



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



CAIM

Issue no 36
Spring 2006

The NORTHUMBRIA COMMUNITY Newsletter

Practice Runs by Trevor Miller

Some years ago now I spent almost nine years in prison. I might add that I was a member of staff. One of the key areas always being emphasised was that of knowing the contingency plans. That is, to know what to do in the event of an escape, a hostage situation, a fire or an assault. Staff were not only encouraged to read, mark and learn the plans but to have frequent practice runs. So we had alarm bell tests, fire drills in the hope that when the real thing occurred, there was no panic but an automatic response already well practised. If you had not read them, kept up to date or neglected the practise then at best it could be embarrassing and at worst, highly dangerous.

Scripture is full of exhortation to know God's contingency plans well summarised by Proverbs 4: 23 'Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.' And Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount concluded that wise people who build their lives on solid rock are those who not only hear his words but also 'put them into practice.'

Inside this issue:

A CALL TO COMMUNITY-EASTER 2006...news of this significant event	2
STORIES BEHIND THE MEDITATIONS—Day 1..."My Gift from the Sea"	3
BOOK REVIEW..."Oriel's Diary, reviewed by Cathy Turton	3
EASTER GATHERING IN OXFORD...celebrate with the Oxford Community Group at Bridge House.	4
CLOISTERS NEWS...what's hot?	4
COMPANION OR FRIEND...do you know the difference? What difference does it make anyway?	5
ONLINE FORUM...have you found your way there yet?	6
Body Language and People who are blind...can you help?	7
MISSION TEAMS...in Wales and the West Midlands	8
TEACHING FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS...the first in a series of three articles	9
POEMS...a selection of poems sent in by CAIM readers	10
DANGEROUS HALF-TRUTHS...have you been taken in?	11

The monastic movement teaches us to 'build up habits of virtue' by memorising Scripture, cultivating inner resources and spiritual disciplines so that when unforeseen circumstances come, we are not caught out or overwhelmed. We act and react in a righteous way because we have had practice runs. It's a bit like learning to drive – what is very difficult for us at first, like changing gear or reversing - with practice almost becomes second nature to us.

We can lay a good foundation by building up our Christian memory and the principal means is through meditation, the basic meaning of which is rehearsal. All we learn and apply through meditation on nature and human nature, theology and life, is a rehearsal for those unforeseen circumstances we meet on the road of life.

Our Community ethos with its emphasis on contemplative awareness, daily liturgy, going to your cell, reading and reflecting on Scripture and books that nourish the heart as well as stretch the mind, all help build up Christian memory. These 'habits of virtue' become a resource bank from which we can draw daily as well as in the emergencies of life.

We can all do this in some measure because it isn't quantity that matters but quality, although we do need to know more than the basics. A driver who only knows how to turn left will not get very far. Most of us know there is a world of difference between knowing how to pass a driving test and the day-by-day growth in confidence that is only learned through the actual experience and constant practice in driving in all conditions. This is why Scripture exhorts us to 'Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity'.



©1965 Hugh Burnett "Beware of the Abbot"

A Call to Community - Easter 2006

*Called to a Way of Life, committed to a Rule –
we say Yes to Availability and Vulnerability.*



Historically, Easter has always been a time of importance in the Community but this year it takes on a special significance. This is because a call is going out across the Community; not only to renew our 'vows' - our 'Yes to Availability and Vulnerability' - but also to recommit to our covenant together within the Northumbria Community as Companions.

Having spent this past year reflecting on what it means to be covenanted together as Companions, we now have an opportunity to respond. We would encourage as many as possible to seek to be present on Holy Island on Easter Sunday so that we can renew our covenant and our vows in the context of our annual Easter workshop gathering which is taking place at the Nether Springs over the Easter weekend.

We thank God for all that he has done in shaping and informing the Community's vocation and vision. We give thanks for those who have joined us on the journey. Alone and Together, we embrace the new monastic call to seek God, to sing His song in a strange land, and to ask how we might live as believers in a changing church and emerging culture.

Whether or not you are able to come to Holy Island, we are encouraging everyone within the Community to use the enclosed 'Renewal of Vows' Liturgy over the Easter weekend, and where possible to join with other Companions and Friends in sharing together wherever you are. As an example, at our Easter workshop at Nether Springs either in the labyrinth garden or in the Chapel of the Incarnation we are encouraging those present to break bread with one another to express the companionship to which we are called as a covenanted community and the friendship into which we are invited. Perhaps this could be an opportunity to do something similar in expressing that togetherness.

To all fellow Companions on the journey - old and new, and of all generations - we welcome you, honour you and we pray the blessing of the living God to be upon you. Alone and Together, may we journey into the future, covenanted together, committed and open to all that God longs to be and do among us. May the risen Christ be with you.

