

CAIM

Issue no 17 Summer 2001

The Northumbria Community Newsletter

Welcome to the Summer edition of CAIM, the newsletter of the Northumbria Community. CAIM is the Celtic word meaning encompassment or encircling. This newsletter goes out to all those who are within our circle of Community Companions and Friends.

Touching Grace

James and Sally Hawes of Nottingham reflect on 3 years at the Nether Springs

It is difficult to capture in words all that our time at Nether Springs meant to us. It will always remain a special place because of what happened within us and because it is where our paths met. Throughout our time at the Mother House many things happened, many people passed through the doors and much was learned. There were many struggles, many disagreements, much laughter and weeping. So many things happened throughout our time at the Hall and in trying to capture the essence of the many experiences we would sum it up in the term 'touching grace'.

Grace is a familiar word within the Christian world, a word that begs to be fleshed out. We discovered the word becoming flesh, we started to experience its deepness, touch its energy and live within its presence. We experienced grace through each other, through our work colleagues at the Hall, through creation, and within the depths of our being. It was a deep sense of coming home, a phrase well used by those who go to the Nether Springs. We experienced a sense of belonging and we felt a reconnecting with our emotions, our bodies, our feelings and our hearts.

The Grace of community.

We touched grace at the Hall through being encouraged to be real, to be ourselves and the pain this may have caused others. We touched it through the hugs received within painful encounters. Grace was touched in the difficult times, times when you didn't understand what was going on, it was touched with tears, it was touched with our bodies. It is a beautiful thing to feel accepted while exposing your weaknesses and monsters in public and this is what living and working in a small community inevitably brings. There were many struggles, disagreements and misunderstandings during our time at the Hall and yet somewhere you could find a glimpse of grace. It was touched in the laughter, the re-

ality, the forgiveness and reconciliation and a deep sense of belonging.

The Grace of creation.

We felt like we were beginning again as small children in the wonderland of creation, exploring afresh the vibe of the sacrament of the created world. We felt in touch once again with the rhythm of the created order, experiencing the depth of the seasons. The cycle of the moon, the closeness to the earth, the smell of new life bursting out on a spring morning. The shades and movement of colour seen within the contours of the landscape. The touch of the earth on our fingers and the connection to wildlife and the animals we observed and cared for. (Caring for Milly and the 'girls' was a great privilege and resource of grace.) We felt the sharpness of the wind, the violent displays of an unrelenting storm and the darkness of a winter's evening. We heard it in the crash of the waves and the songs of the birds. We saw it in a blade of grass and a fleeting glimpse of a graceful deer or a mysterious tawny owl.

All these things were the vital spark for bringing us back to the interconnectedness of our beautiful world, allowing us to explore the simple things and find the treasures that are within our heart. These experiences gave us a sense of awe and enabled us to realise how much we depend on creation, how fragile and small we are and it brought us back to the sacredness of God's world.

The Grace of the inner voice

Being in an environment where you could be yourself was deeply healing. Being with people who were seeking to express vulnerability and get in touch with their hearts was refreshing and a beautiful and painful experience. The journey from moving from the head to the heart is an ongoing one



and yet while at the Nether Springs we were given the space to touch this area of our lives. I know that when I (James) arrived at the Hall I was in pain. The pain was an emotional and physical pain that came from a disunity within my life; my heart was screaming. In many ways I could understand the pain but I needed to go beyond the rational and allow my heart to speak, I needed to feel it. Space was what I needed, and yet in travelling inward to seek to hear that faint voice I struggled to keep busy and avoid facing the pain that I knew I needed to seek to embrace. I started to get in touch with my heart through embracing uselessness. Through doing ordinary everyday tasks and facing the boredom I so often felt, I started to touch my inner monsters. The life of domesticity was the way of being able to face the real me. Within this journey I had many inner complaints. 'I want to be somebody', 'I want to be seen', 'Don't people realise how gifted I am,'

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Touching Grace

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and the only job I get is to wash up plates'. I started to realise how I craved for attention, status, to be looked up at, and the need for power and control. Facing these things was not easy, but it has enabled me to look at things very differently and from a different starting point. I realised with the help of mentors that I needed to learn to love myself as I am, to accept the person that God has created me to be.

So we started to understand the gospel once again in its incarnational terms. The simple statement that is hugely significant is 'Jesus came down'. God became vulnerable, broken and small and he healed us through his wounds. So we discovered that we needed to get in touch with our smallness, how useless we feel, how vulnerable we are and to touch our wounds.

*We know that since we
have touched this place there
is no going back*

We began to realise in a deeper way that we needed to lose life, including status, position and power in order to find life. It is one thing understanding this view of the gospel and seeking to talk or write eloquently about it, but a completely different thing seeking to live it out. We would not have willingly chosen it at all. Yet the things we're seeking to engage in is that being weak is a strength. This is the commonality of followers of Christ, we can come together in our weakness and brokenness.

