



CAIM

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

CAIM is the Celtic word meaning 'encompassment' or 'encircling'

Pete Askew writes:

News we've been waiting for!

At last, we're able to share some exciting information about our new Mother House!



Later this year, Nether Springs will be moving to the Estate of Acton House (not to be confused with Acton Hall) near Felton (not to be confused with Fenton!) in North Northumberland. Felton is situated approximately midway between Morpeth and Alnwick, and is very easily accessible from the A1 and public transport links.

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Many of the 'words' and thoughts that we received in response to calling the Community to prayer have informed the move to Felton and it is exciting to think that the land borders the newly created St. Oswald's Way footpath and a stretch of the River Coquet - which has seen several hermitages established along its banks over the centuries. This new chapter in our own Community life signals some new beginnings, which, whilst keeping us rooted in our monastic calling, open up so many creative, imaginative and missional opportunities.

The new building is very different... it's a number of farm buildings that form a complete square around a courtyard... the buildings will be completely accessible

The new building is very different from Hetton Hall (anywhere was going to be); it's a number of farm buildings that form a complete square around a courtyard garden. Mostly built on one level, the buildings will be completely accessible to those with limited mobility as well as to wheelchair users. There'll also be more bathroom and toilets than we have at Hetton! The building comes with a fair amount of land - certainly more than we currently have at Hetton. As well as the courtyard, surrounding areas will need to be landscaped, and we hope to create prayer walks, poustinias, a chapel, vegetable garden, and to restore a walled garden.

At the moment the building, dating from the 18th Century, is the unfinished project of a previous owner. The external work, as it stands, provides a solid shell, but it needs extending and the interior needs work on it throughout. To achieve the finished building the new owners have invited us to work with them and the architects to design something that will work for us.



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A JOURNEY WITH CUTHBERT

A chance to explore the story of Cuthbert and make a guided pilgrimage along Cuthbert's Way from 7-14 May 2010. It will be based on two centres - firstly at Melrose and then at Hetton Hall. Ability to walk about 15 miles a day is essential. The cost is £330 including board and lodging, packed lunches, transportation at start and finish points, knowledgeable guides and beautiful scenery.



This is not an ordinary walking holiday, but an opportunity to make an inner journey whilst walking the outer journey. Please contact the office for a booking form.

Our Community's new website has been launched since the last issue of Caim was delivered!

The new site is fresh, clean and chock-full not only with much of the great content from the old site, but also has lots of new material and new sections. It's in the same place - www.northumbriacommunity.org - so if you haven't been there yet, be sure to go have a look.

The new site is much easier and more convenient for us to update, so the content is changing on a daily basis now. There is lots of new resource material, and we're really excited about the plans for developing the site, especially as our new Mother House begins to 'take shape'.

Thanks to everyone who has taken time to offer feedback about the new site. It's a great resource for us as 'dispersed community' to learn and share together, so if you have ideas or material you'd like to see there, do let us know.

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The plans that we're now hoping to make a reality mean that the project has grown and developed since it was first envisaged - with a couple of significant implications. Firstly, there's more building work to be carried out, and so our move-in date has had to shift. It will now be early November, instead of late August - this means that August will now be available for retreats at Hetton Hall. If you've already booked in to help us in August don't worry, there'll still be plenty to do! Secondly, with more building work comes more cost. The landowners have generously been willing to fund the building project for us up to a point, but now, as we've dreamed and planned beyond this point, they're asking us to partner with them in raising the extra capital that our aspirations for a Mother House have generated. We looked at the option of lowering our aspirations, but quite frankly this wouldn't give us what we need in terms of accommodation, community space, or the possibilities that this new season for the Community will require from a new Mother House. Full plans and details will be available from the Community website as soon as we have them.



What happens next?

All being well, building work will be happening through July, August, September, and October; and then we begin the process of moving our things from Hetton Hall into our new home. In the meantime there's a lot of work to be done on the land, and work weekends will be happening on a fairly regular basis.

What about the chapel?

The current thinking is that the Chapel at Hetton will be dismantled as best we can before we move out. For a variety of reasons, it doesn't look as though it will be possible to completely dismantle the Chapel and then rebuild it as it is, at the new Mother House. Instead, we'll take what we can and incorporate some of the old into the new. We aim to build a new Chapel in the year or so after we move.

Cont'd on pg 3

Welcome to the Spring edition of Caim!

As we emerge from a long and sustained winter, we see the signs of Spring arriving as the evenings draw longer... and as we prepare Caim in this Holy Week we are mindful of the promise of the new life which Spring points to, and which Easter brings us.