Maundy Thursday 13th April

- 4.00pm Arrive
- 6.00pm Evening Meal
- 7.15pm Maundy Thursday Eucharist including Foot Washing

Good Friday 14th April

- 9.30am Morning Office
- 10.30am A New Monasticism - Teaching and Sharing Stories
- 12.00pm Midday Office
- 12.10pm Quiet Hour
- 1.00pm Lunch
- 2.00pm Pilgrimage – Stations of the Cross Liturgy to Cuthbert's Cave
- 6.00pm Shabbat meal
- 7.15pm Evening Office
- 8.00pm Informal Evening
- 9.30pm Compline

Easter Saturday 15th April

- 9.30am Morning Office
- 10.30am A New Monasticism - Teaching and Sharing Stories
- 12.00pm Midday Office
- 12.10pm Quiet Hour
- 1.00pm Lunch
- 2.00pm Creative Workshops on aspects of Renewing our Covenant.
- 4.00pm Free Time

- 6.00pm Dinner
- 7.15pm Easter Eve Liturgy including worship, music, storytelling.
- 11.45pm Easter Vigil

Easter Sunday 16th April

- 9.30am Morning Office
- 10.45am Morning Service with Communion at St. Mary's C of E, Holy Island
- 12.30 Midday prayer and Christ as a Light at St Aidan's statue followed by prayer and worship on the Heugh, then renewal of our vows in St Mary's church. *Packed lunch (please bring your own) to be eaten on the Island.*

- 6.00pm Dinner
- 7.15pm Evening Office
- 8.00pm Caedmon Evening—Bring yourself, 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 17th April

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

As Easter Workshop is for all the family, it is hoped that there will be workshops for both children and young people during the Teaching sessions on both Friday and Saturday mornings.

Stories Behind the Meditations for the Day of the Month

Day 1 by Andy Raine

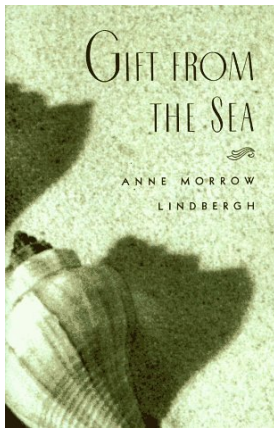
When Anne Morrow, the young daughter of an American ambassador became engaged to aviator Charles Lindberg she was thrust into the spotlight and their romance became a society and media preoccupation. Lindberg, in his day, was like David Beckham and Neil Armstrong rolled into one.



Anne was a great reader, as a girl, and also kept a journal/diary. Later, several volumes of these were published, and make fascinating reading still (see Aidan readings for September 29th in Celtic Daily Prayer).

Her short novel, "Dearly Beloved" is set at a wedding, and gets inside the heads of those involved during the ceremony, their memories, wandering thoughts, joys, irritations or mixture of emotions. She has a sure touch – and I think of it every time I am at a wedding!!

Her most famous little book is "A Gift from the Sea", which is a collection of jottings about time away at a New England beach for a break from normal routine, the opportunity for rest and reflection. Books remain unread, letters unwritten, and as the sea washes up some different finds on the shore for her to notice, so the outgoing tide leaves thoughts and fresh perspectives in her mindscape, and a refreshing for the heart.



Our Day 1 Meditation is a quotation from that little book. Others are found in the Aidan readings for May 23rd to 31st in Celtic Daily Prayer, including a longer version of the familiar quote from the Meditations, reminding us that renewal and regeneration are as possible as the arm of a starfish replacing itself.

Another section is found under the heading "Mid-Life" in the resources at the beginning of Celtic Daily Prayer.

Book review by Cathy Turton

Since its publication 3 years ago I've annually read 'Oriel's Diary: an Archangel's account of the life of Jesus' by Robert Harrison (published by Scripture Union.) It's a moving account of the life of Jesus from an archangel's perspective, giving fresh insights and it rekindles my thirst for the Gospels. Its sequel 'Oriel's Travels' inspires me to re-read Acts of the Apostles and Paul's letters. The prequel (actually written last, and I think best read as the third book) tells the story of Moses.

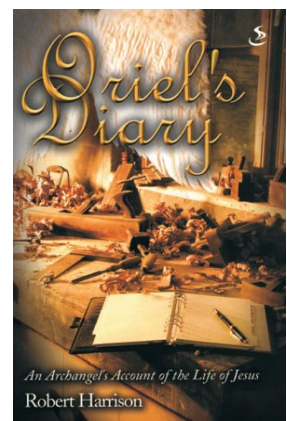
Here are 2 extracts from Oriel's Diary to whet your appetite.

Oriel's account of the Call of the First Disciples.

