



CAIM

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

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

Roy Searle brings us a Christmas reflection:

Dark Nights that take us into the Light

I'm not suggesting it as a last-minute stocking filler, or an idea for any book club that you might attend, but 'The Dark Night of the Soul' is a classic.



It was written by St John of the Cross, a Carmelite monk, who was persuaded by Teresa of Avila to join the Reform movement within the church and monastic communities - an action which was to bring him misunderstanding, opposition and imprisonment. Paradoxically it was in his dark cell that he came to such a deep awareness and appreciation of the light of God, something he described in his poetry. He profoundly and beautifully conveys the experience that is at the heart of faith: the cross leading to resurrection, pain to joy, agony to ecstasy, abandonment to intimacy, renunciation to discovery, darkness to light. His work is by no means 'easy reading' but for anyone who has experienced anything akin to feelings of abandonment and despair, his writing can become a treasured and valued companion.

Reading some of his poetry, I was amazed to discover some of his descriptions of Christmas joy. I would not have imagined him to be the life and soul of any party or the bringer of much cheer! However, the way in which his poetry, often referred to as simply 'the Romances' conveys the story of the world from its beginning to the first Christmas, from God's point of view, is breathtakingly beautiful; full of love, lavished with joy and laced with peace.

As someone who longed to see the simplification of the monastic life and the renewal of the church, his writings dwell much on the spiritual disciplines. In these challenging and opportune days - when all kinds of initiatives, programmes, strategies and fresh expressions are being explored - it is salutary to remind ourselves that true renewal of the heart will come only through a genuine and deep seeking of God, which cannot bypass the spiritual disciplines.

As I reflected upon the writings and poetry of St John of the Cross I found myself making the connection between the story he tells of the purification of the inner life - from idolatry, fantasy, self indulgence, shallow faith and easy answers - and the ability to see and celebrate that first Christmas as an event of cosmic significance.

It's when we 'pay attention to our heart', when we embrace the challenge and the invitation to seek God which is at the heart of our Community's vocation, that we enter into a way for living that not only exposes us to the love and mercy of God, but also to an encounter with our true selves which by God's grace becomes the arena of transformation and growth in Christlikeness.

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We are very blessed by the work that Anita Haigh has done in recent years, writing and compiling Community resources, published for Easter but used throughout the year. We received very positive comments from folk who use these resources. They really are useful: thought-provoking, challenging, reflective and devotional. Make sure you get hold of them from the website, and re-visit them often.

Anita is currently working on next year's 'Journeying with Caedmon' resources:

Journeying with Caedmon – at Easter and beyond

For the past two years at Easter, we have been using some of our liturgies to explore our core values as a Community. These resources are primarily intended to encourage conversations within the Community so that, alone and together, we may hold true to our calling.

So far in our 'Follow the Example' series, we have journeyed with the Hild and Brendan liturgies. This coming Easter, the Caedmon liturgy will provide our focus for reflection and discussion, and to stimulate our creativity.



Do you have any stories, poems, artwork, reflections or questions to help us explore the Caedmon liturgy? If you have any creative thoughts and ideas to share, I would love to hear from you. Please send any contributions *by 24th January 2014* to: anita.haigh@northumbriacommunity.org

May I encourage us all to consider what we could offer, and not to assume someone else will do it! I look forward to hearing from you!

Welcome to the Winter edition of Caim!

Although I can see the Cheviots snow-capped from my window, down here at sea-level the winter chill is yet to arrive. Yet here we are almost at the end of another year... so this edition comes to you with warm greetings and best wishes, and in the hope that you will know the nearness of the Christ who comes to us, in this Christmas season.

Enjoy this issue of Caim.

Jeff & Ingrid

We asked Rachel Moore about her journey to Nether Springs.

Being tentatively involved with the Northumbria Community for just a few months, but not even yet a Friend... how did I end up working on the House Team during April in 2013?

Well, a number of conspiring things brought it about!



I was looking for a new job, as my current one was very insecure, and I continued to apply for similar jobs (project work) in similar set-ups (inner city community work) and was getting precisely nowhere. "I'm just dreaming of working in a retreat centre or something" I complained to a friend "and serving tea and maybe doing art stuff but I know it's just a pipe dream..." "Cast the net a bit wider!" she suggested.

Two weeks later I found myself at the Red Tent retreat booked many months earlier. I thought how much fun it looked working in the kitchen...hmm, maybe I could do that, I reasoned. I spoke to Pete Askew about it - sorted! My job ended as predicted and I had a contented month of sharing in leading prayers, cooking, housework and laundry, baking cakes, offering hospitality and yes, making tea and doing art stuff!