This year is set to be very important in the life of the Community, as preparations for moving the Mother House get going in earnest. Pete Askew brings us exciting news of that in our main article, and we'll look forward to finding out how we can all work together to realise the promise which God has presented to us. Exciting days ahead!

Enjoy this edition of Caim. *Jeff & Ingrid*



Cont'd from pg 2

Will the new Mother House operate in the same way that we operate at Hetton Hall?

The foundations of our ethos (inspired by the monastic communities at Roslin and Clonfert) are the five spiritual disciplines of monasticism - worship, work, study, solitude, and community. From the beginning, the Nether Springs, as our Mother House has been, simultaneously, a chapel, a work place, a school, a place of retreat, and a home offering hospitality and welcome. In these ways, the new Mother House will be very familiar, even if the buildings are very different; we are 'building the new on the foundations of old'.



As a community we have always understood this to mean that we must sustain foundational values but at the same time be open to the new things that God might be calling us to. This is increasingly important because we are an ever-changing and growing network Community, and this fact, allied to declining denominational churches within rapid cultural transition, continues to bring many challenges and opportunities for us.

How can I find out more about the new Mother House?

I'll be blogging about developments at the new Mother House via our Community website; there'll be photographs, plans, regular updates on building progress, as well as things like a list of items we're looking for and details of work week/weekends.

You can also e-mail me:
pete.askew@northumbriacommunity.org

How can I help?

You can help in a number of ways:



Pray: Our calling remains as ever it was - to seek God; we remain dependent upon him, his leading, provision and protection.

Here are some pointers for prayer:

We can give thanks to God:

- for his provision of a new location for our Community's Mother House
- for the generosity of the landowners
- that every step of the way in exploring and discovering this 'gift of God' has seen some resounding confirmations.

We can ask for God's hand to be over:

- all that is entailed in the re-structuring of the buildings to allow access for all
- an openness and inspiration in the creative planning of the landscape to reflect our ethos and provide opportunities for celebration and formation
- the developing relationship with the landowners, who have a personal and deep rooted vision for Northumberland
- the provision of all that is needed to be able to create a new home: time, talents, money, skilled workers, those able to volunteer to "muck in" ...



We can hold before God our desire:

- to respond to the challenges with faith, and to trust that our new location will serve and deepen our call to Community both monastically and missionally.

Get Involved: At various times we're going to need some practical help with a variety of projects, Ingrid's drawing up a list of willing volunteers. You can e-mail her with your 'area of interest' or just simply make yourself available: ingrid.cumming@northumbriacommunity.org

Give: The cost of moving is significant, and this - when added to the project's building costs - mean that we really need to pull together to release the finances for this. We will be putting together further, detailed information on how we can rise to the financial challenges of the relocation and establishing of our new Mother House. But in short we need to increase our income in order to realise the potential. If you would like to give some money towards establishing our new Mother House, please send it to the Finance Office at Hetton Hall marked 'new Mother House'.

This gift to us of a new Mother House is an amazing thing, but it will need our collective commitment as a Community to make it a place of blessing for others. The potential is enormous as we open this new chapter of our Community's life.

Pete Askew, on behalf of the Overseers

George Lings reflects on some ancient inspiration:

Seven sacred spaces

Why do houses that work well for their inhabitants all seem to have dining rooms, gardens, cosy corners, private places and welcoming social spaces? Why do church buildings sometimes not work well as social spaces? In theory they are set up to worship God together, but the together part never really happens or takes off.

Throughout the centuries, parts of the church have lived in working worshipping communities for a long time. They have had to make it work sufficiently well. These monastic communities have found over time that their life together needs seven distinctively different spaces. This is pretty much as true in Benedictine thought as Franciscan practice, or embodied in Celtic rules as in the texts of the Desert Fathers' experiences.



So what are these 7 spaces and what do they do?

Cell is where a person meets privately with God, and thereby meets themselves. So the virtues needed here are honesty and courage. It might occur in a bedroom, a hut in the grounds or a secluded corner set aside for prayer. This is the only totally private place out of the seven. All the others are shared, reminding us that life in Christ is lived both alone and together.

Chapel is the venue for public, corporate, shaped, worship. This kind is intentional, structured, measured, educative worship. It is prayer with and for others. Its rhythms and regularity create a familiarity to be passed through, not get stuck with. Its virtue might be patience.

Many churches cram everything into the 'chapel' time and space, and are surprised that their life together is not rich.

Chapter is where we make decisions together. Here leaders and members communicate, discuss, debate and disagree. Here both are accountable to the other. The virtue necessary is humility, which will lead us to listen and not to condemn others.