'It takes less than two weeks for most people to stop talking about Jesus. Simon and Andrew, on the other hand, have hardly stopped talking about him. Yesterday I joined the two brothers and their partners James and John as they sat mending their nets on the beach. The conversation was about whether they could afford to take a few days off to track Jesus down and listen to him again. They won't need to!'

Oriel's account of the sending out of the Twelve.

'Jesus has asked them to take neither food nor money with them, knowing they would only manage in this mission if they were totally dependant on his Father.'



CLOISTERS NEWS

CELTIC PRAYER DVD

This is a fine new resource produced by Active Media Publishing in a series of DVDs called Just Worship. What they have done is put together beautiful video footage of Holy Island, the artwork of Community Companion Mary Fleeson, and music from the Community's Celtic Daily Prayer and Waymarks CDs. (There are also contributions from other musicians and from Kate Tristram and Ray Simpson on Holy Island about the island's Christian heritage and Celtic Spirituality.) There are 10 sections, each lasting between 3 and 8 minutes, which can be used either by individuals, groups or within church services as aids to worship, meditation - or just for the information they contain. The DVD also contains images that can be used as backgrounds for Power-Point presentations or as screensavers.

This DVD is specially recommended as a resource for churches and groups and it is available from Cloisters by mail order as below (p&p included).



Celtic Prayer DVD (Ref: JW3DVD) £20.00

NORTHUMBRIA COMMUNITY STAND AT BAPTIST ASSEMBLY BRIGHTON 28-30 APRIL

Cloisters will be running a Community stand at the Baptist Assembly in Brighton from Friday 28th to Sunday 30th April. Brenda will be running the stand, but she would appreciate the help of any Community folk who will be attending (just being there to talk to enquirers). Roy Searle and Richard Foster will be participating in the Assembly, so both the Community and Renovare will have a high profile over the weekend.

If you will be attending and feel able to help in this way, please get in touch with Brenda on 01289 388235 or cloisters@northumbriacommunity.org

Easter Gathering in Oxfordshire

Philip and Rosemary Mader-Grayson with the Oxford Community Group are planning an "Alternative Easter Gathering" at Bridge House, Shillingford for Companions and Friends in NC who cannot travel to Nether Springs for Easter Workshop, but would like to meet up with others in community for all or part of Easter.

They are hoping to have a programme of activities including music, storytelling, discussions, art and crafts. On Monday evening there will be the opportunity to renew our covenant with NC using the service which are included in this mailing of CAIM.

Another feature of the weekend will be the dedication of their chapel in the orchard at Midday on Easter Monday. They have converted a large garden shed into a small chapel for prayer offices and as a quiet space for visitors. By then it should be insulated and heated (with a small log burner) and have disabled access through the otherwise muddy orchard.

The campsite at Bridge House will be available and there are two double bedrooms which could be booked on a B&B basis.

Look on the website forum for details of the programme for the weekend or contact Philip and Rosemary 01865 858251.

Who is it that you seek?

"You" have planted in us a ravenous, gnawing wonder that never says, "enough."...Now we see the evidence of your fierce passion. You want us with you. You will let nothing else satisfy us. You insist we come intelligently and responsibly, that we suffer a lifetime of unanswered questions and halting convictions rather than repress the wonder in our hearts that seeks Your face.

From *We Cannot Find Words: The Foundations of Prayer* by Tad Dunne SJ

Companion or Friend? By Norma Charlton

In the course of answering queries from people wanting to find out about Community Groups, I have become aware how few NC folk know the difference between 'Companions' and 'Friends' in community.

As I see it there are two main questions that need to be addressed: a) Do people on our database understand the different levels of commitment implied by choosing to be a Friend or a Companion? and b) how to move from one to the other?

Although we speak of making relationships a priority over programmes, a process of discernment has evolved as NC has grown. At the moment this process has 3 steps:

- ◆ Anyone drawn to NC contacts the Office at Nether Springs and is sent an introductory pack containing an example of all our mailings – a copy each of the Prayer Guide, our newsletter – CAIM (encircling), Cloisters catalogue, an introductory leaflet and a Programme of Retreats at Nether Springs, together with a database form. Once the completed database form, along with a donation towards expenses, is received and details are entered onto the Database you are then a 'Friend'. You can ask to only receive the programme of retreats at the Nether Springs.

All Friends are entitled to register with Jeff Sutheran, which allows free access to the Forum part of the website. This has proved to be a great means of connecting people who experience the 'aloneness' of seeking God on their own, (without being at all exclusive as there is always a welcome for someone new) and provides opportunities for Friends and Companions to discuss all sorts, to share the delights and disappointments of our lives and to support one another.