One of the lovely things about working on the house team is that there are no contracts or job descriptions. You bring yourself and your gifts to share. Everyone is different and has something to offer. Nether Springs is a mix of people from different backgrounds, churches, ages, walks of life, which feels stimulating and healthy as meals and conversations are shared, with a lot of laughter. Being a bit of an introvert, I appreciated as well having time and space alone and instead of worrying about my future direction I felt rooted and absorbed enough to enjoy the present, and the variety of experiences around me. I would recommend it as an enriching experience, and would love to come back and serve again sometime in the not too distant future.

Rachel Moore

Judith Goodfellow told us about a recent trip to 'CRE':

I made a brief visit last month to the Christian Resources Exhibition in Edinburgh. With everything on offer from heating systems to Holy Socks, it proved to be an excellent opportunity to expand my understanding of the term



'resources' but also a chance to talk to some interesting people with refreshing ideas about how to help others bridge the gap between contemporary culture and the Christian faith.

Some of you may already have come across Damaris Trust but for those that have not I would recommend spending a few minutes checking out their website. Damaris Trust is an educational charity that works in partnership with the film industry to create community resources that accompany the latest feature films. Each resource pack includes selected clips from a recent film plus a booklet of discussion questions based on those clips, along with other material such as quizzes and even themed recipes to help a group put together an event.

The booklet and film clips can be downloaded from the Damaris Trust website or you can order a hard copy to be posted out to you. The resource pack is free but you would need to get hold of your own copy of the film in order to watch the whole thing. You may not want to use their ideas wholesale but if you are interested in using film as a way of exploring the journey of faith in today's world, but daunted by the prospect of creating your own resources, this may be a way of making a start.

Their web address is www.damaris.org where you can register to download materials. You will also find more specific areas of the website for schools and churches and, via their Culturewatch pages, you can gain access to a wide range of articles about contemporary culture including novels, TV programmes and music.

Damaris Trust describes itself as 'non-denominational and non-sectarian', their organisation as 'centered rather than bounded' and the basis of their faith as 'a flagpole rather than a fence'. Their statement of belief and a description of their approach to their ministry can be accessed through their website for those who want to check them out further. See www.damaris.org/cm/damaris/beliefs

Judith Goodfellow

Cont'd from Pg 1

The fruit of such contemplation brings wisdom, and the ability to see beyond the surface, beyond that which is artificial and superficial. This surely helps us to journey through Advent with awareness and discernment, enabling us to resist being captured by the consumerism of Christmas: commercialisation which preys upon the desire for self indulgence; a culture of 'accumulation' which feeds compulsions, obsessions and addictions; and the folly of materialism which damages the human spirit.

It also opens our eyes and our hearts to the deep truths of the Christmas story, of a God who enters into the pain and suffering of our humanity, who identifies with the broken and bruised, the weak, vulnerable, marginalised and poor.

His writings encourage us to move beyond settling for anything less than the real thing, or confusing that which God truly wants to bestow upon us with whatever makes us feel good.

It connects us with the heart and mission of God to be good news to the poor, to protect the vulnerable, welcome the stranger and care for the refugee.



John of the Cross is a ruthless analyst of the ways in which we prevent ourselves from opening up to the true joy that God wants to give. His writings encourage us to move beyond settling for anything less than the real thing, or confusing that which God truly wants to bestow upon us with whatever makes us feel good.

To enter into the depths of the bigger God-story behind the familiar story of Christmas, is to take us into the realms of profound love, everlasting peace and unending joy.

As Richard Foster writes in the preface to his *Celebration of Discipline*: 'Superficiality is the curse of our age ... the greatest need today is ... for deep people.'

God grant that we may journey through this Advent season, Christmas, and on into the New Year, as people who journey deeply - with hearts open, receptive and welcoming to the transforming love, peace and joy that flows from the heart of God to his world.

Roy Searle

Community Sailing Adventure around the Hebridean Islands of Scotland

Sunday 18 to Friday 23 May 2014

Come and join Roy Searle and Companions and Friends of the Northumbria Community sailing around the Inner Hebrides, from Croabh Marina, south of Oban. The cost will be £525 per person and will include food and accommodation. A £75 deposit will be required to secure a place. For further details and information, please email Jean - jean.watson@northumbriacommunity.org



The Yorkshire Gathering on 12 October was an opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones. To share our stories, to listen to each other, to share food and laughter.

