



Covenanted together within the love of Christ we share a common heart for Northumbria and a commitment to wander for the love of Christ wherever the Father leads.



CAIM

The NORTHUMBRIA COMMUNITY Newsletter

Issue no 34

Autumn 2005

This issue we're giving the front page to Companion Judith Maskery, as she replies to the leadership request that all Companions re-evaluate what it means for them to be in Companionship with the Community...



Covenanted together within the love of Christ we share a common heart for Northumbria and a commitment to wander for the love of Christ wherever the Father leads.

This statement has a way of getting under the skin. I have been intermittently intrigued by it ever since I first heard or read it some years ago, but over the past few months I have been living with it almost daily, coming back to it again and again, challenged, puzzled, frustrated, excited. Where is the Father leading me? In what way am I, seemingly firmly rooted in my city life and work, to be a wanderer? What does it mean to be covenanted together with people all over the world, most of whom I have never met and, most likely, never will this side of eternity?

Living with these questions has not been a comfortable experience. At times I did feel just like a wanderer, but one who is stuck, driving round and round a one way system looking for the exit to open country and failing to find it. I tried so hard to work out what God was saying about the next stage of my journey that I couldn't understand why I wasn't getting anywhere. In the end I didn't find the way out of my confusion; God in His mercy gave me the signpost as a gift. It was just sitting there, elegantly simple and delightfully apt, waiting for me to find it in the pages of a Royal Shakespeare Company programme for their summer production of 'The Comedy of Errors'.

The programme contained an essay, by poet and novelist John Burnside, on the nature of personal identity. He explores how we come into being as individuals, first by separating ourselves from others, but then by coming back into relationships. He says 'To become unique physical individuals, we must separate from the rest of the world, but to become fully human, we must look into the eyes of another, to see who we are.' Or, as Plato put it: 'If a soul is to know itself, it must look into another soul.'

Reading these words I began to get an insight into my own errors, how totally I had missed the point. Firstly, I

realised that I had been asking the questions posed by this foundational statement in completely the wrong order. I had assumed that I could know in isolation where God was leading me and what sort of wandering He had in mind. But God has already led me to be a companion in a community; why would He then take me on without reference to them? In any true community the relationships are what matter most; the projects are secondary and come out of the relationships, not the other way round. Surely, before I know where I am going to wander to next, or what form that wandering will take, I need to learn to understand what it means to be covenanted together with my fellow companions. My second mistake was to imagine that any real understanding of the nature of covenant relationship could be had other than through first hand experience of such a relationship.

While I was reflecting on this I had a picture, in my mind, of a shallow river. Standing on the bed of the river were men, women and children panning for gold. Side by side they worked, encouraging each other on, the more experienced placing their hands over the hands of the novices to show them how it was done.

As the clear, bright water swilled away the mud and debris in the pans, crumbs of gold emerged. These they collected together, all contributing what they had found to the common purpose. No one crumb of gold would have made much on its own, but together they had the making of something very beautiful.

Inside this issue:

Stories Behind the Meditations for Days of the Month... Andy Raine looks at Day 5, The Methodist Covenant Prayer	2
A Day at a Time... Wisdom from the Desert Fathers, shared by Trevor Miller	3
L'Abri à Suvigny... More news on the progress of this project in Normandy from Jane and Andrew Perkins	4
Community team at "Northern Light"... happy camper Norma Wise shares her experiences	5
Oswin's Day - August 20th... significant prayer-action on the date of this saint's death	6
Book Review: A Generous Orthodoxy... John Goddard reviews this significant and timely book. <i>A must read!</i>	7
New Books Available from Cloisters... "Soulfriends", "Celtic Saints: their Lives and Legacy" and "The Renovaré Spiritual Formation Bible"	8
Soulfriends... a different view from Paul Cullity	9
IN: sight...getting to know the leaders and trustees of Community - Dave Ward	10
Bits and Pieces... news and dates for your diary.	12

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

I am right at the beginning of my exploration of the reality of covenant relationships, but this picture and the words in the programme have stayed with me. I think they have helped me to see a tiny bit of what the meaning of covenant relationships could include. If I take the risk of sharing myself, of daring to be available when the need arises, and others are willing to share with me, then I think we could help each other to know ourselves better and discover the richness of the gifts God has given us. We could find those crumbs of gold and, even more, discover how those gifts could be used to their fullest potential for our Lord. Perhaps then I would come to understand how it is that I wander for the love of Christ wherever the Father leads.

Of course, these are only words on a page until I do something with them. Right now, the only way I know how to demonstrate my commitment to covenant relationship with my companions is to offer these thoughts as a contribution to the common task of finding what it means to be covenanted together. Perhaps they will help someone, perhaps not, but I will risk offering them anyway. There must be lots more thoughts on the subject out there. I'm longing to hear them and to discover what they make when we put them together.



