

CAIM

Issue no 19 Winter 2001

The Northumbria Community Newsletter

Welcome to the Winter 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.

I just want to be with You

Roy Searle of Wooler

It was one evening, and I was in the study, preparing for the next week's sermon. Into the room appeared my younger son who came and sat down on the seat near my desk. It was good to see him and after several minutes of father and son chat I followed a line of inquiry as to why and what he was doing. Had he come in for a story? paper and pencils? to play? was he on the run from some mischief? hiding from the inevitable call for bedtime? None of these. His quiet manner in the chair beside me was both welcoming and disturbing. 'So why are you here?' I eventually asked. 'I just want to be with you Dad'. His innocent yet beautifully profound response was to change the course of my life and ministry for in his simple answer, 'I just want to be with you', sounded the Spirit of God speaking to my own heart. It was a crucible moment that awoke me from my preoccupied sailing through life and ministry, which engaged me in many activities but had robbed me of that desire and call in my own heart to seek God. Perceived knowledge of God was no substitute for knowing God. Words about God were no authentic alternative for relationship with Him.

'I just want to be with you', when had I last said that to God? With renewed awareness of both my need and desire I began to realise that ministry had distanced rather than drawn me closer to God and that I had allowed things to lead me away from the heart of God into a far country of activity, drivenness and falsehoods. 'I just want to be with you' was an invitation to a homecoming, a call in my own heart, a call to return to that first love for God who calls us to be with Him as well as being sent by Him. It is a call that continues to draw and to challenge in Community, and its aim to seek God has to mean more than aspiration and good intent; it requires discipline and a reorientation of life.

Pursuing God is both an invitation and a challenge to reorder our lives. To set our hearts on seeking God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength requires an embracing of those

gifts and graces, disciplines and commitments that would accompany and help us on what is a journey of discovery.

COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY

Think of the following spiritual disciplines and graces as companions and friends to accompany and help us on our journey of seeking God and deepening our relationship with Him. They are given not as rules and sticks with which we are made to feel guilty or be beaten with, rather as those gifts that are for our well-being in our seeking after God.

SOLITUDE

Solitude is an indispensable companion without which it is very difficult to deepen our relationship with God. The frenetic culture of noise and busyness must not rob us from setting aside time and space to give God our undivided attention. Withdrawing from the immediate demands, routines, responsibilities and relationships in order to be alone with God are prerequisites to seeking Him and our being men and women who are led by the Spirit and not driven by the demands, opportunities, obligations and tyrannies of the urgent, [see Mark 1:35-39]. Solitude provided for Jesus those precious times of seeking and deepening of relationship with the Father, out of which came direction for life and ministry. Relationship out of which came activity and mission. Here was the discipline of taking time out to seek God in the solitary place that provided a template for our seeking of God and a foundation upon which our lives should be built. As Henri Nouwen put it, 'a life without a solitary place, that is a life without a quiet centre, that can so easily destroy and destruct'.

SILENCE

Silence completes and intensifies solitude and its value in a world inundated by words, sounds and much noise cannot be underestimated in our quest to seek and listen to God. As Mother Teresa said, 'We

need to find God and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence.

See how in nature; trees, flowers, grass, grow in silence; see the stars, the moon, the sun, how they move in silence... the more we receive in silent prayer, the more we can give in our active life. We need silence to be able to touch people's souls. The essential thing is not what we say, but what God says to us and through us. All our words will be useless unless they come from within – words which do not give the light of Christ only increase the darkness.'

Solitude and silence don't come easy to many of us. They are often equated with laziness, inactivity and regarded as unproductive but seen as companions on the road to seeking God they open our hearts and minds to His presence, found in learning to be alone before Him.

