



CAIM

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

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

Trevor Miller reflects on this Advent season:

The Promise of His Coming

Earlier this month I travelled from Berwick to Chatton for an Overseers meeting. I deliberately took the route that went by Hetton Hall and across the purple bridge that had been the subject of a prophetic word in 1992 while searching for the location of the Nether Springs: 'it would be near a purple bridge' we were told. (Yeah, right!) I stopped right in the middle of the bridge and recalled the elation at our discovering there really was a purple bridge near Hetton Hall. I offered a prayer of thanksgiving for the amazing promises given to us as a Community over the years and the outworking of the purposes of God in their fulfilment. Our waiting on God had brought the past into the present and gave us fresh hope for the future. A reminder that 'God who was, is and is to come – is always 'the I AM eternally now' God to us.



Isn't this illustrative of the current season of Advent, which literally means: a coming, an arrival. It speaks of the anticipated promise of the future, which is coming to meet us in the present. It is an arrival of something that has been awaited with hope and longing. Traditionally, it is a time to thank God for Christ's first coming and prepare our hearts and minds for the message of Christmas Day. It is also a time to prepare our hearts and minds for his final coming at the end of time. It is a reminder that our calling as Companions is to seek to live out the gospel faithfully and righteously between these times as signs of availability and vulnerability wherever we find ourselves, whatever our circumstances, with expectation, anticipation, longing and with the hope that God will come again and again into our lives as preparation for his final Coming again to put right all that is wrong in the world.

In this past year we have certainly experienced the waiting, hoping, longing associated with the season. It was in Advent last year that we moved from Hetton Hall; now 12 months later we are again in Advent and what a year it's been!

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We find these little snippets so encouraging:

This is just to make contact, and to say a big 'thank



you'. I have wandered through the world very much as described in the writings on your website, but never before have I found a place where my approach to the

Christian life seemed to coincide with that of a group of other people. Thank you so much for... giving me hope of belonging and sharing, perhaps even in person one day. It makes me feel stronger, somehow, to know that others are really trying to live out their lives in a similar way to me.

Ruth

I cannot remember an issue that has moved me as much as this one. It seemed that every article and even some of the announcements had a message for me.

Sarah

You are all so where you belong and leaving bits of bread along the way for each of us.

Pat & Carmel

Marg Hardcastle wrote to us:

I've just received a copy of the new Crucible course brochure for 2011-2012 and as it has the Northumbria Community logo on the front I thought it would be good to publicise through Caim, and through the Community website too!

Crucible features theological reflection and teaching on faith/church/mission in the urban setting (though not exclusively) - which is the reality, and the possibility, for a number of Community companions. The pdf can be downloaded here: <http://bit.ly/t0dleO>

Welcome to the Winter edition of Caim!

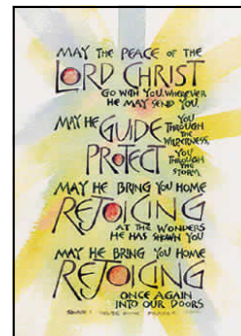
As I write this, the north of England is recovering from yesterday's storm-battering, and the north-easterly wind is biting. Yet the sky is blue and wide, the air is crystal clear, and there is something achingly beautiful about the winter season, which for me brings an opportunity to hunker down and re-group. Life's like that. It might not always be just as we would want it to be, all the time, but there are always good things to glean if we have eyes to find them.

This issue of Caim brings warm greetings to you at this Christmas season. May you find light in the world's darkness, and know the nearness of the Christ who comes... Enjoy! *Jeff & Ingrid*

Catherine Askew writes:

We now have the new Programme of Retreats

ready for 2012. You either have it already, or you'll receive it very soon! If you would like to access the list of retreats from our website, you simply click on 'What's on at Nether Springs'. I hope you will have a look through and see if any retreats seem to capture your interest or imagination.



This year, we're offering a mix of old and new. I like inviting Companions to teach and lead out of their passions and what God has been working in them. Some new retreats are The Emotional Life of Jesus, Releasing Your God Colours, and a Narnia retreat. We're also offering for the first time a retreat for Novices and another for Novice Mentors, as a way to support and learn from those in the Novitiate. What's more, we'll have one retreat just for men and one just for women.

Of course, we will also have retreats around the core teachings and influences for Community: Way of the Desert, Following in the Footsteps of the Celtic Saints, Re-Habiting the Church, Motivational Gifts, Contemplative Awareness, and back by popular demand, a Storytelling workshop and a Brendan retreat in which participants can build their own coracle.

Some evolving retreats are Leadership Schools with Roy Searle, Living in God's Plot, Simplicity and Hospitality.

We're continuing to offer at least one individually guided retreat per month, and, for something new, the one in December is a silent retreat. For those who want to explore further with the Community, a Community Introduction is held at least every two months.

We also have more retreats that simply provide space, as many people want to come and simply 'be' rather than participate in a particular led retreat. These retreats are called 'Be Still and Know'.