Brief thoughts on 'Covenanted Together' Based on Acts 2: 42-47 by Cathy Turton

'....They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.....they had all things in common: they would sell their possessions and distribute to those in need....day by day they spent much time together....praising God.' Acts 2 v 42-47

Reflecting on this passage I was struck by the parallels of the emphases of the Emerging Church and our Community emphases. Our Daily Office ensures time devoted to prayer and the prioritising of God in our lives, articulated in the rule of Availability. Our rule of Vulnerability recommends 'learning' and one of the greatest gifts of Community for me is companions' recommendations of books which nurture our faith. We don't often speak of financial support and perhaps we should. In my (almost) two years of illness, debt has only been avoided thanks to the sacrificial giving of some companions whose lifestyle aspires to 'all things in common'. How often out on Mission, have people commented on the quality of fellowship amongst Community folk - let's celebrate this. John 13.35 'By this will everyone recognise you as my disciples, if you have love one for another'.

Stories Behind the Meditations for the Days of the Month by Andy Raine

Day 5: Methodist Covenant Prayer

It is time to acknowledge Douglas Graham, one of the founders and early wardens of Marygate House, on Holy Island. It was he who introduced me to the island, the rhythm of the tides and daily office, who explained the significance of Aidan and Cuthbert and took Diana Ellis and me out preaching in Methodist and URC churches all over three circuits of rural Northumberland.

He also introduced me to the New Year's Covenant Service, which teaches us to let go. Sometimes the cost involved is abandonment. Douglas' gifts were eventually invested in Shetland instead, and for me, "let me be empty, let me be laid aside for thee" involved a 14 year wait before I would resume that rhythm of life on Holy Island. But when I returned it was as part of a Community, not just on the island but stretched across many miles.

Relinquishing is part of our DNA, but that doesn't stop it hurting. It's crucial to treasure without hoarding, to possess our possessions but not be possessed by them. Christ has many services to be undertaken, some are easy, others are difficult. After many years I have finally picked up *Lord of the Rings*, and I drank thirstily from it. It has much to say about power and the need for relinquishment.



The greater the gifts entrusted to us, the more important it is to not let them devour us, but to freely and heartily yield all things into God's keeping, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So be it.

QUESTIONS

- "Unlimited wonder burst forth in us
- when we were children, and we asked
- more questions than our parents had
- either time or knowledge to answer. As
- adults, we know very well that we will
- go to our graves with unanswered
- questions. But we still revel in the joy –
- and pain – of raising questions...Only
- our love for God will enable us to make
- ultimate sense out of everything."

See page 3 ➔

A Day at a Time

by Trevor Miller



One of the many sayings of the Desert Fathers that are so profoundly simple that they are simply profound is this one, ‘

Abba Poeman said about Abba Prior that every single day he made a fresh beginning.’

At its heart is the proven wisdom of both Scripture and Tradition that urges us to be committed to the daily

discipline of living a day at a time. Not as an assent to head knowledge, (yeah, that’s right) but as an activity of heart knowledge, (this I must do in order to live!)

We are of course surrounded by its teaching in our daily office, in our liturgies. For example, ‘This day be within and without me’ ‘This day is a new day that has never been before’ ‘I bind unto myself this day’, so much so that we need always to be aware of the danger of allowing familiarity to breed contempt. This is one of God’s great gifts to us - a new beginning each and every day. As Jeremiah said:

‘Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness’.

We’ve all heard the sayings ‘Today is the first day of the rest of your life’. ‘Today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday’ but none are as good as the story of Asterix the Gaul and in particular his chief, Vital Statistix, who is described as majestic, commanding respect, feared by his enemies. However he himself had one fear ‘that the sky would fall on his head tomorrow’ but he comforted himself with the fact that tomorrow never comes.’ And it doesn’t, because when tomorrow comes it is no longer tomorrow but today.

This commitment to living our lives in manageable portions, of having a continuity of new and fresh beginnings is essential to our sanity – otherwise we so easily get crucified between two thieves...regret for yesterday, fear of tomorrow...both of which rob us of the grace needed for today. It’s not that we forget or deny the events, happenings and hurts of each day but that each day we can make a fresh start and bring a fresh perspective, having slept on it, and having gone to our cell.

What has this day brought? Joy, frustration, boredom, anger, peace, resentment, hope, challenge?!

‘Take it to the Lord in prayer: in His arms He’ll take

and shield thee. Thou wilt find a solace there’.

That’s going to your cell, unpacking the baggage there, finding your true self among it all. This is the way to growth, to holiness, to Christ likeness, and for all of us, this growth takes place in the ordinary events that make up each day. The extraordinary moments – Paul on the Damascus road, Mary at the Annunciation, Isaiah in the Temple will only come to us...can only come to us...if we are first prepared and made ready by a day-to-day faithfulness in the ordinary. Not living out fiction, fantasy and fables of our own making.

This day be within and without me.....

- By being really with what is going on around us, and not too elsewhere
- By being present to the people God brings to us today
- By being who we really are

In this way we experience the presence of God incarnationally in the here and now. This is what Jesus said

‘Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own – Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well’.



BECOMING THE WILL OF GOD

“We do not “discover” God’s will, as though it is already written down in some heavenly book. Nor, at the other extreme, do we decide autonomously what we think is best to do and just hope God tolerates our incompetence. God “reveals” his will by the subtler gift of interior desire to do what pleases him...we still have to speak of our aim – “to seek God’s will.” All prayer of discernment has to begin by addressing God directly and asking him what it is that he wants. It’s not exactly asking God to “reveal” his will, though, since we really will make a choice that is a free decision. Rather...it’s asking God for the joy of a shared purpose.”

