



# CAIM

Issue no 32  
Spring 2005

**The Northumbria Community Newsletter**

## COVENANTED TOGETHER

This coming year, beginning at Easter Workshop later this month, we will be taking as our Community theme, 'Covenanted together'. This is taken from our original Community Charter, which reads, '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.'

Last year's theme, 'Building the new on foundations of old' reflected the beginnings of a major transition within our Community: a timely focus on re-evaluation and change but within a foundational stability. This year it seems fitting that, as a next step, we set in motion an exploration of what it means to be covenanted together, involving the whole Community.

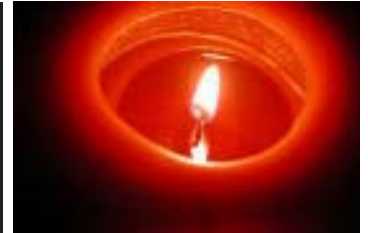
This is why it is important that we understand what we mean by covenant, because the notion of covenant or its use as a word is not familiar today, except perhaps in the marriage service. The root meaning of covenant comes from the Latin 'con venire' which is literally, a coming together. That is, a bond entered into voluntarily by two (or more) parties by which each pledges to do something for the other. Where those 'coming together' determine what roles, rights and responsibilities are needed for a common understanding of the agreement entered into.

This of course echoes an understanding of the shared commitment to loving-kindness and steadfast loyalty we read about again and again in the Bible, with the covenant God saying, 'I shall be your God, you shall be my people'. Jer 31:33. A common understanding of what it means to say Yes to God in 'coming together' with Him.

As this awareness of a common understanding is so important, we need to be aware of what we do and don't mean by covenant, in order to have a common understanding of our shared vocation in being covenanted together as a Community.

First of all, our meaning is not that of a contract, for example, as in a legally binding business agreement for goods or services rendered. Or as in a deed of covenant where we agree to pay monies to a charity. Such contracts involve a give and take arrangement that carry legal obligations where penalties exist for breaking the contract. More often than not entering in with an attitude of 'I will do my part only as long as you do your part'.

*(Continued on page 2)*



### Inside this issue:

<b>Kids in Community...</b> can you help?	2
<b>Easter Workshop...</b> all the information you need...plan to be there.	3
<b>IN:sight...</b> getting to know the leaders and trustees of Community...Roy Searle.	4
<b>Creative Arts Retreat...</b> an opportunity to join this retreat at Ballydugan, in Northern Ireland.	5
<b>..to wander for the love of Christ...</b> Europe, four wanderers and seven countries in April.	6
<b>L'Abri à Suvigny...</b> living out the ethos of Community in France	7
<b>How Then Shall We Live - experiences of a dispersed Community...</b> "God gave me a coin" by Suzy Donaldson in the USA.	8
<b>Community Group Leaders' Weekend...</b> Norma Charlton reports on this important part of Community life.	9
<b>Father Tony Battle-1942 to 2005...</b> significant memories of a man who "lived his faith".	10
<b>Make Poverty History...</b> your chance to make history in 2005	11

**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.**

(Continued from page 1)

Secondly, our meaning is not that of a creed, as in agreeing statements of faith and doctrine as formal confessions that carry authority from a hierarchy. Creeds tend to be exclusive i.e. unless and until you believe exactly as I believe, we can't come together in heart. It follows that they are often legalistic, unchanging and lifeless.

Rather, our meaning is that of Companionship; something distinctly relational, and not merely propositional or contractual. It is a shared lifestyle; a life lived with a common purpose and mutual intention. So that, to use Bonhoeffer's term, we are 'banded together' to explore 'a new type of monasticism' as Companions in Community under a common Rule of life.

Both contract and creed can be impersonal, i.e. simply a unity of cooperation to achieve a common goal, whereas covenant is personal, a unity of persons which can't be described in functional terms alone, hence companionship.

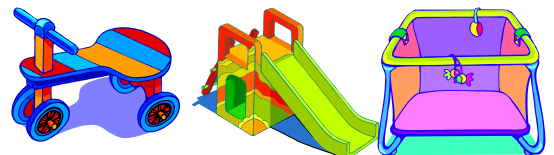
Further, a contract can be ripped up and discarded; a creed can be dismissed as no longer relevant but this can't be done with a covenant because it is much more than a sheet of paper or a set of principles. It is shared personhood and it is this sharing of each other's person – a community of the heart – that is covenant relationship. And this is why the penalty for breaking the covenant is first and foremost relational.

It follows that one of the marks of Companions in Community is this awareness that covenant is reciprocal – Yes, I have something to give, but I also have something to receive. I give myself as a person to the whole and I am bonded together with everyone else who gives himself or herself as a person to the whole – and we all draw from the gift of persons who are all wonderfully diverse and different from everyone else. We are Alone - Together, covenanted together because we are each covenanted to God.

So then, covenant relationship is not *the friendship of a club* or *the team spirit of a sport* or *the acquaintance of a business venture* but an inner awareness of 'coming home'. We have been called to 'come together' in heart and vocation, even though we are geographically dispersed. We all need both 'enclosure' (Alone) and 'encounter' (Together). This is the genius of our corporate identity – the Alone mediated through the Together and the Together mediated through the Alone, as we seek to be an expression of Christ in the world. A world where through our own unique roles, responsibilities and relationships, we work as best we can, both Alone and Together, for justice, peace, love and faith. So that, wherever we are, our common purpose is centred in relational values – to seek God, to know self, so as to learn how we can better live with others and serve the world of our influence whether that is great or small.

