny Went Away' is doing well too. It is good to have her with us, and to see this gifted communicator get to grips with our third question: "How do we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" *Mary Publicover*

Shawna Snow Wilbrink



On Tuesday 13 May a mixed group of friends, of which only a few had personal experience of the Northumbria Community, came together at the house of Shawna Snow in Amsterdam. After a

lengthy time of being a novice, it was now time to welcome Shawna as a fellow Companion into the Community. We started with a great meal and while still sitting around the table, Shawna shared something of her personal life-story and how Celtic Daily Prayer had been her life-line for many years, specially in the difficult period, about ten years ago, after her first husband died in an accident. After that Floor explained a little more about the Rule of the Northumbria Community and what 'A Way for Living' means. Everyone now had an idea what Shawna was about to commit herself to. Our attention was then focussed on the 'Welcome liturgy' itself which all of us shared together. It was a moving moment. A beautiful poem, written and said by one of the participants was another high point of the evening. The interesting thing was that each new line of the poem started with the corresponding next letter of Shawna's full name. Yes, a very personal present for a very special person!

Floor Vogelaar

She heard God's, still small voice
Happily calling her heart.
Away she went across county, land, and country
While His plan was being carved in her hands.
Never seeking her own gain but
Always His Kingdom, His Love.

Righteously He led her through trials and tests
And good times, never lifting His gaze from her
Ever-faithful way.

She pressed on and on, and gave her talent
Nicely uniting His diverse flock of
Often colorful and charismatic sheep
Without whom her life would be less rich, He knew.

We gather today to bless you, our friend
Initiator of love and light.
Lovingly we stand,
Bound by His hand
Rightfully, attesting to His
Infinite glory in your life story
Now fulfill His call and let us
Know how we can help you in your masterpiece of life.
Christa Oudshoorn-Hobo, May 13, 2014, Amsterdam

Andy Wright



On Easter Sunday on Holy Island we welcomed Andy Wright as a Companion in Community. As I said at the time it was great to accompany him through the novitiate as his mentor. He has a real heart for Community and particularly for the ministry of intercession. On a personal note: I became a Companion shortly before we had a formal novitiate so it's been good to experience it first hand as a mentor. Please pray for Andy and his fiancée Sally who are getting married on 19 July. *Mike Gibbs*

Rosemary Penfold

Rosemary was welcomed as a Companion at the South West Easter Gathering. I have known her for over

twenty years and she has been coming to the Group for about six years. She decided she would like to become a Companion after we hosted a Gathering/Taster Day for the Northumbria Community in September 2012. A few months later she was able to attend a Community Day at Lesley and Duncan MacLean's house and then embarked on the novitiate.

Since having a second stroke twenty years ago Rosemary cannot always access the words she wants to say, she finds reading a very slow process and can only write with difficulty but this never deters her from participating as fully as possible in anything she is involved with.

Because Rosemary didn't have access to a computer, I would visit her with each module and we would spend about an hour having a general discussion about the content, pray, catch up on our news and other things. In a way, going through the modules was a formality because to my mind Rosemary already embodied all that Northumbria Community stands for. She gives us great joy with her presence and rarely misses a group. She brings Christ to our meeting - He is with her always.

Liz Brobyn

(sorry we don't have a picture of Rosemary!)

We asked Andy Raine to tell us the story of the **Meditation for Day 8**

When my wife Anna named this tune for her album she called it 'Thin Place' – the words are by Alistair MacLean from 'Hebridean Altars'. It is not just Iona or Lindisfarne that are thin places where heaven and earth are close enough to intersect. Jacob's gateway to heaven was the place of having quarrelled with his family, and run away in fear of his life. All of the spheres of our life can be that touching place. A hurting marriage can be the place where heaven bleeds into earth.

The work of our hands can be established and anointed just as Bezaleel's was. Christ can be found among us on the campsite, at the festival or drum-circle, at a match or on the shop-floor, at the homeless refuge or the Neighbourhood Watch meeting, the pub-quiz and the garden centre, training for the Great North Run or queuing at the checkout. He walks the hills and sits in traffic with the rest of us. And He understands friendship. Sometimes when we sense a connection with another person before long years of shared experience we recognise the likelihood of heaven's intervention and seize the moment. All the spheres of our life can be thin places. Anna went with me to Gibraltar when I taught Motivations for folk from Catholic charismatic renewal. She taught us the song and we stood in circles outdoors, praying for widowed, single and divorced people, for marriages, for families, for work, business and finance, jobs and areas of service, for government, for culture and identity, for music and arts, sport and leisure, for true deep friendship. Lots of prayer initiatives were birthed or redirected at that time in Gibraltar.

Another song, this time by Godfrey Birtill says:

*Looking for Your presence, it's time to seek Your face
Let the window of Heaven open up today...
...Let us pick up Your burdens, walk the land and pray...
Carrying You into the city, streets and homes,
we hear the footsteps of the Lord.
Can Your heavy burden rest on me?*

Andy Raine





News of New Companions is on Page 10!



Liesl and Dom Filippi give thanks for the birth of their daughter Tara Gabrielle. She was born on 30 March, eight weeks early. After several weeks in hospital she is now home and doing well.

Congratulations to Jonathan Tillin and Vivienne Blount

who met over eight years ago and were married on 24 May at their parish church of St Peter's, Belper. Their vicar gave them the freedom to produce the liturgy (which had a strong Celtic theme to it). Jenny and John Cooper represented the Community and offered Caim prayers.



Sue Berry was licensed on 23 March at the Church of St Peter and the Holy Rood in Thirsk. She will be moving to Orkney sometime this year. Bishop Mark Strang prayed a prayer which seemed particularly apt as she leaves the old to travel to the new.

Dates for your Diary:

Saturday 16 August 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, with time to explore, swim, join in creative workshops, take the opportunity for prayer ministry, simply relax or visit 'Betty's' teashop. For more information contact Norma Charlton tel. 0191 4878065 norma.charlton@northumbriacommunity.org

Saturday 27 September - The West Lothian Group will be hosting a Scotland Gathering 2014 at St Ninian's Craigmalen Church Hall, Linlithgow from 10am to 7pm. We plan to share time together centred on the story of Caedmon. All are welcome.

Summer programme at L'Abri à Suvigny

August 4 to 9 Family Holiday Week, a summer break
August 10 to 17 Community Work Week - come and share in the work and renovation at L'Abri within the monastic rhythm of the day.

September 21 to 28 Harvest Retreat - learn (or improve!) your skills in woodland management or harvesting and processing produce. Join us at the special time of the year - seasonal reflections, working within the rhythm of the monastic day.

More information on any of these opportunities can be obtained by emailing ncinfrance@gmail.com

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