AWARENESS

Thomas Merton described contemplation as, "a gift of awareness, an awakening to the Real within all that is real." It is as Brother Lawrence put it, "alertness towards God". One of the things that has dulled our awareness of God is that false divide between the sacred and the secular. Knowing and seeking God calls for an awakening to His Presence in all things, not just in the religious and spiritual realms of life. In Him we live and move

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I just want to be with You

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and have our being. Awareness and responsiveness to God in the ordinariness of everyday life is a key to seeking Him and discerning his Presence: in holy and helpless places, in joy and pain; in the events, experiences, and encounters of life. Garrison Keillor speaks about the presence of God permeating through ordinary life – “cooking, small talk, storytelling, making love, fishing, tending animals, arranging flowers, through sports, music, books, spending time with friends, raising children, why it’s been known in a church service, every once in a while!”

Awareness of the presence of God in ordinary life enlarges our vision of Him and helps us to know Him more intimately in the everyday happenings of our lives and those whom we are called to share and serve. We can however, through being overly obsessed with seeking to see God at work in extraordinary, miraculous ways, consign Him in our thinking, to the ‘remarkable’ and lock our understanding of God into the ‘so called’ sacred realms of church and the worship or ministry meeting, thus blinding us to the reality of seeing and encountering Him in the ordinariness of life.

DESIRE

Desire is sometimes talked about as though it is something we should avoid as believers. But desire is a fundamental human attribute and given by God can be used to lead us in our quest for him. Our desire for Him should govern and determine all other desires.

The journey of seeking God is paradoxical for it is one of pursuing that which has already been found. We seek the Lord because we have been found by Him. The desire to know more of God and to seek Him is the fruit or consequence of having been touched by His love and grace. It is God’s initiative to put desire in us that causes us to seek after Him. It is He who creates us with the ability to desire that enables us to pursue Him. As Augustine said, ‘You have made us for Yourself Lord and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.’ Our desire and restlessness may seek fulfilment in many areas of life and relationships; friendships, marriage, work, football [not if you’re a Middlesbrough supporter!], pleasure, success, accumulation, etc but they will not be truly realised until our hearts find their rest in God. Desire is God given, without which our lives lose their passion, vitality and motivation. Lives that will not rest until they have found the embrace of the God who is the Creator of desire. The Lord who created us in His own image, persons in relationship, the Trinity, the God who longs that we might know Him is the God who has given us the desire to seek, to look and discover him. In the words of Brother Lawrence we are urged to ‘Consider God as the goal of all our thoughts and desires’.

Lord I just want to be with you.

Look at the Birds

Robin Old of Milfield

A few years ago John Stott wrote a delightful little book entitled “The Birds Our Teachers”. His starting point is Matthew 6:26 where Jesus instructs us to “watch birds”. In true John Stott style he writes “the Greek verb employed here means to fix the eyes on or take a good look at”. With these two great authorities for support I need no further justification to watch the birds which flock to Nether Springs. In the last year 24 species have nested at Nether Springs and a further 26 species have been seen in the grounds or close by. But my purpose in writing is to take us beyond these statistics (exciting though they may be) to discover how birds can teach us about ourselves.

Owls

“Owls will live among its ruins and hoot from the windows”. (Zephaniah 2:14)

Owls get a bad press in the Bible because of their association with ruins, their secretive nocturnal habits and their mournful cries. “Our” Tawny Owls certainly give us a few frights at night when they start screeching and hooting. During the day, however, they can evoke our sympathy. When trying to catch up on sleep up in the trees they become the target for all the pent up aggression of the smaller daytime birds. Thrushes and finches (who are rarely attacked by owls) keep up a cacophony of alarm calls, which attracts us humans to come and stare at the owls, causing even more sleep deprivation! So perhaps owls can be likened to leaders. Their wisdom or motivation often goes unrecognised and they become the focus for a lot of critical “watching”.



Swallows

“Swallows have their own homes; they keep their young near your altars”. (Psalm 84:3)

Swallows and House Martins are numerous at Nether Springs. Both species are confiding, colourful and gregarious, and Swallows have a sweet song. They are fascinating birds to watch especially when they are building their mud nests which they plaster on to buildings, or when they are gathering on the phone wires before migrating. Swallows are great travellers, migrating to equatorial Africa and beyond. Yet they are bound to return in order to breed when staying put in Africa would seem a much better option. Several pairs of Spotted Flycatchers also nest here. Like Swallows they feed on insects and migrate to Africa for the winter. Yet how unlike Swallows they are in many other ways. No attractive plumage or sweet song; secretive, especially on their nests and “vanishing” as soon as their young are fledged. So Swallows and Flycatchers are on the same journey and share the same food supply at the same Mother House, but like humans their behaviour is often very different.