## Kids in Community

In order to help make the children who are part of community continue to feel at home at Hetton we are looking to improve some of the resources we have for them. The toys, cots etc that we have are well used, and some things even worn out.



The plan is to gather together some newer stuff with appropriate storage and labelling so that children's toys/ resources can be stored out of the way, and just the toys suitable for a child or children got out when they visit, hence having more toys but less stuff in Lindisfarne at any one time so it does not feel like a toddler group room, except when it is!

For this reason I am co-ordinating a very specific "shopping" list. This means that if you have something you wish to contribute ***you must contact me and not just take it to the hall.*** This will prevent us having more stuff than we can deal with or store.

Some of the items are

- Storage boxes with lids (various sizes)
- Two travel cots (umbrella style)
- Two compact high chairs or booster seats (fold flat preferred)
- A small selection of baby/toddler crockery, cutlery and cups with lids
- Two wireless baby monitors (with a good range)
- Play mats (e.g. road or village designs)
- Baby gym and play mat
- Lego (all varieties)
- Baby doll and some accessories
- Toy cars in good condition
- Garage (not too huge)
- Dolls house (small)

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

- Plastic aprons for messy activities
- Dough cutters
- Craft materials (all sorts)
- Swing ball game inc bats
- Pop up play tent
- We are open to suggestions of other useful items/toys to keep at Hetton



If you are able to contribute to this wish list, or wish to contribute some money to purchase some of it new, please contact me

**(Wendy Ward) on 0161 442 7506 or by email at [david.ward@northumbriacommunity.org](mailto:david.ward@northumbriacommunity.org)**

Please don't be offended if I turn down an offer, or ask you to hold fire while I see what else comes up as it is essential we don't end up with too much. If your offer is accepted I will then discuss with you how to get it to Hetton or me and when.

**Easter Workshop 2005**  
**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> March**

Our Annual Easter Workshop is to be held at the Nether Springs from Thursday 24th March to Monday 28th March 2005 inclusive. We would encourage as many as possible to come and share with us for the whole or part of the overall programme, especially Easter Sunday on Holy Island. All aspects of the programme will be held at the Nether Springs unless otherwise stated. The theme for this year's Workshop and for the coming year is the concept of being COVENANTED TOGETHER in Community.

This is taken from our Community Charter, '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 was originally a covenant between two different groups, namely Nether Springs and Northumbria Ministries with the intention of bringing them together as one. This 'coming together' was a recognition that although formerly having separate identities, they shared a common vocation and vision. This meant that common resources could be shared, as we explored together a common purpose and direction. As the Community developed, this covenant became significant for all who desired to share the faith journey with us.

We are aware that as a geographically dispersed Community we will never all be physically together at one time in one place – Gatherings like Easter Workshop are the nearest we get. We recognise the truth in Jean Vanier's words: 'The covenant of Community profound as it is, can never guarantee that a certain person will always stay physically close to another. It guarantees only that there will always be someone there; inspired by the same spirit.'

This is why these times of renewing the covenant relationship are times of symbolic value and significance. They are significant because there is a concentration of interest upon the past in its relationship to the present – a link historically, prophetically and spiritually to our foundations. The meaning and importance of our collective Memory and Story is highlighted as we recall and remember the covenant times of past years. These times are to be celebrated with thankfulness. They support us, re-energise us and encourage hope within us for our ongoing faith journey to see the kingdom extended in our hearts and in Northumbria and wherever the Father leads.

**Maundy Thursday 24th March**

- 16.00 Arrive
- 18.00 Evening Meal
- 19.15 Maundy Thursday Eucharist including Foot washing

**Good Friday 25th March**

- 9.30 Morning Office
- 10.30 Covenanted Together - Teaching and Sharing Stories
- 12.00 Midday Office
- 12.10 Quiet Hour
- 13.00 Lunch
- 14.00 Pilgrimage – Stations of the Cross Liturgy to Cuthbert's Cave
- 18.00 Shabbat meal
- 19.15 Evening Office
- 20.00 Informal Evening or Film 'The Passion of the Christ' at Belford.
- 21.30 Compline

**Easter Saturday 26th March**

- 9.30 Morning Office
- 10.30 Covenanted Together - Teaching and Sharing Stories
- 12.00 Midday Office
- 12.10 Quiet Hour
- 13.00 Lunch
- 14.00 Creative Workshops on aspects of Covenant, including Writing and Liturgy, Theatre and hopefully others involving Music and Dance.
- 16.00 Free Time
- 18.00 Dinner
- 19.15 Easter Eve Liturgy including worship, music, storytelling.
- 23.45 Easter Vigil



(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

#### Easter Sunday 27th March

9.30 Morning Office  
 10.45 Morning Service with Communion at St Mary's C of E, Holy Island  
 12.00 Midday prayer and Christ as a Light at St Aidan's statue followed by music and dance at the far end of the Priory and the renewal of our vows by saying Yes to Availability and Vulnerability. Then High Praises in the Chapel area of the Priory.  
 Please note that the tide closes early afternoon, so we will have lunch at the Nether Springs available from 13.30 – Soup will be provided but could day visitors please bring a contribution for a shared table.

18.00 Dinner  
 19.15 Evening Office  
 20.00 Caedmon Evening—Bring your self, a song, a story, a sketch or anything else to make a contribution to this informal gathering. *To be held at the nearby hall at Hetton Steads.* Followed by Compline

#### Easter Monday 28th March

8.00 Breakfast  
 9.30 Morning Office  
 10.00 General tidy up and depart before lunch.

It is hoped that there will be workshops for both children and young people during the teaching sessions on both Friday and Saturday mornings.