The thoughtful planning was revealed through leadership, liturgy, the welcoming of a Companion, sacred space, and workshops with the chance to try dance, felt-making, story-telling or simply to sit and watch the DVD of the saints in Europe.

In the morning, someone from each local group was asked to share how they became involved with their group and what it means to them. A few extracts:

- The Community is your support and your friend - Andrea
- Our group has family friendly stuff; the recent trip to Whitby included the story of Hild told with puppets. There is continuity and change, the building of deep and meaningful relationships - Andrew
- A place to say how you feel without oughts and shoulds - Jenny
- There is a building of trust, a place to share - Jean

Jackie Ellis from the Bradford Group shared her story: "My involvement with the Northumbria Community is relatively recent. In 2010 my work, church and family commitments all changed considerably and it seemed good to take time out and seek God. I went to Hetton Hall on a four day individually guided retreat and that was my first contact with the Community.

It was a significant time and a new beginning. I am so thankful for the gentle and perceptive guidance I received and for the opportunity to reflect. I started using the daily prayers and returned a year later for a weekend at Acton

in September 2011. That's when I found out that there were local groups. I was fortunate to have two groups in my area and for a while I went to both, but have settled at the Bradford group as the meeting time suits me best.

What does the group mean to me? Good company - they are a friendly welcoming group and it feels good to be there. Good food - we always share something delicious. Worship - we say Compline or Evening Prayer or one of the liturgies. Variety - we've had a Caedmon Evening, done Art and Craft, looked at the Rule, discussed what it means to be hospitable, spent time in intercession and had a Quiet Day.

Another thing about the group, something which for me is quite novel - I look forward to going. This is after years of turning up to church meetings out of duty not from choice. I enjoy being with people who are getting on with their lives while working out what it means to be available and vulnerable.

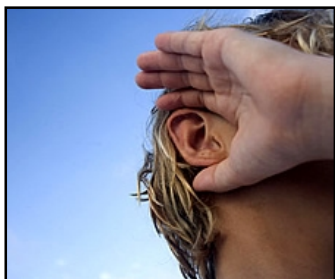
Availability and vulnerability. I love the simplicity of that. And yet it is so complex. Working out what it means is not easy but sharing with others, and seeing how they do it, is such an encouragement."



When we received this interesting and provocative piece from Paul Moore, we knew immediately that we wanted it in Caim! He poses a question for our time:

Where are the Prophetic Voices? Should we Stand with Brand - or Choose and Lose!

I'm strangely attracted to people who speak of God, most especially when it is in a positive way and in connection with what they believe to be truth and the



solution to the world's ills. And so it was that I came across the interview Russell Brand had with Jeremy Paxman - which in turn led me to Brand's previous interview with the American talk show host and libertarian Alex Jones.

So - what are we to make of the comedian Russell Brand?

Some have had difficulty deciding whether he is a 'fatuous buffoon or a misunderstood genius'. His language is certainly colourful - not the sort of thing you would want to expose your Mum to. But recently he seems to be hitting the headlines with his passionate words speaking about the need for change, revolution and the power of capitalism resting with those who hold the money. Who knows whether he really believes this stuff - or not?

Comedian and actor Brand first came to fame through the programme 'Big Brother's Big Mouth' (something I avoided like the plague, as I have most of Brand's appearances). But since his recent appearance on 'Question Time' - if you didn't catch it, it's well worth a YouTube visit - and certainly since watching these absorbing interviews, I seem to be warming to him!

Personally, I'm not a fan of Brand. I don't much care for his language, or his comedy style. I wouldn't pay for his 'stand-up' DVDs, or to see him in a live performance. But of late I have been interested to listen to his rhetoric, noting his recent eloquent comments on revolution. Some would say these are not new - and they could be right - but he has a compelling way of speaking simple truths in a curious way.

I came across his interview with Jeremy Paxman, where he explains his reason for not casting his vote; "why continue the lie, this pretence. Current political structures are failing to resolve the world's problems".

I found myself wondering whether Brand isn't 'taking the Heretical Imperative': choosing for himself the things he wants to espouse, and challenging the established and assumed understanding of what is the status quo; questioning the political formulas and certainties; pointing out the difference between the dead institutionalised

politics and the cries from the masses for justice and recognition. You could say he is looking for a 'new map', for new ways of being community. He speaks of a call for change, of finding a genuine alternative to our current political system.