See page 8 ➡

L'Abri à Suvigny

by Jane and Andrew Perkins



Northumbria Community-style Christian Retreat Centre in Normandy, France. This is an update on events since then.....

At the beginning of July we went over to L'Abri à Suvigny in the company of a family from Loughborough (Diane, Paul and daughter Isobel), Paulette (a lass from New Zealand recently attracted by the Community and having a few weeks in hand before returning to N.Z), and Brian and Cathy, who had felt led to France about 4 years ago, and are currently in the Dordogne. While we were there, it was obvious how God was working in the people's lives.

Although initially, we were disappointed that the works that were to have been carried out on the driveway/septic tank system and water supply hadn't been completed before our arrival, this actually turned out to be a very good thing. Certain alterations could be made, and the workmen were willing to do some extra bits like putting in the electrical earth trench, making a hole through the flint wall for the bathroom pipes, and using the excess soil to help build the bank at the end of the garden where the pond will be. This was only possible because we were there to supervise. God's timing was better than ours!

Community life took off most successfully with the regular monastic rhythm of the day and plenty of time for sharing stories and ideas over the mealtimes. Some lasting friendships have begun, not least with the previous owner of the land who has really taken us under his wing and, through Diane's superb translation skills, we were able to build up a huge amount of *entente cordiale*. We had a grand tour of their farm, met their son and grandson, and have discussed ways in which he, Mr Lechevallier, will help with digging holes in the orchard, as well as maintaining the land at Suvigny, and organising the ordering of fruit trees etc. He is also a very influential person in the local community and this should enable the reaching out to the French people to be eased as well as our acceptance into their midst.

While we blessed the bell, and during conversation and prayer times, more than one of our number received pictures and guidance on what their future journeys with God are likely to entail, as well as what God has in mind for France. This was very exciting, as was the contact with the roofing contractor's wife. She

said that they had just bought a new property quite close to us which had a barn which she had a very strong feeling would be used as a meeting place. When I shared with her what we were doing and about the Northumbria Community, she was extremely interested and asked for the website! She duly perused that while we had returned to England, and on our second visit at the end of July, asked to see us. A very encouraging conversation ensued which may well lead to her being drawn away from her spiritualist past into Community the Northumbrian Way! She needs our prayers.

It was a real blessing to meet Brian and Cathy from the Dordogne. They felt very much at home, and have since said that they feel they will be an integral part of L'Abri à Suvigny in the future. Unfortunately their visit was cut short by their daughter's ill-health and they had to return after only two days.

Paulette (from New Zealand) gained a lot of confidence over the week, which was lovely to see, and so did Diane. She had been very trepidatious about life in general following her surgery and treatment for cancer since April, and the week saw her coming out of her shell and daring to live again. She and Paul have since had more confirmation that their future very probably lies in France and in community, so that is exciting! Paul and Andrew are an excellent partnership, and their daughter Isobel, and our Sarah got on very well indeed.

I returned with Paulette again for a couple of weeks end of July/beginning of August, when we were able to link up some more plumbing in the bathroom, plant some cut-price trees from the July sales at Mr Bricolage, generally work on some redecoration and domestic items, and enjoy a visit from my sister and son from the West Country of England.

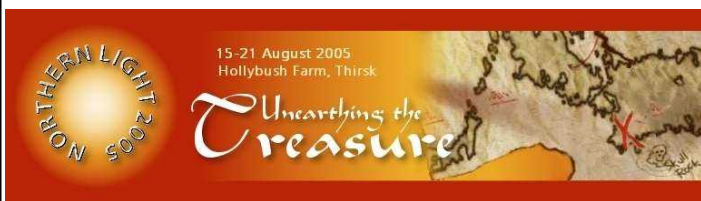
The next project is a possible link up with some senior school pupils at the school where I work, to come and help to plant the orchard as part of their Duke of Edinburgh

Award Scheme. This is an exciting step forward, as one never knows what God will do with the spiritual seeds planted in young lives. They are hoping to do this around Easter time next year.

We intend to do more on the pond, woodland and prayer garden next summer, as well as pottering on with renovations in the house. If anyone feels they would like to join us, or feels they have items lurking in their sheds or garages that we could use, please do contact us. Email address a.perkins@ntlworld.com



During the Summer months Community teams have been out and about to some of the camps and festivals that happen at this time of year. Here is a report on the work of the team at "Northern Light", held at Hollybush, in North Yorkshire, written by Norma Wise...



The intrepid trio travelled on Sunday afternoon to Hollybush, Thirsk, to their first Northern Lights Camp. Although the week started officially on Monday, us teenagers, sorry slight mistake, I meant keenagers, were very excited about this

special week, and were allowed to arrive early to prepare our venue. Norma Charlton, Ann Brown and myself.....did I say keenagers? it was actually the 'over sixties set', arrived safe and sound?! With the help of Ken, we set up camp. [He then fled to find peace until his gallant return on Saturday, when he was all set for a comfortable bed, only to discover he had been allocated a small one man tent in the middle of the field 'cos Ann and I had the caravan.....ah well,'...all for the sake of the Kingdom'.]

