

CAIM

Issue no 16 Spring 2001

The Northumbria Community Newsletter

Welcome to the Spring 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.

The Seal of God

Jeff Sutheran of North Sunderland

A life that embraces, even imperfectly, the spiritual disciplines, means that most of the time we are in the process of being inwardly transformed by the renewing of the mind. But, speaking personally here, every now and again I meet someone whose experience of God releases in me not a joyous communion and unfettered thanksgiving, but an unexpected surge of jealousy, even anger. "Why don't I hear from God like that?" "Why doesn't he speak to me that clearly?" and "I simply don't have enough faith" are all rushing into my head before I can stem the tide with a memorised verse.

And so it was in that time of sharing our hearts in Iona recently. One of the guys related how he had rested on a rock during a long walk on the west side. He had almost whimsically said to God that "it would be nice to see a seal", and a few seconds later one had appeared just a few feet away! Now, this pressed two buttons for me: one, I have always had a fondness for seals, which seem to me so ridiculously clumsy, yet elegant, tough and able to survive in seemingly impossible situations; and second, this man had merely uttered his heart's desire, and God had delivered it first class, on a silver plate! That familiar "told you so" was lapping around me before I could defend myself...

A few days after returning home, I

was walking on the beach with Jill, and Paddy, our dog. Jill's attention was suddenly taken by something appearing for a fleeting moment in the water, quite a way down the beach. "Perhaps it's a seal, let's get closer" she said, with real excitement in her voice. As we moved quickly down the beach, I remembered the Iona incident, and reminded the Lord how special it would be to see a seal there in the water, just a few hundred metres from our own front door. I pleaded with him to bless us in this simple way, and even if I didn't deserve it, then for Jill, please...

We must have searched the water for ten minutes I suppose, before turning away disappointed. I remember Jill asking, "what an earth is the matter?" as she looked at my face, which must have been wearing a thunderous scowl to match my mood. Where were you, God? Why could you not do such a simple thing to bless us, struggling as we are?

A week or so later, I was on a different stretch of this majestic coastline, this time alone with Paddy. I was enjoying the solitude, and had noticed how, even though the beach stretched out for a mile or more in each direction, there was not another soul in sight. I liked that. As I strode out purposefully, my eye was drawn to a large object high up on the beach,

almost in the dunes. I had thought I'd seen it move, and was telling myself not to be ridiculous, when suddenly it lurched heavily to the right. So, it seemed, did my heart.

I made my way the hundred yards or so up the beach, having restrained Paddy some distance away. As I came close, I saw a most forlorn sight. A seal, about four feet long, quite hefty but obviously quite young, was flapping about in the sand. I could see the long trail he had made - was he a he? - as he wandered around in the sand, way above the high water mark. I came within an arm's length, and marvelled at the sheen on his back. I could see clearly the shaped grey blotches on the skin, and the perfectly symmetrical, absurdly long whiskers each side of his twitching, blowing nostrils. If I stayed still then so did he, and then his enormous, dark eyes

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The Seal of God

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were like deep pools inviting me to

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COMMUNITY GROUP LEADERS WEEKEND

Norma Charlton of Gateshead

Once a year Community Group leaders have the opportunity to get together for a weekend to share about our lives and our groups, to raise relevant questions, and to pool ideas for what our groups have done, would like to do or are hoping to do in the future. It is a time to reflect on each group's development, to get to know each other and to pray for each other, for existing groups as well as those God is planning, and to simply enjoy being in each others' company. We meet with Roy and Trevor, do a bit of business, have a bit of fun, and also fit in some free time when we can choose to be alone or together.

This year's gathering was in January, when ten regions sent seventeen representatives, including one who went back home fired up to officially recognise the existence of a Northumbria Community Group in Aberdeen. Six other areas where there are groups meeting or wanting to meet could not send anyone this time. One group is not meeting currently, [although they have hopes of an early revival].