We're coming up to a full year at the new Mother House, and I continue to marvel at God's provision. It's been a delight to welcome people from all over the world and to be Community together at Nether Springs.

Catherine Askew

Pastor Wurmbrand said to a cellmate as he was led to solitary, "When you come back, tell us what you have learned."



Cont'd from pg1

This time last year we were engulfed in snow unable to move, the transition from Hetton to Acton was on hold, and in terms of the Mother House we were homeless. As with Advent, we lived and waited with promised hope. Now twelve months on we have relocated effectively, seen the emergence of three Other

Community Houses, undertaken a significant piece of work in reworking the Novitiate Process, as well as a comprehensive Admin Review. We've experienced a season of steady growth in people entering the Novitiate with new Companions and Friends journeying with the Community. We've also made huge steps in revamping the leadership network, seen the closure of our Trading Company, my own stepping back from full-time to a part-time overseeing role, the appointment of new staff and a greater missional expression of the Community's life. It has certainly been a year of significant development and growth in the life of the Community.

As we prepare to enter another year, where so much economically, politically, socially and culturally is changing and uncertain, we give thanks to God for the constancy of his love and faithfulness. What we will find in the New Year is this recurring pattern of living with anticipation and hope because we've heard and believed the promises of God to us; that we desire more than anything to see his purposes fulfilled in and through us as Companions in Community. Even in the context of challenge, unrest, chaos and much that is unknown on so many fronts, we can take heart in the words of Corrie Ten Boom, 'Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known God'. For as the old hymn put it – we don't know what the future holds but we know who holds the future – this is our Advent hope.

Trevor Miller



Sarah Berry recently wrote this after a visit to the Canterbury Retreat Center in Florida in preparation for the NC-USA retreat coming up during the week of Jan. 29 - Feb. 4, 2012:



I have just returned from a brief visit to Canterbury to make my own retreat and spend some time in this space imagining how our time in January could flow. I really do

not have adequate words to express the wonder and beauty of this property. Green and peaceful - magical and enchanting, comfortable and homey - warm and welcoming are just a few of the words that come to mind.

A busy road lies only yards away but is hidden from sight (and most of the noise is muffled) by a thick row of trees. Like the ebb and flow of the tides on Holy Island, a similar experience and rhythm happen at Canterbury when you move off and on the campus... so clearly reflecting 'monastery and mission' - a going out to engage the world and retreating to the quiet of the cell - both so necessary. The rooms are comfortable; the food excellent, and the main living room has a big fireplace for when the nights turn chilly. The chapel sits by the lake at the end of a delightful walk through a green bower. There are dozens of special places to be in solitude whether you prefer being out in the sun, or enclosed in a forest, or under a gazebo. The lake is a perfect gem in the midst of the property. No alligators, I am assured - but there is at least one very big turtle who will come visit if you sit still. There are canoes and kayaks, rocking chairs, a swing, an outdoor terrace with shaded tables and a wonderful path around the lake that invites you to wander at a slow pace, discovering special places to stop, observe and reflect.

We will begin the week slowly - with an emphasis on quiet and rest. Based on readings from the Sermon on the Mount, we will reflect on the three questions: Who is it that you seek? How then shall we live? How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? Wednesday seems like the logical day for a beach outing, although we will keep a watch on the weather and stay flexible. Thurs - Sat. morning we will delve more deeply into the Northumbria Rule of Availability and Vulnerability. Workshops on contemplative practices, storytelling, fun and games and plenty of time for solitude will round out the week.

We invite you to join us from near and far – there is still space. Please email usa@northumbriacommunity.org for more information. If you cannot join us, please pray for us! This is a new adventure for the NC in the USA. We have never held a weeklong retreat before and are hoping to fully lean into the monastic rhythm experienced at Nether Springs. We are also excited by this new relationship with Canterbury and a continuation of our friendship.

Sarah Berry

We asked Pete Askew to reflect on the year at the new Mother House:

Looking out of the window at green fields, it's hard to imagine that this time last year we had two feet of snow at Hetton Hall! As you might remember, the snow not only created some challenges around moving out of Hetton, it had also held up the building work at our new Mother House. We finally moved into Acton Home Farm on February 13th with the builders still finishing off.

To be honest, it feels as though we've been here for ages; it did from the beginning, but we're still making it 'ours', and everybody visiting for the first time is still adding to that sense of home. Hetton Hall still has a special place in our hearts, but as folk come through here they often comment that Acton feels new but familiar, I don't think we can ask for anything more - God has been good to us again.



It feels as though Nether Springs has been well used and very much appreciated this year. People find a peace here, and the sense of a land that has been prayed on long before we added our voice. The financial support people have given to the Mother House Fund, and through regular giving to the Community, has enabled the continuing provision of a place where people from all over the world and from all kinds of backgrounds, within the Community and outside it, can find some sense of Heart, Home, Hospitality and Hope. Given the challenging social and economic climate we all find ourselves in, it seems as important as ever that places like Nether Springs exist.