We had been asked to man [or woman] THE SACRED SPACE marquee, which was meant to be a quiet space for prayer. A little miracle had happened a few days earlier; God had given us 28 beautiful saris, all radiating out from a metal circle in the middle [from the Telling Place at Greenbelt]. Norma Charlton had a lot to do with this free gift, but what an amazing difference it made to the plain white venue, plus quite a bit of other creative splendour. We also 'built' a poustinia [gazebo] with a fur wall and floor!! [We found a pregnant lady asleep in it one day. *How's that for 'the peace that passes all understanding'?*]. We've got to say the place looked stunning, and we were very grateful to a wonderful angel called John Stone, with his wife Fred and to the rest of the team, John and Janet Roberts.



The facilities on the site were first class, including The BARN, which is a huge charity shop raising money for Africa. There were 180 people there, including children who were well catered for by some very talented people [I would have loved to have spent time in those tents, to take ideas home to our Sunday school]. There was a large choice on the programme; sadly we couldn't get to them all.

Some highlights for me were:-

- meeting faces behind the names I'd only seen in the Prayer Guide and discovering once again how deep friendships within community are so quickly formed, with the immediate sense of working as a team [such a definite spontaneous drawing together and sharing of selves and resources, which helped us to help others!]
- Fraggie on roller skates waving the flag of the Spirit to start Celtic Fire on Monday night, miraculously put together by Andy who engaged some of the actors as they took their seats, and supported by the dancers from community.
- The hot chocolate in Jaboula late at night.
- Clean hot showers freely available
- The joy of sharing in Sacred Space our 4 Offices a day, led by different team members, including Graham and Elizabeth Addis
- Tapes available for all the talks at a reasonable price, so we could and hear again those we enjoyed, like Roy's talk on "God, You and Adventure" – lovely to hear him
- I went each morning to a seminar, held in Sacred Space, called "Growing a Local / Global Church" led by Tony Kirk [OM]. Very challenging and interesting...
- The final joy was seeing the toddlers and young children, at the front of the church [service] worshipping God with themselves and their flags...delightful.
- A huge thanks must go to "Wellspring" and their music and "In Yer Face" drama group....both brilliant.

catch up on the talks we missed



WE ALL LOOK FORWARD TO 2006 CAMP...HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE .

Oswin's Day - August 20th by Andy Raine

Oswy was king of Bernicia [north-Northumbria] following the death of his elder brother Oswald. He wanted to be king of the whole of Northumbria, but that could only happen when his cousin Oswin, king of Deira [south-Northumbria] also died. After 2 or 3 years he arranged for Oswin's friend to invite him to his own home [at Gilling, near Scotch Corner] and slay him there. It was a double treachery because Oswy not only had his cousin killed but it was at the hand of someone he believed he could have trusted his life to!

From that time on Oswy showed a profound anxiety that God would never forgive him for this act of treachery, especially as he continued to reap its benefits. His wife, Eanfleda, suggested the compulsory purchase of the site of the murder so it could become a monastery at the king's expense, ensuring that it be manned by those who would pray for the slayer and the slain. So instead of begging God's forgiveness and mercy, Oswy begins his attempts at buying God's favour through bribery, giving his infant daughter Elfleda to be a nun, and funding the setting up of a total of 12 new monasteries, 6 each in Deira and Bernicia, in return for a victory in battle

This was the same king who called the famous Synod of Whitby to rule for a unified practice of the faith throughout Northumbria, mainly so his queen and her chaplain and her maids would have to abandon the new Roman calendar and fall in line with everyone else instead of causing him confusion and the matrimonial distress of 2 Lents out of sync with each other.



The outcome should have been a fore-gone conclusion were it not for the surprise substitution of Wilfrid as the spokesman for the Roman party. He used his inside knowledge to bring about a different outcome before the opening speeches had hardly been heard and all discussion was thus aborted.

Wilfrid well knew, from his years on Lindisfarne, the fierce loyalty of the Celtic monks to John as their father in the faith. From his friendship with the king's son he knew of Oswy's anxiety and sleepless nights, his fear of dying un-forgiven. Wilfrid's manipulation of these factors and his representation of Peter as effectively the bouncer at the gate of heaven became the third and final act of treachery, creating a wind-tunnel of treacheries, given extra power by the synod's venue being one of the foundations

Oswy had funded in his desperate attempts to win back God's approval. From that time he turned his attention instead to attempts to curry favour with Peter, ruling unexpectedly pro-Rome at Whitby, begging Wilfrid to take him on pilgrimage to Rome so he could die clinging to Peter's tomb, and then when he was too ill to travel arranging to be buried instead in a new royal burial-place attached to the Whitby abbey which he named St Peter's Portico. 'He took his treachery with him, even to the grave, and it filled the earth.' It was Oswin's murder, but Oswy's grave, that this speaks of, we finally realised

One ordinary Wednesday morning [which turned out to be Eanfleda's day!] we had met on the Island, Andy + Anna with Mary Fleeson, to do intercessory listening prayer without any notion that it would lead us into eventually taking on a major prayer-action on August 20th 2005, the anniversary of Oswin's murder.