The Grace in each other

As a couple we received a deep sense of grace from each other. We realised how the Christ expressed through each other could be such a healing and beautiful gift, how we could feel safe in exposing our dark sides and still feel accepted. We seek to give each other grace while we expose our immaturity and insecurities and support and encourage one another to continue to travel on the unpredictable road of inner growth. We know that since we have touched this place there is no going back, so we continue to travel on the journey of learning how to touch grace. Nether Springs for us was a steep learning curve of touching unconditional love, feeling free to expose our real self and raw vulnerability. We thank the Northumbria community and the resident community for giving us the space to receive this gift.

COMMUNITY AND MISSION – UPDATE

Roy Searle of Wooler

We have just appointed Claire Wilson to work with the Community with responsibilities in co-ordinating the Community teams and helping Roy as his PA. Claire and Graham were married last year at Altrincham, and they will continue to live in Macclesfield from where Claire will work [the wonders of electronic communications making this possible!]. She will be coming up to the Nether Springs for a week each month. She can be contacted by e-mail: claire.wilson@northumbriacommunity.org (Claire)



- **Renovare** - Dave Robertson and Angela Knowles, together with James Catford have been to Denver Colorado this month for the Renovare board meeting with Richard Foster et al. The developments with Renovare are very exciting and auger well for our working together in the future.
- **Russia** - Dave and Angela, together with Susan Walters and Natasha have been in Moscow leading a storytelling school. Some exciting links are emerging with Russia, including the friendship being built with Anton and other young people / students in Moscow.
- **Health Service Chaplains Conference, St. Andrews** - do pray for the planning and composition of the team to lead this exciting but challenging conference later this month. Particularly the session we are leading on worship and resources for those in palliative care.
- **Bible Society** - our partners and friends at Bible Society are in the first phase of a re-launch programme to church leaders throughout Britain. We shall be involved in the next phase over the autumn and winter as participants in a Bible Society Road Show travelling the country sharing the story and vision of Bible Society in a new millennium.
- **Building Bridges of Hope** - this is an exciting, ecumenical (in the best sense) project that Andy Raine and Roy Searle were first introduced to at the Catholic Forum on Evangelisation in February. The project wants the Community to be involved in its next phase of development and we are glad to be involved in something that echoes much of the Community's heart for mission and ethos in relation to spirituality.
- We are taking part in a **Prayer walk** in Northumbria from Monday 1st - Friday 5th October based at Nether Springs. If you would like to be part of the team please write to us at the Community Office.
- The NACCAN [National Association of Christian Communities and Networks] are holding their annual assembly, **Community in Society**, at Whitby, 7th-9th September. Any Companion of the Community who would like to go and represent the Community please write to us.
- We are involved with a **week of mission** in the autumn 10th-18th November, with all the churches of Poynton in Cheshire. If you would like to know more about the week and how you can be involved please contact Claire next month.
- **Greenbelt Arts Festival** – August 24th-27th. Whilst the Telling Place is not there this year some of our Community folk are going as guests. If you are wanting to join them please write to us and we'll link you up with others.

Journeying with the Northumbria Community

The booklet with the above title is currently being revised to accommodate significant changes soon to be implemented in the process of becoming a Companion in the Northumbria Community. It will provide brief introductory information about the background and formation of the Community, as well as an explanation of the process required for those wishing to explore journeying with the Community. Recent growth and development has resulted in more people expressing an interest in joining with us than ever before. This means that we must ensure (more than ever) that we remain in our story and true to the vocation and vision given to us by God.

Therefore as far as we are able we will provide opportunities for each applicant to understand who we are and what we are about in order for them to better test their calling to embrace our Way for Living, of saying Yes to Availability and Vulnerability. We will also seek to provide opportunities to share through teaching and dialogue something of our history, ethos and spirituality in the context of life at the Mother

House. To do this people need time – time to read and reflect, time to pray and think through the implications of what their embracing of our Rule of Life will actually mean for them in their own unique situation and circumstances.

Thus from September of this year the process of becoming a Companion will be extended and deepened, so that the embracing of a life which has the 'new monasticism' at its heart can be more and more likened to that of a postulant (a candidate for admission into a religious order). This extended period will enable each applicant to give time to pray, to wait, to discern, and to reflect on what it means to be alone/together in a dispersed Community.

Thus anyone wishing to explore what it means to be a Companion in Community will (among other things) be encouraged to apply in writing outlining the reasons why they feel this is God's plan for their journey at this time. Then to arrange to attend a Community

Weekend at the Nether Springs where something of the history and spirituality of the Community will be shared. During the whole of this time they will be encouraged to embark on a course of recommended reading related to our ethos and also make a commitment to spend quality time reflecting on their vocational call and the testing of its validity. If following all this they still wish to pursue becoming a Companion they will be asked to make arrangements to attend a midweek led retreat entitled 'Further up, Farther in' which will look in some detail at our Rule of Life and outline some of the practical ways in which a Companion can support the vocation and vision of the Community and be involved in the different expressions of its life. Again following reflection the applicant will then enter into a covenant with other Companions in Community to seek God through embracing Availability and Vulnerability as their Way for Living. This is a process that will take time and therefore in itself will be a means of testing the validity of the call to embrace and express Availability and Vulnerability. The programme at Nether Springs (from September) will reflect this change of emphasis in that the relevant retreats – Community Weekends/Further up, Farther in – will now alternate bi-monthly.