- ◆ Those who wish to take their involvement further are encouraged to attend two retreats at Nether Springs: a **Community Weekend** followed by a week **Living What We Teach**. These impart the story and ethos of NC, teaching about the **Rule** – A Way for Living, and giving opportunity to experience the **Rhythm** of our Daily Living. Through this period prospective Companions can see if this is what God is drawing them into.
- ◆ The person who wishes to become a Companion then has a time of reflection, after which they may make formal application to the Leaders through the Community Office.

At its most basic, Companions are those who have a sense of vocation expressed in a commitment to seeking God, through their 'Yes to Availability and Vulnerability' as a way for living and practising a daily rhythm, supporting the Community through whatever means they are able and participating in an annual retreat at the Nether Springs. Every Easter we have the opportunity to renew the commitment we make as we 'covenant together' to follow Jesus through our chosen way for living. This commitment is to living the questions at the heart of our Community ethos, 'Who is it that you seek?' 'How then shall we live?' 'How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?'

All Companions were sent a CD last year, which invited them to reflect on what it means to them to be 'covenanted together'. This highlighted a couple of facts: many who have been registered as 'Friends' for years are under the impression that they are actually 'Companions', while some who have been Companions for a long time no longer have the same need or the same level of commitment. Indeed some have changed address without forwarding their details and we have to ask "*Are we still in relationship?*" In theory it should be easy enough to change – another letter to one of the Leadership Team, through the Community Office.

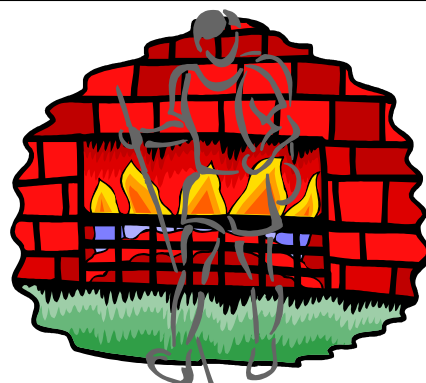
As we used to say in the past when folk looked for all their information from the Mother House – "It's all about communication" and that's a two-way thing!



The Storm

The rolling sea, grey, white-capped waves
tossing logs like so much kindling
on the shore. Wind, driving rain
and robbing body heat from soaking clothes.
I will thank you for the pow'r of wind
and for the cold, storm tossed sea? Not likely!
For a spot by fire warm and toasty,
safe within the nest perhaps. Not storm tossed
boats,
lest I die, but saviour's words of "peace, be still",
and pillows soft on which to lay my head.
Your church lacks pow'r - small wonder Lord,
while pilgrims, such as I, wimp hearth to hearth
along the path to heaven.

Diane Sekuloff
2006



Online Forum...a developing expression of Community

We love to get feedback for CAIM. Recently we received this in an email from one of the regulars on the Online Forum.

"First of all, thank you for the Caim. It is lovely and full of information.

Second, I must confess I always feel disconnected when I receive this. It's as if the Northumbria Community I know (predominantly the forum) isn't the same community as what is shared in the newsletter. I cannot see myself reflected in it, or my community experience reflected in it."

Ever anxious to build community we encouraged Forum regulars to write for CAIM and more people from Community to try out the Forum.

Here are a couple of contributions that spring from that encouragement:

A Technophobe in a Safe Place by Linda Davis

In the on-line Forum I have found a safe space where people can share their thoughts, ideas, questions, experiences, prayers. There are discussions, ranging from serious theological and spiritual issues, to light-hearted and sometimes hilarious ones such as the merits of Marmite and the Awful Horror of Jeff Sutheran's feet (!).

One of the longest running topics is 'Practical Prayer' - ways of praying in a 'hands on' way - including walking, gardening, lighting candles...and lately, knitting socks and hoovering the rug! The most heavily subscribed Topic must be 'Intercession', and this also runs through and undergirds the whole of what happens on the Forum.

Being a bit of a technophobe (blush) I've been amazed at the depth, sincerity, and REALITY of prayer I've been able to enter into, just sitting at my computer, as I join fellow Forumites, praying for each other, family life, the Community, and the situations and needs of others as they arise.

One of the 'practical' things some of us have started recently is to exchange 'prayer' beads, representing ourselves and close family. I already have beads from Northumberland, Somerset, USA, Canada, and Senegal. We come from many different backgrounds, countries, cultures, churches and no church at all. But we are part of 'the body' of the NC and as such we seek to express and build up a sense of community in and around ourselves. Whether, like me, you log-on most days, or just occasionally, we can learn from and support each other, and hopefully, contribute to the strength of the Community as a whole.