## IN:sight...getting to know the leaders and trustees of Community...Roy Searle



Born a Geordie, I never went to church after some bloke in a long white dress chucked water on my head as an infant but despite such a religious moment spent a very happy childhood on Tyneside before moving to Harrogate. Sport, socialising and some schoolwork dominated my teenage years. Leaving school I did several casual jobs but intended to become a PE teacher after being trained as an Outward Bound Instructor. Whilst in the Cairngorms in Scotland I came to faith and was discipled for the first few months by a member of the Brethren assembly and a Catholic charismatic. The miracle was not that I was nurtured but that they discovered that difference did not necessarily mean division and that diversity could be enriching; a truth which I have come to value and appreciate throughout my life.

Happily married to Shirley, whom I met when she was baptised, [it was lust at first sight!] we celebrate our 30<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary next year. She is a librarian, beekeeper and works at Nether Springs one day a week and is incredibly supportive of our call to Availability and Vulnerability and all that it has meant for us as a family. We feel incredibly blessed and are very thankful for our fabulous four children and our daughter-in-law. They continue, each one, to bring us considerable pleasure and joy. Shirley and I both trained at Lebanon Bible College, [as did Trevor and Freda Miller, Lorna Fisher and John & Linda Skinner] prior to my calling to the Baptist ministry. I studied at Cardiff University before being ordained in 1980 and serving in two pastorates in the North East; first at Portrack, which was an incredibly challenging but wonderful time of planting the gospel and working in an urban area undergoing astronomical unemployment and the attendant ravages of 1980's Thatcherism.

Throughout these years a growing heart and vision for Northumbria emerged and we gathered several folk, [the original 'Northumbria Ministries'], who shared a similar sense of call and mission. We regularly made journeys up to Holy Island and it was on one such occasion that we met up with John & Linda and Andy Raine, who had established the original Nether Springs and through the meeting of our two groups we covenanted together and formed the Northumbria Community.

At my second pastorate in Sunderland, the challenges and opportunities were different and related to helping the church engage in its mission to the city that included its student population and changing social climate. It was during this period that I experienced a real period of disillusionment and what later I would describe as the desert, where God took me to a deeper place of longing, desire and encounter. A place of exposure and a context for transformation or conversion of the heart, an experience that has changed my life and ministry, the fruits of which I seek to live by and share as I continue to express a refocused ministry *to serve the city with a heart for the desert.*

In 1992 we moved up to Wooler in Northumberland to work full time with the Community. Covenanted together within the love of Christ, exploring a new monasticism, sharing a common Rule of Life of *Availability and Vulnerability* and with a commitment to carry the torch of the gospel wherever the Father leads, has taken me as a wanderer for the love of Christ, among many people in lots of different situations. I do have a real passion for

(Continued on page 5)



(Continued from page 4)

spiritual formation, helping people to grow in their love of God, in his grace and wisdom and encouraging them to discover what it means to be a follower of Christ in our changing cultures. Living, as we do in the Borders I feel like someone who is on the margins of the church yet is able to speak into its established and emerging new expressions.

It took a little while to come to terms with the reality that I had been elected to serve as the President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain for the coming year [April 2005 – May 2006] but am genuinely looking forward to the opportunities to serve and share the fruits of my own and the Community's journeys with the denomination.

I am still very much a part of the Leadership team of the Community, have valued immensely the partnership shared with Trevor in recent years, and now with others in the wider leadership and with several good friends and Companions, all of whom have helped me to grow and develop and discover my vocation to be a man of God who carries an apostolic calling to the church and culture. I do lots of other things and am involved in many contexts: e.g. directing Renovaré in Britain and Ireland; lecturing and working with Together in Mission on their MA course for Missional Leaders; part of the Baobab Team working on issues of Spirituality and the Workplace in York; various other bits of consultancy work and time permitting, will publish a couple of books later this year but my vocation is with the Community and the call on my life which informs all the other things I do is to *Availability* and *Vulnerability* and to commit to the covenant which is at the relational heart of our Community. It's what makes us *Alone* and *Together*, Companions on the Way.

I travel extensively and find the rhythm of life that I have embraced as life giving. 'Monastery on the Road' has been more than a catchphrase, sustaining, informing and guarding my heart as I have ventured into many areas of life and work. Shirley and I have a commitment for Ireland and it will come as no surprise to many that we shall be following our hearts and spending time in Ireland after my Presidential year. I have been travelling there for many years and in recent times have been involved and supportive of Community folks and others engaged in building relationships across sectarian and ecclesiastical divides.



I love being with my family and friends, walking with Geordie our family dog in the Cheviot Hills, sailing whenever the opportunity arises, going to the gym and supporting Middlesbrough Football Club. I have an interest in politics, love the Hebrides and also appreciate the ordinary things of life; conversation, larks singing, Guinness, relaxed meals, pottering in the garden, reading, walking by the seaside and driving a tractor!

On my epitaph I would like to think that through my life and work I had made a difference for good to the few and the many that I have had the joy and privilege to have known and shared with.

Yours buoyantly, because of the hope that God has put in my heart, Roy .

## CREATIVE ARTS RETREAT...



Creative Arts Retreat in Ireland from Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> August at Ballydugan, County Down, Northern Ireland. Join Nick & Anita Haigh & others from the Community for a creative week of writing – songs, music, liturgy, poetry, stories etc. We also hope to have the opportunity to do some calligraphy and silk screen painting with Pam French.



