



Issue no 18    Autumn 2001

## The Northumbria Community Newsletter

Welcome to the Autumn edition of CAIM, the newsletter of the Northumbria Community. CAIM is the Celtic word meaning encompassment or encircling. This newsletter goes out to all those who are within our circle of Community Companions and Friends.

### Following those who are Followers

Trevor Miller of Hetton Hall

We've all had the experience, no doubt, of realising that we are lost and then having to stop and ask someone directions. I remember one time being stopped by a very anxious enquirer saying 'We're lost but we're making good time' but of course that can't be if you don't know where you are going. You may well be travelling in the wrong direction which is why we often need the help of others on our journey.

This happened to my wife Freda and I when we visited France last year. We were lost on our very first day in a place called Alencon, and we weren't making good time as we had pre-booked a motel room that would only be held for us until 6.00pm and it was now well after 5.00pm. We had driven around this very busy little town many times on its One Way systems, trying to remember to drive on the right, looking for the name of the street where our motel was located.

There was no town plan which said 'vous êtes ici' or even 'you are here.' Then we saw signs for the Tourist Information centre and our spirit's lifted. They would know! After a few moments, I managed to find what seemed to be the last space in the very busy central car park, but still couldn't find the place, despite the signpost. It was then we decided to ask for help. I walked across from the signpost to where it was pointing and just then a middle aged man came into view walking towards me. I decided to ask for help. After finding out that his English was even worse than my extremely weak French, I said in stuttering French phrases, 'excuse me, sir, I am English, I don't understand French, I am lost, can you help me please?' I pointed to the sign and he pointed to his watch, shaking his head. It was closed for the day. I then showed him the address of our motel and he made signs indicating that I was to fol-

low him. I did so and knew this would turn out right when I realised that his car was parked literally, right next to ours!

Thus began a journey of faith, risk and adventure! There were no words spoken only action and example. I followed him, did what he did, went where he went, signalled when he signalled. It was a difficult journey needing discipline and focus. I was in new territory, uncertain and a little fearful as it was obviously the rush hour. As I looked to him, followed him, trusted him on the journey, I also had to concentrate, do my part, drive on the right, not knowing where I was going. He got us there, in the middle of an industrial estate, out of town; he pointed at the motel, waved and drove off. I never even got the opportunity to thank him.

I thought about the lessons in that incident. The whole of life is a journey in which we need direction; the help of others who have been that way before, especially when we are uncertain and a little fearful. This man (or angel) could not tell me in words, but he showed me the way by his actions. I know many people who cannot articulate their faith in fancy phrases and sentences but who show the way through their lives in extraordinary ordinariness. For us all, of course, Jesus is supremely the Way but it is also true that each Christian is an imitator of Christ and therefore we are to imitate the Christlikeness in each other. The Apostle Paul writing to the Corinthians said '*follow my example as I follow Christ*' and to the Thessalonians '*we do what we do to make ourselves a model for you to follow.*' This is happening consciously and unconsciously all the time—when we give spiritual direction, lead another on retreat, talk one to one about the inner journey, and as we seek God in

Availability and Vulnerability every day of our lives. My French friend was not the way himself, he too was following directions that were familiar to him from experience and life. This is true for us. It is not arrogance to claim to know a part of the way and invite others to follow. Indeed, on the spiritual journey, we can only lead others where we are travelling ourselves. So if someone asked me the way to Cuthbert's Cave, I could tell them—not because I am a whizz at map reading or have a PhD in Geography but because I've been there many times. I know where it is, how to get there, the pitfalls to avoid on the path etc. It doesn't mean that I can't learn more about it. It would not have been helpful at all, if I had replied to the question, 'Well, actually I do know the way but out of modesty and humility, I'm not going to tell you.' We help when we can.

Let us be determined to live what we speak; be who we claim to be, so as to be able to say with the Apostle, '*Join with others in following my example, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you.*' Our pattern is our Rule of Availability and Vulnerability, expressed through an earthed spirituality in the ordinariness of the everyday of our lives.

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## One Year On...

Colin Amor of Manchester

"sometimes I need to be by myself  
I need to be by your side  
I need  
sometimes  
I need the company of art  
I need the company of friends  
I need you"  
ADAM AND THE ANTZ

These lyrics sum up the past year for me as I've begun carving a path through the urban jungle. This path is called 'The Altar', though as yet the destination remains unknown. It began in the solitude of my bedroom, where I seemed to spend a lot of time on my own with God. Sometimes He'd appear through the front door of His Word or prayer, but more and more He started popping in round the back, sneaking in through a piece of music or an idea in my head. During this time, I seemed to need to be by myself to be by His side.

I've also spent many weeks in the company of art, wading deep in the waters of 'avant garde' theatre and occasionally finding my net bursting with the weight of exciting possibilities. These have all been carefully packed in ice so that I can return to them in the future and explore them more fully. But in order to do that, I need the company of friends - people with creative gifts who are excited by the idea of exploring God in new ways - though I've yet to come across anyone on quite the same path.