So if you haven't done so yet, get registered, and drop in to the Forum for a visit. Pull up a chair round the table and maybe join in one or two of the 'conversations'. You'll find a warm welcome! Linda x

Finding Your Way to the Forum by Aggie Mitchkoski

Out walking on a cold and rainy day, you pull your jacket collar up and grab it close to protect your face from the wind. The hills are tweedy with brown and green and everywhere you look, the sky is grey and the way is empty. As you continue down the road, you spot a bit of smoke rising and as you round the bend, there before you is a lovely little cottage. Simple, small but even at this distance you can tell it is a place cared for. Your very next step lands you in a cold, muddy puddle. With your right foot soaked to the bone and biting with the cold, you decide to go and see if you could take shelter in the cottage. Limping, you go forward. The light through the window is butter-yellow. And what is that smell? Soup? No.. cookies....

A lovely hedge surrounds the cottage but there at the front is a wide gate and a meandering cobble path to a deep forest green wooden door. Surrounding the entryway is thick ivy that even in this cold, gives off a fragrance of the woods. All is quiet within, should you knock? Who lives here? Maybe they won't be happy with you just dropping in... You turn and look back to where you have just come from. It seems so empty and so cold. Turning to the door again, you knock.

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

The door swings open and a man with a broad smile and a twinkle behind his black horn-rimmed glasses says, "Well hello! Welcome, welcome..." and reaches out to bring you into the room. As he closes the door, you spin around and notice the room is much bigger than it seemed from outside. Helping you to take off your coat, the helpful man nudges you in the direction of the large kitchen table that stands in the center of the room. "Go on. Have a seat. I'll put on some tea," and he bustles off into a corner of the room and seems to disappear into the background. It's a beautiful table, long and wide with thick supporting legs. And the chairs! You have to chuckle and wonder as they are all so different! One is so small; you'd think it was for a child. And then there's a large upholstered one that looks more like it belongs in the living room than in a kitchen. Some have cushions, some painted, and some plain....and how could so many fit around one table? To the right, you feel the heat of the hearth and see that the bright fire basks the entire room in a rich glow. Beside it, is a chair. You run your hand over the curved back and down the arm and almost without knowing why, you sit down. Sigh. Slowly bending over you pull off your soaked shoes and socks and lay them in front of the fire. Wiggling your toes in the heat you say to no one but yourself, "I don't know how I can go on. I don't know why I decided to take that road. What am I going to do now?"

"Well, you don't have to go anywhere right now," a voice says from behind you. You turn and there sitting at the table is a young woman with glasses, knitting. Where did she come from? The helpful man appears at the edge of the room and brings a pot of tea to the table. The woman gets up and walks over to you, in her hand is a pair of socks. "Here, put these on and come over to the table and we'll have a chat." As you put these warm and perfectly fitting! socks on, you notice there's a bit more movement in the room and when you lift your head, there are even more people sitting at the table. Some are having little conversations together but as you come to the table, with your chair, they all begin to bring their attention to you. Quietly, a cup of tea is pushed across the table to you. You put your hands around the cup, feeling the warmth, the comfort and even before you know it, you're talking. Talking about all kinds of things, personal things, troubling things. Mostly, they all listen. Certainly they are all praying. One next to you reaches out her hand and gives yours a squeeze. Another person notices you're shivering and covers your shoulders with a shawl. The man across from you, shares how he also has experienced that sense of being lost and alone and how he found hope again. Before long, you feel warm and safe and as these new companions begin to get up from the table, you bow your own head in prayer, thanking God for leading you here. Safe in the knowledge that you will find your way back here, to this space bathed in light and fire again and again.

Body Language and people who are blind by Catherine Davies

Since being dropped into the world of people with sight loss 5 years ago, through marrying Rob, who is blind, I have been on a steep learning curve. We run **Echurch-uk**, an online Christian community for people with all levels of sight loss, some of our members are deaf/blind.

A common complaint from Christians who are blind is that people ignore them at church. Some of this is down to shyness or rudeness but I believe a lot is just ignorance. And I use that word as it is meant to be used, as a lack of knowledge.

<http://www.echurch-uk.org/myths.php> on our website explains all the myths about blindness that I believed were true. Which is why Rob and I wrote this list and the answers and which we use as the basis of talks we regularly give. I am reading lots of books at the moment, - thank God for libraries! But I have found nothing about body language as relates to blind people.

Please may I ask you to share any ideas you may have; one of our blind echurch list members is dreadfully upset as no-one spoke to her at her church one Sunday - but they may have nodded and smiled at her without thinking (As I still do after 4 years of marriage to a blind man!)

"It has been accepted by many experts that 93% of communication is nonverbal, 55% through facial expression, posture and gesture and 38% through tone of voice. These are seldom used consciously, but are a natural way of communicating with others. We are taught not to touch people unless we are really familiar with them and these gestures help us not to offend people by touching them unnecessarily. The 55% section of these figures refers to what are grouped together as "body language" .