The day began early that Saturday morning on the beach by the Green Shiel on Holy Island where Wilfrid was taught to fish as a teenager, and where he could even have been when he heard of Oswin's death. We danced to recorded music by Iona the story of the coming of Aidan and his monks ...So here we are; we have come this far to say a prayer on Lindisfarne....One of the 'monks' was Mark Westhead who danced from his wheelchair and reached that beach with the enlisted help of an English Nature warden's land-rover. Chris Seaton had travelled from Bognor Regis where Wilfrid evangelised the south-Saxons whilst rescuing them from famine with his Lindisfarne-learned alternative fishing expertise. Chris danced the role of Wilfrid to the Chris Rea song 'Going Fishing', sliding off the stepladder of his ambition long enough to throw off his smart shoes and clothes, roll up his trousers and reach out for the harvest of the sea and of people's hearts won for Christ ['You can waste a whole lifetime trying to be what people expect of you and never be free.. May as well go fishing']

Then we hurried in cars down to Gilling West for a CDP communion in the church on the site of the abbey on the site of Oswin's friend's house. The celebrant was Randy Vickers from the Northumbrian Centre for Healing at Stocksfield.

Dorothy, Lewis Houston, Chris + our Joel each prayed powerfully, Jonathan Priestley, Andy + Fraggie danced Godfrey Birtill's 'When I look at the Blood'.



We took leave of the local congregation and the

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

Sedburgh contingent and hurtled on to Whitby Abbey to meet other friends. We gathered at the outside wall where Fr Simon and friends were already huddled. The mass there was a struggle with cold winds and other discouragements. Andrew Lobb sang about 'St Peter's divide', Jonathan danced the lament "'How long?' and in another dance the clenched fist of certain faith smashes in pieces on the ground then its fragments are gathered and offered back to God.



We also sensed the pain of Oswy's struggle to ever release his guilt fully to God's mercy and grace. We anointed the feet of Steve Lowton and his team of prayer-walkers as they left us to begin their trek to York. From York to Canterbury, and from there to Rome his journey was to continue.

We seemed always to be focused on the ground, while we were there, but we believe that much healing for the land and its peoples will flow from what was accomplished.



Reviewed...

A Generous Orthodoxy

By Brian D. McLaren

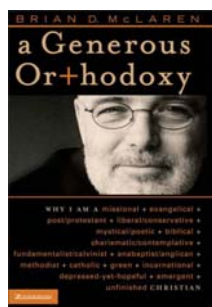
Zondervan,

297 pages, hardback

ISBN: 0-310-25747-6

Reviewer: John Goddard

Available from Cloisters £15.00



This book would be worth the cover price for the title alone. A

Generous Orthodoxy is a personal confession and an offer of hope to those who are struggling to relate our Christian faith to the challenges of the post-modern, post-critical, post-Christendom world.

Brian McLaren, a respected writer and speaker within the emergent church networks, outlines what a new kind of Christianity might look like in our new world – a Christianity beyond the conflicts of conservative and liberal, based on the generosity of God's grace within the integrity of traditional creedal orthodoxy. The term generous orthodoxy was coined by Yale theologian Hans Frei, who once commented that "Generosity without orthodoxy is nothing, but orthodoxy without generosity is worse than nothing."

McLaren begins by describing why he is a Christian, before going on to explain what kind of a Christian he is. This second section of the book unpacks the outrageous subtitle of this book: *Why I am a missionary + evangelical + post/protestant + liberal/conservative + mystical/poetic + biblical + charismatic/contemplative + fundamentalist/calvinistic + anabaptist/anglican + methodist + catholic + green + incarnational + depressed-yet-hopeful + emergent + unfinished Christian*. Put briefly, generous orthodoxy seeks a place beyond conflict where we might celebrate diversity – a place beyond the family infighting that has sadly characterised Christianity for too long. A place of generosity...

This book will upset many, and will be important because of that. Like Dave Tomlinson's *The Post Evangelical* and Steve Chalke and Alan Mann's *The Lost Message of Jesus*, McLaren will be accused by his conservative friends of betraying the evangelical cause, and fifteen years ago I'd have held their coats whilst they picked up the stones. But today I suspect that *A Generous Orthodoxy* is saying what many are feeling – myself included. This book is not *the* answer, but please don't miss the significance of the questions. Highly recommended.

John M. Goddard is minister of Abbey Road Baptist Church, Barrow-in-Furness



Joyden's Wood

August 18 2005

"If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers." (John 15:6)

I pick up a dead branch from the ground
Searching for its message.
I see it disconnected, cut off,
No longer part of the tree.
Hard, unyielding, dry and brittle –
It snaps easily.

I see myself too disconnected and alone
Through over busyness and pre-occupation.
I am tense, fragile, withering.

"Remain in me... No branch can bear fruit by itself."
(John 15:4)

I grab a branch of the tree and pull.
So strong and flexible,
So vitally connected to the trunk –
Same wood, same bark,
Same sap coursing through
Nourished by the sun and the rain.
Green leaves flourishing.
Lord let me stay in You
Vitally connected like this branch.
Nourish me Father with your light and warmth,
Soak me Holy Spirit
And may the green leaves of my life
Be for the healing of the nations.