This is not to say that I've been without friends along the way. God has blessed me through new and ongoing relationships that have spurred me on, challenged me, and occasionally completely confused me! Roy Searle, Dave Robertson and Angela Knowles are but three such people - I won't say which category they fit into!

And finally of course, I've needed (and still need) you - and people like you. People who've been interested, people who've prayed, people who've given financially. I think one of the words to describe 'you' is 'the church', a phrase which at the moment confuses me a little more each day...

The Altar now has a home big enough to welcome visitors, a little safe haven of dangerous creative spirituality in the heart of Manchester. So if your path ever crosses mine, come and see for yourself and you might be able to explain it to me!

## Mission News - Some Happenings

### Dates for the Diary:

#### October

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> A Day Gathering at St. Bede's Pastoral Centre, York from 10.30-6.00. Open to all Community folk and others interested in sharing together in worship, teaching and workshops [music, storytelling and intercession] ending the day with a ceilidh. Bring a packed lunch. Everyone welcome. [For details contact Gayle-Anne at St. Bede's 01904 464900].

#### November

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> - Monday 5<sup>th</sup>  
Men's' Pilgrimage to Iona. There are a few places available for those who would be interested in being part of this journey to Iona.

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> - Sunday 18<sup>th</sup>  
Poynton Spirituality and Mission Week. We shall be working with all the churches in Poynton, Cheshire. If you are interested in being part of the team for this week then please contact asap  
[claire.wilson@northumbriacommunity.org](mailto:claire.wilson@northumbriacommunity.org)

Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> Oxford Churches Together.

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> - Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> Winter Lanterns Storytelling Gathering at Ford Castle, Northumberland.

#### December

Saturday 8<sup>th</sup>, Sunday 9<sup>th</sup>  
Community Team in London, Purley. Workshops Daytime and Ceilidh in evening. Services on the Sunday at Purley Baptist Church.

#### January

Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> Community Gathering at Bradford Cathedral.

Please keep all these events in your prayers.

## BOOK AMNESTY

As we have many library books particularly from the reference section at Nether Springs currently unreturned, would it be possible for you to check whether or not you have overlooked any such books, and if so could you please return them. We would be very grateful.

## BOOK REVIEW

Kay Old of Milfield

### A Celtic Psalter: Compiled by David Adam

The Psalms of the Old Testament have been special for many peoples through the ages and the peoples of the Celtic lands were no exception. 'They were learnt not by rote but by devotion; it was not so much a matter of the mind as of the heart,' says David Adam. This heartfelt devotion called forth and inspired their own songs and prayers. In 'A Celtic Psalter' David Adam has collected together, in an attractively illustrated thematic presentation those songs and prayers, which have enriched his individual and corporate worship. In doing so he has provided a useful and valuable resource which includes some 'old favourites' of the Northumbria Community and many more.

These songs and prayers often, it is said, unostentatiously intoned in voices merging with those of the wind and sea, speak powerfully to us of a love of God and of all creation. Also their themes, which include, creation, morning, evening, protection, glory, consecration, praise and blessing, underline a desire to seek God in Trinity in all aspects of ordinary daily life. Such a love and desire is timeless and as we join with the Celtic psalmists in worship, we may find their words still relevant and capable of finding echoes in our hearts today.

### Journeying with the Northumbria Community

A booklet with the above title is available on request from the Community Office. It is designed to provide introductory information for those wishing to explore what it will mean in actual practice to become a Companion of the Northumbria Community. A brief outline of the background and formation of the Community, as well as its vocation and vision is followed by an explanation of the process required of those considering journeying with the Community.

# The Vision of Bridge House

Philip and Rosemary Mader-Grayson of Shillingford

We were delighted to see that Bridge House appeared in the Prayer Diary for the Community again recently, but it did cross my mind that few Community folk will actually know much about us. We, therefore thought it timely to share something of our story and vision with the wider Community.

Our vision for Bridge House and our ministry emerges from our commitment to Christ and His challenge to be witnesses, but more specifically has been shaped by the painful and traumatic experiences in both of our lives including the death of Rosemary's first husband, David and my (Philip's) divorce from my first wife, Catherine. Before we met we had both, independently, made a commitment before God to offer our experiences to Him for the sake of others who may have been hurt by life's experiences. When we met we obviously found kindred spirits within each other and began to put this commitment into action. Now, together we want our suffering to be used to help others who are suffering and to minister to hurting and broken people.

As our commitment to each other grew, the vision of ministry grew along with a realisation of the resources God was making available to us in that ministry. Our home, Bridge House, a big, old house with 4 acres of land, could become a place to reach out to people, especially marginalised, alienated and unchurched people and it could become a link for them to the Kingdom of God. It could become a bridge, or a "Touching Place".