The first thing we did on Friday night was to share something of ourselves and our vision of Community Groups. Here was a chance to express any concerns we might have or raise questions for dialogue over the weekend, especially on the Saturday morning when we were joined by Trevor and Roy. We had three 'business sessions' on Saturday when we talked about some of the perennial chestnuts – communication of information (both ways), 'new map' spirituality and the Community's relationships with established and emerging churches, the need to know the story of the Community, the purpose of the Groups and how we fit into the bigger picture. This was interspersed with free time when some went onto Holy Island, while others walked or talked, prayed or slept around the Hall.

On Saturday after evening office we enjoyed a ceilidh as we understand it – stories, songs, poems, games and goodies, with a modicum of wine and mulled cider, sitting by the fire and candlelight. On Sunday morning we looked at the issues of Regional Gatherings and helping new groups to get started, before giving everyone the opportunity to be anointed with the oil of Gladness and praying with and for each other. After lunch we finished praying with the last two people. One or two were staying on to combine a retreat with the weekend but most of us set off home with rekindled fervour for our groups and already looking forward to meeting again.

While each group is unique and has its own

special character, people spoke of them as places where individuals can feel safe and accepted for themselves, comfortable yet open to being challenged. For some their group is a safe 'flopping place' in the midst of a 'busy world', for others it is their lifeline to sanity and a source of learning and encouragement. Some have twenty members; in others only three or four meet regularly.



Everyone values their ecumenical nature, and the opportunity to share Office which most of us usually say alone. We also recognise the importance of being able to bring along our Christian and non-Christian friends. But above all we treasure the experience of being able to be our real selves with others who are seeking God in the way we live our lives. In prayer before the first session we were given the image of the night sky, with all its constellations and single stars scattered around. This felt so apt for all the Community, shining as bright stars where God has placed us, some far removed from anyone else, others clustered together making a recognisable pattern, distinct and different from any other. Just as we can only see the pattern of each constellation from a distance, so we appreciate the uniqueness of each Group when we stand back from it and attempt to describe it to others. Descriptions included 'life-giving', 'releasing', 'enabling', 'open to change but not compromise', 'accepting', 'non-evangelising', 'challenging', 'supportive'. Given the tremendous mixture of talents within the Community and using our Rule as an interpretative framework for the activities of the Groups allows a wonderful variety in what we choose to do and explore. We also provide for variety by asking each group to make sure that in some way they cover each of the four 'Achsah Principles'* in

the course of the year:

1. The Deeper Life – a commitment to help each other grow on their inner faith journey
2. Not Alone – we aim to give support to each other so that no-one need feel isolated
3. Listening to God in Prayer – according to the 'Principles of Intercession' used by the Community
4. Church without Walls - meeting people 'where they're at', without ulterior motives and consciously trying to avoid a 'fortress mentality'.

Following the ethos of the meditation for day 31, we do not advertise for new members for the Groups, preferring instead to let God do the calling [although that does not prevent us from inviting our friends to 'come and see']. We are delighted to hear that several groups of people meet regularly to share Office without being official Community Groups. What is required to be recognised as a Northumbria Community Group are a few people [not all from the same church] eager to explore together the spirituality of the Northumbria Community, a congenial place to meet [these vary from homes to historic chapels] and someone who is prepared to co-ordinate the meetings. [The responsibility for the content of the meetings should be shared so that it doesn't become a burden for one person]. Currently there are groups meeting in **Aberdeen, Andover, Bradford, Coventry, Derby, Gateshead, Gloucestershire, Holy Island, Newton Aycliffe, Sedburgh, Swindon, West Calder, and York.** Also there are possibilities to meet in **Altrincham, Brockley (S.E. London), Osset, Oxford, and Teeside.**

If anyone wants help setting up a group in their area or finding out about existing groups I would be delighted to help. Contact Norma Charlton at 84 Kells Lane, Low Fell, Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, NE9 5XY, phone 0191 4878065, or e-mail: normacharlton@bigfoot.com If I promised to give you information and you haven't received it, I'm sorry, you must have been on the other side of the paper my son used for his notes and then threw in the bin. Please try again.