Pheasants

“Hide me in the shadow of your wings, from the attacks of the wicked”. (Psalm 17:8-9)

Much to our delight a pair of Pheasants hatched eight chicks in the Prayer Garden this summer. Sadly none survived very long, although even their short lives reminded us of one valuable lesson. At first we didn’t know how many chicks there were because they spent most of their time safe beneath their mother’s wings. As they grew they inevitably became more venturesome, and it was when they strayed that they fell victim to predators and heavy rain. “Mrs P” is still around, often getting in the queue with the hens at feeding time, and we have hopes of another brood next year.



So watch the birds wherever you are. They have a lot to teach us.

Thanksgiving

As we anticipate once again as a Community moving from an old year to a new year there is a profound sense of thankfulness to God for His continued financial provision. It is still, (more often than not) very scary but recognising our dependency upon Him we are grateful for all those who have stood with us in prayer and those who have given, often sacrificially, to enable the Community to live, develop and grow. You have made a difference. **Thank you so much!**

Journeying with the Northumbria Community

A booklet with the above title is available on request from the Community Office. It is designed to provide introductory information for those wishing to explore what it will mean in actual practice to become a Companion or Friend of the Northumbria Community. A brief outline of the background and formation of the Community, as well as its vocation and vision is followed by an explanation of the process required of those considering journeying with the Community.

Community Group Leaders Gathering

As the Community continues to grow and develop across Britain and beyond the requests from people to join with others in the form of a Community Group grows. In order to find a way forward, a weekend has been set aside for a coming together of all actual and potential Community Group leaders at the Nether Springs. The dates are **19 - 21 January 2002**. This is an important gathering with an open invitation for anyone who is interested in exploring the idea of establishing a Community Group in their area to attend along with already established groups. We would encourage all group leaders to try to attend or to send a representative. Better still - leader and representative. We will be then be able to catch up on news, share ideas and insights for the future development of such groups around the UK and beyond.

If you would like more information about Community Groups; please contact: **Norma Charlton** at 84, Kells Lane, Low Fell, Gateshead NE9 5XY Tel: 0191 4878065 or norma.charlton@cablenet.co.uk

Book Review

Ian Corsie of Allerdean



JOY TO THE WORLD
by Joyce Huggett (Eagle Publishing, ISBN 0863473733, £7.99 paperback). This is a book of Christmas meditations by a writer, speaker and retreat-leader who has close links with the Community. There are 34 meditations that could be used through December, or, in a more concentrated way, as a retreat over or around Christmas (or at any time, if one wished to focus on the incarnation). There are prayers and readings from a wide variety of sources, many of which will feel familiar to Community readers - and, indeed, there are some from Celtic Daily Prayer (which is how we come to know about this new title). Many of the quotations are from songs and hymns, and a CD/tape containing these is available separately.

The Seeking Place - Sought and Found

Alun and Mary Brookfield

Readers of the prayer guide will be aware that, after more than a year of active searching, Alun and Mary Brookfield of Swindon have finally managed to buy a house in Wales to be the Seeking Place (Y Plas Chwilio). Here they tell their story.

Our search for the Seeking Place is summed up in the words of the Evening Office - have courage and wait. Indeed, as Norma Wise once said to us, we began to think that 'wait' was the only word of English that God knew! After having our financial fingers burned in the process of trying to push things at our speed, we knew that, however difficult it became, we learned the hard way to allow God to move at his speed.

During 2000, we looked at 12 different properties, although some were dismissed as possibilities even before we reached the front door! We made offers on four, had three surveyed, and spent a lot of money and time racing to and from rural Wales to view all these houses.