Besides this passion for people, we understand that the Gospel is about the whole of creation, as well as people. Thus in our lifestyle we strive to find ways of honouring, protecting and caring for our environment both locally and world-wide, reflecting this God given responsibility. Thus our use of the smallholding became a part of our vision. Trying to live simple, sustainable, environmentally friendly lives in harmony with God and His creation.

We have found great rapport and encouragement in our links with the Northumbria Community and the Community Rule of "Availability and Vulnerability". I, Philip, met the Community whilst training for the Baptist ministry at Regents' Park, Oxford and began trying to follow the Rule and using the daily Offices.

Rosemary met the Community through me. A Community Weekend at Nether Springs soon after we married furthered our shared links and commitment and also helped confirm our calling to this ministry. We now try to be informed and directed by this commitment to Community and Rule, although we recognise that we are only novices on the Way.

Putting house, smallholding and community together, our vision extended to see that a daily and seasonal routine in harmony with God and creation can be a framework for retreat, restoration and rejuvenation for world-weary and damaged people. The routine of prayer and work is a framework we are building into our lives and ministry and this could help those suffering temporarily to return to full strength. Others with more permanent disabilities and dis-ease could find a place of support and encouragement and, we pray, a place where they can meet God in their own ways. So we try to be available.

Living off the land is not easy or simple and the folk we seek to support are often least capable of supporting us. Therefore this is, inevitably, a ministry of faith; faith that God can and will use us, faith that the needy people will find their way to us, faith that the land will help to support us, faith ultimately that this is what God is calling us to and that He alone will sustain us. So we become vulnerable.

We have taken the first few tiny steps on this journey. There's still plenty of work to be done on the house, the farm shop, the Tea Rooms (Brigid's Kitchen), the smallholding and animals, the caravan & camping site; all of which will give us opportunity to engage with people and hopefully help turn Bridge House into a church without walls.

If you would like to know more about us you could try our website [www.bridge-house.org.uk](http://www.bridge-house.org.uk) or contact us on e-mail at [house@bridgehouse.org.uk](mailto:house@bridgehouse.org.uk) or snail mail to Bridge House, Shillingford, WALLINGFORD, Oxon. OX10 7EU and we could send a fuller vision statement (please include SAE), or even come and visit us.

## FRACTURE

Anne Cope of Leeds

(Thoughts from a dark place)

Deep in the dark inside  
Of this body  
A tiny bone  
Breaks.  
Kyrie eleison

Pain overwhelms  
And everything swells  
Out of all proportion;  
The load can no longer be carried.  
The limb is useless.  
Christe eleison

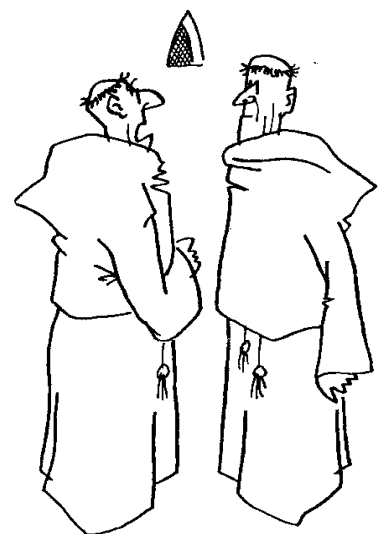
Yet the body moves on,  
And with it  
The fractured member is carried  
forward  
Until, in the hands of the Creator,  
As from the beginning,  
The bone knits together  
And is ready to take up its purpose  
again.  
Kyrie eleison.

## Pause for Reflection

(U i f! qbui x bz! up! bddfqbodf!  
jt! opu! ui f! bdrvjtjuppo! pg!  
x i bufwfs!zpv!fowz!jo!pui fst-!  
cvu! l op x joh! zpv s! jefoujuz! jo!  
Nf(-!tbzt!ui f!Mpse!)

## BEWARE OF THE ABBOT

Hugh Barnett



'The Abbot unveiled the new tithing campaign slogan last Sunday: it's "I Upped My Pledge - Up Yours."

## Being Filled to Overflowing

Diane Sekuloff of Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada

The Christian Dance Fellowship of Canada held a national conference in August in Vancouver. I was involved as national coordinator, in the planning and leadership of the conference. Frequently in the past, CDFC events have been characterized by worship on the evangelical scale of things – heavy on lively praise and worship, with much attention given to ‘Toronto Blessing’ experiences. I have often wondered how the lonely Presbyterian or Anglican, from a traditional church relates at such an event. So I took on the role of coordinating the worship for this year’s event, hoping to allow the Holy Spirit to live in all aspects of worship including liturgy.