As this year has unfolded, like a flower coming into bloom, the building site has given way to something beautiful. The first stage was to get the buildings established as places of worship, work, study, solitude and community, pillars on which our Mother House stands, forming the rhythm of the day. We don't yet have a Chapel or Poustinia, these are yet to come; instead, the office is said in the living room. The house is being prayed in and that seems right. The en-suite

bedrooms are a real gift, and each now has a desk and chair providing space for solitude and study. We've also spent quite a bit of time sorting the library out; it's a



light, airy space with reference books specialising in spiritual formation, missional community, gospel and culture, and Celtic studies. The courtyard, which is encircled by the buildings (Caroline Ramsey suggested we call it a Caim instead of a courtyard, I think she might have something there) is a quiet, simple space. A suntrap on sunny afternoons – even in Northumberland!



This outdoor walkway links all of the rooms and provides a place of encounter as people move around our home. The last few months have seen the final stage of development before the winter. Large grass lawns, herb garden, and butterfly garden have been established, a communal family space that is quite different to the feel of the courtyard. Also in this space are now two lighted, heated and insulated 'garden rooms'; seating six and twelve, these rooms have provided much needed small group space that is already well used.

Rather than try to have everything done in the first year we've chosen to live with the house and its grounds and let their development emerge. One of the things that has become apparent is that we're not now certain that we'll



need a glass covering for the walkway around the courtyard; this comes as something of a relief as we don't have the money for one.



Sow Esther the pig

leaving the ground ready for creating a veg/fruit garden and some space for pondering creation. We'll also be looking to build a Chapel and Poustinia too, as well as developing and planting up the front garden. Not all of the plans for these things are finalised and we're grateful to those who have contributed already in various ways, and to those who have offered help in the new year.



environmental charity, to identify the various species of

When the winter has passed, and the spring is here, we'll be looking to work our way from the house and into the gardens. For the last six months we've had a small herd of Tamworth pigs doing a great job clearing out the old brambles and overgrown undergrowth in the walled garden. They'll all be gone by February,

In order to better understand the land that we're looking after and working on, we've formed a partnership with A Rocha, a Christian

flora and fauna there are around, and work out how to protect and develop their habitats. We're looking forward to developing this as it gives a clear connection to our area and the local community, and it's also linked to a Christian spirituality of creation and its maker voiced by the Celtic Saints of Northumberland.

These are just some of the things that have emerged over the last ten months and just some of our hopes for the future. They've raised interesting questions about sacred space in the ordinary and the everyday, and they've helped form community and called out creativity.

One of the most important things about moving our Mother House is that it has called us afresh to ask the questions that have guided our Community from the beginning: Who is it that we seek? How then shall we live? How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? The same questions that all of us are called to ask as we try to figure out our Rule of Life, wherever we are. What does availability and vulnerability mean in our neighbourhoods? What is God calling us to for this season of our Community's life? Henri Nouwen writes, "It is Advent again, be alert, be alert, so that you will be able to recognise your Lord in your husband, your wife, your parents, your children, your friends, your teachers, and all that you read in the daily papers. The Lord is coming, always coming. Be alert to his coming. When you have ears to hear and eyes to see, you will recognise him at any moment of your life. Life is Advent; life is recognising the coming of the Lord." This is the call to our Community, to seek God and to name his presence in the places that we live and in the people that we meet, this is the prayer of contemplative awareness, a prayer that leads to a new season and new life. *Pete Askew*

Pastures new for Norm and Ingrid



After nine years serving at our Mother House, Norman and Ingrid Cumming have decided that it's time to move on. This comes after a good period of discernment with the Baptist Union and with the Community and, although we'll miss them terribly, God clearly has a purpose for them in another place. Starting in January, Norm has taken

up a twelve-month transitional ministry with West Craven Baptist Fellowship on the Lancashire/Yorkshire border. We're sure that they'll be a great blessing to the people there, as they have been to us - and to many who have stayed at Nether Springs.

Norm and Ingrid, on behalf of the Community - thank you for all you've given over the last nine years... if only you were arriving instead of leaving... we pray God's blessing upon you in your new home, and look forward to the continuing journey with you in Community.

Don't miss the compelling series of Advent Podcasts presented by Roy Searle and one or two other Companions, which are being released on our website across the Sundays of this Advent season.

Don't worry if you've missed an edition - all the 'back issues' are there for you! Available via the article on our homepage, or from this link:<http://www.northumbriacommunity.org/audio-a-video/447-advent-reflections-4>

Martin & Bekah Neil sent us this beautiful and moving story of hope and redemption:

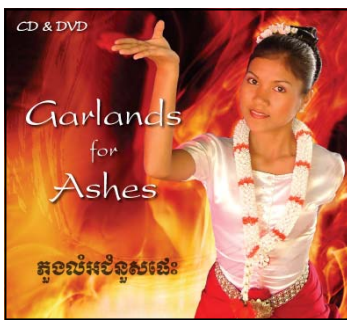
**“ giving them a garland instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.
So they will be called oaks of righteousness,
the planting of the LORD that He may be glorified.”**



On the 21st November 2011 in a small courtroom near the capital of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, people gathered to try and come to terms with the atrocious events of the 1970s. During a short four year period the Khmer Rouge, led by their leader Pol Pot, were responsible for one of the worst mass killings of the 20th Century.