St. Cuthbert's Centre

Jeff Sutheran of North Sunderland

A couple of years ago, after searching for a place for our family to settle, we found what has turned out to be an absolutely wonderful house. At that early stage, however, there was a bit of a problem: the house was being sold complete with the church next door! It's a long story, but the long and short of it is that we did buy the house, and our dear friend Nancy Hammond bought the church! (She is a bit of an interesting-old-artefacts addict!).

With hindsight, of course, we can see that God was in this interesting acquisition. The church has been here since 1810, so is a prominent, if largely neglected, feature of the village. There were many saddened by its 'disposal', and many fearful of what use it might be put to! Nancy has worked to ensure that it can become a resource for the local community, and the Northumbria Community.

The 'vision' is hazy at present, but what is clear is that we have at our disposal a fine and substantial building, which could be used to serve the community and visitors – a kind of 'walls without church!'

We imagine the building being put to work as an Arts and Creative Centre. Its position, at the heart of a thriving local community busy with visitors and tourists, means that it could be a way of telling God's story of his dealing with his people who have walked these lanes and beaches over centuries - and spread the gospel across this country and beyond. There are large numbers of school groups visiting the area on field trips, so we could 'tap in' to that group too, and this could be a major part of the work. It could tell aspects of the story by covering parts of the Geography, History, and RE curriculum. There are possibilities for a 'hands on' display of musical instruments from around the world, which could open up learning about other cultures. Additionally, we would love to think that it could be used as a performance space, for local musicians, storytellers, artists and all kinds of local craftspeople. Whatever else, we are aware that the space must be arranged flexibly - an exhibition space today, a theatre tonight, and perhaps a meeting room tomorrow! Nancy has had an architect friend cast an eye across the place, with this in mind....

All this might sound like a far-fetched and wacky vision - and perhaps it is. In one sense, I hope so! But it's clear to us that it won't happen unless we get God's vision for the place. The building is in need of some TLC, so an early job would be to attract some funding from Trusts, Lottery, or local sources, to put it in order. But before we can do that, we need to build a sensible proposal. And before we can do that we need to get some clarity on what the various aspects might be and so it goes on.

So please think and pray about the possibilities which St. Cuthbert's offers, and if you have any inspiration – or even idle thoughts – do get in touch via the office.

Perfect Cross

Paul Lucas of Gateshead

There are times when God breaks into the midst of the ordinariness of the working day. One such occasion for me was during Holy week this year. We were dismantling dead and dangerous elm trees in the Gateshead College grounds, and having painstakingly removed by lowering limbs on ropes, the brittle crown of the last and largest of the trees on the previous day, there was only the tall stem left to fell. Without enough space between buildings and a 'net' of telephone cables, I reluctantly had to go back up the tree to fell the straight top section. It's always a bit risky that one, you're strapped to the stem just below the point of cut, there's nowhere to go if it twists or turns the wrong way. I generally pray the Jesus prayer in these circumstances - 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me a sinner' - it's a sort of do it yourself 'last rites'. The 'caber' tumbled safely to the earth, landing directly on another tree trunk already lying on the ground, and to my amazement, balanced in just the right place to form a perfect cross. The chaps with me couldn't help but notice and recognise the strange irony of it, but what made it even more poignant for me was when Mac, almost jesting, lay on the main trunk with his head on the cross stem as a pillow, spreading his arms out either side, enjoying a rare moment of sunshine. For me it was an impromptu Passion play, for the chaps, well I don't really know, except that somehow, seemingly at random, the ordinary became extraordinary.

The Easter Workshop that didn't happen...!?

Adapted from a circular e-mail by Andy Raine of Holy Island

This year we had a very peculiar Easter with the Easter workshop that did and didn't happen. This year our annual workshop was to be Palm Sunday weekend, and scheduled to happen at the Nether Springs, with the customary Holy Island gathering to renew vows and do high praises on Easter Sunday. Then Foot and Mouth happened, albeit not locally, and the decision was made to close the Nether Springs as a precaution. With people coming from all parts of the country and beyond we represented the greatest threat of importing the infection to the Hetton Farm Estates. That was the Easter workshop that didn't happen. Now what did?

Happening #1. Richard Foster had been coming sort of unannounced to join us for Easter workshop. As he was meeting up with various other folk as part of the same trip from the USA he still came. He met up with folk at the Nether Springs and then with the combined Tyneside and Newton Aycliffe Community groups, on the Friday night, at what proved to be very worthwhile meeting.

Happening #2. Mark and Mary Fleeson had invited Neil Arnold to stay with them over the Easter period, and when Easter Workshop was cancelled thought it was a shame if he came up then didn't get to meet up with the folk that were around, so planned an open-house party at their house on Holy Island for the Saturday night of what would have been the workshop. Various folk met up for that, including Bill and Louise Whitfield just back from Australia. Good timing as it was Bill's birthday.