Our theme this year was Be Filled. In prayer, and thanks to the influence of the Desert project Roy and Trevor have been working on with me, over the last two years, I sensed that we needed to make the whole journey of the soul legitimate. In response, I divided the week into daily sections, beginning with a day of reflecting on Emptiness, another on Repentance, then Waiting on God, before we came to Being Filled, and finally Overflowing. We were able to use a lot of the material from CDP to create liturgical expression to the journey, as well as artistic ideas in decoration of a focal point relative to a rough cross. In addition, our keynote speaker, who

came from 4000 miles away, had planned his addresses and just happened(?) to fit in with each day’s theme.

The results were beyond expectation – in every day, people were touched at a heart level – some days our prayer counselors had line-ups for personal ministry in the spaces of the day. Several people spoke of the way the morning worship and teaching time carried into the dance classes, and continued to work deeply within them throughout each day. By the time we came to the closing, there were many signs that every participant had been touched by the Lord at some level – many received a significant release from roots of pain, sin, and woundedness in their lives. It has been exciting to hear of ways that people have taken home what they have gained during our week together. Throughout the week, many people asked for the CD we used in worship, and were directed to contact Cloisters to obtain it. I hope it will continue to be a blessing to them as they seek a more authentic walk in faith and life.

*‘May He bring you home rejoicing at the wonders He has shown you. May He bring you home rejoicing once again into our doors.’*

## A Newmanastics



Initiated by the late Cardinal Newman for the physical well-being of all who live in Community.

## Music Review

### Pilgrim House

### Pocket Songbook

a 3 CD set of songs from Australian pilgrims

Andy Raine of Holy Island

‘Jesus, lover of wanderers, daily we seek Your voice. Keep us within your tenderness. Visit our every choice.’

These 101 songs bring together, living community, sharing liturgy, preparing food, raising children, applying scripture and finding new expression. The songs have a raw edge, but are well-produced and varied, arranged alphabetically to match the songbook, so Psalms, graces and travelling songs jostle surprisingly side by side. This is a resource from close on twenty years of consistent struggle and radical creativity. All 3 CDs come with a pocket songbook with guitar chords, all for the amazing price of £20 from Paul and Helen Shogren at 0191 3734340 or Email [shogs@shogren.freemove.co.uk](mailto:shogs@shogren.freemove.co.uk)

## Sojourners on the net

Andy Raine of Holy Island

Are you interested in social justice, faith and culture? Does anyone remember Jim Wallis and Sojourners fellowship from Washington DC? Have you ever tried planting mustard seeds of faith? or wondered how changes will impact the poor? Then ‘Sojourners’ magazine is for you. And now free of charge you can receive a weekly bulletin direct to your e-address. Check out [sojourners@sojo.net](mailto:sojourners@sojo.net) to subscribe, or <http://www.sojo.net>

## Annual Retreat

All Community Companions and Friends are encouraged to build into their lives an Annual private retreat at the Nether Springs. This would be a time of reflection, of quiet and waiting upon God with individual direction, particularly looking at how our Rule of Availability and Vulnerability is applied to the unique circumstances of each of our lives. Many of you already do this and know its benefits and blessing. Also to participate in one of the many Led Retreats over the coming months, details of which are in the current programme which is available from the Community Office.

# Council of the Isles

Andy Raine of Holy Island

I was privileged to attend a small gathering for 24 hours in Burton-on-Trent for those with a special interest in small islands in and around Britain. 'God is modelling something in the little islands that He wants to release across the islands of Britain and Ireland then across to Europe,' we were told, (and even 'Lindisfarne needs to pray for Wales ... which certainly got my attention.)

There is 'an ancient anointing ... lost for generations, covered-up foundations calling from the earth' and 'there is a wild fire coming, an explosion from heaven on earth', but the answer is not in the ancient fire, nor in the new fire, but in the collision between the two.

I was excited especially to begin to build relationships with folk from the Isle of Man and Wales. 'I have come to these islands with no pointing finger but with the hands of a builder' Echoes of Isaiah 58.

Godfrey Birtall contributed the music for the Council, and for the 2-day teaching conference which followed, where Jim Thwaites gave us a fresh theological underpinning, and others shared practical insights and prophetic challenges to immerse ourselves in the world and fill it for God's sake rather than disengage from it by default.

Sharing about this gathering gives me an opportunity to review and recommend first of all, a book written by Jim Thwaites and then a music CD of Godfrey Birtall songs.

'**The Church beyond the Congregation**' by Jim Thwaites. Paternoster Press ISBN 0-85364-952-9

We are commissioned by God to inhabit the spheres of creation. Jacob's ladder saw heaven penetrating earth. We need to see the same thing happen in all the places we live – spheres of marriage, family, the work-place, our work itself, friendship, culture...

The church, if it has any relevance at all, is there to support us in this, so that pressure appeals for us to support the church are as silly as the notion of a dog taking someone for a walk ...!