An enquirer asked a monk; 'What do you do in your monastery?' The monk replied; 'We fall down and we get up, and we fall down and we get up.'

dive in. If I moved, he barked, and bared his imperfect, stained teeth to show me that he was fierce. What on earth was to be done? Although I had felt some affinity with these creatures, I knew nothing about them. Was he really lost, floundering? How could I get him back to the water? It was at least 150 yards; the tide was now low. "Well" I thought, "this is a quiet place, maybe I'll leave him and he'll find his own way back." But as I sat there next to him, I could hear him panting quickly, and somehow he seemed so pathetic, stranded high and dry.

What I needed was help, moral and physical support. I scoured both directions but not another living soul. So, I told him we were going to get him back. We were both out of our depth here, and only if we worked together could we sort this out. Unfortunately, he didn't seem to speak the language, because every time I went near him, he lunged at me with those stained, stubby paws. I tried to assure him that I was more frightened of him than he was of me, and he seemed keen to make sure it stayed that way.

For a few minutes we tried using a long stick. I placed it gently near his face, and he attacked it with determination. While he was clamped on, I could drag him a few feet towards the water. We might be there by Wednesday at this rate.

"Look," I said impatiently, "this is ridiculous. Stop messing about, let me get you back in the water, and we can both get on with our day." There was no alternative but to actually **touch** him, but even if I approached from behind, he would crane his neck to get at me. After fifteen minutes of indecision and wondering whether I was doing the right thing - all the time hoping someone else would come along who had done a seal-handling-for-beginners course - I decided enough was enough.

I took off my expensive mountain jacket, and draped it gently over his swaying head, to cover his eyes. I held it closed behind his neck, and scooped him up in my arms. I was

surprised by his solid weight, much heavier than my big dog. He was wriggling at first, and we set off for the sea, and liberty. We had a long way to go, and I walked awkwardly with this heavy weight at waist level. After a few yards he became still, and I wondered whether he had realised that I was his saviour, not his enemy. I was aware that my thighs felt damp, and leaning forwards to look, realised that he had evacuated the contents of his innards down my legs. Thanks a lot, pal. Nearly there, only one chance to do this. Hang on tight and keep walking, straining to stay upright. I stepped right into the shallows and gently put him down. My jacket fell into the sea, and I struggled to unwrap it from around his head, before he hopped and skipped with fresh energy through the breaking waves. I'm sure he turned to look at me before disappearing...

So there I was, standing in the shallows. My boots were full of water, my jacket was soaked and full of sand, and my trousers drenched in seal effluent. It was at that moment that I know, I just know, that God spoke to me. "There's your seal" was what he said. And I started to laugh. In the immediacy of my dilemma, I had not thought of the earlier two seal incidents. Now, the whole story panned out before me, and I laughed and laughed until tears came. I made my way back up the beach, wet, smelly and very uncomfortable. Still there was not another soul on that beach. But my God had showed me that he loves me.

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.

The Saints' Way

a Pilgrimage to Bardsey Island
15th – 22nd September

Setting the Scene The Lleyn peninsula in North Wales is a beautiful and unspoilt part of the British Isles. It contains several interesting sites associated with Celtic Christianity. This is because the peninsula was a much used route to the holy island of Bardsey, Ynys Enlli.

Accommodation While medieval pilgrims would have slept in a different place each night of their journey, we have secured a spacious, well-heated, three-storey house in the village of Nefyn. It is situated at the top of a cliff road, which leads down to a wide, sandy beach. The five bedrooms sleep up to 20 people and each bed is provided with two pillows and either blankets or duvets. You will need to bring sheets, pillow-cases and towels.

Summary of the Week You will arrive at the house, Pendorlan, in time for an evening meal together on the Saturday. It is possible to get to Nefyn by public transport although we hope some folk will be happy to use their cars to help the group get about. [petrol costs will be reimbursed.]

Sunday to Thursday will be filled with visits, walks and trips to the main sites of interest and beauty in the area. Friday is the day of the pilgrimage to Bardsey, although in the event of inclement weather and the boats not sailing, other interesting visits will be in hand. Departure will be after breakfast and a communal clean and tidy up of the house on the Saturday.

Pilgrimage Leader The Pilgrimage will be led by David Pott of the Fountain Gate Community, London and a Companion in the Northumbria Community. David, who is an experienced teacher has lots of Pilgrimages and Prayer Walks behind him, most recently the Meridian Walk.