Cloister connects. It links up the other places so people walk up and down them. They use this pace to change gear – say from eating to worship. The traffic makes it the place of surprising encounters. We may meet the person we try to avoid, needing virtues of temperance and charity, but to bump into a beloved friend we have not seen in a while, will be a joy.

Garden is not so much the idyllic rest, as the place of work. It gave a balance to the other two works done by monks, prayer and study. God has made us creatures who work, without it we become dull. With good work we are satisfied. Garden also provided food for the community's table. Its classic virtue is diligence.

Refectory is the eating place. It beats at the heart of community. Those we eat with, we become one with, and vice versa. It also extends community through hospitality. We eat to meet and greet. The delights of food and drink require the discipline of temperance but doing it together also needs the virtue of glad serving.

Scriptorium, or Library, is more about learning to pass on knowledge, than acquiring for its own sake. Originally scribes wrote to enable others to learn and pray – from the only text books that existed. The kind of learning mattered too. Slow, thoughtful, spiritual learning is about transformation of the heart not information for the head, so is all about becoming more like Christ and his many virtues.

Today you can still see these spaces alive and well, in older university colleges, a cathedral, conference centres and bigger traditional houses. Some have been twisted as priorities between them have changed, but the inheritance is clear.

So what?

Many churches cram everything into the 'chapel' time and space and are surprised that their life together is not rich. There is a better, older, way. Fresh expressions need to be aware of the sacred seven for the life of the young communities they are building.

In our own homes, spot them at work: which are naturally doing well, and which are eclipsed?

George Lings' book in the 'Encounters On The Edge' series, entitled **Seven Sacred Spaces** is available from the Cloisters website: www.cloistersonline.com

We asked Liz Brobyn to write something about the recent

Community Group Leaders' Weekend



As I sit on the train travelling back from Hetton Hall, I reflect on what has been an amazing and wonderful weekend; laughter and tears, good

food and entertainment, deep fellowship, love and understanding.

For some of us it was the last time we would be at Hetton Hall, and for all of us it was the last time we would be there for our group leader's weekend. We started the weekend as usual with a time of

It's so reassuring to hear how different the groups are – there is no right or wrong way of doing them

introduction and sharing about our groups. It's so reassuring to hear how different the groups are – there is no right or wrong way of doing them and we were able to pick up some good ideas to try out back home.

On Saturday morning we felt privileged to be shown many photos of the location for the new Mother House by Pete, and to be told the hopes and plans for its future.

After lunch, we had a choice of listening groups to participate in; Norma had picked out some topics

which had arisen from our discussion on Friday night. Listening groups are a bit like circle time at school, when one person is talking everyone else has to be quiet and listen until it's their turn, which is often much harder than you'd think.

Saturday evening saw us gathering for our ceiledh and we were

royally entertained with songs, poems and stories, some serious and some funny. Annie had us all collapsing with laughter at one exercise she put us through.



On Sunday morning, there was a choice of activities: - walking to St Cuthbert's cave, craft work, silent group prayer or an intercession group. I attended the intercession group and I have never before experienced such a deep inner peace, the Holy Spirit ministered to us all in different ways.

After Midday Prayers, we remained in the chapel for our service of dedication, where we remembered the groups who were not with us and placed specially chosen stones to form a cairn which represented our own groups.

Then a bit of a rush to change the bed, have lunch and say some swift goodbyes – I thought I was going to miss out on the sticky toffee pudding but Ann let me wrap up a piece in tinfoil to eat on the train.

This is my third year of attending the Leaders' Weekend and they have become one of the high points of my year. Thank you to everyone.

Liz Brobyn

What began with a conversation over a drink in a coffee shop in Wooler High Street has led to a really exciting missional initiative in Glendale, North Northumberland.

In June this year Bill and Eeva-Liisa Eugster, some Companions of the Community will come to live in the town. Bill is coming to be a Missional Pastor working with a small but dedicated group, the majority of whom are part of the Community. Please pray for this exciting venture and if you'd like a copy of the paper that was presented to the Baptist Union who are helping to part fund the venture, it is available from Roy Searle, email roy.searle@northumbriacommunity.org

'On the Other Side of Silence'

In the middle of March, twelve companions spent five days in Whitby at the invitation of sisters from the Order of the Holy Paraclete. What was perceived as a formative event for our developing relationship with this established religious community beautifully exceeded all expectations. In the next edition of Caim we will hear more from both the nuns who shared their life with extraordinary hospitality and from those 'strangers' from Northumbria Community who themselves were thanked for their own expression of hospitality. And you wouldn't believe how much laughter there was during the silences and how many sweets were consumed during Lent ... *Sarah Pillar*

Lynda Kennedy sent us an account of what sounds like a fun day:

In September the Cambridge Community Group decided to spend a day together following a monastic rhythm, so went to Ferrar House at Little Gidding

The day didn't start as I had planned as my husband and I didn't leave our house until 8.10 instead of the 7.30 that I had intended. So the leisurely drive down to Little Gidding turned into a pedal to the floor mad dash – but we still managed to arrive before the 10.00am start. Tea/coffee was being served which is always a good start to the day. We wandered over to the chapel for morning prayer which was led by Eileen.