Similarly we are to support one another as Community, and not merely support Community, as though the Community was an

IT rather than an US. The monastic wing of the Church universal has always acted as an independent reference point with its emphasis on seeking God for His own sake, but now the church-as-congregation can perhaps embrace this same self-effacing emphasis and start seeking harder for God in everyday reality and in encouraging us to engage there more fully. Any church that preaches this is, of course, shooting itself in the foot, like John the Baptist who said, 'I must decrease that Jesus may increase.'

Jim Thwaites also explains how many of our traditional notions of Church are rooted in Greek thinking, fuelled by anti-semitism. In contrast to this, all aboriginal peoples instinctively look to encounter God in physical realities, and Celtic people embracing Christianity within their culture instinctively evangelised and impacted upon whole nations. All in all, a deeply thought-provoking read.

Now to '**Outrageous Grace**' the Godfrey Birtall music CD.

We seek the Lord our God. Do you seek Him with all your heart? 'Looking for Your presence, it's time to seek Your face .. and pick up Your burdens, walk the land and pray, carrying You, carrying You. Can Your heavy glory rest on me? We hear the footsteps of the Lord, and the King is in the streets. It's time we started recognising His presence, all kinds of signs of hope, unmistakable initiatives of the Spirit all around us. How dare we call unclean or unspiritual what God has touched with His presence.



'There's a lot of pain, but a lot more healing, a lot of trouble, but a lot more peace. There's a lot of sin, but a lot more grace'

Godfrey Birtall's songs speak prophetically, and often have refreshing energy. Previously a press photographer for over 20 years, now his songs are mostly sung by people under 35. 'He's taking us to the potter's table...reshaping us for His Kingdom. We're turning inside out ... **out** into this world!' CDs available – call 01772 746879 or visit [www.whitefield-music.freemove.co.uk](http://www.whitefield-music.freemove.co.uk)

## News from Cloisters

Ian Corsie of Allerdale

### US EDITION OF CELTIC DAILY PRAYER

Readers in the US will be pleased to know that HarperSanFrancisco will be publishing a US edition of Celtic Daily Prayer in May next year at \$29.95 (Can \$44.95). Until then, copies of the UK edition can be obtained in US from Renovare - or of course by mail order from Cloisters.

### WAYMARKS CASSETTE TAPE

The Waymarks: Songs for the Journey album is now available from Cloisters



as a cassette (in addition to the CD format). The Order Code is NCAT102 and the price is £10.00. The price of the CD is now £15.00

### NEW CLOISTERS CATALOGUE

Look out for the new Cloisters catalogue which will be mailed out with the Nov-Feb Prayer Guide in October. It will be accompanied by a leaflet highlighting Christmas cards and gift ideas from Cloisters.

### STORYTELLING RESOURCES

The new Cloisters catalogue will include a much wider range of resources for Storytelling - both about storytelling and containing stories for telling.

### NEW CREATIVITY

There will not be a Cloisters calendar for next year; instead we have approached a number of creative people within the Community to consider ideas for a completely new approach for 2003. If you have not been contacted, but have ideas that you like to be considered, contact Brenda Grace in the Cloisters office. (The same comment applies if you have other creative ideas that are not necessarily related to a calendar.)





## Prayer for America

As a Community we have been much in prayer for our American Companions and Friends and for the horrendous situation they have been subjected to in the recent terrorist attacks. Many have contacted the Mother House and furnished us with items for prayer, especially that we pray for wisdom for President Bush and his advisors in considering a just response.

Typical of many is this comment from Diane Sekuloff of Canada, who writes: *I am heartened by the voices of those who call for restraint and are able to see the events of 11 September in light of the drawbacks of the "American Way." We, who by good fortune hold 90% of the world's wealth, have neglected our responsibility with respect to the rest of the world. While this doesn't absolve the guilt of those who resorted to senseless violence, in the face of their own coloured perspective of the world, it does call on Americans and their allies to act responsibly and thoughtfully in return. Retaliation will create an even playing field, but not the one we might hope for - it will make us just as cruel and arrogant as those who planned and executed the attacks on Tuesday. Certainly the world community must root out those who resort to such tactics, and deal with them with the fullness of justice and law.*

And from Gary and Sonya Olsen-Hasek, *Thanks for your message and prayers. Please remind the Community that Jesus taught us to love, to reconcile and to be peacemakers even in the face of hatred and violence. Jesus died for the sins of all people. Nationalism and civil religion would have us believe in the US (and more so in the past, Britain) that God once again prefers us and will bless our vengeance. The apostle Paul reminds to leave vengeance to God and to overcome evil with good. That is the wisdom of God.*

And from Helen Mace Priest quoting her Bishop *'We can never excuse terrorism, but we must understand the conditions that breed it. The roots of violence are desperate poverty and oppression. As Pope Paul VI challenged us many years ago, "If we want peace, we must work for justice."*

Please continue to pray for the situation as it unfolds.