I would really appreciate some input, have you ever come across writings on this subject? Or learned through your own experience? If so please contact me at kate@echurch-uk.org. Blessings



Mission Teams



"Covenanted Together" in the West Midlands by Wendy Ward

A small Community team led a Community Gathering, kindly hosted by Keith Judson at Bewdley Baptist Church. The event consisted of three workshops, (art, music and discussion), a generous finger buffet tea and a corporate time of worship/blessing. This was all around the theme of what it means in practice to be "Covenanted together in Northumbria Community."

The main points that came out of the workshops and talk were these:

- ◆ Our 'covenantedness' comes from the heart
- ◆ It is something we actively choose to do that not just commits us to our Rule but to one another and Northumbria or its heritage
- ◆ It is not easily defined and can not be summed up in a slick phrase. This is well expressed through the sculpture shown here.



The sculpture will be on display at Easter Workshop along with the opportunity to add to it and develop it

A number of those present were surprised to see how many people around the Midlands are linked with or have an interest in our Community. We saw new friendships being forged and possibilities for Community groups to get together more frequently to encourage one another on the journey.

Celtic Fire in Bangor, Wales

Walking the ancient paths a large Community team went to Wales the other week with a mixture of "old hands" and new Companions and Friends. Leading workshops and presenting a Celtic Fire they told the story of Aidan and the link with the Welsh Saints composing for the occasion a hymn set to the tune of Cwm Rhonnda which was greatly used by God as many sang in their native Welsh tongue a heart cry to God for the land and people. Strong connections were made and there was a real sense that by the Sunday evening that there had been some repairing of broken altars and a gathering of kindred spirits.

"Thanks again to the whole Northumbria Community team for the most excellent Celtic Fire weekend we've just had with you here in Bangor... I can't speak for the rest of Penrallt (although I'm sure many would echo my sentiments), but I was greatly blessed by meeting you, and I fervently hope that our paths will meet again soon.

As well as being very satisfying on a musical level, and a chance to meet some very fine people, the weekend has rekindled my desire to move deeper into God and to give him the centre of my life and not just its fringes. I hope and pray that the discipline of Celtic daily prayer might help me to keep up this resolve...."



"To you all, our very many thanks for a fantastic weekend. People have been talking to me non stop about it and all of them were very appreciative. One of our church leaders is beginning to use the daily offices, and the music is going to slip into our repertoire over the next month or so. Most importantly, we connected with your spirituality and felt that we were pilgrims on the same road.

Thank you for your cracking sermons...I could go on, but it would be all the same - gratitude to God for you all and for your love for us. God bless you and lead you. You know now that you have kindred spirits here in the West"

Teaching for Community Groups Article 1 by Trevor Miller

First given at the recent Community Group Leaders' weekend.

An important lesson for us as a Community is well captured in the prayer towards the end of our Brendan Liturgy, 'Lord, I will trust You, help me to journey beyond the familiar and into the unknown. Give me the faith to leave old ways and break fresh ground with You. I will believe You for my future, chapter by chapter, until all the story is written'.

This awareness that the story of our Community is *still being written*, so that new chapters are an inevitable and essential part of the story in progress: yet also realising that they don't replace or negate the old chapters because *both* old and new are vital parts of our ongoing life. To understand that we need to grasp the familiar *in order to* go beyond it:

we take hold of the known *so as to* enter the unknown, and, as a result, our Community needs *both* story-keepers *and* story-makers existing in tandem.



Let me try to explain! Unlike the journey across the Pilgrim Way to Holy Island where the way-marks are numerous and the way clear, the spiritual journey is often 'a journey without maps'. Time and again, we have to carefully plot a course, not always knowing if it is the right path. In *Jeremiah 31:21* God says to the pilgrim people, wandering in exile, 'Set up road markers'; as you journey 'make your self guide posts', turn your thoughts to the way you went, so that if needed you can retrace your steps. They were to build pillars, leave poles and stones to mark their way so that unlike Hansel and Gretel the birds wouldn't eat up their markers, so they could find their way back on course.

As Companions and Friends, as Community Groups, we need way-marks: 1] because all pilgrims are tempted from time-to-time to take an easier path, or a more exciting alternative route or equally, to remain stagnant on the known familiar path even when called to pioneer new ways. And 2] because nothing is static, everything is moving since *it is* life actually being lived, it is pilgrimage, people on a journey. The Kaleidoscope of life brings change with every turn but we recognize that all the different patterns emerging are in fact made up of the *very same pieces* - our DNA!

What are the pieces that are a constant for us? At what point do we need to stop and take the opportunity to retrace our steps, and look for these way-marks, as Jeremiah 6: 16 'Ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is and walk in it'. We need to be aware that as a Community now into 3rd generation there are peculiar dangers, one of which is illustrated by the following story.