Our first activity of the day was a book discussion “The Day is Yours” by Ian Stackhouse. Not many of the group had finished reading the book but we still managed to have a good discussion on the content which is about

There was some free time before lunch for quiet reflective thought but a group of us... had a good game of Frisbee instead.

putting the brakes on in this fast moving 24 hour world in which we live. We seem at times to live in a world which keeps gearing up for tomorrow, so much so that we forget to enjoy the day itself. Always filling our day with plans for tomorrow and sometimes, as we all must be aware, tomorrow never comes. I think the discussion gave us much to think about in trying to gain some slow spirituality. Not something that can be done overnight. It is a thoroughly good easy read for any of you out there looking to make some changes in their lifestyle in order to enrich the day itself. This then led us nicely into midday prayer.



a good game of Frisbee instead. The weather was glorious and couldn't have been better. Others in the group sat quietly or went for a wander. Young Katie

There was some free time before lunch for quiet reflective thought but a group of us led by Charlotte had

Elizabeth sat on the grass eating her lunch and then Charlotte performed one and two handed somersaults. It was impressive!



A very enjoyable lunch of fish bake, vegetables and salad followed by apple and apricot crumble and ice

cream, and yes there was seconds too! After lunch the group did various activities – reading, walking, chatting and painting which led us into the music session. I took the opportunity to have forty winks on the sofa to the gentle sounds of the morning blessing “May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you...” while a gentle breeze blew through the window.

There was more time to relax before the bug hunt which everyone I am sure found very pleasing.

Warm sunshine, birds singing in the trees, watching the butterflies and the bumble bees whilst a combine harvester hummed in the distance. It was a lovely slow interlude, time to sit and reflect. This was probably one of the last fine days before the autumn set in.



Some of the group went on the bug hunt whilst the rest of us took a gentle walk to Steeple Gidding church. It

was strange seeing a church with no pews inside. Why did we ever design churches with rows of pews all facing the altar, which doesn't encourage friendship or fellowship in any shape or form? Tea and cake were waiting for us on our return which led us into finishing with evening prayer. All of us I'm sure took something home with us from the day which gave us space, time for reflection and time to be “community”. The last quotes I'll leave you with come courtesy of Charlotte who, when asked what was the best thing about the day said “The cakes”, “Oh and the Frisbee” “All the food was great” and “I liked the chapel”.

Lynda Kennedy, Norfolk

Bill Hockey writes from the USA about
An Inconspicuous Revolution



North America presents both an exciting opportunity and a great challenge. In America, where religious solutions are publicly admired, a piety of secret devotion is truly revolutionary. Here, followers of the Northumbrian Rule are

called to a vocation of availability and vulnerability within a culture which, though profoundly confident of its ability to succeed, is largely clueless of the difficult problems it is facing! Brave disciples who honestly wish to exemplify the spirit of the new monasticism will struggle with the obstacles of religiosity, materialism, busyness, noise, and the quest for personal power. .

Religiosity and the Erosion of Servant Living

Of course North American culture is much more outwardly religious than its European counterpart. Americans seem to be able to express an affinity to things religious regardless of identification with a particular church. For those that do attend church, religious experience seems to be undergoing a fundamental shift. The age old ideal of servant-hood is being supplanted by a posture of entitlement. People are asking "What am I getting out of this?" instead of "How can I be of service to God?"

A sad drama follows. Unwitting religious leaders respond to these feelings of entitlement by scrambling to implement the latest program ideas, while followers try to discern if they're "getting what they need." The experience of faith gradually devolves into a drama of gimmickry and people pleasing gestures which only reinforce feelings of entitlement. We always want more.

In stark contrast, the Northumbria Community invites Christians to embrace a life of humble service. Our Rule of availability and vulnerability fosters a heart-desire to assume the humblest position. We choose to be servants, but not out of obligation. We assume the lowest position simply because it is the only position that makes sense to us.