Happening #3. Palm Sunday was also Passover this year. Andy and Anna Raine had their first Passover family Seder meal and invited some folk in to what proved to be a very memorable gathering.

Happening #4. The awful tragic death of Clare Grimley in just this period, and her amazing funeral, celebrating her life and faith, was held on the middle Wednesday in Earl Shilton. So many of us gathered there that it had the reunion quality of an

Easter workshop in itself. Some had been present at Earl Shilton when Easter workshop had been held there several years ago.

Happening #5. On Easter Sunday itself there was a good, though smaller number of us met for the usual Easter service in St Mary's on Holy Island, then gathered around St Aidan's statue with a depleted bunch of Northern Cross pilgrims [who had walked only the pilgrims' way because of Foot and Mouth, instead of their usual week-long overland treks with their wooden crosses] to dance 'Christ as a light', then on into the Priory for vows, Easter celebrations, and declaration of Christ's victorious presence. It was a very blessed time indeed. Some of the recordings we used to sing or dance with were from the new CD Waymarks.

Happening #6. A large Community team was again at Spring Harvest, which was yet another gathering point covering this same time-frame. On Easter Sunday itself over 30 Community folk gathered to renew their vows of saying Yes to Availability and Vulnerability.

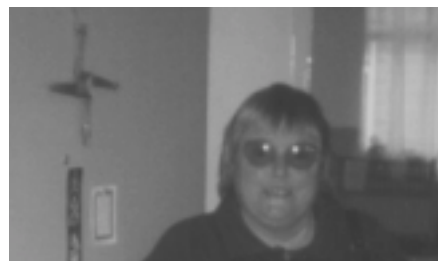
Happening #7. One of the regulars at Easter Workshops in the early 80's were Rob and Geraldine Fawcett, and a number of years ago they held an additional Workshop specifically for Scotland, so it was not without precedent when they informed us of and invited us to, an Easter Camp at Whithorn this year.

So given all these happenings and gatherings of Community folk, planned and unplanned, I don't think it is true to say that this year is the only year since 1980 when there was no Easter workshop. God somehow had the last word.

Mission to Miriam

Trevor and Freda Miller of Hetton

It was with a mixture of thankfulness, excitement, and trepidation that we set off in mid February on our journey to Tasmania. We were thankful to the many Community Companions and Friends who had given so generously to the fund for Miriam and her immediate needs following her diagnosis of cancer. Excited because we were representing the Community in paying this personal and pastoral visit to a very dear friend (something we had talked about often with Miriam but never thought could actually happen.) In much trepidation because she lived on the other side of the world which meant a long haul flight that was very much outside of our experience. As it happened it was all very enjoyable but very tiring. Our first almost surreal experience was to be met at Hobart Airport by Bill and Louise Whitfield of Wooler as well as by Miriam and we all went to the famous Mures restaurant in Hobart Harbour for fish and chip's. We were so delighted to see Miriam's lovely, spacious flat which she so obviously loves.



It was a delight to know that the Community had helped to ease the burden of cost and to purchase items to make Miriam more physically comfortable in her condition. We spent most of our time meeting with the many friends of Miriam, something which blessed us enormously because we were reassured of the fact that Miriam would be very well cared for in the future. She certainly is a much loved person. Among others we met Sister Philomena, a Dominican Nun who lives in the same complex as Miriam. Eric, an Anglican Canon of St David's Cathedral in Hobart, who shared with us how Celtic Daily Prayer had been a lifeline to him at a time of great despair in his life. Felicity who worked with L'Arche and had spent three years in L'Arche Daybreak, Toronto when Henri Nouwen was there. John and Jen Coleman, current leaders of the L'Arche Community in Hobart, a lovely couple with whom we connected immediately. Pete and Penny Jerrim, very special people, and close friends of Miriam for many years. They had visited the Nether Springs and kept in touch with us and we stayed at their home for a week, a wonderful blessing apart from the scorpions. Tim and Merron Dyer who lead the Southland Community in Sheffield, northern Tasmania. We spent a couple of days with them and found it a hugely significant time as we shared many similarities in our respective spiritual journey's. It was very tiring because Freda spent much of the night searching for the huge spider she discovered when turning back the sheets in our room. Miriam shrugged it off after hearing our description by saying, oh, it's just a tarantula. We didn't do any of the touristy bits apart from a visit to Port Arthur, which was fascinat-

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

William Stringfellow

Mission to Miriam

(continued from previous page)

ing, although a grim reminder of the forced transportation and imprisonment of people for crimes which were very trivial. What a beautiful setting for such a horrible episode in British colonial history. On the way there we visited a wildlife park to see the Tasmanian devils and possums and wombats and other things Australian.

As you can imagine the ten days passed over



very quickly and it seemed no time at all since we arrived that we were saying our tearful farewell to one another. Miriam seemed to be much better than we had anticipated but while we were there we were reminded just how unwell she really is when a visit to the doctor revealed a spread of the cancer. Miriam however is in good heart and very positive in her outlook, and her determination to live life to the full a day at a time is a powerful testimony to her faith.