Cost The cost will be £200 for the week, which is full board and inclusive of all trips.

Booking If you would like to go please send a deposit of £30 made payable to - "Northumbria Community Trust" marked 'Saint's Pilgrim-

Staying Put and Going Out – Mission Matters

Roy Searle of Wooler

Staying Put

I write this from a very wintry North Northumberland where these last two weeks the snow and ice have reached levels of severity unparalleled for over thirty years. The extreme weather conditions brought snow falls of over two feet with much deeper drifting, telephone lines affected and electricity off for days throughout the region and no power or water at the Nether Springs for several days. The anticipated thaw has now begun bringing in its wake serious flooding and many related problems of clearing up.

These adverse weather conditions are the cause of much inconvenience but **nothing in comparison** to the far more serious matter of the **Foot and Mouth Disease** which is now gripping the country and threatening especially the rural areas.

Given that Nether Springs is located on the Hetton Farms estate which has gone into a state of "extreme caution" we are greatly affected by the threatened disease. Roads, tracks and footpath closures, warning signs, disinfectant and restrictions on traffic movement now dominate the landscape. Up to now it does appear that vigilance is paying dividends and keeping the disease from spreading further in our area.

In the light of this and after prayer and consultation with advisors, the estate and our Community Council and Trustees we have reluctantly but firmly made the necessary decision to close the Nether Springs until Easter. This includes our scheduled Easter Workshop at the beginning of April. The consequences of this decision and these preventative measures are inevitably having a severe impact upon the Mother house, the folks who live and work there and the ministry and mission that we do from the Nether Springs.

Not only have we had to cancel all our retreats but all meetings in connection with Council, Trustees, Telling Place, mission, day visitors, partnership meetings with Bible Society, guests from Germany, refuge

care etc. Apart from the disappointment and hard work in cancelling, and rearranging where possible scheduled meetings, there are big financial losses that we are incurring as the result of loss of income. We have lost £1600 revenue in the last ten days and each week the Hall closes will see a further average loss of £1000 a week. We are asking everyone who reads CAIM



to pray for us and to stand with us in these difficult times. Please pray.. **Give us this day our daily bread ... let nothing disturb thee, nothing affright thee, all things are passing...**

We trust that you and the wider Community will understand that many livelihoods are at stake and the future of the Hetton Farms estate is threatened by this latest crisis. Already under extreme pressure to survive, this latest blow to the farming industry and the rural economy presents an enormous challenge to limited resources. Pray also for Lord Vinson, our landlord, Peter Guy, the estate manager and all those who are working and looking after the livestock which includes the run up to the lambing season in the next few weeks.

Going Out

We deliberately curtailed much of the mission activity that involved sending teams out between December and Easter of this year. This has given us a valuable period of reflection and quality time to think and pray about our vision and to correspond, visit and listen to the many people who are engaged with the call to Availability

and Vulnerability throughout the Community.

We stand amazed at the influence of the Community's vocation and vision on so many people in so many places all over the world. An impact that far exceeds the numerical size of the Community and attributable to the amazing grace of God and the wonder of his Spirit's work. The great thing about it also is that it is His doing; in taking an ordinary bunch of folk like ourselves, with all our struggles and brokenness and using the story he has placed in our hearts to bring hope to so many.

Dynamic and erratic, spontaneous and radical, audacious and immature, committed if not altogether coherent. Ecumenically open and often experimental; visible here and there, now and then but unsettled institutionally. Almost monastic in nature, but most of all enacting a fearful hope for society.

We have no power to control or determine what has and is happening, nor should we. Our task is to serve, support and be responsive to the initiatives of the Spirit. To cite some of the happenings concerning mission:

the tide is in... mission starts at home

Several initiatives have taken shape in the last year, eg. Jonathan and Lynda Roe have moved onto the Brandsholme estate where they are exploring what living in community means in Hull. Rob & Amanda Miles have established an 'open house' in Barnet, with a particular heart for those who work in the arts. Fountain Gate is developing a base for community "church without walls" and is becoming very involved in the storytelling initiative. Alun & Mary Brookfield have just purchased Bryntrion at Gwynfe in Wales and hope to open it as a *Seeking Place* by the end of the summer.