We first saw Bryntirion on 4 November 2000 - the same day that we and our vision were being prayed for by the Community. The sale process went as smoothly as these things ever go and we completed the purchase and moved in on 21 February 2001 - the same day we were being prayed for by Spurgeon's College in their chapel prayers. We felt as though the whole process had been 'bracketed' by prayer.

Bryntirion is a three-bedroomed, ten-year-old house with 4 acres of land in the heart of the Brecon Beacons National Park. It is in a tiny village, a true community, with its own church and village hall. The back of the house faces south, with uninterrupted views of the Black Mountain as far as the eye can see.

Our vision and dream for many years has been to provide a safe place, a place to rest, a place to seek God (Plas Chwilio - a seeking place), a touching place, a 'thin' place, a place where the membrane which separates earth and heaven is as thin as possible, where people of any religion and none may seek God, whoever or whatever they perceive him to be. All of this will be rooted firmly in our Christian beliefs.

The vision for a seeking place began when, in the mid-1980s we experi-

enced some personal difficulties, yet could find nowhere to seek the Lord together that was within our budget. It was not that such places did not exist - we just didn't know where they were.

The Northumbria Community, with their openness to all who truly want to seek God, whatever their religious affiliation or lack thereof, further nurtured the vision. Exploration of the Celtic sites aroused within us an awareness of Celtic Christianity in Wales, which led to a desire to 'rebuild the ancient ruins and walk again the ancient paths' of the early Celtic Christians of Wales.

Finally, our experience is that many (perhaps the majority of) clergy and others in Christian leadership are tired and discouraged in their ministries and desperately in need of places they can go to rest and be 're-envisioned', but which will not cost more than they can afford. We believe that God has called us to offer such a place.

So what will visitors to Bryntirion find? First, they will enter a place with firm Christian foundations, based on the Rule of the Northumbria Community - availability and vulnerability. The Daily Offices of the Community will be observed as a disciplined framework to daily life. We intend to make no formal charges, but to invite donations according to the resources of the visitors. We will not run formal 'retreats', but will instead invite visitors to share our home and use it as a place of retreat, where they can seek God for themselves.

At the time of writing, we are hard at work making the house and grounds ready for visitors and we are grateful to all who have supported and encouraged us in our vision. Please continue to pray for us.

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, particularly looking at how our Rule of Availability and Vulnerability is applied to the unique circumstances of each of our lives. Many of you already do this and know its benefits and blessing. Also to participate in one of the many Led Retreats we are running in the coming months, details of which are in the current programme available from the Community Office.

A Creative and Exciting Place

Amanda Miles of New Barnet

I've been asked to write about our house, at number 28, Abbots Road, New Barnet, on the outskirts of North London, and so I will. I don't want to talk about vision or ideas but simply about what is. We moved here eight months ago from a house a mile or so away but it was a big move, from a dark two up two down terrace to a light and spacious place, and also we feel from a desert inward time to a time of moving outward into God's blessing. Our aim is to have an open home.

I'm sitting in the chapel in the basement of our home next to where the kitchen will be—this is the heart of our home and I love it here. This is a place where Office is said, (though not always) where dreaming is done and tears are shed. Home church sometimes happens here and the quiet making of things. Guests frequently disappear for an hour or two and emerge from this place with some comment, according to their personalities about the space they've found, - these comments range from 'I didn't expect to find the Lord's presence so very rich and deep here' to 'I've been away with the fairies for ages in there and had some great ideas...'

Following the attacks in America one friend who is not yet a Christian asked if she could come down to the chapel and light a candle and pray. Our children, Anya and Ellie, slipped into there

by themselves and quietly made a memorial using their own gifts and symbols because they couldn't relate to the prayer service on TV that I was trying to join in with. This has led to the decision to open the basement and chapel area up to the community for a day of prayer without words, where people can just call in and make a prayer using colour and art materials or just take some quiet time.

This is something of the flavour of our chapel. It is a hidden place. Upstairs we have a lovely room where we have begun to have story, song, poem telling evenings for all ages. This is a creative and exciting place and I am looking forward to seeing what unfolds from the manifold possibilities. Our aim is to have an open home, to practice hospitality, to seek to live availability and vulnerability, slowly and surely. "Unless the Lord builds the house the builders labour in vain."