We had arranged a few days in Melbourne and stayed at the lovely comfortable home of Mary McGivern Shaw who had been to the Nether Springs several times. Mary was away in Perth but left the key for us. It was a lovely experience mostly resting but we did make two trips. The first to Geelong, about two hours drive SW where we visited the residential Community where both Andy and Brenda had recently visited. So different yet so similar! The other visit was to Ballarat which is almost two hours drive NW of Melbourne. This was a spontaneous arrangement by Mary's daughter Rachel resulting in a gathering of fifteen people not merely interested in the Community, but some who actually used Celtic Daily Prayer and the Office. It was a good time sharing our life and ethos and since that time this group has continued to meet regularly – our most far flung Community group. On our journey home we had arranged a stop-over in Tokyo so as to meet up with Jean Wilson. We wanted to put a little Together in Jean's Aloneness. This was a brief but meaningful time as we shared a meal together and caught up with one another's news. We were also catching up with news from England which was dominated by the Foot and Mouth outbreak and the terrible winter weather. What a contrast as we had left record high temperatures. As we arrived home we knew it had certainly been worthwhile. Especially as Miriam was and is so grateful for the prayerful and financial support she has received. As Miriam herself writes "It is so important that you made the trip and that I'm living in this good place. I feel really settled. Please keep telling everyone how grateful I am for their prayers and the provision they have made for me. I'm sure that is why my health is good".

NEWS FROM CLOISTERS

Ian Corsie of Allerdean.

CLOISTERS ADMINISTRATOR

Brenda Grace took up her new role as full-time Cloisters Administrator in April and has been very busy ever since getting all the orders out and dealing with bookstalls at Spring Harvest and other venues. The surge of interest in the Community and Cloisters products (particularly the new Waymarks CD) at Spring Harvest in particular has resulted in much new business. Having Brenda full-time will make it much easier to develop Cloisters activities and to promote Community products more vigorously by printed catalogues and on the new Community website. Brenda's contact number is 01289 388235 and the new Cloisters email address is cloisters@northumbriacommunity.org (though the cloisters@bigfoot.com address is still valid).

CELTIC DAILY READINGS

This new Community book has just been published by HarperCollins. It contains a third year of daily readings (the first two have already been published in Celtic Daily Prayer), called the Colman series (each series is named after one of the early bishops of Lindisfarne; Colman came after Aidan and Finan). It stands complete in itself, but it is also a companion to Celtic Daily Prayer, providing an additional set of readings directly relevant to the life of the Community. Those familiar with the old filofax format readings, or the booklets containing 6 months of readings, will recognise much of the content, as this is the original source of the material, though some of it has been reworked. The December readings are the Jesse Tree, with illustrations specially drawn by Sara Bennett-Steele.

The book is a paperback with a cover in matching style to the new hardback Celtic Daily Prayer, except that the colour is blue. The retail price is £10.99 and Cloisters is making it available by mail order including p&p at £11. If you have friends interested in the Community but who may find Celtic Daily Prayer a bit daunting or expensive, it is worth considering Celtic Daily Readings as an alternative. To order copies, ring Brenda Grace on 01289 388235 or email her on the new Cloisters email address cloisters@northumbriacommunity.org

CELTIC ILLUSTRATIONS

Stocks of this book at HarperCollins have now been exhausted and they will not be reprinting it. Cloisters still has some stock left, but, if you have been thinking of getting a copy and hadn't got round to it, you'll need to hurry. The mail order price is £11.50.



COMMUNITY MUSIC ON CD AND TAPE

Waymarks, the new CD of Community songs published in April, has already proved enormously successful, with sales of nearly 1000 units in 2 months! An audiotape version will be available later in June at £10 (mail order price including p&p). You may be able to help us promote sales of these by encouraging your local Christian bookshop to try stocking it (tell them the CD trade price is £8.55 and the RRP is £14.99 and the tape trade price £5.70 and RRP £9.99 and they are available from Cloisters if you need a sample copy). The mail order price of the CD will rise to £15 on 1 July.

The first printing of 2000 copies of the first Community CD, Celtic Daily Prayer, is nearly exhausted and new stock will shortly be purchased with a new cover design to make more of a visual identification with both the Celtic Daily Prayer book and the Waymarks CD. The mail order price of this CD will then rise to £13.

An audiotape version of Nick and Anita Haigh's Celtic Roots and Rhythms: Heartcry is now available from Cloisters at a mail order price of £10.

RECOMMENDED READING

THE DIVINE CONSPIRACY: Rediscovering our Hidden Life in God - by Dallas Willard

Richard Foster, in his foreword, describes it as 'the book I have been searching for all my life... a feast for the mind and the heart.' Willard wants a fresh hearing for Jesus, offering a revolutionary way for Christians to experience God vividly today, and the book includes penetrating teaching on the Sermon on the Mount. ISBN is 0006281141 and it is available (Code DC) from Cloisters at mail order price of £10.

Do you wish to receive CAIM on e-mail?