The tide is out... mission continues outside the home

Examples are too numerous to mention but certain trends are clearly discernible:

Young People. The prophecies concerning young people, who are

sometimes described in post-modern jargon as *Generation X'ers* are being realised. As the Community has grown from the Founders to the Few and now to the Many it is really heartening to see a generation of young people connecting with and embracing the Community's vocation and vision. Some very exciting developments are occurring with young people and those involved in working with them, eg. Colin Amor and *the altar* in Manchester; young peoples communities within the Catholic Church eg. *Nottingham Pilgrims*; relationships built with young peoples groups in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and with young people in Russia. All these developments are significant in that they pave the way for a handing of the baton on to a new generation to lead and serve the Community

Emerging Church. Whilst we continue to serve established churches the focus of our involvement has definitely shifted in the direction of new, experimental and emerging church situations. Our ethos of *church without walls.. kingdom in the streets.. heretical imperative... etc* resonates with many in the emerging new church scene and we have been able to work with and for those who are committed to these core values in churches, theological colleges and community based projects. The **Telling Place** is a key component in these developments.

Partnerships. Hiddenness is an important and valued feature of our Community ethos. Neither advertising nor seeking to be known, we nevertheless have recognised the dangers of isolationism and insularity. Such has been the joy and importance of listening to others and learning from them that a number of good relationships have been formed with other groups and communities, some of which have led to working partnerships. These include a very fruitful partnership with Bible Society, not least the Telling Place Storytelling Initiative but this is not the only thing we are working on together. There is also the Anabaptist Network, the Baptist Union Mentoring Scheme for people in church ministry, connecting with Northumbria Church Leaders, Richard Foster and

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Going Out

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the Renovare movement, the Redemptorists, Impact, Evangelism and the New Age Group, Catholic Evangelisation Forum and Habitat for Humanity.

The City ...We're walking to the city as our Rule puts it in Kingdom in The Streets. Our involvement with Community folk and others who are called to the city is increasing and serving the city with a heart for the desert is now a notable feature of the Community's life and work. eg. James and Sally Hawes in Nottingham, our involvement with the Housing Estate Churches and Cathedral in Bradford, Fountain Gate in London, the Kirchentag city festivals in Germany, Bath Abbey, Chris Sunderland's *Agora Project*, relationships as far apart as Minnesota, Moscow and Manchester; working with the Hospice Movement, supporting chaplaincies in education and the health service and opportunities in schools, colleges and prisons in the urban areas.

Creativity. The fruit of prayer and

Ongoing Discipline

Geoff Boston of Stockton

The following challenging quote is an extract from 'My Utmost for His Highest' by Oswald Chambers. "The measure of the worth of our public activity for God is the private profound communion we have with Him. Rush is wrong every time; there is always plenty of time to worship God. Quiet days with God may be a snare. We have to pitch our tents where we shall always have quiet times with God, however noisy our times with the world may be. There are not three stages in spiritual life — worship, waiting and work. Some of us go in jumps, like spiritual frogs, we jump from worship to waiting, and from waiting to work. God's idea is that the three should go together. They were always together in the life of our Lord. He was unshaking and un-resting. It is a discipline, we cannot get into all at once."

Paradox

Cathy Anderson of Porthcawl

You stand
silent, still
Christ of the wintry and wild
desert,
my love

Turning
You walk
quickly, join
the throng
hustle and fuss;
the waiting crowd
swallows you

And the wintry wild
desert,
my love
You hide in your heart.

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 or Friend 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.

Spring Harvest

Once again a team from the Community is at Spring Harvest leading the worship for two weeks at Skegness from 12-22nd April. Please remember them in your prayers and if you are going to be at the event meet up with them at the Cloisters stand. We meet as a team each day to share in the Office together – why not join us. Anyone going to Spring Harvest at Skegness on Weeks 2 or 3 April 12th - 22nd and could help for a few hours one day with our Community Cloisters stand please let us know asap.