Describing the regime as an ‘assault on the humanity of the Cambodian people’ Chea Leng, a co-prosecuter in the trials, told of how cities were emptied leaving roads littered with the bodies of those who had been executed or had died through hunger and disease. Many other horrific stories were told, including that of a campaign of forced marriage "in which the fundamental human emotion of love was removed".

During these devastating years of dictatorship, the beautiful traditions of Cambodia’s artistic community were systematically silenced. In the people’s struggle to survive starvation and brutality in the killing fields, their suppressed creative story lay dormant.



As the trials began in Cambodia, here in England a new project was being released. “Garlands for Ashes” tells the story of a community of children in Phnom Penh rescued from unimaginable situations, who are nurtured back to life, given hope and an artistic voice. Recorded in

Phnom Penh and the Mekong delta this package of CD and DVD tells the amazing story of Cambodian Christian Arts Ministry School.

CCAMS was started by Noren Vann Kim, (a survivor of the Pol Pot Regime), whose husband and three children died during the genocide, and an American lady Gioia Michelotti. Former street kids, gang members, orphans, and children being abused in slavery and prostitution are rescued into a loving home, then fed, sheltered and educated. Alongside the regular schooling the CCAMS family has an emphasis on the arts (music, dance, drama, visual art, and literature). Some of the first people who were taken, tortured and murdered were the creative people who

carried the story and the heartbeat of the land. Even instruments were destroyed during this time and ultimately an estimated 1.7 million deaths resulted from Khmer Rouge policies. By teaching the children at CCAMS the arts, they not only give the children incredible skills and a means to express their emotions, they are also restoring something that was stolen from the nation - and putting God at the centre of it.



We first met Gioia Michelotti in 2006 during a trip to connect with musicians from Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand. We were very encouraged to find CCAMS actively restoring the Khmer art forms. Not only that, but we discovered that they were also training Cambodian Christians to express the Christian message through those traditional styles. On the day we visited, the children were just preparing to depart for a performance, so our visit was cut short. However, we asked to be kept up to date with newsletters.



Over the next couple of years, we enjoyed the stories of CCAM through the newsletters. Interestingly, it was a side story that especially grabbed our attention. One of the children Buntheep was found to have a large brain tumour and was taken to the States to seek treatment. This became an amazing story of faith and courage with very little funds and ended with a miraculous return to health after complicated surgery. We were very moved by Gioia’s faithfulness to leave the many to look after the one and decided to write to CCAM to see if there was anything that we could do to help.

Gioia’s reply seemed to be a divine opening. She wondered if we knew anyone who could help with their dream of recording their music and filming their dances. Little did Gioia know that we run a charity called Voices from the Nations, which seeks to promote and encourage indigenous cultural music, arts, and traditional storytelling.

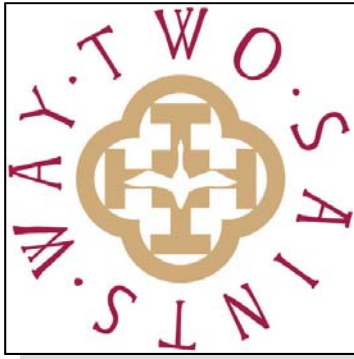


This CD and DVD will take you to the very heart of the Cambodian Christian Arts community so that you can experience in video and pictures, sounds, songs and dances, the

Khmer people of Cambodia. 100% of the money raised will go out to help build a home, school and performing arts centre for the children of CCAMS. Order your copy now from www.voicesfromthenations.org *Martin & Bekah Neil*

David Pott wrote, by way of

INTRODUCING THE TWO SAINTS WAY PROJECT



When Pam and I first came to live in Stone in 2007, I was particularly intrigued by Stone's foundational story about the pagan Wulphere, King of Mercia killing his two sons, Wulfad and Rufin, (c.660AD) who had come to faith through St Chad. A cairn of stones was

erected where the two boys were buried which is how Stone got its name. I then discovered that Stone became a place of pilgrimage between Chester and Lichfield. The south eastern gate in Chester which is now called New Gate was at one time called Wulfad's Gate which suggests that Stone was the next pilgrim target before they moved on to St Chad's shrine at Lichfield and then maybe onwards to Canterbury or even to Rome or Jerusalem!

I discovered that around Stone there were some other sites connected with characters from the legend and so the idea of some sort of story trail emerged. I met with a medieval historian and he was the first to suggest that I should consider reviving the old pilgrimage route. I began to share the idea with various people including people in tourism and at both cathedrals and they thought it was quite a good idea, but then something happened which made it seem like a very good idea!

In March 2009, we received a very surprising email. We had been giving a monthly contribution to a girl who was on a discipleship training school in the USA. She had been praying for us and this is what she came up with...