Maintaining the rhythm of the 'monastic day', we will share in the offices, the preparing of meals, taking time to enjoy beautiful County Down and its links with the sacred sites of Saul, Downpatrick and Inch. This will be a relaxed, creative week staying in the beautiful and comfortable Ballydugan cottages.



People will be responsible for making their own way to Ballydugan although help may be given to those who require transport to and from Belfast. Cheap flights can be found (the earlier you book the better & cheaper) with companies like easyJet, bmibaby, FlyBe, & Jet2. Belfast City Airport would be recommended although there is a shuttle bus service from Belfast International Airport into the city centre. Alternatively folk may wish to take their own vehicle on the ferry and can book online at the Stena website or by telephone on 028 90 747747. The cost will be £150 per person.



**For further details and to book your place, please contact Jean via email [jean.watson@northumbriacommunity.org](mailto:jean.watson@northumbriacommunity.org) or telephone 01625 874493.**

**Please book early to avoid disappointment and send a £50 deposit to the Finance Office at Northumbria Community and mark it *Creative Arts – Ireland*.**



# Cell and Coracle

News of Mission and Monastery



## ...to wander for the love of Christ...

A fascinating feature of the Celtic saints that has always proved attractive to me was their propensity to wander 'for the love of Christ' – making up mission in a new and fresh way every day depending on the people they met, the villages they entered and the questions they were asked. So, what an exciting opportunity that presented itself when Roy offered the possibility of wandering around Europe after Easter.

The plan is to travel through Holland, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Croatia, Italy and France over three weeks to wander, meet people, learn and hopefully to contribute. It feels like an adventure of exploration and discovery is about to open up and I'm sure there will be lots of opportunities to step out into new things.

The privilege of travelling together with Roy, Tom and Mel to observe, share and learn is a great blessing. Whether my companions will think so after three weeks of roving with me we shall have to see! This adventure – like most good things in life – will depend on good relationships. But, the strain and challenges of being together 24/7 also holds the possibility of encouragement and growth.

I'm looking forward to living together within the framework of the Daily Office, saying our prayers and meditating on the Word in a wide variety of places across the broad landscape of nations so close to us geographically, but historically often far from us in so many other ways. However, one of the wonderful things about wandering in this way is the reminder that will surely come in many and varied ways that the Kingdom in which we serve holds no barriers of nationality, language or race.

One of my own interests is in what is known as the 'emerging church'. The name is something of a misnomer as the church has been emerging for the last 2000 years. But, we are in a period of great change all across the western world and most certainly within Europe as the Church grapples with the challenges of the post-modern era. Many are exploring the challenge of what it means to live for Jesus with integrity and also what it means to do mission in this new and exciting period where it can no longer be assumed that people know much about Jesus; the Bible is not a familiar book to the majority and prayers and liturgy which we take for granted are lost on this post-Christian people among which we live.

Wandering through Europe grants me the wonderful opportunity to learn how our brothers and sisters across the continent are meeting this challenge; how they are responding to the challenge of cross-cultural mission and the challenge of living out their spiritual journey in an increasingly alien environment. Coveting your prayers and the Lord's gentle but persuasive guidance, Edward Pillar.

## European Wanderings...

As reported in Ed Pillar's article, Roy Searle as part of his Baptist Union Presidential commitments is touring parts of Europe after Easter and will be accompanied by three other Companions of the Community; Tom Duncanson from Upper Beeding in Sussex; Mel Rogers from Wakefield, in Yorkshire; and Ed Pillar from Evesham in Worcestershire.

The purpose of the visit is to 'wander for the love of Christ', praying for the people and nations of Europe during this period of major cultural transition, with its attendant challenges and opportunities and to specifically visit, share, learn and encourage those who are working with the Baptist Missionary Society. Whilst there are some formal speaking and lecturing engagements, as much time will be spent sharing with people in their homes and work contexts. We are inviting the Community to "accompany" Roy throughout his Presidential year by praying for him, the family and others who will be joining him at various times on his travels. This can be achieved by logging on to the Community website and reading the pages dedicated to Roy's year in office. For those unable to access the website, they can get a printed download of what's on the website every month by registering their request to Shirley c/o Community Office and enclosing £7 to cover postage costs for the 13 months. We are specifically asking Community Groups to intercede and to pray for particular countries as the team journeys through or stays in them. Would Community Groups please register the countries that they are going to pray for and notify Shirley at the Community Office ASAP. It is hoped that both Community Groups and others will pray and use the following itinerary:

*(Continued on page 7)*

(Continued from page 6)

30 <sup>th</sup> March	-	De Spill, Holland
31 <sup>st</sup> March	-	Liege, Belgium
1 <sup>st</sup> – 4 <sup>th</sup> April	-	Prague
5 <sup>th</sup> – 6 <sup>th</sup> April	-	Budapest, Hungary
7 <sup>th</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> April	-	Zagreb, Croatia
9 <sup>th</sup> – 11 <sup>th</sup> April	-	Genoa, Italy
12 <sup>th</sup> – 14 <sup>th</sup> April	-	Lyons, France
15 <sup>th</sup> – 17 <sup>th</sup> April (am)	-	Paris
17 <sup>th</sup> – April – 19 <sup>th</sup> April	-	St. Malo
19 <sup>th</sup> or 20 <sup>th</sup> April	-	Travel home to U.K.