A very devout Christian developed a discipline of spending several minutes each morning in prayer and reading the scriptures in his bedroom. As time went by, this pattern became increasingly meaningful & life-giving to him. Now he owned a cat, and during his devotions the cat rubbed itself against him, purring loudly, which spoiled his concentration. So he found a solution, he put a collar on the cat and attached a lead to the collar so that during the devotions he could tie the cat to the bedpost. The result was that the cat was happy, (curled up and contented) and he was happy because he could concentrate on his prayers and meditation. Over the years, his daughter (having seen how much this meant to her Dad) followed his example of daily devotions for herself. However, time now moved much faster than her Dad's generation and she found that she couldn't give as much time as he had done, but in the brief moments she did have, she dutifully tied the family cat to the bedpost as she prayed, as her Father had done before her. Now the day came when her son grew up and he wanted to preserve the family tradition of both his Mum and his Granddad, but the pace of life had quickened even more, so that there was *no time left at all* for prayer or reading the Scriptures *but each day, while he was dressing, he tied the family cat to the bedpost.*

Humorous but challenging, illustrating the difference between tradition and traditionalism. The 1st, tradition is good – keeping alive the life lived by others, the baton passed on, taken up, lived today. The 2nd, traditionalism is the opposite, not the living faith of those now dead/past, but the dead faith of those still living. It's bad because it involves *a loss of meaning & a loss of memory* – we no longer know why we do what we do and why it was significant.

As a Community we need to hold to tradition without falling into traditionalism. So we must ever be alert to discerning the difference. One polarisation is that of a Legalism that holds on tight to no change; acting as if the 'Foundation of old' is the whole building.

The opposite polarisation is that of License, which lets go of everything through all change and is only interested in 'building the new'. We need a middle road of Liberty that draws the best from the other two: holding strong convictions yet open to change, so that 'building the new on foundations of old' is in harmony. This means we can acknowledge and bless one another's diverse journeys.

Poems

There's space this month to print a few of the many poems that have been accumulating in my "in-tray. It seems a lot of CAIM readers like to practice the ancient art of creative writing, and here are some of the fruits...

DESIRED HAVEN

To be still in the midst of movement
To be silent in the midst of noise
To be calm in the midst of chaos
To be serene in the midst of my heart



To be ordered in the midst of disorder
To flow in the midst of stuttering
To be warmth in the midst of coolness
To reach out in the midst of isolation

To be simple in the midst of confusion
To be involved in the midst of detachment
To be life in the midst of death
To rest in the midst of the borderlands

To be yours in the desired haven

This was written not long after moving to Hetton Hall and becoming part of the monastery team. Years ago I was given some verses from Psalm 107 as being significant for me. They describe people being on the sea, caught in a storm and crying out to God – 'and he guided them to their desired haven'.
Ingrid Cumming 2002

No moving onwards.
But there is;
Gradually,
Imperceptibly,
The waves recede,
And the beach
Is left free
To bask in the warmth
Of the sun.

So waves of grief
Come and go,
But gradually,
Truly,
They too recede,
And life is warm
Again.

Margaret Green, from her book
"Clouded Yellow" ©1993



WAVES

Life seems so much like
the tide
Washing on the shore,
Ebbing and flowing.
Back and forth
The waves travel
And something I thought
Was gone and was finished
Comes back, again and again.

It seems as if there is
No progress

VULNERABILITY - St Cuthbert's Island

Picking a way over slippery stones,
Crunching bladder wrack and mussel shells,
Between pools left by the ebbing tide.
Reaching a sandbank,
A black shelf of rock.
"Take off your shoes for you are standing on holy ground."
You mean, take off my nice leather boots?
Here, on this hard rock?
Well, if You say so.
Bare feet on the cold rock,
Sodden grass,
No nice leather boots to protect
From sharp rock or wet grass.
Stepping slowly towards the cross
Where Cuthbert prayed,
Where Cuthbert slept.
"Do not protect yourself from my cross."

Thank you, Father, for the cross.

Margaret Ashby © 16/02/2005



Dangerous Half-Truths by Andy Raine

Sometimes we hear arguments that might sound right, but can lead to some very muddled thinking and confusing conclusions.

God is longing to have a relationship with each of us. He wants to be invited inside, given permission to begin the make-over of a lifetime. Unless we allow it, God does not over-ride and make it happen. *Our* willingness is all He requires – His willingness was never in question.

1. "Look for God inside yourself"

Inside each person is an emptiness that only God can fill. When we ask Him in, then He will make His home there, and transform us from the inside out.