The day-in-day-out rhythm of our prayer discipline of fixed hour prayer (our Daily Office) helps us to move from a "more is better" attitude towards an acceptance of the "day-as-it-is". Gone are expectations that tomorrow's experience of God must be more titillating than today's experience. The simplicity of our liturgy frees us to focus on who we are today. The quest for

happiness has been replaced with a passion for authenticity.

Culture Clutter and Numbing of Heart Attentiveness

North American culture is compulsively drawn to all sorts of emotional entanglements, physical clutter, and plastic answers for life. By catering to these attachments Christians (along with the general population) seem to be losing the ability to be attentive to matters of the heart. An emptiness ensues which fosters an addictive attachment to shallow activity. We prefer to embrace immensely difficult dilemmas and place ourselves in impossibly difficult situations, rather than ask simple questions like "How does God want me to act today?" We'd rather engage in intellectual gamesmanship than ask the basic spiritual question "Am I really happy with the way I'm living my life?" While our televisions have gained the status of high definition, we are barely able to recognize the contour of our own soul. Managing clutter takes all our time.



The Rule of availability and vulnerability teaches us that doing more does not necessarily mean we are doing better. We must be authentic in our

doing. Three questions are important to us: Who is it that we seek? How will we live? And – How will we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? These questions expand our curiosity for authentic living. And they help us to discern which aspects of our culture are helpful or hurtful. Our growth is gradual. But slowly we realize that a subtle instinct to return to a busy existence is being supplanted by a desire to be who God has called us to be (vocation) – and then do something authentic (mission) however small the action.

Self-sufficient Isolation and The Loss of Community

In spite of a multitude of resources, Americans tend to feel isolated. We are crippled by life-scripts which demand, or goad the individual to be self sufficient. Our culture chooses to venerate impossible ideals of personal achievement. From earliest age girls and boys are told "You can be anything you want to be!" Meanwhile, self-help crusaders cry for people to take charge. "God helps those who help themselves!" they say. The pseudo-heroic expectations which arise from this sort of thinking create tyranny within the hearts of individuals. The desire to "do good" and "be strong" is experienced at a terrible cost.

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Gone is the possibility of surrender and simple progress. We are filled with the sentiment that we must do everything by ourselves. We must do it fast and we must do it big. Unfortunately, we have failed to embrace the wonderful irony of grace – that God helps those who have utterly failed in the self help enterprise.

At the heart of the Northumbrian tradition is a powerful concept of community which provides alternatives for pilgrims who are weary of this sort of ego driven isolation. Friends and companions are able experience the presence of those with whom they have no physical contact through the Daily Office. This concept of “being alone together” is immensely important, especially in the vast physical expanse of North America.



It will also be important for community members in the US and Canada to make physical connections with people of like mind. While the Nether Springs certainly provides a focus for the rhythm of Northumbria Community worldwide,

it is important to note that the community has never desired, or even pursued a strictly Celtic emphasis. There is no reason to be overly sentimental about the ‘celtic-community-over-there’ – while neglecting the possibility of friendship right here in our own back yard. A gentle, but firm commitment to soul friendship, spiritual direction, or other forms of personal accountability provides absolutely the best real-life setting for availability and vulnerability to be experienced.

Bill Hockey

Marg Hardcastle wrote to tell us about the **Crucible course**

The thought of giving up a Saturday and Sunday to sit indoors in a ‘classroom’ has never been appealing to me – but when the latest Crucible brochure landed in my e:tray introducing a new stream for the three weekends: ‘Restoring Hope, Becoming Human and Jesus Unplugged’ – it really attracted me – and I decided to make the Saturday sacrifice. I’m really glad I did – not only was the course material stimulating and the speakers inspiring – I also met some great people from different places and church backgrounds, and there was plenty of opportunity for sharing experiences in quiet conversation and lively debate. For those of us attracted to ‘following Jesus on the margins’ and being and doing church in that context – be they the margins of society, culture or church – Crucible provides some great support and encouragement and ideas to take away and apply. For those who think engaging in the margins sounds a good idea – for someone else – then maybe coming along to a Crucible course would help to give courage to step into the spaces around the edge. It would be really good to see some more Northumbria Community folk involved too – for me the course content creates a helpful balance to the emphasis that as Community we can tend to put on put on prayer and liturgy and eating together – Crucible supports all that – but encourages us to ‘go out with the tide...’ I look forward to seeing some of you there in July! *Marg Hardcastle*

This email warmed our hearts - and we thought it was a jolly good idea too!