Europe has long been in the Community's consciousness and several Companions and friends have made journeys in the past and in recent years wandering for the love of Christ, making connections with people and places and for some exploring a call to move to places such as France, Ireland, Holland, Belgium and Italy. It has been a delight to strengthen the connections with people particularly in Ireland, Holland (we look forward to welcoming a party from Holland at this year's Easter workshop) and France. Pray for the team as they wander that they may know God's protection, provision and that they may be blessed and a blessing to all whom they share with. Thank you!

## L'Abri à Suvigny...by Jane and Andrew Perkins

Like so many others, when we went to the "Alternative Worship" sessions at Spring Harvest, and found the Northumbrian Community, we knew we had 'come home' spiritually. After many years of living in Africa, emigrating to the UK in 1989, and through our 18 year marriage, having worshipped in the full range of churches in Africa and the UK, there had been a sense of restlessness; a sense that one belonged everywhere and nowhere; that God was present in all denominations, and yet absent; and that church, as we had experienced it, lacked a real connection to life outside its doors. In the Northumbrian Community we found a wonderful sense that here was something fluid, without too much structure, earnestly and honestly seeking God and His will in everyday living. The Stringfellow and Bonhoeffer quotes spoke to our international and eclectic backgrounds.

On our travels in France, Andrew fell in love with the open space of the country and its simpler lifestyle. Through vision and Words of knowledge and prophecy received over the past 4 years, we now know that God is calling us to "step into our coracle" and cross the Channel to take to life of the Northumbrian Community to France. We believe He wants us to establish a community based closely on the life at Hetton Hall. We have bought a smallholding in Basse-Normandie, just east of Avranches and close to Mont St Michel. It will be a semi-self-sufficient organically run 'petit ferme' where there will be woodland, an orchard, vegetable garden, prayer garden, pond, meadow, and space for small livestock such as sheep, rabbits and chickens. The accommodation will be a converted barn to sleep about 18 people as well as communal eating, working, studying and recreation areas in the main house. There may be the possibility of camping as well. We will live out the ethos of the Northumbrian Community ourselves and encourage those who visit to participate in this too. Groups may wish to run their own seminars/workshops while there, or spend time exploring the history and holiday attractions in the area. (It is situated just East of Avranches, close to Mont St Michel) Trevor Miller is very excited about the prospects of this venture, and says he foresees a day when courses run at Hetton may well be run at L'Abri à Suvigny as well.

We are currently drawing up plans and obtaining planning permission for the proposed building works, and hope to get started on the renovation and creation of the project this year. We plan to divide the work into smaller projects so that if people want to come and help, they can commit to a particular aspect. Help will be needed at all levels, including the translation of the Daily Offices etc into French (we've had Trevor's permission to do this!) If you feel you have any skill, materials, time or advice to offer, or if you feel pulled to the sense of community, please make contact. Above all, please support us in prayer.

This is a massive undertaking, but with God's strength, and with the help of those whom He calls, we believe the dream will become a reality. The dream was born out of community, it will need to be created in community, and it will find its raison d'être in community – a church without walls. As our 11-year old daughter commented when we were at Hetton Hall in December, if she hears the word 'church' she thinks of words such as boring, dark, sometimes cold and stuffy. If someone mentions the Northumbrian Community, she thinks of a group of people where God is. Our prayer for L'Abri à Suvigny is that it will become just such a place.





## HOW THEN SHALL WE LIVE

...experiences of a dispersed Community.



### God gave me a coin

(Psalm 76, vs. 11-12)

by Suzy Donaldson of the USA

Its two years now since my husband was offered a job in Washington DC. To accept would mean selling our house in London, which we had just finished restoring, and leaving our friends and family behind, including two little grandsons. I was in turmoil. This was a huge decision, and, although he is not a believer, my husband supported my decision to go on a prayer retreat to Nether Springs.

My friend Pauline, who is deaf, agreed to come with me and booked the train tickets by telephone. But when we met at the station we found she had made a mistake in the reservation. At the last minute the clerk agreed to change our tickets to the train we wanted, but we had to take the only seats available at the back of the carriage.

Rushed and flustered we settled ourselves on the train for the four-hour journey. As we talked I had to speak quite loudly so Pauline could hear me above the noise of the train. She asked about our plans and whether we were closer to making a decision about America. I told her I had been praying about it and hoped to seek God's guidance during our retreat. Just then a couple who were in the seats in front of us turned round and said: *Hi! Did I hear you say you are moving to the States?* It turned out they were also Christians, from Virginia. We had a wonderful journey talking about our plans, our faith journeys, and life in America. We seemed to reach our destination in no time and by then I felt I had known Charlie and Carol for years. They were staying on the train so we said our goodbyes and exchanged addresses. How wonderful the Lord is, and how good it is to know we are all part of his worldwide family.

As we were leaving Carol called me back and said: *Please take this.* She handed me a coin, a quarter minted in 2000. *I like to give them to people we meet on our trail.* Charlie was keeping a journal of all the trail blessings they had received. I looked at the coin and read: *In God We Trust.*

I thanked this lovely couple and silently praised God for his blessings and attention to detail. What a wonderful Heavenly Father we have, who knows our every move. If our train and seating had not been changed we would have missed meeting our dear friends, who later introduced my husband and me to friends of theirs who live in Fairfax and have made us feel so welcome here. This is just part of the story and just one of the multitude of blessings God has given since we arrived in the USA I praise God for adopting me into his worldwide family. It's wonderful to know we are all praying from Celtic Daily Prayer. I feel very close to you all. God bless you and keep you safe in every place where you are.