## Network of Biblical Storytellers - A Report from Atlanta

Cyndy Geraghty of Keene, New Hampshire

Biblical storytelling and tell-evangelism was the focus at the recent Nobs conference in Atlanta, Georgia, USA with the Northumbria Community in partnership with Bible Society sending a team of musicians and storytellers who hosted, led the worship, and provided the keynote speaker. I was on a pilgrimage of sorts, wandering as a test and testimony to newly reclaimed physical powers of ability. I set out on the road to witness and participate in a larger Community venue, here on home ground! I was not to miss the chance to see again some old friends and to meet some new friends along the road; to hear first hand of Community events worldwide; to serve perhaps in some small way; to ask some questions of storytellers, active and practicing their skill.

What is the magic in storytelling that draws and keeps? In embodying scripture - and then in telling the stories - the narrative takes a significant place... a way to reach through interpersonal gaps and find a common ground in image, experience, and emotion. They serve as a bridge across the gulf of aloneness; a light into the darkness of depression and fear; a reminder of the presence of wonder in the ordinariness of everyday; a stairway to cross the chasm of the personal into the collective realm; a tangible connection to that which is mystical, spiritual and regenerative. In our post-modern and technological age, I think stories may hold the potential to ground us in our common humanity and ultimate vulnerability, to lay anchor to a thread of the past that is too sacred and too valuable to lose.

Indeed, as we patch together the remnants of our days and the pieces of our pasts and choose to be available and present to one another, as we **listen and tell**, stories can be the threads that bind our heart-strings, our minds and our bodies into families and communities. They may be just one of the healing and transformative vehicles needed for a culture adrift: a culture and people starved for a listening silence, a sense of sanctity and sacredness; seeking connection to God, our very souls and to each other.

This miracle of connection happened in Atlanta, through the vehicles of both storytelling and worship. To watch a community of many different denominations embrace warmly what I have come to call my own - the Office and prayers set to Celtic music and dance, brought tears of joy to my eyes and a renewed sense of hope for the Body of Christ - the Church worldwide. I was blessed to remember the dances, music and prayers of many years now travelled, and privileged to envision this gathering as fruit ripening on the vine. The individuals who touched me deeply and our exchanges were all about this very authentic and present deep touching - touch magic within the ordinariness of everyday and the gruffness of each other.

As I answered questions about what being a Companion has meant, about how the Office came to be, about the Mother House at Nether Springs, about my personal journey, I was strengthened and renewed for what comes next, as the Community in North America takes form and we all take a deep breath.

## Heaven touches us as we seek to touch Heaven

Andy Raine of Holy Island

I realise that prayer is supposed to be hard work - that's why the regular saying of prayers is called Office - but just occasionally heaven touches us at such a time and we happen to notice it when it happens. And those times make all the difference. It happened for me one morning recently when I went as usual, to say morning prayer at my local church with my daughter Martha [almost 3] and on this occasion with her friend Martine who is a couple of months younger. We picked the customary 3 names from the prayer-pot - one each! Two of the names were people I had recently spoken to and knew their circumstances, but the 3rd were a group in America where everyone was in shock after the terrorist attacks. So we joined hands and prayed together. I glanced down at the Community prayer-guide on my knee, and on its back was Nancy Hammond's beautiful circular knot work and calligraphy of the 'Circle me' prayer. So one at a time we laid the names from the prayer pot in the centre of the circle on the back cover of the prayer guide, holding hands and intent together before the Lord, me and two not quite 3 year-olds ... and God was there.

# Reflections, Contrasts, and Confessions

Storyteller Dave Robertson of Manchester reflects on recent travels to both Russia and the USA

## STORYTELLING SCHOOL, MOSCOW

I have to admit the thought of going to Russia did not fill me with great joy! I knew I was going to be a part of something special, but the images of Cold War Russia were part of my upbringing, these images were then replaced with Mafioso wars. Not that I thought I would encounter any trouble, but I was prepared to be stressed! So, when myself, Angela Knowles and Susan Walters were met at the airport in Moscow by a portly bloke with a big 'tash, driving what can only be described as a tank on wheels - I was ready for this. After the speedy, adventurous ride from the airport to the centre of Moscow with Angela and Susan muttering their own versions of "God protect us from crashing and throwing up" prayers in the back seat, we arrived, at the eponymous Hotel Sputnik where we spent two days settling in before the school started. Of this time I have too many memories to share concerning prostitutes, breakfast and Hammond Organs?!

The school itself was to be run on the outskirts of Moscow where those Muscovites who can afford it, build Summer houses to retreat to. Don't get carried away here, many of these houses would make a poushtinia look posh. Alongside the houses was the relatively new church we would be working in and staying in. The Institute for Bible Translation who were our employers and partners had invited 19 people, representing 10 states within the CIS and who had 10 languages. We had decided to concentrate on text telling for this school, as many of the people were helping IBT in various translation projects concerning the Bible and their mother tongues. Also, in terms of logistics it will be a long time before translations of the whole Bible will be available for many of these people groups. I can only describe the students of the school as some of the most beautiful people I have ever met! Beautiful in spirit, beautiful in simplicity, beautiful in faith and beautifully generous of themselves. They took to storytelling like fish to water, no doubt due to the fact that many of their states still have strong oral traditions. At the end of the week they told the first six chapters of Luke in Russian - which was the common language thanks to the Communist education system - and it was a telling of pure magic as they realised what they had just done!