Thank you Ellen for the Prayer Guide. As I am elderly now I can’t manage to print back to back properly, so I just print the Guide on one side of the paper. When the prayer sheet is finished with I tear the sheets in half and use them as scrap paper at the side of the computer. As I use the scrap I often turn over the paper and pray again for the people and events listed, so I am a prayer recycler! How’s that? Love and blessings to you all and you work.

Eileen Court, Solihull

Duncan & Lesley McLean wrote to tell us about a
welcome for some

New Companions



On February 13th, rather later than planned, we were delighted to welcome Robin and Carole Moulton into Companionship of the Community.

We have been delighted to journey with them through the novitiate process which they completed at the end of last year. Plans were in hand

for the welcome to be included in our Community Group Covenant Service in January. Unfortunately the weather had other plans and like so many other things that month our meeting became a casualty of the snow.

So a month later the Marches Group were joined by friends and Companions from the Forest of Dean Group and the Worcestershire Group at Kingswood Village Hall as Robin and Carole shared about their journeys, before they were welcomed into Companionship using the prepared liturgy. It was a very special time and of course was followed by a bring and share meal!

We pray the Lord’s blessing upon them both.

Duncan and Lesley McLean

We asked Elizabeth & Peter Webb to contribute to our series looking at 'Other Houses':

Poustinia, Exeter

We had lived in manses all our married life and were looking forward to the day when we could buy our own house. Five years before retirement we were in the fortunate position of having inherited family money. For some time, we had nurtured the idea of finding a building which would not only offer us pleasant living space, but would also lend itself as a venue for Quiet Day retreats, hospitality, and spiritual direction. This we recognised as God's leading for our future ministry after the formal church based years.

One morning ten years ago, we set off from the manse, newspaper clutched in hand, for Exeter estate agents. We had given a great deal of thought and prayer to this venture, and were excited about the outcome. At the very first agent we were given the details of the house on the edge of Exeter, which was to become our home.



It looked an ordinary semi-detached house from the road, but the view from the rear of woods, rolling farm land and hills was wonderful. By evening we knew it was ours, and five weeks later we moved in!

We chose *Poustinia* because we wanted the name to reflect the nature of the house, which is to be with God in the silence of the surroundings, and in the quiet of our hearts. Sometimes it is full of chatter and laughter when being visited by family, friends or the Northumbria Community group, but God is there in the joy of tranquility as well.

During the next year the barn in the courtyard was converted to create a chapel which will seat 18 comfortably. The terraced garden was planned to give several quiet sitting areas.



The house itself has a sun room, a lounge and a dining room, and four bedrooms. Additionally above the double garage is a large study, so there is enough space for retreatants to use for times of quiet reflection without being too close to each other. Another area of the house has become our Traidcraft store, as we see the selling of these goods as a very real way to identify ourselves with

plight of the poor in developing countries

By the summer of 2001, we were ready to begin our new ministry, even though Peter was still in a local pastorate.



We held our first Quiet Day. The pattern is one we have used since, with the time split into three sections, each with a short talk on the theme, followed by an hour's silent reflection. Prayers and lunch complete the programme. The meal is part of the day as some of our visitors may live on their own and so appreciate a time around a table with others.

We aim to run at least two retreats a year and are pleased to offer hospitality to other groups and individuals who wish to use our premises, especially during the summer months.

Towards the end of his ministry Peter was approached to become a Mentor for newly appointed Baptist ministers. This has been an important part of his work and there are also a number of folk who come to him for spiritual direction.

How does the Northumbria Community's 'Other Houses' fit into all this? We became involved with the Community in 2000 when we were on sabbatical leave and visited Nether Springs. Two years later we invited Roy and a team to lead a weekend for us in Exeter. Out of this our Community Group emerged and has continued to thrive and grow ever since. We meet on the second Friday of each month for an evening which includes the office, meal, discussion, prayer and compline.

We became Companions six years ago and as a result our life here at Poustinia has become strongly linked with the Community ethos of availability, vulnerability and hospitality.

For your prayers:

Our next Quiet Day on April 17th, a post Easter reflection on the theme "Not the end, but the beginning".

Give thanks for increased numbers attending our Community Group and pray that it does not lose its distinctive identity and impact.

For the energy and strength to carry out our calling, as we seek to do God's will in our retirement.

We are pleased to have been adopted as an "Other House" and also to provide a resource for the Northumbria Community in the South West.

Elizabeth & Peter Webb



David Pott shares a precious memory:

On a mid-summer visit to Scotland I had an experience which is a precious memory still.

I went to church with my parents on a Sunday and the preacher spoke about Jesus spending the night in prayer on the mountain before choosing his disciples. He asked us to imagine what it must have been like. That played on my mind and in the end I decided I would spend Monday night praying on the mountain range in front of our house.