As from early January 2005 there is an urgent need for Companions and Friends to help with the practical day-to-day running of the Nether

Springs. Can you help us for a weekend, a week, a fortnight or longer as the resident Team is now so small that we will be unable to maintain the continuous programme of retreats without such help.



We also require those who are able to explore an extended time as a Volunteer, perhaps joining the Monastery Team.

The only requirement is a heart for God and a genuine desire to explore the 'new monastic' way which is at the heart of the Nether Springs. **If you are interested then contact the Community Office for more details.**

### Northern Light 2005 'Unearthing the Treasure'...

a holiday camp with festival atmosphere  
at Hollybush Farm, Thirsk, North Yorkshire  
from 15th - 21st August, 2005,

Wellspring and Community musicians will be leading worship, Roy Searle will be speaking one of the evening's, Andy Raine is hoping to take a dance team, and we hope also to have a storyteller for workshop.

Further details and a brochure from [office@northernlight.org.uk](mailto:office@northernlight.org.uk).



## Community Group Leaders' Weekend, 11 –13<sup>th</sup> February

by Norma Charlton

We had a good weekend, with the best turnout ever - 45 leaders and representatives from 19 groups! Only 4 groups were unable to be represented: Edinburgh, Exeter, Sheffield and Forest of Dean. Needless to say all the resources were stretched; the house team did a brilliant job of catering for us all and thanks to Nancy, Bryony, Roy & Shirley and Brenda everyone had a bed. We also appreciated that everyone on the leadership team managed to get to at least one session over the weekend as well as being available to chat to.

On the Friday evening we had to meet in the chapel as we were too many to get into Columba (the sitting room in the house). I talked about the development of the groups and the 'Achsah principles' that we aim to follow. Then we split into two groups to share IDEAS, REFLECTIONS, QUESTIONS and ISSUES, which resulted in some interesting discussions that we came back to on Saturday afternoon.

On Saturday morning we went over to Nancy Hammond's house, meeting in her wonderful 'upper room', where we listened to talks by Roy and Trevor. Roy talked of the changing cultural background in which we ask: "Covenanted together and seeking God, How then shall we live? and Sing the Lord's song in the changing world?", and the position of Community in this culture. He then shared some insights on faith journeys and approaches to putting faith into practice based on observations by Helen Ebaugh of 'Leaving Journeys', Jamieson's books and James Fowler's Stages of faith that may help us to better understand where people are coming from.

Trevor spoke about the groups helping people to 'live on the threshold', in fact 'being threshold' as in our ordinariness we are signs of the kingdom in the streets where we live. He referred to the holy space of our 'intentional uselessness', and, since the Achshah story is at the heart of the Northumbria Community with its image of the Upper Springs and the Nether Springs, asked "How can we give water to others?" He then gave seven guidelines for the groups to be 'safe places' and called for us to be *'Dynamic, 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.'* William Stringfellow. Both he and Roy stressed the importance of the Community groups in the place of the Community and encouraged us to explore different ways in our groups to bring life.

Jeff was filming both talks, so there wasn't quite as much as usual in the way of questions and comments. However, there was the opportunity after lunch to reflect on what we had heard and to consider the questions and issues that had been raised on Friday. We then broke up in to groups according to our interests: 'Why Groups?' 'What about the church?' 'The problems of groups that are themselves dispersed' and 'How do we stay feeling connected to NC?'

After a brief feedback we were free till the evening meal. Some folk explored Wooler; others went back to the Hall where Brenda showed those who were interested (or had enough energy to take it in) how to find their way around the website and enter details of their group. Hopefully we will see the forum being regularly updated with group information....The intrepid six from the Cotswolds trekked off to Bamburgh and got lost on the way back, arriving back to find that there was still plenty for them to eat.

Saturday evening gave us the opportunity to relax with a ceilidh. Contributions came in the form of music, song, poetry, stories, wine, fruit, drinks, chocolates and biscuits; and a good time was had by all, rounded off by Compline in the chapel on a clear starry night.

On Sunday morning I was able to go for a walk that was cut short by snow gusting along the lane. We had a leisurely start to the day with informal sharing until a Commissioning Eucharist at 10-15, during which Trevor gave a talk on the current theme that the leadership want everyone in Community to connect to and develop this year: **'Covenanted Together'**. After Communion group leaders or their representatives were invited to be anointed by Trevor or myself. Several people commented that the service was a moving and affirming experience. As a result of the final time together it was decided that it would be of benefit for group leaders in regional patches to meet together locally. Those who had previously been to these weekends agreed with Richard Oliver who said he had missed the usual opportunity to share ideas and resources. Bob Ainsley volunteered to look at the geography of the groups to see if he could work out logical groupings and a central place where they could meet. Hopefully there will also be the opportunity to get together through regional gatherings, which would allow those not attached to a group to come too. Roy will be travelling all round the country over the course of his year as President of the Baptist Union and he said how he would welcome people from Community joining with him whenever possible. Everyone agreed that it had been a valuable weekend. All that remained then was to enjoy lunch before leaving for home.

Currently there are groups in the following areas:

Bradford, Birmingham, \*Bridlington, Cambridge, Chard, Cotswolds, East Midlands, Edinburgh, Exeter, Forest of Dean, Holy Island, Leeds & York, Manchester, Newton Aycliffe, Oxford, \*Peterborough, Poynton, Sedburgh, \*Sheffield, Tyneside, \*Wear Valley, West Lothian.