David Pott

New Books Now Available From Cloisters

Soulfriendship

This is the latest in the How then shall we live? series of booklets. The subject is one that has always been vital to the Community and there has been a great need to help folk understand the concept and how to put it into practice. Ever since Andy and Anna Raine and Amund Karner began leading teaching weekends on soulfriendship there have been helpful accompanying handbook notes available; but it has taken ages to reach general agreement about how best to present this to a wider audience - but we've done it at last!



The booklet provides the historical background to the subject; sets out some basic principles; and shows ways these principles can be applied in practice: how to choose a soulfriend, different models of relationship, structure of meetings and how often to meet, how to be a soulfriend to somebody when invited, help on the spiritual journey, etc.

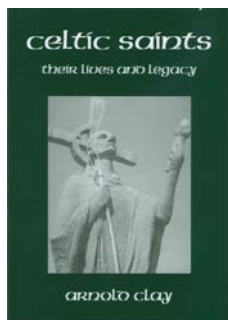
The material in this booklet is not intended to be **prescriptive**: many of the issues raised here can be the subject of debate. It is, rather, intended to be **provocative**, making us think and inviting us to take action.

Brigid said, 'Anyone without a soulfriend is like a body without a head.' What are you going to do about this? As a first step, get hold of a copy of this booklet!

ORDER CODE: HT/SF Mail order price: £4.00

Celtic Saints: Their Lives and Legacy

This is a new paperback book by Arnold Clay summarising the lives of the major Celtic Saints - and a good job he has made of it. It is a well-researched and clearly-written summary of all the major saints familiar to the Community. There are no illustrations, but all the facts are there, clearly laid out, together with an assessment of the legacy of each saint.

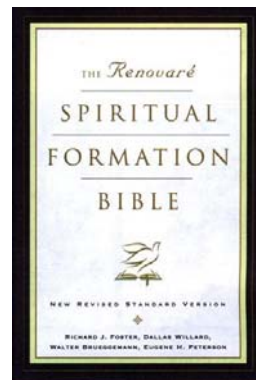


ORDER CODE: CSLL Mail order price: £7.00

The Renovare Spiritual Formation Bible

This is not just 'another' new Bible: it is different in that it combines a **study** Bible with a **devotional** Bible. It means that you not only get the full Bible text (it's the NRSV version including the Deuterocanonical books) with overviews of each book and extensive notes on the text by many authoritative commentators (not least Roy Searle and Trevor Miller of our Community, who have contributed on Obadiah, Nahum and Zephaniah), but also many challenges throughout the text on how we might respond to it. There is an introduction to 'The With-God Life' and, instead of a general index, a 'Spiritual Disciplines' index.

This Bible is the result of much labour by the Renovare team, led by Richard Foster, and it complements the other Renovare books sold through Cloisters: Richard Foster's **Streams of Living Water** and **Spiritual Formation Workbook**, and Dallas Willard's **The Divine Conspiracy**. There is a growing demand for these in the UK as Renovare UK (Roy Searle is the Director) holds conferences and encourages the growth of Spiritual Formation groups.



This is, inevitably, a big (over 2,300 pages in a sturdy hardcover binding) and expensive book. But as it is not yet generally available in the UK (it is published by HarperSanFrancisco ISBN 0060671084), Cloisters has imported stock to make it available here, particularly where Roy is speaking, but also by mail order (though there is a hefty postage charge because of the weight of the book).

ORDER CODE: SFB Mail order price: £26.00

The quotations on pages 2 and 3 are selected by Andy Raine from the book,

We Cannot Find Words: The foundations of prayer,
by Tad Dunne SJ

*"The material in this book is not intended to be **prescriptive**: many of the issues raised here may be the subject of debate"* Review of "Soulfriendship" on page 8. **Paul Cullity suggests a different view (prompted by reading an early draft of the book called "To Each their Anamchara"):**



Soulfriends or Anamchairde by Paul Cullity

I'd like to lodge a few observations about the practice of soul-friendship, in response to recently reading the book provided by the community. My observations will be in three areas, historical, theological and practical. Most are still formative for me, so I would not want anything to be seen as argumentative, or confrontational. I would just like to open the dialogue. I think that there are some possible misconceptions in the way we are currently defining the practice of soul-friendship, if the book is an example of our current common understanding. I'll begin with a bit of history.

In the fourth to seventh centuries, also the time of the great Celtic church plantings, there was no clearly defined sacrament of penance. Christians often confessed to one another, without using a priest, and frequently, people confessed to God directly without mediation. This phenomenon is clearly explained in books like Deanesly's *Pre-conquest church in England*, MacLean's *The church in these Islands before Augustine*, MacNeill's *A Cure of Souls: Pastoral Care and Practice*, etc.