I set off at 9:45pm and watched a great sunset for the next half hour as I started to climb. I passed under a cliff and for the next half hour or so a

peregrine falcon wheeled round and round me with loud protests about my proximity to the nest site! I got to the first top at the western edge of the ridge before midnight and the views were just amazing with the lights of the villages winking in the valley below and the glow on the northern horizon lasting the whole short night, and a lovely crescent moon to the south-west.

It was only dark enough not to be able to read between midnight and 2am, but there was enough light for me to see my way to the highest peak at the eastern edge of the ridge by 1:30. I just sat there in the unusually warm stillness with just the occasional gruff barking of the red deer - I don't think they expect any humans at this time of night!



To the south, the main range of the Cairngorms stood like huge grey sentinels with their white snow eyebrows

glowing softly in the moonlight. It was a great time and place to just walk with God and talk about all that was going on. Slowly the northern glow moved round from the north west to the north east and the afterglow of sunset transitioned into the foreglow of sunrise. I descended slowly and sunrise came at 4am as I reached the bottom. A special time of communion with God in the stillness of the short summer night.

David Pott

Cathy Hutcheon sent us this from Toronto: **Breaking Ice, and New Beginnings**



Some of us rose very early on the morning of 21st February in Toronto, Canada. There were wake-up phone calls to make sure folk were up in time for the ferry crossing to Toronto Island.

The sky streamed with pinks and oranges and the Lake glittered as an excited group of Carrying Place friends gathered at the quay side.

As we pushed into the little quay on Ward's Island, the ferry boat crunched through packed ice, like a mini ice-breaker. The adventure had begun! We made a 2k trek across the Island to the lovely church on the island, St Andrew's on the Lake. They had graciously offered to host our gathering to pray the Welcome Liturgy as Duke became an affirmed companion of the Northumbria Community.



Fortified by coffee and hot cross buns we joined the tiny congregation at St Andrew's in an Ash Wednesday service with the sobering theme of dust. From dust you came, to dust you will return.

We gathered around the circular altar and pondered some words from Catherine Doherty's writings in Season of Mercy: Lent and Easter about 'the long pilgrimage to the passover...in a totality of surrender that has some kind of beginning but has no end'. Then, using the simple Welcome Liturgy Duke was welcomed, and made his vows.

The only restaurant on the Island was able to accommodate us afterwards in a celebratory brunch, and we enjoyed passing around Duke's gifts; both serious (his bound rule with photo montage of special photos, drawing and prayers) and not so serious (Jesus action hero figure... don't ask!!)

We then thinned out and made our way back to the mainland on the return ferry. As we parted company to disperse across the city, we felt that we had been privileged to be with Duke on this day in this place. That under a bright and glorious blue sky we had been part of 'some kind of beginning', and that maybe our little boat was breaking more than ice. *Cathy Hutcheon*



Andy Raine continues to give the background to our Daily Meditations:

The meditation for Day 6 was written by Mother Basilea Schlink of the Sisterhood of Mary.

The story of the establishing of their community in Damstadt, Germany, is told mostly in her book 'Realities' which was a profound inspiration for us in the early days. In a film, the Sisters also recounted two other incidents which were especially encouraging: A major highway was planned which would bring noisy traffic right across their land



where guests came for quiet retreats. They declared '*the highway cannot stand*', and watched the route take a huge loop round the outside of their property! Then, they had almost completely tiled a pool before striking the water of a spring that fed it. This reassured us that God was capable of leading us to a home for the Nether Springs. When we agreed to rent Hetton Hall one concern was whether the spring supplying water for the house would be equal to the demands of all our visitors. Just in time another spring was found and it became a place for the netherprings - plural! These were not just stories, but realities.

'If I only love Jesus' is the story of a girl who joined the Mary Sisters but struggled terribly to curb her stubborn wilful nature. She asked Mother Basilea to give her a prayer to help her on the practical journey of transformation. The prayer Sister Claudia was given places its trust in the power of the wounds and blood of Jesus to radically redeem weakness and failure. One of the gifts from my own Salvation Army upbringing was a devotion to the blood of Jesus, so this story resonated strongly with that for me, and then with my devotional focus on the healing that can come to us through receiving communion. It has also proved especially powerful in all types of conflict with evil forces.

More recently, Gavin Briars had a strange experience working with left-over snatches of sound recordings gathered for a tv documentary about homeless people. One man was singing a few lines that were important for him: 'Jesus' blood never failed me yet - this one thing I know, for He loves me so'. This recording is extraordinarily powerful when looped into a repeat with backing instruments and voices.