[\* = new groups]

I ask you to excuse me if you do not get a reply immediately. I work on a voluntary basis from my home in Gateshead and domestic issues sometimes take preference. (If you don't hear at all do contact me again, as I may have accidentally deleted your message) *Norma Charlton*





## Father Tony Battle 1942 – 2005

by Norma Charlton

Tony was a curate at St Mary's cathedral in Newcastle 30 years ago when I went to my first Catholic mass with my boyfriend Norman and his family. The following year, after I'd had an amazing conversion experience, he agreed to give me instruction, and said: "I'll teach you what it means to be a Christian, then you can decide if you want to be Catholic, Methodist, Anglican or whatever".

During the course of those lessons, Tony taught me what it meant to pray by introducing me to a local prayer group in Low Fell as well as the charismatic renewal prayer group that met in the cathedral after mass on Sunday evenings. He taught me that God loved me into being, and that it is natural for each of us to have a vocation to seek God and to follow Jesus' teaching.

Tony had begun with the Acts of the Apostles, and with him the words of scripture came alive for me, looking at how the first Christians followed Jesus; and it was then that a longing for 'community' was kindled in my heart. A friend of ours, Andy Raine, was one of the founders of what became the Northumbria Community, but as I was praying for God to give me a community on my doorstep, I just thought that was 'Andy's thing'.

After the community found a home at Hetton Hall I went up and found my still point in a turning world. Here were people from a range of religious backgrounds who were not afraid to admit that life and prayer could be difficult and above all there was the freedom to be real and to ask questions.

Shortly afterwards when I went to see Tony he had also been up to Hetton and discovered the community. It was the reality and total acceptance he found there that appealed to Tony too. And like many of us he said he felt as if he'd 'come home'. He became first a friend then a companion of community, regularly going on retreat and praying with "A Northumbrian Office", published now as "Celtic Daily Prayer", which was a source of great comfort and inspiration particularly over his last few weeks after he was diagnosed with liver cancer.

The Aidan readings for December on the call to a deeper life were particularly meaningful to Tony. For example, the commentary that began the month stated: "...where we really belong is somewhere else, we have heard something inside us calling us to 'Come away'. We belong to a different kingdom; our home is another country... This world is not my home". His catch phrase during the six weeks before he died on 3<sup>rd</sup> January was "I'm dying but I'm fine". He told me that he had always lived with an expectant faith and he hoped to die that way....and he did! He planned every detail of his funeral, which truly was an expression of his faith and was attended by so many that it was impossible to get the coffin out of the church. Typically, in front of his coffin stood a poster of a motor bike rider with the words 'Ride free into eternity'.

Although in his humility he denied it, I think Tony is an example of living the Rule of the Northumbria Community: 'A Way for Living' that is summarised in the two words 'Availability and Vulnerability': available to God through prayer and to other people, sharing in God's care for them, which may involve hospitality and intercession.

I am one among many who felt his genuine love and compassion and say that Tony was always there when needed. He was instrumental in both setting up and offering his home for the charity 'Night stop', which provides emergency shelter to homeless youngsters.

As for being intentionally vulnerable, I have heard many people say that he lived the gospel absolutely. Material things didn't matter to him, Until recent years when his parish was too widespread, Tony would go everywhere by pushbike (although he did love his motorbike and impressed our boys enormously when he turned up on it!).

Following the heretical imperative, which puts relationship before reputation, and speaking out when necessary came naturally to him. He was actively involved in whatever he felt Jesus would be, from peace vigils with CND and Amnesty International to being prosecuted for refusing to pay the poll tax that he considered to be unfair. Finally, he embraced the vulnerability to live as 'church without walls', living openly among unbelievers and other believers in a way that the life of God in his could be seen, challenged or questioned. He turned down being chaplain at Cambridge university, choosing instead to work in a parish in one of the worst areas of Tyneside. Here he empowered the 'ladies' of the parish, and worked with an Anglican priest and a house church minister to build up an ecumenical practical outreach and service based in the local community centre.

Part of the ethos of the community is a conscious link between the way we seek to live and the Christian history of Northumbria. Tony loved to walk all over Northumberland and became fascinated by the stories of our Celtic forefathers and mothers. The Venerable Bede admired the Celtic saints because they 'lived their faith'. That we can say for Tony too – He lived his faith and was an inspiration to countless people.

## Make Poverty History...

*On Saturday the 29<sup>th</sup> January, 2005, Roy Searle spoke at the Churches launch of Make Poverty History at Bloomsbury in London. This is an extract from his talk...*

There is a scripture which talks about the young having visions and the old dreaming dreams. I have a dream that in 40 years time when I'm shuffling along on my solar powered zimmer frame accompanying my grandchildren as we visit a new museum which is dedicated to telling the story of how extreme poverty was eradicated. The displays, exhibits, video imaging and bank of plasma screens tell the stories of how the year 2005 marked a turning point in the world's history:

- How the British government led by example and brought other major economic powers on board and took the courageous but groundbreaking steps in cancelling international debt and how by the year 2015, world poverty as promised back in 2001 by the G8 nations was fulfilled.
- How trade justice was realised in such a way that gave the developing nations of the world an equal opportunity to trade within a just global system and has brought a more peaceful, stable and economically prosperous culture to the continents of Asia, Africa and South America and how the token aid offered in the 20<sup>th</sup> century paled into insignificance compared with the phenomenal monies and resources that have changed the world for the better. No longer does a child die needlessly every three seconds from preventable diseases, no longer do 30,000 people die every day from poverty related issues, nor does the continent of Africa any long suffer from the horrors of HIV/Aids that was eradicated and isn't it brilliant how every child up to the age of 16 receives a proper and free education in Africa.