When pushed by Paxman to define his tactics for revolution, Brand said "the time is now", and alludes to movements that are already developing around the world, communities such as the Occupy protest movement, standing against social and economic inequality.

Then I found the interview with American talk show host, Alex Jones, where Brand was asked to explain the basis for his 'awakening' (as Jones put it) to the plight of humanity. In his reply, Brand spoke of our living in 'these interesting times', where people are 'interested once more in forming a different society'. He said that people are "bored with being exploited, with a cultural narrative that supports elitism and exploits the people".

Their conversation led on to matters of 'spirituality', which led Brand to say that "politics just needs to be the administration of certain spiritual principles; that we are all one, altogether, and every individual's rights need to be respected. Politics should be the administrator and distributor of these ideas". He said that "we need a spiritual revolution rather than a political or social one".

Jones asked about 'ultimate truth', to which Brand replied, "all things are transient". At a deeper level he understands the temporary nature of the world, and the important things are those we all share: love, unity, togetherness.

Finally, Jones asks Brand what he thinks may happen when the establishment eventually recognises they are no longer in charge. Here Brand recites a part of The Lord's Prayer - "on earth as it is in Heaven" - this, he says, is how we should live. If we become in-tune with a different narrative, a different story, if we were to live as God would have us live, then the world would change automatically, we need not to do anything. The light is coming, Brand says.

Now - was this just a clever script from his latest 'Messiah Complex' tour, or something regurgitated from a previous monologue? Or could Brand be a 'prophet for our time'? If God could use the leader of the most powerful nation on earth to bring punishment to His own people in an attempt to save them and turn them back to Him, could he not use a comedian - even if you find him a little distasteful - to wake up a world caught in a deep sleep?



I'm keeping my eyes on Russell Brand. And hoping he isn't just another false prophet! *Paul Moore*

Dan Hazen, from Washington State, USA, sent some reflections arising from his journey through the Novitiate process, which he recently completed.



As part of the Novitiate, we Postulants are asked, “How does your heart respond to this, or that, part of the Rule?” Early in 2012, as I was contemplating ‘The Cell’ my heart responded in paradoxical ways.

It responded with familiarity. The idea of ‘cell’ feels like confirmation of what I have been experiencing increasingly over the last decade or so: Inner journey is, in a sense, all that we have. It is at least the *beginning* point of all else and where we ultimately return. The ‘cell’ is to the pilgrim what scales are to the pianist, and rudiments to the drummer. It is not the end, but there is no end that does not contain it.

My heart feels safe. I know because a spiritual attack was under way. It was targeted at the entrance to my ‘cell’. The ordinance is a high degree of activity, high demand on time and energy from multiple directions at once. The cell itself is not being targeted because it is hardened against such coarse, violent attacks. The enemy knows he can’t simply ‘blow it up’. But he *can* block my access to it. Explosions of need and opportunity shake my being, and the rubble of activity falls to block my path to the quiet interior.

This tactic is effective *only* to the extent that I see my cell as temporal or physical. The actual cell exists in intense mindfulness. The author of the ‘Cloud of Unknowing’ describes it with great aplomb. He speaks of INSTANTS of time, the smallest imaginable unit of time in which we are open to the Presence...or not. This moment is so small in duration that it does not really qualify as temporal at all. It is The Moment.

The cell only ever exists in units of One Moment. It does not matter whether one is physically in a cell, in a crowd,

eyes closed or hands raised. There is only the INSTANT. The cell is so small, so tiny, so void of any substance that it exists for less than a breath, shorter than a blink, a heartbeat. Then...the cell must be re-animated, re-constructed, re-entered in the NEXT moment.

Brilliant. God has created an environment that is literally unreachable by anyone else (Satan or the neighbor’s barking dog) because it is so pure, so profoundly small and perfectly shaped for me and my Abba to occupy that it cannot, by definition, be occupied by *anything* else. It is life reduced to its ‘lowest’ (by lowest I mean most PURE) common denominator. It cannot be blown up because there are no two things to be separated: there is only one ‘thing’ in the cell. This feels like safety to my heart. During this time of reflection on cell my heart began to feel longing. I followed this longing on a two day solitary retreat. I just followed the Spirit’s prompting and I found myself on a ferry boat, heading toward tiny Shaw Island in Northern Puget Sound.



As the ferry departed I remember these words: ‘Take me often from the tumult of things into thy presence. There show me what I am and what thou hast purposed me to be. Then hide me from thy tears.’ I am brought again to the knowledge of all that I am willing and capable of doing to create some sense of intimacy in my life; I am willing to commit any number of sins to acquire it. This is a very deep longing.