"I saw you both with metal detectors and you were digging up and finding various treasures and riches (it was just like the program Time Team!) You have an invitation to come and dig up treasures and inheritances that have been destined for you from the beginning of time. Some treasures are hidden deeper in the ground than others. You will have wisdom and discernment on when and how to dig these up and go deeper into the unknown. History is significant for you in some way..."

What is interesting about this is that she has never met us and knew absolutely nothing about my interest in the early history of Mercia! And of course she knew nothing about the Staffordshire Hoard because it was not discovered



until four months later! That event meant that Mercian history - which was already the focus of my research - suddenly came to the surface of the tourism agenda. The Hoard was dated at exactly the same period as the legend of Wulfad and Rufin.

So now representatives of various organisations including both cathedrals, the tourist boards, British Waterways and Staffordshire University have come together to form a steering group to see the project through from vision to reality. And of course I am delighted that Northumbria Community is in the partnership too! Marg Hardcastle is another valued member of the steering group. Eventually the name 'Two Saints Way' was settled on and the logo (left) incorporates St Chad's cross (Lichfield) and the goose which is a symbol of St Werburgh (Chester).

As the project has developed, a number of particular features are emerging. We want it to be a new walking route which will break the mould and will attract many (especially younger people) who have not been on a long distance walking route before as well as seasoned walkers. Here are some things that will make it special...



Pilgrimage – journeying forward to the ancient future.

In the last twenty years or so there has been a revival of interest in the idea and practice of pilgrimage. In the UK new and revived pilgrimage routes, such as St Cuthbert's Way and St Oswald's Way, have been established and are proving popular as well as benefiting the local economy. The Two Saints Way ties in with the new mood of enthusiasm for the active spirituality of pilgrimage and will set the modern pilgrim on a contemporary quest for ancient wisdom.

Discovering our Mercian Heritage.

This pilgrimage route will enable walkers to visit the Staffordshire Hoard collection at the Potteries Museum in Stoke and Lichfield is very close to where the hoard was found. There are other places where we will highlight the Mercian and Anglo Saxon heritage of the region including the Saxon preaching crosses at Stoke Minster and St Mary's Trentham.

Pilgrimage for Wholeness and Healing in Body, Mind and Soul.

A major motivation for medieval pilgrims was the idea of going on pilgrimage to seek healing in body, mind and soul. This project will seek to recover that emphasis in a contemporary way and will encourage modern pilgrims to walk with an intentionality about seeking to become healthy in body, mind and soul. The project will identify strongly with widespread concerns about health in our society today and is linking with the NHS Change4Life initiative.

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Cracking the QR Code!

The normal way that people follow a long distance walking route is by using a guide book and maps and looking out for the waymarks. We will provide those, but we will also introduce some special high tech innovations. This will mean that it will be possible to follow the route with a mobile phone through the use of QR (Quick Response) codes. The codes will be discreetly positioned on finger posts and interpretation panels and they will give the walker all the information he or she needs to navigate the route successfully.

Reviving some whacky customs!

Pilgrims in medieval times did some pretty strange things and we think we should allow people to do those things today if they find them meaningful. For example:

- pilgrims used to mark their forearms with a cross, today it can be a transfer
- pilgrims used to bring stones to Stone to symbolise laying down burdens
- at Lichfield Cathedral, by prior arrangement, it will be possible to have your feet washed!

The Pilgrim's Pass

The Pilgrim's Pass will provide the pilgrim with various items like the St Chad's Cross transfer and reduced price access to some of the sites along the way. We even hope that pubs will provide you with a free Pilgrim's Pint when you stop for a bite to eat!

Pilgrimages for schools and colleges

The Two Saints Way will be an ideal resource for schools and colleges, providing a pilgrimage experience which will enable young learners to enter more fully into the medieval mindset as well as understanding how pilgrimage can still be relevant today.

Pilgrimage for Special Groups

In Belgium a project called Oikoten has successfully organised pilgrimages for young offenders as an alternative to a prison sentence. We are exploring this as well as the possibility of providing special pilgrimage opportunities for particular groups such as those recovering from mental illness or those undergoing rehabilitation for drug and alcohol dependency.

A Real Slice of England

The Two Saints Way does not give the visitor an idealised portrait of England. It certainly includes tourist attractions but there are also parts that are off the tourist track including some urban areas which will provide opportunities for regeneration and environmental improvements.



A final thought of relevance for the Northumbria

Community: some have said that the Staffordshire Hoard is possibly Northumbrian in origin. The historian Michael Wood says it may have been part of a payment made by King Oswald to King Penda of Mercia. Discovering our Northumbrian heritage in Mercia? Come and join us folks!

We have many challenges ahead as we seek to set up the Two Saints Way and of course one of those is funding. I believe that one of the keys for getting the job done is through what some have called 'relational economics'. To give two examples, I had a good time talking with some councillors from Nantwich last November. It was pretty informal. I never asked for money but they have promised £1,000 for signage in the town. Back in the summer, I raised £1,315 for the Two Saints Way through my walking the route in two days; obviously I have some sort of relationship with those who gave. I believe that the long-term sustainability of the Two Saints Way is very much about relationships.