Waymarks

New Community CD

The new Community music CD will be available in the middle of April. It is to be called 'Waymarks: Songs for the Journey' and will have 14 tracks containing songs to remind us of the past, anchor us in the present, and provide hope for the future. Familiar friends like 'How lovely is Thy dwelling-place', 'Brother, sister, let me serve You' and 'I bind unto myself this day' find their place alongside some less familiar ones; and there are new songs which have grown out of the ongoing life of the Community. It is very much in the Community's own style (as in the Celtic Daily Prayer CD) and the recording will be high quality. The Cloisters mail order price will be £13.50 (until 1 June when it will be £15). Place your order now whilst you think about it, using the Cloisters order form enclosed; your credit card will not be charged (or your cheque cashed) until stocks are available (provided you do not order other items for earlier despatch with the same cheque payment).

Celtic Daily Prayer

The new edition has been very well-received and is now a familiar friend to many of us. It looks good and feels good to use; and, being a hardback, it will last much better than the old paperbacks. If you haven't purchased a copy yet, use the Cloisters order form enclosed (the mail order price is £20).

Unfortunately we were unable to persuade the publishers (HarperCollins) to spend the extra on marker ribbons in this edition (for the readings, meditation of the day, etc.). However, you can buy ribbon marker sets in bookshops and just fit them down the spine of your CDP – easy.

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. Many of you already do this and know its benefits and blessing. Also to participate in one of the many Led Retreats we are running in the coming months, details of which are in the current programme available on request from the Community Office.

Shhh... The Telling Place is thinking!

Susie Minto of Hetton Lodge

The Telling Place has been on a 'sponsored silence' for the early part of this year to take stock of its own story. Having told stories in just about every setting imaginable during the first three years of its life, it was felt that, before being drawn into another round of workshops, conferences, festivals and teaching, some time to reflect would be time well spent.

With storytelling making such a comeback in mainstream and Christian circles, there's certainly no shortage of avenues to go down. Work with theological colleges, responses to politics, media and education, and interaction with the mainstream storytelling scene are all under consideration.

A network of some 600 people has mushroomed around us – some already involved in the storytelling field, others just inquiring, some involved in a wide range of performing arts and wanting to find out how storytelling can connect with their existing interests, others involved in health care and education and many who want to become storytellers. Serving the many needs of this fertile network will be a job in itself.

In the past few months the team has welcomed on board Dave Robertson, from Manchester, who works alongside Angela Knowles at storytelling schools and workshops, as well as taking on work himself.

The connections with staff at Bible Society have been strengthened and the whole team is now 11-strong, incorporat-

ing management, PR, education and creative folks from their end. The commitment of both parties in the partnership is to build and serve that which will last in the long term. Consequently, rather than feeling obliged to fill the diary in response to all the many requests that come in, this next phase of the initiative will be less driven and more directive in its functioning. One feature of the initiative is the growing development of enabling those people who want to develop their calling and skills as storytellers in numerous settings.

It's like the Community's story all over again – as it got bigger, the leaders had to think about handing over from the few to the many. So it is in our storytelling initiative – the circle of interest is ever-increasing and we're certainly a long way from the end of the story. By the way, does anyone know how this particular one finishes?

STOP PRESS: Have you ever thought about exploring and learning how to be a storyteller? Two schools are planned for 2001: 18-24 June at Nether Springs; 10-16 September at the Sion community in Brentwood, Essex. They will explore general storytelling skills, biblical and personal storytelling. If you are interested, call us now on 01289 388477 or e mail us at <thetellingplace@bigfoot.com> Bookings are open and there are about 20 places available on each.

The Return of the Prodigal

(the older brother's story!)

I knew there'd be trouble when I saw him with Father;
Get his come-uppance? Don't make me laugh!
He goes on a jolly, I work all the harder
While he gets the money, the feast *and* the calf!
What price then for values within this family?
Oh yes, *I'm* accountable for things gone amiss:
I give my utmost, with no prize for loyalty
While my brother's betrayal is met with a kiss!
They've tried to explain why the great celebration
For a lost son restored to his family again;
But what about honouring loyal commitment?
I'm sorry to say it, but Dad's lost his brain!
So here I now stand, watching sheep for a living
While they're all inside having party-type fun;
I don't want to join in their laughter, their singing;
I wonder if Dad know's who *is* his true son!