At our last Community Council meeting it was suggested that in our increasingly technological age, many people on our mailing list would prefer to have CAIM sent to them via e-mail. There was a discussion as to whether or not this detracted from the importance of one to one relationship which is perceived to be the case in receiving a personal copy through the post. Others saw no difference. It was agreed that the choice be given. So those who wish to receive future issues by e-mail please let us know through the Community Office.

Northern Ireland

Following on from Spring Harvest was a very significant time in Northern Ireland. Going ostensibly to take a Weekend Conference with a church in Newry, the Lord had the Community team, [Roy Searle, Gordon & Margaret Joice, and Ken & Norma Wise] involved in much more than we ever imagined or envisaged.

Roy writes: It was one of those times of seeing God at work in bringing people and situations across our path that led to some very deep conversations, relationships and happenings. Sufficient to say that we need to give thanks to God and pray for the following situations: Ken and Claire and family in Belfast, the vulnerability surrounding the future of the Morningside Community Project in the Lower Ormeau Road; Stephen Adams; John Robinson, whom we continue to support who is working for Habitat for Humanity and who has just flown out to South Korea for three months; Newry Baptist Church in their transitional period; Rostrevor Renewal Centre and its prayer ministry in Ireland; Trevor and Judith Sands and Rosie Mitten and the cross community project, "church without walls, kingdom in the streets" in Killeel, that is converting the largest town centre pub into a place of healing, reconciliation, care, work, training, counselling and new community. David Macmillan pastoring a church in Belfast with a "church without walls" ethos; Keith Getty, a musician and composer from Belfast; the new Patrick Exhibition in Downpatrick; follow up from the meetings that Roy and Syd Niven had in Belfast and Bangor; the continuing peace process, especially with the run up to the marching season in July. So many people, situations and issues. Do pray! Ireland, North and South is close to our heart and linked to the vocation and vision of the Community.

Gordon & Margaret write: It was good to be able to return to Northern Ireland. As usual we did not know why we were going, but, again as usual, it was right to do so! Apart from spending some time at the Morningside community centre, renewing our acquaintance with Rostrevor, visiting the superb new Patrick exhibition & seeing the amazing new project at Killeel, it was a joy to pick up again on established friendships with Ken & Claire, their children & Stephen Adams. We also enjoyed, being able to walk on the beach at Cranfield, saying the Office and praying for Ireland. The problems are still so very real as are the hopeful signs of opportunity. The overriding impression that we are left with, is of overwhelming warmth & hospitality that we met on all sides. We were again made to feel most welcome. Perhaps our most abiding memory is that of two little girls singing "I'm special" that was sung on the Sunday gathering at Castlewellan which Roy was leading. Those two small children, with their uncluttered minds and simple trust, we felt, represented hope for the future.

The Value of Anonymity

One of the most remarkable happenings for us in recent times has been the developing relationship between our Community and the Renovare network led by Richard Foster. This has grown out of the friendship between Richard and Roy Searle and the subsequent discovery of incredible similarities of vision. A good example is this recent article by Richard written for his own community and reproduced here word for word. All the more telling because Richard is one of the most well known writers on the spiritual life today. Please pray for Richard and his colleagues, for Renovare and for all the Lord is planning for us, alone and together.

In the midst of our "celebrity culture," as we like to call it, I want to put in a word for the value of anonymity. Frankly, all this hankering to get noticed runs at cross-purposes with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Besides, it is all so mindless. Many people, for example, act as if it is some kind of honour to be on television. Unfortunately, today all we have to do is act outrageous, and bingo, the media are there. (And more and more now the key is to be violently outrageous.) Friends, this is no honour; it is a sadness and a disgrace.

My counsel is that we simply turn our back to all the brouhaha of our media-soaked society. It is nothing more than a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal. It is candy floss. Besides, most of us will never be "important" or "noticed" in terms of human reckoning. Even Andy Warhol's dictum that each of us gets fifteen minutes of fame is beyond the reach of most of us. And it isn't worth the reach anyway.

Now, being important" and "valued" is central to our health and well-being. But it is an importance and a value that is worlds apart from the modern gushing over "the ten most sexy men of 2001." We can and we should give and receive the honest affirmation that comes within the warm context of family and friends. We can and we should rest contented in the experiential knowledge that we are of infinite value to our heavenly Father who loves us utterly. Together these are wholly sufficient. We are therefore free to live our lives quietly and profoundly. We are at ease in our hiddenness. We have no need for attention because we have learned to do ordinary things with the perception of their enormous value. In saying this I am not referring to the kind of "humble mumble" that pretends not to want attention and all the time is desperately wishing that someone ... anyone ... will notice. No, here we are fully satisfied. Truly. And may I just add that this way of living is not just for individuals but for groups and churches as well. To be important from a kingdom perspective we do not have to be the biggest, the best, or the most innovative. We simply do our work faithfully with all our might and we leave the rest in the



hands of God. (It's a good place to be, you know.)