They returned home with a passion to tell God's story in their mother tongues to all who will hear. And I do mean a passion, these guys were totally up for it and filled

with hope. Until this point the only Bible available was in Russian, now they plan to help in translating the Bible using their experience of storytelling and to set free biblical stories, to their people, in their languages and through "word of mouth".

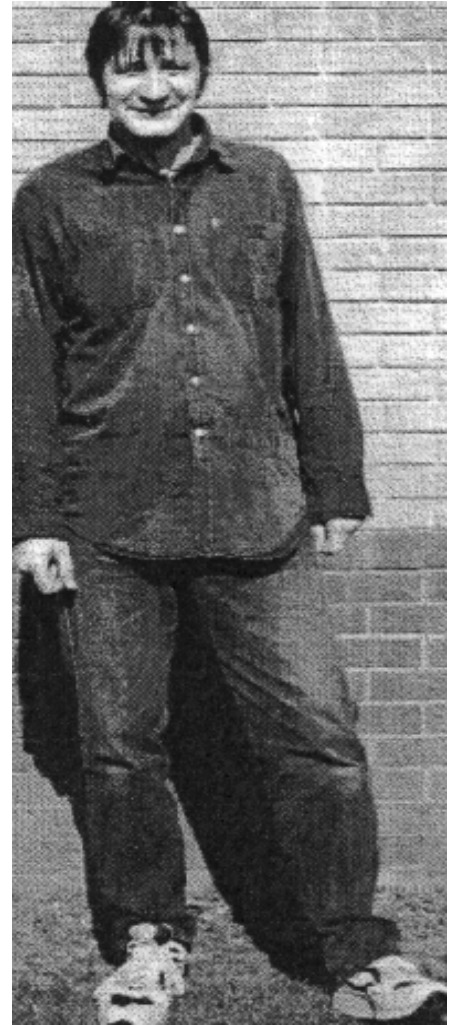
Russia itself is a poor country, however it is nowhere near as violent and hostile as we are still led to believe. The people have a fighting spirit to plough through this season of change and are looking to the younger generation to drive them forward. Yet, it is a country in need of prayer, perhaps more so now than before. With freedom and the promise of its fulfilment comes independence, a desire of peoples to be recognised for who they are and where they come from. A desire to be heard. So, nationalism is holding its prickly hand out to these people, I only hope that the handshake is a careful one and that they don't get stung like the people of Chechnya. Yet, within that week of the school, the formerly oppressed worked with former oppressors, evangelicals worked with orthodox folk, and together they told the story that we have in common, and from that commonality came love, hope, joy and peace! It was a great joy to receive an Email saying that one of the students from the school had set up a storytelling group of ten people (this number keeps repeating, is it mystical in Russia?). And together they have just told their first Biblical Epic!

## RENOVARE

The day after leaving the CIS we were in Denver, Colorado, and ...erm... culture shock and jetlag were my first friends of this trip. When I met the board members of Renovare I thought they were a nice bunch of mainly gently ageing folk. Little did I realise that most were either the leaders or ex-leaders of their denominations and authors, in fact, you could fill a small library with the amount of books this lot have written. Someone asked me if I'd written a book, I answered "not even a pamphlet mate", the term - out of my depth - came to mind.

However, ego was not present or welcome here with these folk, and hospitality was foremost, within hours I felt at ease, even laughing at the fact that I was talking nonsense to Dallas Willard over lunch.

The storytelling we did went down a storm and many and various offers of several U.S. tours came flooding in. The worship we led and the Community ethos



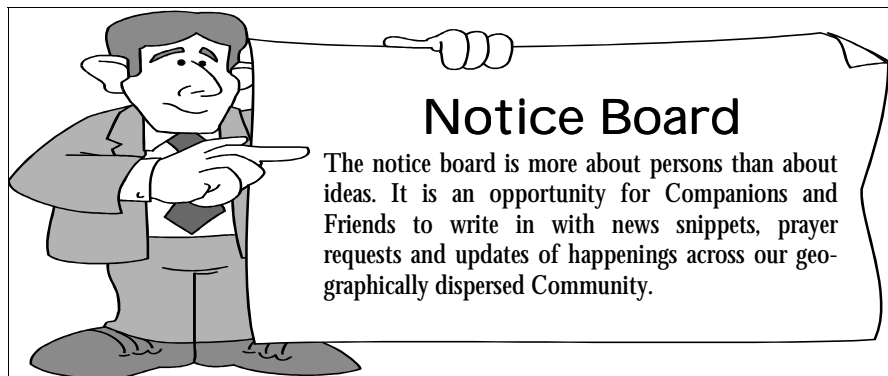
Dave Robertson

we talked about was again really well received. But, I have a suspicion that, that is not all we were there for, I don't know why its just a feeling.