Communion Cards and Complines

The Communion service from Celtic Daily Prayer is now available on a folded A4 card (similar to the Daily Office Card already available). The mail order price for a pack of 10 copies is £4.

A new A5 booklet containing all the Complines is available (in reasonably large print, as Compline is often used in low lighting conditions) at a mail order price of £2.50 each.

Use the enclosed Cloisters order form to obtain copies.

Community Website

The Community's Website is coming together and hopefully there will be something meaningful to access shortly. You will find it at www.northumbriacommunity.org. There has been much debate as to whether the Community should even have a Website at all; and finding an appropriate way to approach it from within the Community's very individual ethos has not been easy. But people expect more and more to be able to access information via the internet, and there are many with a spiritual hunger that may well be intrigued by what the Community has to say. The key message is 'Come and see'.



Apart from information about the Community and its activities, the site will allow you to access 'real-time' Daily Office – depending on the time of day and the date, you will find the appropriate Office, Daily Reading (complete with Scriptures), and Meditation. All clever technological stuff by Mark Fleeson, who has put an immense amount of time and web-design skills into this project. The site will also allow you to order Cloisters products online; and there will be a 'members area' which will require you to key in a code for access (more about this anon), giving prayer requests and other information that is not appropriate for the casual visitor to the site.

What Drew You?

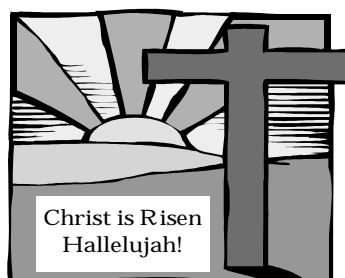
I am hoping to do some research on 'extended communities' [like Northumbria Community] in Christian discipleship; are they a growing thing? What do they offer the wider church? How might they serve God's purposes in the coming years?

Initially I would like to find out about the following things and would be grateful for people to write to me or email me with responses. What drew you to seek affiliation with your extended community? How do you see it in terms of God's wider mission? How do you relate your affiliation to your local church?

Contact me [Andii Bowsher] at 41 Little Horton Green, BRADFORD, BD5 0NG [01274 415910] Or email andii@onet.co.uk

Performing Arts Centre, Bradford.

Moved by the injustice of children in the Holmewood area of the city being denied any access to music lessons, an initiative is being explored by our friends at St. Christopher's that would see a Creative Arts Centre established on the estate. It will offer facilities for children to engage with music, storytelling, art, dance and drama within the urban community. We continue to be involved in sharing and serving the parishes on the Housing estates in the city and could be involved further in this exciting and significant development that realises the kingdom in the streets. Pray and watch this space...



Habitat for Humanity

Claire Humphrey of Belfast

Unemployed, in trouble with the police, addicted to alcohol and fed up, John Robinson sought out Jesus.... John had been involved in Mornington Community Project, a project working in the Catholic nationalist lower Ormeau in Belfast and aiming to "promote values of the kingdom of God in the Lower Ormeau community". Through relationships with Christians from a range of religious backgrounds, he made a fresh connection with Jesus.

With plenty of ups and downs, John and Jesus have brought about transformation – learning to overcome problems of alcoholism, adapting to the world of work, building self-confidence and developing friendships, growing an understanding of what being a Jesus follower really means – changed attitudes and lifestyle.

Part of this journey of change has been John's decision to serve God and others with Habitat for Humanity. Habitat is a world-wide organisation which seeks to build decent affordable housing in partnership with low income families and volunteers. In N Ireland it aims to bring Catholics and Protestants together, with Catholic homeowners committing to work in building Protestant homes, as a condition of home-ownership, and vice-versa.

John is a trained bricklayer and so is a valuable asset building houses now in a Protestant area of West Belfast. He recently spent 2 weeks with Habitat for Humanity in El Salvador, working with local people to build simple homes. John said of his trip 'I saw that Jesus is with the poorest of us in the dirt and mess'.

His commitment speaks loudly of the alternative Jesus-way - the way of reconciliation and peace making, the way of service for the poor, the way of giving and risk-taking.

Thank you to the Community for supporting John in his work with Habitat for Humanity.