Now, at times God, for his own sovereign purposes, will raise up a person for leadership or to honour in some special way. And, if this happens to us, it is a grace to receive, it is a call to serve, it is a cross to bear. If given a position of leadership, we lead as only we follow our Master who leads without guile. If given honour we accept it thankfully as those who have done nothing more than receive a gift of grace. In this way our anonymity is not really given up, only extended.

BEWARE OF THE ABBOT

Hugh Barnett



Prayer.....and a liberal sprinkling of fertiliser.....!

Northumbria Community online

Jeff Sutherland of North Sunderland

After a lengthy and careful planning process involving the Community Council and Trustees, amongst others, the Community's website is now up and running. You can visit it at:

www.northumbriacommunity.org

Like all major projects, the development of the site will be a lengthy process, so the site is still very much 'under construction', but we will welcome comments and feedback if you are able to have a look (as long as they're constructive!). The whole subject of 'advertising' has led to a lively and considered debate in Community. Web sites generally are about attracting people, and convincing them that they need what you've got. By that yardstick, we don't want a website! But the reality is that it offers a modern and convenient method of **giving information** to large numbers of people, and will offer other opportunities for people to be in touch in Community. The ability for us to enter a 'private' area for Friends and Companions – to post urgent prayer requests etc – is on the way. It will also open up trading opportunities for Cloisters, with facilities to buy goods from the site in complete security. We know the dangers of such gadgetry replacing personal contact, (are you frustrated by those answering machines offering you twenty options?), and we will work hard to ensure that **relationship** always remains the most important aspect of our communication – not the ability to be net-savvy.

Along with the Community website comes the facility of new email addresses. We are reluctant to change the address – it's a bit like moving house, someone always wonders where you've gone – but we hope it's the only move we'll ever need to make. The most important address is the general office, and messages to this address will always be relayed to the most appropriate person:

enquires@northumbriacommunity.org

You can also email cloisters@northumbriacommunity.org or music@northumbriacommunity.org or finance@northumbriacommunity.org if your message is specifically related to those areas. We have also established trevor.miller@northumbriacommunity.org and roy.searle@northumbriacommunity.org. Other addresses will come online as they become necessary, and we will issue a 'directory' occasionally. Watch this space, and please make this important change in your address book, otherwise your message might be lost.

Reflections on Spring Harvest a Community team's perspective



Once again a Community team journeyed to Skegness to lead the reflective worship at Spring Harvest. The two weeks saw some remarkable happenings in the lives of many people whom we were privileged to share with and serve. We have reported in previous years the feedback from guests but in this article we have included some of the feedback and reflections from the team of musicians, dancers, storytellers, artist, power point operators, caterers, pray-ers and Cloisters.

" creative, innovative worship zones, reflecting the Community's ethos ... use of images and symbols that were created had a deep impact on people and served the worship of God ...it was demanding, hard work and drew every last ounce of energy from us but extremely worthwhile and a great privilege to be part of serving and leading folk in worship and facilitating happenings for so many...

I was thrilled and encouraged by the responsiveness of so many people. It was notable the number of wheelchair users we had in our venue this year...

a haven where the poor in spirit sang... really good to have taken risks and experimented in worship.. captured peoples' imaginations.. gave them a different experience of being church... journeying together...

For the first time at Spring Harvest, I felt that there was time for me to hear from God. The usual 'clash of culture', which we've often known, gave way to a sense of time and space to hear from God and worship Him... wonderful!...

Our venue was quite literally on the margins of the Butlin's site, through a subway under a road which sepa-

rated us from the rest of the activity. There was a certain irony about it! Yet, it was to this out of the way place, that many came hungry for God, for community, for reality...

Can you think of somewhere you would prefer to be than at Butlins Skegness on a cold Easter day? I can! - but, had I been elsewhere, I would have missed out on experiencing Community in action in a very special way! Manning the Cloisters stand, I found myself time and again sharing with people who had been deeply affected by the Community's music, dance, worship and 'ethos', that they had experienced in the Crazy Horse Saloon. All this, combined with the companionship shared in the Community hospitality chalet, made it a privilege to have been there...

Worship in the venue - gentle, vulnerable, non-threatening, inviting, friendly, loving...team together - community within community, supportive, sharing, working together...What were we doing there? - bringing hope for people asking ordinary questions of faith and life, signposts for the journey...

I left home in a state of shock, bewilderment and fear. I came straight from the funeral of a much loved friend, on top of feeling lost myself for months prior. From this place of total trust in my Heavenly Father [cause I knew for sure I had nothing within me on which to draw], I found a place of healing in the ebb and flow of community life together...

We did vulnerability, late nights, fabulous food... sunny beach walks.. scraping ice of the windscreens, Skegness in April and made some great new friends.

Seeing and hearing the story of the community life touching deep roots in people. I never cease to be amazed at how He works though the simplicity and



Notice Board

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

Notice board again reflects the highs and lows of life that we all experience in varying degrees. We rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep.

Congratulations to **Chris and Jackie Johnson** currently living in Japan, on the birth of a baby boy Patrick Oliver on May 18. Also to proud Grandparents **Ian and Joy Corsie** of Allerdean on the birth of Imogene to their daughter Iona and her husband Michael.