As the ferry plies the waters of Rosario Strait, I feel the longing to take in the landscape; to eat it or to be eaten by it. To be consumed in it, to put it on like a skin, covered with it...to cover it all. There is no distinction between being in it, and having it in me...

...to be in the earth, to see *beneath* the beach where the pebbles go on forever; deep, deep, deep. To lift the islands, roots and all, and see the squirming dark underneath; to eat it; be one with it.

The longing is unbearable.

...to part the waters and see the bottom, the margin at the shore which always entices, pulled away, made naked,

finally revealed...my heart races at the thought; mysteries revealed, kelp and anemones flagrant in their colors, exposed to me.

Oh how I know this **longing** so well. How it burns in me, un-namable, unspeakable. It feels lewd and perverse...yet there is holiness at its very center. It is in fact the HOME of holiness. The Father and me. Alone.

I realize this is simply **longing** for the cell. Longing for the lover's nook, the still and intimate 'default' place. Home.

"In speaking of this desire...I feel a certain shyness. I'm almost committing an indecency. I am trying to rip open the inconsolable secret in each one of you - the secret which hurts so much we take revenge on it by calling it names like nostalgia, and romanticism and adolescence, the secret also which pierces with such sweetness that, when, in every intimate conversation, the mention of it becomes imminent, we grow awkward and affect a laugh at ourselves, the secret we cannot hide and cannot tell." – C.S. Lewis

Paradoxically, there is a shadow feeling to the longing: I **fear** the cell.

I **fear** being confronted with my own darkness. It hurts. Evening office contains the words, "Lord, you have always lightened this darkness of mine..." For me, those are the most resounding, electrifying words in that liturgy. I want my darkness exposed (longing) but I **fear** the consequences and so, often avoid the entrance to the cell.



Arriving at Shaw Island, I took a very nice bicycle ride, to what *later* turned out to be a convent which I thought God might have been calling me to visit.

I went down the lane, but it felt like private property. I didn't see anyone so I left assuming I was mistaken about its location.

Dates for Your Diary

Saturday 15 February 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.

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

I took a 'flyer' down a dead-end road. At the end of the road was a chain blocking my way and a sign that read 'University of Washington Biological Preserve' and the road became more of a dirt track.

A hundred yards further were several abandoned shacks, an idyllic little cove, the largest Madrona tree I have ever seen...and complete solitude: 370 acres of my own 'private island'.

It was February but the crocuses were emerging. So were the tears. The inexplicable purging; the mourning, the repentance, the regret, the confession.

No convent. No other people. I was shepherded right to the spot, to my cell.

Deep Peace.

I had been resisting out of **fear**. I got out in front of God and blunted my own longings with expectations and plans, when all along my cell awaited in a place that I did not choose, and did not expect.

I *always* return from the cell less judgmental, more motivated to serve, more creative, less likely to consume what is not needed, more focused on God's presence in the everyday, and more willing to let Him be seen in me. How is that not 'salt and light' in a dark and rotting world?

Monastery AND Mission.

Dear God,
Protect me from the chaos of the coarse and unwieldy.
Hide me in the tiniest moment of your imagination.
Think of me; and I will attend to your thought.
Oh the joy to do 'only what the Father tells me to do'; to exist only for a flash, but in that flash to feel the fullness of your presence, the sense of your pleasure, the resounding ecstasy of your love and your holiness.
That is one moment worth living.
Father, make this that moment. *Dan Hazen*

Check out the new Nether Springs Programme of Retreats for 2014 on the website; the printed copies will be available early in the New Year.

Whilst you're there - tell us what you think of our Community's new website!

www.northumbriacommunity.org

Thoughts of St Aidan - written by Colin Symes for Cuthbert's Day on Holy Island



Now he was walking on the cool, shifting sand; he felt its soft, wet touch beneath his tired feet, and heard the distant thunder of the great sea far off, restrained only by the powerful hand of the Creator

Himself.

The sun was going down behind him, which was strange to him, for it would be before him at the end of the day on the island of Columba, when his boat returned home after evangelising on the mainland.

This wasn't Iona, anyway; Lindisfame was a different island. It was joined twice a day to the mainland, when the veil of water ebbed away, and likewise, it cleansed every footprint away in its flowing, when the place returned to being the island.