In this pre-confession age, a number of practices took root. Among them were the processes that have become known as soul-friendship and spiritual direction. Some are now saying that these practices are different, but I would argue that every single soul-friend or spiritual direction relationship is also different, but they have a number of common elements. The conflict seems to be over the issue of collegiality or authority. If the "friends" are equal in authority, that is a soul-friend relationship, if one has power over the other, then it is a spiritual director relationship.

I would argue that any relationship that places one person over another in Christian direction is **WRONG!** Spiritual direction is not about authority, it is about intimacy, listening, discernment and prayerful support and guidance. In other words, it is about all the things that soul-friendship is about. I have a number of people who visit me for what some of them call spiritual direction, others call friendship, and still others just call conversation. All of these relationships involve a listening ear, a confidential security, and a space that enable these individuals to hear from God for themselves. None are mutual. That is, I "bare my soul" to different people than those who come to share, confess, or unburden themselves to me.

I believe that the current popularity of soul-friends is in no small measure due to the alienation people are experiencing in society. Without the traditional framework of church, confessor, parent, people are clamouring for some type of intimate partner for their experience of faith. The Celtic traditions provide such a basis, but it is important to remember that the soul-friends of the Celtic tradition are exclusively monastic. They are probably confessional, in a pre-confession era, and are an antidote to the ban on special friendships within the monastery. We do not have a single example anywhere, of an individual not from a monastery engaging in this practice. It is out of the intense experiences of monastic discipline, that soul-friendship emerged.

By the time these stories were written down, more than 500 years had passed. Even Sellner, in his *Wisdom of the Celtic Saints*, reminds us that none of the stories are historical in the normal sense of that word, and that they represent the wisdom of the age that generated them. That being said, Sellner also tells us that they were written down in the 13th to 16th centuries. This tells us more about the late medieval church, then, than it tells us about the great age of the Celtic saints.

Theologically for me, the practices of soul-friendship, spiritual direction and personal confession are all inextricably linked. Our current booklet indicates that, "some people are now so confused that they use the terms (soulfriend/spiritual director) almost interchangeably" I would admit to being one of those people, but would add to my name the names of Tilden Edwards, *Spiritual Friend: Reclaiming the Gift of Spiritual Direction*. He is also the author of *Spiritual Director*, *Spiritual Companion*, Ken Leech, *Soul Friend-Spiritual Direction in the Modern World*, Merton, *Spiritual Direction and Meditation*, Thomas Dubay, *Seeking Spiritual Direction*, and on and on. In just thinking about this issue this morning, I pulled out about thirty books from my counselling shelf, okay counselling book case, and all covered some aspect of the companion or friend sense inherent in their definition of spiritual director.

I am also very uncomfortable with 'proof-texting' the lives of the Celtic saints as if they were scripture. It is

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

actually, in my opinion just as valid to proof-text the stories of Susan Howatch as it is the lives of any of the 5th and 6th century Celtic saints. We don't know if they even existed, much less what they said, or what authority their ideas would have had. See Mackay, *Introduction to Celtic Christianity*, or Kathleen Hughes, *'Is There Such a Thing as the Celtic Church?'* in *Cambridge Medieval Celtic Studies*, Volume 1, number 1, 1981.

When we say that Paul teaches us in scripture, we do so with profound agreement as to the universal acceptance of Paul as a New Testament writer. When we say that something should be done because Brigid said so, I think we need to ask what that means. I don't believe we can demonstrate that a single passage or idea of the so-called St. Brigid traditions are actually historical. Appealing to Brigid as an authority for modelling our behaviour is therefore a dubious exercise. When we use the apocryphal tale of St. Francis, telling his companions to "preach the gospel today. If absolutely necessary, use words", we are not requiring the listener to believe that Francis ever said those things. In all likelihood, he didn't. We are simply pointing out the possibility of "living" the Gospel, not just talking about it. This model is in harmony with what Francis did achieve. If we introduce this idea by saying something like: It has been told about Francis that... or Some people tell this story of Francis. . . Then we are on safer soil, so to speak.

In the case of To Each Their Anamchara, the urgency is supported only by an apocryphal directive. To be at least basically scriptural, "let each word be established in the mouth of two or three witnesses."

IN:sight...getting to know the leaders and trustees of Community – Dave Ward

It seems that the most extrovert members of the leadership team have now written their pieces for this section of CAIM...at least, none of the shy and retiring remainder have rushed to give me their biographical revelations this time...so it's left to me to fill the gap in this issue.

Boating with Brendan



I am not, by nature, a person who takes wild risks, particularly if they disturb my comfort and security, and I think I'm getting worse as I get older!

This makes dear old Brendan the Navigator, saint and seafarer, a very unusual travelling companion for me. A significant number of people, places, books, films, music and ideas have shaped my life and made me the person who I am today, but none so effectively as the reckless mariner monk, who constantly challenges me to,

***"abandon... the soft comforts of home...turn my back
on my native land, and my face towards the sea."***

Yet somehow this constant challenge to move on from the safe and familiar and adventure with God has kept me aware of how it feels to be really alive, trusting God and walking by faith, not sight.

Life in Wales had not been easy. I had gone there, into "exile", following my divorce and the loss of my job as a minister. Despite a very happy remarriage to Wendy, life had been filled with loss, bereavement, debt, depression, unemployment, betrayal, slander, dashed hopes...even as I type the list I find it hard to believe that after 40 or so years of relatively regret-free living I was hit by so much bad stuff in such a short period of time.