Blood means death, and in this instance sacrifice. This particular death, of Jesus as willing victim, says that once and for all death will not have the final word. The powers of darkness are defeated, forgiveness is demonstrated and offered us still. The sight of blood is unpleasant and distasteful. Yet because of that blood I can stand in front of anyone knowing nothing I have ever been or done can ever accuse me again. In that knowledge and trust I am freed to then take responsibility for my choices and their consequences! *Andy Raine*

Fancy contributing to our own bit of market research?:

Northumbria Community Trading (Cloisters) – we seek your view

The old traditions of monastic trading were to provide 'food for the table' of the Community. It is no different for new monastic communities.

As we intentionally seek to support the Community, in particular the impact of a new Mother House, we at Cloisters, the trading arm of the Community, are appraising how and with whom we trade.

We are considering the kind of products we sell, how we sell them, and how we might develop and increase the engagement and participation of Community Companions and Friends in our trading activity.

Over the past ten years and more, the Community has developed a number of products which have sold well through Cloisters, eg Celtic Daily Prayer, music CDs, books and liturgy resources.

Companions and friends who faithfully buy resources of this kind are increasing in number and we want to ensure that we meet with expectations of what they would like to find available, and resource them more widely as needs change and develop.

So, we seek your views and ask that you might give some time to consider the following questions and perhaps pop them on an email to us so that they can inform our development plans:

- How often do you buy from Cloisters?
- Do you buy online or at events?
- What would you like to be able to buy from Cloisters, in addition to what we have?
- Would you be interested in keeping in touch with our trading activity by giving your email address?
- Would you be willing to volunteer to help with a Cloisters shop at events happening near you?
- Other comments?

Email your comments/ideas to Cloisters Directors
Duncan MacLean rev.duncanmac@btopenworld.com
Tina Jefferies tina.jefferies@sky.com



The back page

Another Generation



Congratulations to Ann Brown, from the team at Nether Springs, for becoming "Grannie Annie" when Neve Ellen was born on 5th February to Gareth and Vicky.

Congratulations also to Linda and John Davis for their grandson, Joseph Hancock, born on 12th February to Sally and Christopher.



Another Companionisation (or two) (yes, we know it isn't a real word but can you think of a better one?!) Robin and Carol Moulton became Companions in a celebration on 13th February with Companions and Friends from the Marches, Worcestershire and Forest Groups. See page 8.

Duke Vipperman became a Companion in Toronto, Canada, on 25th January this year and you can catch up with the event on page 10.

Another Celebration

 (or two/ three)

North Carolina Gathering

We have a growing cluster of friends in North Carolina, USA, and Ingrid and Norman Cumming took the opportunity while visiting their family there to have a small gathering in a shopping mall. We took over a corner of the food court and said midday prayer together. We spent some time talking about aspects of Community life and finished by sharing evening prayer. The singing drew a little attention but it seemed to go down well. It is hoped that this is the first of regular get-togethers in the State.

Otley Gathering

Ruth Barling, Joan Parker and Martin Timmins are hosting a gathering on 22nd May in Otley, 10:30 to 4. Ask Ellen in the office for contact details.

The memory of a good man



It is with sadness that we report the sudden and unexpected death of Andrew Tucker, the brother of Jill Sutheran, who died on March 5th after a short illness.

The whole family - and particularly Jill and Andrew's Mum Pat - would like to thank those in Community who diligently prayed for Andrew, and those who have sent cards and messages of support and kindness. They are a great comfort.

The General Chapter of the Community met at the beginning of March.

The main subject under consideration was the appointment of 'provincials'. These are folk who are already holding an area of responsibility, such as Community Groups or intercessory prayer, and the appointment is a recognition of their role. Several people have been asked to consider accepting these appointments and more information will be given when all the responses have been made. This is an ongoing process and will be reviewed in a year's time.

Pause for thought:

Please take the time to check out the programme of retreats at Nether Springs for the next few months.

There is a flyer included with this mailing for the 'Celebrating Difference' week in May.

Others which may be new to you are:

7-9 May 'Take Note' (music);

4-6 June 'Story of a Homecoming' (The Return of the Prodigal Son);

7-10 June 'Influences' (writers who have inspired our Community);

16-18 July 'Nurturing the Spirit of a Child' (not a parenting course, but an exploration of Child-like Spirituality).

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Nether Springs, Hetton Hall, Chatton, Northumberland NE66 5SD

Tel or Fax: 01289 388235 email: office@northumbriacommunity.org

Caim Editors: Jeff Sutheran & Ingrid Cumming

email: caim@northumbriacommunity.org