Now he saw the tiny lights of the Abbey, where there



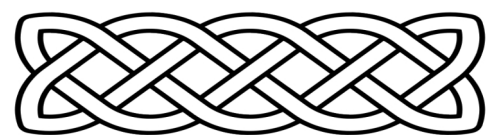
was hope of shelter. He thought of that day, of the young king, Oswald; surely he was the vessel of God for his own kingdom. Aidan was a Gael, and he thought of the music of the Gaelic that ran over his tongue like pungent wine, carrying the gospel through this royal translator, who was in his mind's eye as a boy who had grown up in the abbey of Iona's holy island, when he was a fugitive from his enemies. He heard again in his head the sharp, strange language in which the king spoke, which they called *English*.

Wasn't it true, though, that the gospel crossed borders and seas, as it came to Ireland with Patrick, and, afterwards, to the Picts with Columba originally? He heard again in his mind the words of Cormac, who had been before him on Lindisfame, without success. 'Brother Aidan' he said to him, 'How will you teach the gospel to a people so hard, so obstinate as the English? They are so far away from our Lord, that no man can bring them to repentance!'

'You are not right, my Brother' he replied to him, 'There is no man outside of the love of God; and our Saviour will help me, anyhow, for did he not die for the English also?'

Now he was close to the other shore; he heard the voices of the brothers singing the psalms, '*As it was, as it is, as it shall be forever...*' He was sure that this was the right place, the island which was the mirror-image of Iona, that he had left to shepherd the English.

Praise fell from his mouth as he sang with gulls and monks in their songs to the Lord; there was no other place so sweet, so precious in the world as the centre of the divine will.



For those of you who have been blessed on the journey by the music already produced by folk in our Community, here is good news of another CD just about to be released. To find out more Judith Goodfellow talked to Clare Hunt and Mike Clifford - two-thirds of the group 'Hyldas' - about their new album.



Judith: Can you tell us something about your involvement in the Community's music life so far?

Clare: I was introduced to the Community when someone lent me a copy of Waymarks. I just listened and listened and quickly arranged a trip to Hetton Hall to find out more about where this music came from. In 2008 I met Mike, and we arranged a music gathering in Nottingham where we sang and played new Community music and songs. We could tell there was a real thirst for more music resources. With the help of our good friend Tim, we got together, formed the band and started recording songs we had been writing over some time.

Judith: What does Hyldas mean?

Mike: The word is old English and is linked with favour, grace and protection. Also, although it's a different spelling, it reminds us of Hild, who lived for a time on the 'north bank of the Wear', which is where Clare and her family live now.

Judith: What has inspired the music and lyrics you have written for this album?

Clare and Mike: Firstly, the inspiration was an emotional, musical response to things of faith. 'Out of the Depths' for example was written many years before Clare knew about Community, so the words had a natural resonance when she heard them used as part of evening prayer. Since then, inspiration has come largely from Community resources, like the Meditation for Day 23, as well as the prayers of Gilbert Shaw and old hymns and folk tunes. The album is an emotional journey; it weaves from joy to sorrow, to anger, to longing, moving deeper into relationship with God, with all the exciting and frustrating stuff that entails!

Judith: What are your hopes for the album as it is released?

Clare and Mike: We hope that people will enjoy it and be able to use some songs devotionally, as well as singing and playing others in a wide variety of settings. We know there are lots of people writing music and songs and we'd like to think our CD might inspire others to get their music recorded so more people can hear it. Some lovely new music has come out in the last year or so (Alone and Together, and Ancient Paths for example); perhaps this is a sign of things to come. Mainly, though, we hope that people enjoy 'As the rain hides the stars' and find it helpful in some way.

You can find out more by visiting the Hyldas FaceBook page: <https://www.facebook.com/hyldasmusic>

'As the Rain Hides the Stars' will be available very shortly, price £12.00 plus p+p, from the online shop on the Northumbria Community website www.northumbriacommunity.org

Bill Armstrong wrote to us from Brisbane, Australia:

These are not just Christmas greetings but year long ones... It is now about 20 years since I obtained Celtic Daily Prayer and commenced using it almost daily. Over that time God has used it to sustain me through some very challenging years of full time pastoral ministry. So, thank you for being available to God in being faithful to His call on your lives which in turn has strengthened me in fulfilling His call on my life. God bless you all and grant you a blessed Christmas and a New Year in which you experience increasing freedom 'in Christ' in every aspect of your ministry.