In October we launched a new funding concept encouraging individuals and organisations to adopt a mile of the Two Saints Way (check the website for further details www.twosaints.org.uk) We plan to open the route and have it fully waymarked in the summer of 2012, but it is possible to walk the route already. If you would like a copy of the draft guide or regular updates about the Two Saints Way, please contact me.

David Pott dlpott@twosaints.org.uk

Community Sailing Adventure around the Hebridean Islands of Scotland

Saturday 27th May to Friday 1st June 2012

An opportunity to go sailing in 2012 with Roy Searle and Companions and Friends of the Northumbria Community on Seventh Wave, a 49ft luxury ocean-going yacht. The cost will be £495 per person, which includes food, accommodation and hire of wet weather gear. The boat will sail from Croabh Marina, south of Oban, around the Inner Hebrides. A £75 deposit will be required to secure a place. For further details and information, please email Jean:

jean.watson@northumbriacommunity.org



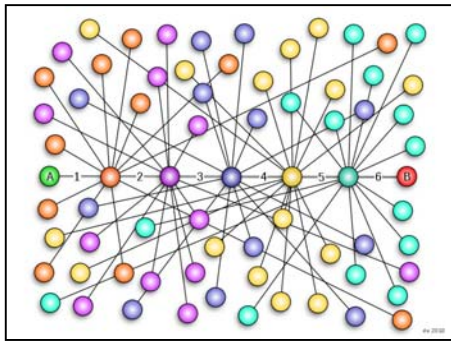
Here's some exciting news about

Easter Workshop: An On-going Conversation, some key questions

In the last edition of Caim, Roy Searle spoke about our need as an expanding, dispersed global Community to consider two key questions:

- how we can better express and develop our 'togetherness', in living out our common calling, and
- how can we better explore and reflect together upon the vision and ethos of our Community, and its core values and principles?

The Easter Workshop gatherings have always been important annual events in the life of the Community. At these 'schools of creativity', we have been able to express our togetherness and to listen to and learn from each other. The Community's expansion across continents presents us with both amazing opportunities and challenges. How do we learn from and listen to each other across cultures and miles? How do we provide a means to hear all the voices? How do we express both the privilege and responsibility of



being in Community together? What does availability and intentional vulnerability look like at a whole Community level?

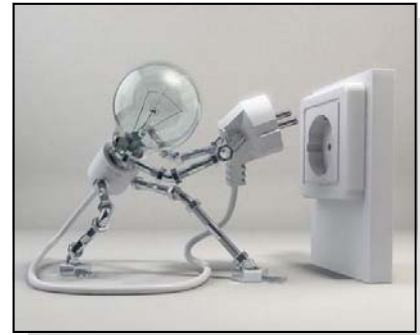
An annual cycle

It seems that we need a process for feeding back our stories, reflections and questions from wherever we are located or gathered, so that we can discern what God is saying to us as a whole Community, and so that we can encourage one another in living out our calling where we are. Roy wrote about taking a year to explore a particular theme rather than packing everything into a few days. To this end, a small group of us have been working together to consider what such an annual cycle of exploration and reflection might look like.

As a first step, we have drawn up a model based on the Liturgical Year. We considered how some of our existing liturgies, in particular those in the 'Follow the example' section of Celtic Daily Prayer, can both provide 'waymarks' to guide our journey through the year, and a stimulus for exploration, reflection and action concerning particular values and principles.

Easter Day would mark the start of this annual cycle with the Easter Gatherings playing a central role in reflecting back on the particular theme explored throughout the year. Stories and reflections would then be collated by an assigned group of Companions. This group would be

different each year and would liaise with the overseers. The key priorities and messages identified would be communicated back to the Community at large, and would inform how we respond to what God is saying to us individually and corporately. Throughout the year, there will be on-going conversations at local and regional levels, and on the Forum, perhaps further Gatherings, to help shape and deepen our thinking and inform our action.



Rather than providing a set format for the Easter Gatherings, it is envisaged that locally devised programmes would be developed that are appropriate to context and length of time available. However, as an expression of our togetherness we would all share a common liturgy for the renewal of our vows, and give time to exploring and reflecting upon a common theme.

When do we start?

This year's theme, as Roy mentioned, will consider what it means to be "Together" as a diverse and dispersed Community. During Lent 2012, we will start to explore what this means. To facilitate this, resources of suggested activities will be made available. The various Easter Gatherings 2012 will provide creative environments in which we can further explore our theme, and share our ideas for shaping the process by which we remain in conversation. Throughout the rest of 2012 and early 2013 we will gather our stories, reflections and experiences, with Lent 2013 providing a focus for considering what God has been saying to us throughout the year. As we gather again at Easter 2013 to renew vows and share our thoughts and stories, we begin the cycle again. And so our conversation continues.

What can you bring to the table?