The Great God who made the heavens lives in me. My heart and heaven are one. It will not help me if I continue to think of God as far away and distant. He is closer than breathing, nearer than hands or feet. The good news of the Kingdom is that God is close at hand, if people will let Him in, their lives can become part of His domain also. To the believer, "Look for God inside you," may be a call to renewed intimacy! But often it is a filtered down teaching that everyone is innately capable of exuding the God-nature if only we would focus inwards and meditate calmly..!

2. "We're all God's children"

Other people say this one, and Christians are supposed to nod supportively! What they mean is that God is everybody's Father (or Mother!), full of compassion and bound to make allowances for us all – (*that* isn't what the scripture teaches.)

God has a Father-heart and Jesus is His son, the firstborn in a family where many, many sons and daughters can be adopted and taken to glory. We start out as children of this world who Father God longs to adopt and make His own for ever. He is wealthy and willing, but refuses to kidnap us – instead He waits to capture our hearts, so we will allow Him to make us his heirs. Our hearts then call out to Him, "Dad! Abba! Our Father!"

3. "Christ is in the poor and the stranger"

One poem about Aidan says:

*"To look for Christ in the stranger's face
or feel the absence of His touch"*

Martin of Tours gave half his cloak to a beggar, and later, in a dream, Christ sang to him that it was Him that Martin had clothed. Matthew 25 tells us that "In as much as you did this to the least one of these you did it to me." The Shabbat grace at table says, "and if there is any poor creature hungry or thirsty walking the road, may God send them in to us so we can share our food with them just as Christ shares His gifts with all of us."



We are to treat that person the way we would treat Christ. The stranger who comes may be an angel in disguise. The stranger who comes may be another believer who blesses us with their presence and encourages us in our faith. The stranger who comes may be someone who sees the face of God in us, or feels His touch through us. The stranger may be difficult, demanding, ungrateful and rude. At first they may even laugh at us for our trust in God. God is not always in that stranger.

Sometimes we need to pray that Christ will be between us and each eye that looks on us, between us and each who speaks of us, for our protection when they wish us harm. When we are told to turn the other cheek we are not promised that it will not hurt. When we look to serve Christ in the poor and disadvantaged we need to beware of a naïve romanticising of that poverty.

God never said, "Look for Me among the poor, but only the *nice* poor." William Booth said, "Go for souls and go for the worst." There are many evils in the world, poverty and injustice, sin and selfishness. Booth also said, "While there's one lost soul without the light of Christ, I'll fight, I'll fight to the very end."



Bits and Pieces

Tel: 0117 9655454, E-mail:
pilgrim.adventure@virgin.net .

Alternatively visit:
www.pilgrim-adventure.org.uk

From Graham and Claire Wilson:

We are the proud parents of Hannah Wilson, born today, 12th February, at 13:45 in Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham. Mother and baby are well. Hannah weighs 6lb 9oz (approx 3kg). Claire and Hannah will remain in hospital for a day or two until the baby is feeding adequately and since Hannah arrived 4 weeks (!) earlier than expected then they want to ensure all is well.



From Gordon and Margaret Joice:

Margaret & Gordon Joice would very much like to thank Trevor, Roy, Rob, Joanna, Ingrid Norman, all the House team, our friends old & new who all made our Golden Wedding Anniversary celebration at Nether Springs such a joyful occasion, one we will treasure for the rest of our days.



Pilgrim Leaders

Pilgrim Adventure is a small not-for-profit company founded in 1987. We provide an annual programme of Pilgrim Journeys through Celtic Christian, Britain and Ireland, with occasional journeys on continental Europe.

Pilgrim leaders plan and lead the journey programme, with two leaders taking responsibility for each journey.

For an Information pack on how to become a Pilgrim leader with Pilgrim Adventure, please contact:

Jill Atkinson (Secretary)
Pilgrim Adventure.
27 Oldbury Court Road,
Fishponds, Bristol. BS16 2HH.

The warmth & love we felt was quite awesome -not to mention the vast quantity of greetings cards that we brought home with us. Thank you all so very much!



Taize Pilgrimage:

Despite some interest, regrettably there is not sufficient to organise a pilgrimage to Taize this year but we hope that it may be possible at some point next year.

If you are interested please would you register early by letting Jean Watson know at the Community Office or via email
jean.watson@northumbriacommunity.org.

Questions of Community...

1. Who is it that you seek?
2. How then shall we live?
3. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

These three questions shape our Rule and life, alone and together.

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 these, or established Community Groups; please contact: Norma Charlton
norma.charlton@northumbriacommunity.org
Tel: 0191 487 8065 (if a member of her family answers, please ask them to write down your telephone (preferably landline) number), or via the Community office.

Thanks!

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.

Issue 37 Summer 2006.

The copy date for this edition is 22nd May 2006.

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