Quarterly Updates

In preparation for our quarterly Community Trustees meeting, the Overseers compile a simple 'update' report, which gives an overview of what's going on where. We think this is such a useful update that we email it to every Companion. But we'd like to make it even more widely available - so if you'd like to receive a copy by email each quarter, then please tell Ellen; office@northumbriacommunity.org and she'll add you to the list of recipients.

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

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

Day 18 Meditation

The source of this meditation was the visitors' book at Marygate House on Holy Island. It speaks of 'this your house' - referring of course to Marygate, but once it is used as a regular meditation quickly refers also to blessing the house wherever we are staying and praying. The 'shifting dunes' returns us clearly to Lindisfarne, however, after its evocative description of primeval fire, creation, formation and light speaking into chaos.

Traditionally, the rebellion of Lucifer and other angels occurs between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, so that the 'chaos' where the earth becomes 'without form and void' is against this background that the Word speaks through the 'days' of creation, reforming the raw materials as an artisan blows glass or a potter reshapes the clay.

The original poem says 'Lastly men came, led by Christ' and in the interests of inclusive language I altered that in such a way that the wording became even stronger: 'lastly trusted servants came, led by Christ'. We say, this is Your house, planted in a sacred location. It reflects the definitive Celtic monastic strategy of simply planting a presence, watering with prayers of compunction and intercession, then allowing it to grow and its influence to spread. From Lindisfarne that influence was incalculable, as Aidan's companions, students and disciples were released to go far and wide, 'planting the Presence'.



Over the last ten years we have been made more aware of the story of Aldwin, Renfrid and Elfwy who travelled north from Evesham to rebuild. This new infusion of monastic presence in forsaken holy places resulted in the building of our present Priory only six years after Aldwin's death and its settling by monks from Durham. I can almost see those three men and a donkey journeying north, appearing over the horizon: Lastly trusted servants came, led by Christ. *Andy Raine (lino print by Andy Foster!)*



We heard news of the South Wales Group Retreat to Caldey Island in September

For several months our group of Friends and Companions had been looking forward to a four day retreat to Caldey Island, off Tenby in South Wales. Much prayer and preparation had gone into the planning of this event and we were not disappointed.

Our retreat began on 31 August at the ancient Church of St Lawrence in Gumfreston, near Tenby, which has Celtic connections and ancient healing wells. As it was St Aidan's Feast Day, we prayed the Aidan liturgy by candle-light leaving our prayer candles floating in the waters of the healing well. We then set off in the warm sunshine from Tenby Harbour, for the short crossing to Caldey. On arrival at St Philomena's Retreat House we were greeted by Peter and Dawn, the friendly couple who run the retreat house, with a selection of cakes and a very welcome cuppa.

The theme of our retreat was 'Alone and Together', and as we had crossed the sea in our 'coracle' to this beautiful island it seemed appropriate to spend time looking at the Brendan liturgy to stimulate our thoughts and conversation. Each day we met for Morning Prayer, Midday Prayer (which was said around the Calvary looking out over the bay of Tenby) Evening Prayer and Compline. On Sunday morning we celebrated Holy Communion in the tiny St David's Church and we ended our retreat with a Taize evening in the ancient Priory.

As Caldey is home to a Cistercian Community of Monks, we were also invited to participate in any of the seven services of the day held in the Abbey Church, the first of which

begins at 3.30am! Three intrepid retreatants left the comfort of the retreat house for this first service of the day, as together we walked towards the Monastery in total silence under the starry sky. For me, this was one of the highlights of the retreat, listening to the monks chanting the psalms and praying for the world while others were sleeping.

One afternoon we were treated to an interesting talk by Brother Titus, who spoke about his vocation, which began over forty years ago in Germany. We also enjoyed two guided tours of the island by Father Gildas who explained the Celtic history of Caldey and the neighbouring locality.

All too soon it seemed our retreat came to a close. We had prayed together in the many different parts of the island, explored the island alone, and enjoyed true fellowship with one another as Community. Hopefully this retreat will be the first of many - who knows we may even find our way to Northumbria next time!