We offer this first step to you and hope it will be the beginning of an on-going conversation. Our desire is that it is organic not static, that it is sustainable and genuinely useful. The process will no doubt need further shaping and refining. We would welcome some initial feedback once people have had time to digest it and discuss it at Easter and other Gatherings. We hope to make available a presentation with notes to facilitate further discussion. The primary concern is to develop a



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process that facilitates an on-going conversation, and to address the questions posed earlier in this article. It is intended as a framework not a strait jacket! How it develops will depend on everyone joining in the conversation.

A final thought. A helpful image for us as we embarked on this task, and considered how we speak of ourselves as a diverse, dispersed Community, was that of a banquet table around which we all sit. The term 'Companion' means 'with bread', someone we eat with. As a Community, we all have the privilege of receiving nourishment from the contributions of others along with the responsibility of bringing something to the table!

Let's feast together!

Anita Haigh, Keith Judson, and Sarah Pillar



Norma Wise: Provincial with responsibility for the Community Prayer Team:

I was asked to 'describe myself and how I see my task':

I stand in the gap to receive and pass on to the team, keeping notes for future reference – a prayer diary, and holding many people in my heart before God. My prayer life changed dramatically when I learned the principles involved in praying as Listening to God through the Joy Dawson/ Lydia way of intercession. For more than 30 years I have been called to pray for others, both within Community and in the wider world, particularly for Malawi for the last 14 years. I have lived in Newton Aycliffe, Co. Durham for 62 years, where John Skinner, one of the founders of NC, was our curate and taught us lots of things that we still share with others. Also in Newton Aycliffe are my two daughters and four dear grandchildren. Sadly, during a period of two and a half years I lost six very close relatives, most recently Ken my husband of 46 years. Recently I've felt God like a magnet, pulling me deeper into more intercession. I hope also my ongoing love for the Community will allow me to spend more time helping out at Nether Springs.

The Beginning of prayer for...

Our Community was birthed and undergirded with prayer by many. For example, for over 12 years three of us spent many hours every Wednesday in intercession. During this time God led us by His Spirit to pray for many different situations and needs. Even before we knew what God was calling us into God showed us what to pray for and how. Later, after we had become established as a Community, there were many practical things to pray for and time was spent listening for God's will.

This is the reason why every Wednesday in our prayer guide there is 'an intentional day of prayer for the life and work of the Northumbria Community'. This is not to say that we can't pray whenever we want to for the life and work of NC; please feel free...

Why do we have a prayer team?

I realise that every Christian prays, but our Community has now grown so large that we no longer know everyone.

When there is a need, it is helpful and comforting to know that 'the family in Community' is holding you and your loved ones before God in prayer. This is when the prayer team becomes involved.

Who do we pray for?

When someone sends me a message with a prayer request we pray for them. I send emails to the thirty plus pray-ers. Through their great love for others these dear ones, having received one or two requests a day, sometimes more, set aside their time to pray.

How do we pray?

'As we can, not as we can't'. I realise that not everyone has hours to give, but there are many ways to pray. In our Community there are some who meet regularly to share Principles of Intercession taken from the teaching of Joy Dawson, and in so doing, continue a practice used since the earliest days of NC with its emphasis on intercession as prophetic listening and healing prayer. However for most of us it is simply praying for others and doing so in very ordinary ways: placing their names in a prominent place, keeping a prayer diary or in any other way that helps us to pray for them.

What do we pray for?

Usually there is an explanation on the email, but for those who have time it is best to wait on the Lord, who may show what is actually needed. This may differ from what has been requested. He always knows best. It is a beautiful privilege to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ. Some situations may need only to be prayed for once, while others need ongoing prayer. It is really encouraging when the person who has requested the prayer keeps us updated. When called to pray over a long period for someone, it is also helpful to receive feedback from the prayer team, which, when taken as separate pieces may seem meaningless, but if they can be put together may give a more accurate way forward.

If you would like to join the team or know more about it, feel free to get in touch with me either by email norma.wise@northumbriacommunity.org or through the office.

Andy Raine continues to give the background to our Daily Meditations:

Day 2 Meditation

Somewhere in the States - at a flea-market, yard-sale or much-loved second-hand bookshop in New England - I picked up a white spiral-bound delight published in 1975 by Printery House, Conception Abbey, Missouri. It was called, 'Life Is A Full Circle'. The words were handscrawled in capitals or joined-up writing, the pictures were photographs, drawings or stencils but all in imaginative designs and psychedelic colours. I loved some of the pages so much that I tore out the others.



What remained became a book to lie open in my prayer-corner, a focus for meditating on words from Gabriel Marcel or Erich Fromm, Anais Nin, various scriptures or more importantly quotes from Anne Morrow Lindbergh, Paul Brunton and Alan P Tory. This was the sourcebook that brought me the meditations for Day 1 and 2 each month, and the reading for January 1st. Another wise merchant had gathered treasures old and new, so I in turn could pass on the ones I chose to treasure, kept safely in my storehouse, and ready to be shared. (That quote by Alan P Tory was from 'Wonder: Learning the "Ah!" of Things'.)