Congratulations to **Sarah Hay** of Tow Law on her appointment to Head of English at St. Joseph's RC Hebburn. She starts in September. Also to **Ben Searle** of Wooler on his achieving a 2:1 BSc (Hons) in Forestry from Bangor University and on his new job in Moffat.

Amund and Pamela Karner of Aberdeen are to have a marriage blessing at the Nether Springs in August following their wedding earlier this year.

Jenny Crisp of Newcastle has become engaged to be married. We wish her and Mark well for their future together.

Following Paul's ordination at Heaton in July **Paul and Barbara Revill** are to begin their ministry in Stocksfield Baptist Church in September. Pray also for **Stephen and Helena Ibbotson** of Leeds and **Andrew and Penny Hardcastle** of Lytham as they join the Ministry team at Altrincham Baptist Church.

Pray for **Ferg and Becky Matthews** of Lyon, France and especially for their youngest son Isaac (4) who suffers from epilepsy often having many fits each day. Pray for wisdom in discerning the appropriate help and healing.

The Community was shocked and deeply saddened by the news of the tragic death of **Clare Grimley** of Barwell at the age of 25. Many were able to share in the celebration of her life at St Peter and Paul RC Church in Earl Shilton in early April. Easter took on new meaning as we spoke of hope in the midst of tragedy. Please pray much and often for **Ant, Mary and Katie, Kev and Ellen, Brian and Cathy** as they have to make huge adjustments to their lives in the midst of grief.

We also wish to pay tribute to **Kay Critchlow** of Andover, who died peacefully in May aged 47

after a two-year illness with cancer. Her unfaltering faith was an inspiration to all around her. We stand with her husband **Dave**, and her children **Gemma, Linda and Robert**, as they begin the painful process of life without her.

We also remember **Joe and Gail Wykes** of Barwell as they mourn the loss of Joe's Mum in May.

Geoff Boston of Stockton asks us to pray for all aspects of his trip to Mozambique from 4th-17th July. He is part of a team going from Portrack Baptist Church to help in a building project of a much needed Health Centre.

There have been a number of changes at the Nether Springs recently and there are others in the pipeline. These include: **Brenda Grace** who has moved from the Finance Office to Cloisters; **Bryony Stimpson** who has come to work in the Finance Office with Freda. **Rob and Joanna Brown** who have taken on the responsibilities of leadership within the monastery team and now oversee all the practicalities associated with the Mother House.

Rebekah Pollit and **Martin Neil**, following their marriage in July, will work full time at the Nether Springs for a period; **Natasha Roumientseva** is returning once again from St Petersburg for a few months from July; **Clare Redhead** from Brisbane is staying on till the autumn; **Stephen and Sheena Hewitt** of Warwick are taking a year out of Parish ministry and joining the Monastery team in September; and others, like **Anne Hewson** of Wilmslow and **Nick and Anita Haigh** of Chichester are still exploring the possibilities of coming north.

There are places still available for the Llyn Peninsula pilgrimage. If you would like to be part of this pilgrimage to North Wales from September 15th-22nd led by **David Pott** of Fountain Gate and which includes a visit to Bardsey Island, then please contact the Community Office for further details.

A Big Thank You

A big thank you to all who supported the Mother House through prayer and financial gifts during the recent closure for 8 weeks due to the Foot and Mouth epidemic. Although confirmed cases came very, very close to us we have not had any outbreak on the Hetton Farm Estates which surround us. We re-opened at the beginning of May and are now fully operational. Due to your generosity we have been able to meet our bills from that closed period.

The following report from Geoff Boston of Stockton is typical of the response we received during that difficult time.

Just a note of encouragement for you following my visit to a Celtic Supper Evening at Emmanuel Church, Saltburn last Friday. John Pearson who organised it asked me to come along to tell a couple of stories about Patrick and Brigid, play the bodhran and lead a compline in the church at the end of the evening. Joan and I went and were pleasantly surprised at the sheer numbers of ticket paying attendees, most of whom did not know what to expect. There was a mixture of Anglicans, Catholics and Methodists from the local area, about 70 people in all. People warmed to the dancing led by John and they were really bowled over by the Storytelling and the Compline at the end. Many folk began to ask questions about the Community. I was greatly encouraged by the gift they gave to pass on to the Community of £50. I thanked them publicly for it and asked them to pray for us, particularly as the Hall was closed. At the end someone came up to me and gave me a further £20 for the Community. On top of that, I got a phone call from John yesterday who was really enthusing about the responses from people over the weekend. He also said that they had made more money than they had expected and that it was unanimous that they are sending a further £50 to the Community. It is wonderful the different ways that God provides!

Thank you so much to everyone involved in similar ways in blessing the work of the Mother House through this difficult time!

Annual Retreat

All Community Companions and Friends are encouraged to build into their lives an Annual private retreat at the Nether Springs. This would be a time of reflection, of quiet and waiting upon God with individual direction. Many of you already do this and know its benefits and blessing.

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