Sue Powell



Among many encouraging developments within the last couple of years has been the recognition of three Community Houses in addition to our Mother House, Nether Springs. Pioneered and developed by Community Companions, they are House of Azar in Herefordshire, Bridge House in Oxfordshire and L'Abri a Suvigny in Normandy, France. They carry the Community's heart and commitment to prayer and hospitality, the same essence but with different expressions in their particular cultural contexts. In the next few issues of Caim we will feature updates on each of the Houses - beginning with news from France. Jane Perkins gives us an update on happenings at L'Abri:

L'Abri à Suvigny – Northumbria Community in France

Summer 2013 has been a time for welcoming singles, couples and families on their own retreats and holidays, and some helped with odd jobs around the property as well. Jane has continued to offer ongoing support to individuals visiting for spiritual direction, as well as running the regular monastic retreat Sundays following the Brendan liturgy material from the Community. Neighbourly relations with local contacts have developed well this year, because I am at Suvigny most of the time - Andrew and I are adjusting to this rather strange way of living apart and together!

Roy and Shirley Searle came to L'Abri to lead a **Celtic**



Saints Retreat in October, based on the stories of the Celtic Saints of the area. This was attended by people from the local area as well as Anne Marie DuClos, a British trained mission worker whose origins are in Normandy. We are developing a friendship and prayer partnership for furthering the outreach to people in Normandy. Those who came to the retreat were also able to meet with Frère Sébastien on Mont St Michel and share in the mass at the Abbey. It seems that the fraternity there value our friendship as much as we value theirs.

We continue to thank God for his goodness and leading and ask for your prayers for continued protection and provision.

Upcoming events at Suvigny



April 17th to 20th – Easter Retreat – an opportunity to share in activities and reflections based on the Passion of Christ, as well as renewing of vows on Easter Day. This is to be followed by...



April 21st to 26th – Community Work Week – anyone from the Community or beyond is welcome to come and share in the work and renovation at L'Abri within the monastic rhythm of the day.

For further information, please email ncinfrance@gmail.com or visit our website on www.northumbriacommunityinfrance.net



The newsy bit



We were sad to hear of the passing of Lorna Walker. Her daughter, Corinne Pearson, has sent us this tribute to her mother.

Lorna Walker: 21 July 1920 to 23 October 2013.

Lorna was born in Birmingham and lived there until the outbreak of WWII, when she joined the Women's Air Force and was stationed in Cheadle as a communications officer. She met and married her husband Bernard who was in the Royal Navy.

After the war she trained as a social worker and the couple lived in Yorkshire. Lorna worked part time while raising her two children, Corinne and Michael. Throughout her life she was an activist for peace and social justice, and wrote numerous letters to the Prime Minister over the course of her lifetime regarding issues of poverty and the world affairs. She was persistent when she believed in something; she never stopped seeking God, and did not confine her faith to a specific denomination or building.

In 1978 she and Bernard settled near Southport and Lorna began to establish herself in the local church community and as senior social worker at a Liverpool hospital. She became an active member of her local church and remained involved for as long as she was physically able. After retirement she spent time in her beloved garden, volunteering in the church, painting, writing, and travelling, including visits to Nether Springs, until a stroke in 2007 left her weakened and unable to communicate easily. For the next six years she persevered, maintaining her faith that, as she told her grand daughter the last time she saw her "it will be all right." During her final years, unable to read, she liked hearing the midday office or a compline when she wasn't sleeping.

In her final months Lorna appeared to find peace. She had persisted to the end, and could rest knowing that she made a difference in the lives of others. *Corinne Pearson*

New Companions



Andrea Hunt was welcomed as a Companion at the Yorkshire gathering on 12 October (see page 4). Her mentor, Linda Davies, led the welcome liturgy as part of the closing worship and

presented Andrea with her copy of the Rule.



On an October Sunday afternoon fifteen of the Norfolk group met for pleasurable conversation and food - always a feature of our Norfolk meetings! There was good reason however, for our special

purpose was to welcome **Eric Bone** as a Companion of the Northumbria Community. Eric - a founder member of the Norfolk group - had spent the previous two years working through the Noviciate, mentored by Malcolm, also a Group member. It was a particular joy to have with us Roy and Shirley Searle en route to Northumbria from L'Abri and representing the wider Community; to catch up on news of L'Abri and Community developments; and to celebrate with Eric and Margie in the welcoming liturgy. We recalled those who in one way or another had influenced Eric on his journey thus far; the particular gifting of each, and the value of difference and diversity. We recognised a keen sense of 'pilgrims together' even though much of the travelling - perhaps some of the deepest - is done alone.

Malcolm Nicholas

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Nether Springs, Croft Cottage, Acton Home Farm, Felton, Morpeth, Northumberland NE65 9NU

Tel: 01670 787645 email: office@northumbriacommunity.org

Caim Editors: Jeff Sutheran & Ingrid Cumming

email: caim@northumbriacommunity.org