Notice Board

The notice board is more about persons than about ideas. It is an opportunity for Companions and Friends to write in with news snippets, prayer requests and updates of happenings across our dispersed Community family.

IMPORTANT PLEASE NOTE

After much prayer and consultation we have taken the difficult step of cancelling all retreats at the Nether Springs up to and including our Annual Easter Workshop in early April. Given the seriousness of the Foot and Mouth epidemic and the possibility of it spreading to the Hetton Farms Estate we are taking the view that a pre-emptive cancellation is better than a last minute panic cancellation or a possible quarantine situation.

We are hoping to be able to reopen the Nether Springs in time for the retreat 'The Passion of His love' over Easter weekend itself and that we will be able to meet with others on Holy Island on Easter Sunday as is our tradition. All this is provisional and those who wish to attend Holy Island on Easter Sunday are asked to contact the Community Office nearer the time for an update.

Congratulations are in order to **Rebecca Pollit** of Hetton and **Martin Neil** of London who are to be married in July of this year. Rebecca has been part of the House Team at Nether Springs for nearly 3 years and Martin, a freelance musician, has been involved with different aspects of our Mission. May the saints and the Saviour watch over them

Rob Fawcett of Edinburgh has organised an Easter Camp at Whithorn from 11th – 16th April. The theme will be 'Nature', observing God's Kingdom in a mechanical world. For more information call 01968 675653

We were extremely shocked and saddened to hear of the death of Gerald Blockley of Ossett. Our deepest sympathy goes out to Phyl and the family at this difficult time.

Trevor and Freda Miller have returned from their visit to **Miriam Sayer** in Tasmania. Miriam is in good heart and very appreciative of the many prayers and the financial help given to her from the Community. All this has given her a huge lift at a very difficult time for her as she battles with cancer. Although the cancer has not been arrested totally, Miriam is heartened by the news that the treatment she has been receiving to coat and strengthen her bones has been very successful. She is very happy in her new home and has many loving and caring friends around her. We do ask the Community to continue to hold Miriam in their hearts and in their prayers. Full details of the trip to Australia will be included in the next edition of CAIM.

Prayer Walking in Northumbria

If you would consider being part of a small team of folk prayer walking in Northumberland 14th-18th May, then please let us know. We shall gather at Nether Springs on the Monday and be on Lindisfarne and Cuthbert's way for the first two days before moving south to Alnwick and the Blyth Valley for the rest of the week. We also need folk who will offer prayer support from their own homes for the duration of the week.

Mission Prayer Diary

Please keep these events on your hearts and in your prayers over these coming months as we journey Alone/Together.

April

March 31st- April 1st Bath Abbey
11th Renovare meeting in Derbyshire with Richard Foster and others
12th- 22nd Spring Harvest-Skegness.
26th-30th Newry & Belfast
30th New Age Consultation, London

May

4th-6th Baptist Assembly at Blackpool
14th-18th Prayer Walk in Northumberland
21st-25th Storytelling School, Moscow

June

2nd Community & Anabaptist Conference at Bradford Cathedral
3rd St Christopher's Bradford
5th-8th Celtic Spirituality retreat at Redhill
9th Community & Anabaptist Conference in Oxford
13th-17th Kirchentag Festival, Frankfurt.
16th – 17th June Council and Trustees
18th-24th Storytelling School, Hetton
21st-22nd Retreat at Parceval Hall
28th Health Service Chaplains Conference, St. Andrews

August

1st-4th Network of Biblical Storytellers Gathering, Atlanta
5th Oswald's Day, Heavenfield
11th – 18th Northern Light week, Thirsk
12th to 18th Pilot Week for Performing Arts Centre, St. Christopher's, Bradford
23rd-28th Greenbelt Arts Festival, Cheltenham
31st St Aidan's Day, Lindisfarne

If you would like to know more about any of these happenings and how you could be involved please contact us at the Community Office 01289 388235

Easter Cards

Don't forget that Cloisters has a range of Easter cards available – see the order form enclosed. There are 10 designs, and they cost £3.50 for a pack of 10 of a single design, or for a mixed pack (EMIX) containing one each of the 10 designs.

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