I will totter around the museum with a sense of pride as I tell my grandchildren that I was part of a generation that made history by making poverty history.  
I have a dream!

We wouldn't be here today if we didn't think that such a dream could be achieved. If we didn't believe that we are at a carpe diem – seize the day – moment in history.

Movements have changed the world and we are part of a movement. We are like a stream that together with other streams and tributaries is flowing into and producing a great river that is working for change in the world today.

A movement of one people, we represent the churches throughout the length and breadth of Britain but we are joined by Christians across the globe united under the commitment and call to end poverty, establish trade justice and release significant aid to developing nations. We are joined by other faith communities and in this country alone there are hundreds of non-government organisations committed to the cause. It is not a church outing like a picnic in the park, this is a serious campaign where we are speaking out for those whose voice is rarely heard, affirming God's heart for the poor, demanding a just and better deal for the developing nations. We are here to make a difference and in the words of Sir Bob Geldoff, Chairman for the Commission for Africa, "We are not going away".

Secondly, a movement of happenings. Britain this year has tremendous opportunities, privileges and responsibilities, e.g. we have the Presidency of the G8 Summit in July, Presidency of the European Union and the Prime Minister's Commission on Africa. Our Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and Gordon Brown with his "*Marshall Plan*" for Africa – like them or loathe them - have been making pledges, commitments and promises that we need to hold them to and pray for their realisation. It is also 20 years since Live Aid was launched. Many of the global policy agendas are being forced to address the issues of poverty and development. We have heard today already of how the cancellation of some of the debt owed by Tanzania has in three years brought health care to levels unimagined in the last Century, education for every child at primary stage and thousands of people able to experience fresh and constant water for the first time in their lives. Cancelling debt and giving aid makes a difference. How much more so when we allow the developing nations to come to the world's market place as equal partners, when we put an end to the curse of free trade and fight for fair trade.

And we are here to add our hearts and voices, wills and actions to make a difference and make poverty history...

**For further details of Make Poverty History visit  
[www.makepovertyhistory.org](http://www.makepovertyhistory.org).**





## 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

If you would like more information about Community Groups; please contact:

**Norma Charlton**

norma.charlton@northumbriacommunity.org  
0191 487 8065  
or via the Community office

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.

### Are you with the Woolwich?

Bryony says that there are 2 standing orders arriving in the Community's account every month with Woolwich account numbers but no names: 233881732 and 206119853. It would be good to know who the givers are, in case we can reclaim the tax – though of course you can stay anonymous if you wish! E-mail  
finance@northumbriacommunity.org  
or call the community Office and leave a message for Bryony.

**THANKS!**

**Issue 33**

**Summer 2005.**

**The copy date for this edition is 23rd May 2005.**

## Northern Cross 2005

Walk the paths trod by Aidan and Cuthbert next Easter.

For almost ¼ of a century pilgrims have been walking to Holy Island to celebrate Easter on Holy Island as part of Northern Cross.

I will be leading the Haddington 'leg' of Northern Cross during Holy Week 2005 and would like to extend a warm invitation to all those associated with the Northumbria Community to join us.

We walk about 70 miles down the beautiful Berwickshire coast, sleeping in church halls. We walk, we sing, we eat, we talk. We worship together, and take time to reflect.

If you would like to know more, check out the website:

[www.northerncross.co.uk](http://www.northerncross.co.uk)

or contact me, Chris Cobbold

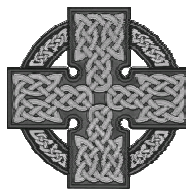
by email: [chris Cobbold72@hotmail.com](mailto:chris Cobbold72@hotmail.com)

or phone: 0118 966 7355.



walk with northern cross

### Tony Battle



*The memory of a good man is a blessing indeed -*  
we give thanks to God for those who have gone before us to their eternal rest, for those Companions and Friends who have entered the fullness of joy in God's presence.

Remembering all, we especially give thanks to God for Fr. Tony Battle and Roger Green.

### PROGRAMME EXTENSION

A new programme for the next 12 months is currently in the process of being finalised and will be sent to you on completion. One of the features will be an extension of the more informal programme geared especially to Companions and Friends entitled 'Living what we teach, teaching what we live' which has proved to be of real significance to many. These retreats span what would normally be two periods of the programme, i.e. a combining of Monday to Thursday and Friday to Sunday of the same week so as to provide a longer period for people to be part of the life and daily rhythm of our Mother House. In this way Companions and Friends (in the context of residency at the Nether Springs) are helped to respond to the prayer of Hild 'Show me the right seat; find me the fitting task; give me the willing heart' and find better understanding of what it means to be part of our Community. The content of these times together are a healthy mix of the planned and the spontaneous with opportunity in the context of a safe place to pray and work, dialogue and dream, think heretical thoughts, ask questions, as we explore together what it means to be part of a geographically dispersed Community. In the future this will incorporate the led retreat previously entitled 'Farther up, further in' and will continue to be an important part in the process of discerning and embracing vocational expression as Companions in Community. Please consider sharing in these times, as we believe they will make a major contribution to our understanding of being Alone/Together.



© 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](mailto:office@northumbriacommunity.org)

**Editors:**  
**David & Wendy**  
**Ward**

[david.ward@northumbriacommunity.org](mailto:david.ward@northumbriacommunity.org)

0161 442 7506