A friend who stayed with us for the weekend recently said "Thank you so much for what you're not doing" It was heartfelt and I take much encouragement from that. We simply want to be there and allow God to use us as we are, where we are, without the need for any structured meetings—because this creative and exciting place is simply home!

New Year Gathering at Bradford Cathedral

We would want to encourage as many folk as possible to join with other Companions and Friends at this important Community Gathering at Bradford Cathedral, on **Saturday 5th January 2002**. We will explore the theme: **Building the New on Foundations of Old**. This will be the theme not only at the beginning of the new year but also throughout 2002, including Easter Workshop and other events to be scheduled throughout the year.

The programme for the Bradford day is:

10.30am arrive / coffee

11.00am worship and Teaching

12.15pm *Market Place*. An opportunity to meet and interact with others and learn more about Community Groups, Intercession, the Telling Place, Community Council, Cloisters etc.

1.00pm Lunch [bring your own – drinks will be provided]

2.00pm *Learning Zones*. Take part in listening to and interacting with the folk who are pioneering new initiatives including: *The Altar; Faith, Education and Community in Hull, Community Houses in Wales and Oxfordshire, etc.*

3.30pm Tea Break

4.00pm Celebration and Commissioning

5.15pm Tidy up and departures

This will be an exciting day providing much information and inspiration; an opportunity no-one will want to miss so we hope to see you there!

Wisdom for a New Year

Rainer Maria Rilke

I bwf! qbujfodf! xjui! fwfszuijoh!
vosftpmwfe!jo! zpvsl i fbsu! boe!usz!
up!mpwf!ui f!rvftujpot!ui fntfwmft!bt!
jg! ui fz! xfsf! mpdl fe! sppnt! ps!
cppl t! jo! b! wfsz! gpsfjho! upohvf/!
E p! opu! tfbsdi! gps! botxfst-!
xi jdi! dpvme! opu! cf! hjwfo! up! zpv!
opx-! cfdbvtf! zpv! xpvme! opu! cf!
bcmf! up! njwf! ui fn/! ! Boe! ui f! qpjou!
jt-! up! njwf! fwfszuijoh/! ! Mjwf! ui f!
rvftujpot! opx/! Qfsi bqt! ui fo-!
tpnfefbz! gbs! jo! ui f! gvuvsf-! zpv!
xjmt! hsebvbmz-! xjui pvu! fwfo! op.
ujdjoh! ju-! njwf! zpvsl xbz! joup! ui f!
botxfs/!!

BEWARE OF THE ABBOT

Hugh Barnett



"For Christmas, I'm having my hair shirt stuffed with holly—!"

Poets Corner

A poem written by Brenda Grace of Holborn during her recent trip to America

WITH FRIENDS

With Friends

the weather is warmer
colours brighter
laughter kind.

With Friends

a day can last forever
an hour can be endless
a moment is wrapped up in eternity.

With Friends

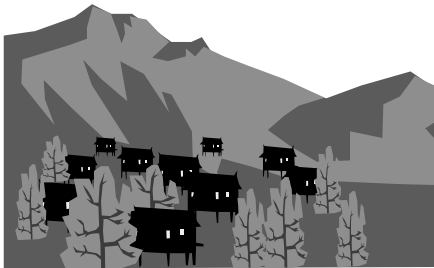
distance is as close as a heartbeat away
togetherness is always today
for yesterday only just happened
and tomorrow is almost here
with friends.

Vulnerability – Chinese Style

Ian Corsie of Allerdean

Joy and I were privileged this autumn to be able to travel to China to visit the mountainous southwest and northwest parts of that vast country. It gave us the opportunity to see at first hand the amazing changes taking place there as it takes its leap into the future; and to experience the stark contrasts between the dirt poor and the new mobile phone generation being thrown up in a capitalist country run by communists (the only satisfactory definition of Chinese Communism!).