When I had not long returned to the Island and was living at Starbank Cottage I framed a grey photocopy of that scribbled meditation, 'There is a contemplative in all of us...' Ervin Dorschler visited the cottage with Dave Reynolds, as soon as Ervin saw those words he was shaken and had to sit down, experience the Now, unable to continue as before, while Dave was asking did the scripture, 'Ask for the old paths' mean something as he couldn't get that out of his head!



The Carmelite vow was contributed by John and Linda Skinner. It reminds us of early days when visiting convents, contact with monasteries, hermitages and the friary seemed to bring peace and sanity, connecting to silence, the calling of the bell to a rhythm of prayer, the sense that this was to be inextricably linked to our future. Activity needed to spring out of prayer, journeying and creativity out of listening, wisdom out of silence. *Andy Raine*

Northumbrian Week in Prague, Czech Republic Sunday 18th to Friday 23rd March 2012

Come and join us in Prague! A great opportunity to join Roy Searle, (Northumberland), Ken Humphrey (Northern Ireland), Bill & Sue Hockey (USA) and Shawna Snow-Wilbrink (Netherlands) who are leading a week of seminars, workshops and lectures at the International Baptist Theological Seminary.



Take the opportunity to meet some remarkable young students from Eastern Europe and beyond, enjoy the friendships with the staff and help to deepen the partnership that we enjoy with IBTS. Each day is built around the rhythm of our Daily offices and there will be plenty of opportunities to visit the beautiful and historic city of Prague and enjoy the wonderful setting of the seminary in Sarka Valley.

The week's teaching programme runs from Monday 19th to Thursday 22nd but if you would like to join us and arrive on Saturday 17th then you would be part of the Sarka Valley Church and have the opportunity of going down into the city with the student team that works with the homeless on Sunday evening.

Costs, inclusive of accommodation in shared en suite rooms, breakfast, lunch and workshops:

Accommodation, breakfast and lunch:

Saturday to Friday – £225

Sunday to Friday - £190

Evening meals are either taken at the Jeneralka pub across the road, (good food and reasonably priced) or down in the city centre, which is easily accessible by public transport.

Places are limited so please let us know ASAP if you are interested and we will liaise and book your accommodation with IBTS. Contact the Community Office 01670 787645 or email: jean.watson@northumbriacommunity.org It is possible to get reasonably priced flights to Prague if booked well in advance from most places in the world. As someone who has been part of these weeks in previous years, I can thoroughly recommend them and have always had a great and memorable time. *Jean Watson*

The newsy bit



New companions



Helen Rengert and Lynda Kennedy were both welcomed into Companionship on the 22nd October at a gathering in Norfolk. Here they are pictured with Jane Perkins, their Novice Mentor.

Here we are at Christmas - but it will soon be Easter! **Pam Pott** has done some videos as part of the Easter resources for 'Hope Together' - tellings from each of the four gospels - they can be found at http://www.hopetogether.org.uk/Groups/153275/HOPE_Together/EasterVideo/EasterVideo.aspx under 'Other Videos about the Easter Story'.

The **team at Nether Springs** has recently been joined by **Charlotte Lobb** (in the office), **Fran Race** and **Becks Davis**.

Jane & Andrew Perkins wrote from the Community's house in France:



2011 has been a year of fruitfulness in every way. Our family circumstances have moved closer to our being able to spend much more time at Suvigny, and there has been a deepening of relationships, both in

France with the local community, and with the Northumbria Community.

For next year's programme, please see our website: www.northumbriacommunityinfrance.net

Jane and Andrew Perkins

Gatherings

Lee Johnson sent us news of the Lancashire Gathering:

The Community gathering at Yealand (near Carnforth) on the 19th November again drew attendance from a wide area. Folk came from Carlisle, Staffordshire, Sedbergh, Manchester, Southport – with Julie and myself travelling up from Bolton.



St John's Church, Yealand, was cosy and inviting and the tables fairly groaned with the assembled 'goodies' as we enjoyed lunch together. Di Smith had made a variety of lovely hot, tasty soups, so we were well fortified for an afternoon session, led by Vince, exploring 'the heretical imperative'. We even managed to incorporate craft activities before joining in evening prayer. Vince and Michael led us in worship in the atmospheric setting of the chancel, as the darkness gathered outside. Having 'live' music is such a help and a blessing.

Do join us if you can for our next Lancashire gathering on Saturday, 18th February 2012 – this time in the nearby village hall in Yealand. We start with the mid-day office and then all enjoy lunch together. As you can see, we gather people from far and wide! Di Smith (tel. 01524 782341 or dianesmith1@mac.com) will gladly give you more details.

A date for your diary: a gathering in Scotland is being planned for 17th November 2012 in Linlithgow. More details in the next issue of Caim!

Prayer Guide

For those who are compiling our Community Prayer Guide, it is really helpful to have requests and suggestions for prayer - for people, places and initiatives that are connected with the Community. Please send them to the Office and we will try to include them in the next edition, or email them to prayerguide@northumbriacommunity.org

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