It was really good to meet James Catford, a really good guy even though he is a bit posh! I was struck by the sense of mutual respect and love they had for each other, it was a joy to behold. The Renovare thing is fantastic, I can't really say what I want to, because it hasn't all sunk in yet!

The six streams they talk of are very clever - Contemplative, Holiness, Charismatic, Social Justice, Evangelical and Incarnational. One problem with the Northumbria Community is that it can be a bit 'out there', a bit difficult to grasp, more intuitive and in the ether. Yet there is nothing within the six streams emphasised by Renovare that is new to us, in fact the similarities are scary. So there is much to gain on that score. The renewing of the church goal is again a scary similarity, along with the upholding of community.

I noticed one glaring difference in that they see books as very important as leaving a kind of lasting testament, whereas the Northumbria Community sees relationships and community as its lasting testament! All in all ----amazing.



We have said a sad farewell to **Clare Red-head** who has gone back to Brisbane in Australia, following nearly 7 months at the Nether Springs. Clare left us with a poem which she says, speaks so much of her experience at our Mother House.

#### In My Cell

In the silence  
In the darkness  
I come to meet you  
Undistracted  
As I am

With open arms  
And an open heart  
I lower my eyes  
Distracted  
As I am

At the foot of your cross  
Pierced and broken  
I come to meet you  
Unforgiven  
As I am

With open arms  
Pierced and broken  
You came to meet me  
Forgiven  
As I am

You were held in open arms  
At Mary's Bosom  
You came to meet us  
Ungodlike  
As we are

In that embrace  
Nurtured and fed  
Into the world you came  
Godlike  
You are 'I am'

Now I can raise my eyes  
And meet your face  
Into the world I go  
With God and in God  
As 'I am'

Many of our Community have been or are about to go travelling. **Ian and Joy Corsie** of Allerdean and **Ken Humphrey** from Belfast have returned from prolonged trips to China. **Colin Patterson** has returned safely from a sabbatical in Jerusalem.

Pray also for **Andy and Anna Raine** and their children Joel and Martha as they travel to Boston and on to New Hampshire for 2 weeks from November 1st, gathering together Community folk from within travelling distance, and sharing some dance/creative arts input.

Also for **Brenda Grace** as she travels to Boston in early October and onto Cincinnati, Minneapolis, Oklahoma and Birmingham, Alabama visiting Companions and Friends of the Community.

**Natasha Roumientseva** has had to cut short her time at the Nether Springs due to pressing needs in her work as Librarian in the Russian Christian Institute in St Petersburg. Pray for her as she returns to Russia in early October.

**Ferg and Becky Matthews** and their children, Amy, Joseph and Isaac, have returned to England from Lyon, believing that God's purpose for their time in France has been fulfilled.

**Dawn Millington** of Leeds would covet our prayers as she moves to Turkey at the beginning of November.

Congratulations to **Martin and Julia Timmins** of Otley on the birth of their daughter Olivia Alice Ita on July 25th.

Also to **Peter and Jessica Wohler** of Minneapolis, on the birth of their daughter Anna Skye on September 14th.

## GIFT AID DECLARATION

We would like to remind Companions and Friends and all readers of CAIM who are UK tax payers of the benefit to the Community of Gift Aiding their donations however large or small. This also includes donations for Retreats at the Nether Springs. This adds 28p to every £1 given. If you haven't yet completed a declaration form and wish to do so, then please contact the Finance Office at the Nether Springs. (If you cease to pay tax could you inform the Office of this change in circumstance).

Continue to pray for **Miriam Sayer** of Hobart, Tasmania as she continues to be in good heart as she battles with cancer. Also for **Bill and Louise Whitfield** as they have returned to Lakes Entrance, in South Eastern Australia for a further nine months.

We pray for **Joe and Gail Wykes** of Barwell as they grieve the loss of Gail's Dad in August. This so soon after the death of Joe's Mum.

Congratulations to **Neil Crosbie** of South Cerney on becoming General Secretary of the United Bible Society, a post having worldwide influence. Neil makes this transition from Chief Executive of the UK Bible Society early next year.

**Joy Dunne** of Wakefield has just completed an arduous 'hands on' sponsored sailing trip from Norway to London raising money for disaster relief. Well done!

Thank God for growing links as a Community with **Richard Foster** and the Renovare Movement he founded in America. A UK expression of Renovare (to renew) has been established with **Roy Searle** as one of the Trustees.

Pray for **Derek Marr** of Newcastle as he is ordained into the Priesthood on 7th October in the Parish Church of the Holy Nativity, Chapel House.