But now all that was history. We both had jobs we enjoyed, had managed to 'buy' our own house and were settling down to what felt like recovery and normality.

Then I made the mistake of reading David Adam's book about Brendan, *"A Desert in the Ocean"*, and every unsettling chapter I read produced in me the dual feelings of threat and excitement. Eventually I confided in Wendy, "I think God may want us to move again." After being in 5 different homes in the space of 3 years I expected a fairly tart, if not angry reply, but instead Wendy confirmed that, "God's been saying the same to me".

So it was that, after a miraculously speedy house sale and equally speedy new jobs for us both, we found ourselves once again living with friends (we'd had to do this for a while in Wales, when we lost our home) and

back from the beauty of Welsh mountains and sea to the rain-washed streets of Manchester (the city I love to hate!).

We moved into our own house, and were fairly quickly joined by all 4 of our children, who had been living with their mum (who had remarried and gone to live in London), so that they could continue their education, church and social life in Manchester. We renewed friendships we thought we'd lost and found new ones, and for a while, we were settled...

It seemed that God had given back so much of what had been taken from us during the years in Wales, but for me, one major thing was still un-restored. The call to pastoral ministry, which I assumed was my life's vocation, had not been revoked by God, as far as I could see, and I was baffled at my inability to return to pastoral ministry. The whole thing was becoming a bit of a frustration, a barrier to moving on, enjoying the "now" and a blight on my relationship with God.

I suspect that, like me, not many of us use the Brendan Liturgy in Celtic Daily Prayer very often, but when I did, the Nagging Navigator spoke God's words into my life again:

***"I determine amidst all uncertainty always to trust.
I choose to live beyond regret, and let you recreate my life"***

I remembered the words of the preacher/prophet, David Pawson, who said that Christian belief was not about putting your faith in God at some moment in history, but that we should constantly ask ourselves, "When did I last have faith in God?" God was saying, "Do you still trust me with your life and vocation NOW, despite all the heartache and regret?"



St Columba's Bay, Iona, on a bright but stormy day in late October 2003. I was on retreat on Iona with a group from the Northumbria Community. It was in this bay that another Irish monk beached his boat, and climbed a hill to see if he was out of sight of his beloved Ireland, as he contemplated the "white martyrdom" of a life of service in exile.

The "Pilgrim Guide to Iona" told me,

"as part of our meditation at this bay we take two pebbles from the beach. One we throw into the sea as a symbol of something in our lives we would like to leave behind, while the other we take back with us as a sign of a new commitment in our heart."

My clinging to "full-time ministry" went into the sea that day, and the other green pebble sits on my desk to remind me not to go dredging it up again.

Just recently, we seem to be getting "watery words" telling us that another move, another journey is coming soon. After all, we have been in our present house for an excessive 5 years...pray with us!

***"Lord I will trust you,
help me to journey beyond the familiar
and into the unknown.***

***Give me the faith to leave the old ways
and break fresh ground with you.***

***Christ of the mysteries, can I trust you
to be stronger than each storm in me?***

***...I will believe you for my future,
chapter by chapter,
until all the story is written.***





Bits and Pieces

Intercessors

If you wish to know more about how you can be part of this vital ministry, please telephone: **Norma Wise** of Newton Aycliffe on: 01325 312930.

Community Groups

People are investigating the formation of new groups in several areas:

Nottinghamshire

Sue and Peter York are planning to hold meetings in the Nottingham area. Sue can be contacted on dr.s.m.york@ntlworld.com

Wrexham

A couple of NC folk have started meeting to pray about a possible group in the Wrexham area. Anyone interested should contact Graham Ledger at love2grow@onetel.net

South Leicestershire

Contact Linda Brown on 01455 272518 if you'd like to be part of a group in South Leicestershire.

If you would like more information about these, or established Community Groups; please contact:

Norma Charlton norma.charlton@northumbriacommunity.org

Tel: 0191 487 8065 (if a member of her family answers, please ask them to write down your telephone (preferably landline) number), or via the Community office



Easter Workshop 2006

This year, Easter Workshop will be held in Northumberland over the weekend from Thursday 13th April to Monday 17th April.

The theme of this year's workshop is:
"Renewing our Covenant - A Call to a New Monasticism"

The editors would like to thank all those who have contributed to this edition of CAIM.
We apologise to anyone whose contribution has been missed due to lack of space.

We always appreciate articles, pictures and snippets of news, no matter how small. It's important that CAIM is a means of communication for everyone in our "dispersed" Community.

**Issue 35
Winter 2005.**

**The copy date for
this edition is
21st
November 2005.**

© CAIM is the official newsletter of the Northumbria Community.

Northumbria Community Trust, No: 1099503, a Registered Charity in England and Wales.

Nether Springs, Hetton Hall, Chatton, Northumberland NE66 5SD
Tel: 01289 388235 Fax: 01289 388510 email:
office@northumbriacommunity.org

**Editors:
David & Wendy
Ward**

david.ward@northumbriacommunity.org

0161 442 7506