We were able to visit projects involving Christian professionals working in



China under the auspices of a Hong Kong-based organisation called Jian Hua (which means 'build China' in Chinese). China welcomes foreigners who bring relevant skills to help in many aspects of modern life, and they specially favour those who come with a real heart to help the people and who are prepared to work there in the long term. Because many Christians working in China come into this category, they have been able to establish excellent working relationships with the authorities they work with, and are often able to identify needs that cannot be met locally and find means of bringing resources to bear on them. The upshot is that there are at the present moment wide opportunities for Christians to go and work in China. The most obvious one is teaching English – it seems that nearly everybody in China wants to speak at least a few words of our language! But there are very many others: we met with people who are working in hospitals, schools for the disabled, orphanage homes, community development, village doctor training, agriculture, linguistics, etc, etc.

Although the Chinese government likes to say it provides religious freedom, it does so strictly under its own limited terms, making the rapid growth of Chinese Christian churches over the past two decades all the more remarkable. There are broadly two kinds of churches in China today – 'registered'

ones which accept a degree of political control (which varies enormously from place to place); and the 'unregistered' ones, which can be truly autonomous, but are subject to persecution (which again varies enormously across the country). There are good Christians to be found in both; and if you are privileged to meet fired-up Chinese Christians, as we were, you find the raw power of the New Testament churches being lived out in action.

Did all this have anything to do with 'being Community'? Surprisingly, yes. The Christians we met would not know anything about the Northumbria Community: but we found all of them, in one way or another, living out 'availability and vulnerability' in some of its purest forms. For one thing, nothing in China is possible without the right relationships: so people always matter more than things or projects.

the spiritual situation in China is so confused and spiritual ground so hotly contested, that intercession is vital if anything is to move forward

For another, the confused and fragmented church structure means that you are almost forced to live as 'church without walls', just 'being' where you are, earning the right to be heard through diligent, professional work and through your lifestyle. Another thing: the spiritual situation in China is so confused and spiritual ground so hotly contested, that intercession is vital if anything is to move forward. Moreover, if any churches anywhere answer the description of the William Stringfellow quotation we love to use in the Community ('dynamic and erratic, spontaneous and radical, audacious and immature, committed if not altogether coherent') it is the Chinese ones! Most of all though, it is the willingness to be 'available' by leaving ones family and friends (and, in many cases, lucrative careers) to go and live in a very frustrating and unpredictable country, where almost everything is difficult; and prepared to be 'vulnerable' in extreme ways.

This vulnerability is well illustrated by the following recent story. We went

to visit a young couple: David (not his real name), who is involved in a project to assist with medical training in a remote area and Sheila (that's not her real name either), who is busy getting deeper into the language and looking after their young son who at this particular time was just over a year old; she was also 6 months pregnant with their second child. (Sheila had already made the major decision to have this next baby in the local hospital – a decision subsequently vindicated by the immense trust shown back to them). They had been back to England for a family wedding and had lent their small apartment during their absence to a Chinese Christian family who were moving to their city and were looking for their own accommodation. A week before they were due back, they discovered that the Lins (you've guessed, that's not their real name either) had still not found anywhere to go. They said fine, but they must be out by the time they returned. David and Sheila duly arrived home tired from all their family-relating and travelling – to find their large 'tenant' family still there. The Lins were really sorry, but the answer they had been getting to their prayers was that they should not move out until the Boss indicated where they should go – and He hadn't. Sheila simply wanted her own space back, and could foresee that their visitors might still be there when the baby arrived! They prayed for resolution and Sheila made herself supremely vulnerable by graciously giving in. The upshot was that the right accommodation turned up a week later – but, in that week of living on top of each other (and, crucially, praying it all through together), a precious bond was formed between the two families that has resulted in a major breakthrough in the project they are involved in and a remarkable team has developed.

If anybody would like further information about the work of Jian Hua or about the orphanage homes we visited in Lijiang (Yunnan province, SW China) please get in touch with us (01289 387257 or iancorsie@bigfoot.com).



Church without Walls... Kingdom in the Streets... in Cheshire

Reflections from the Outside

Claire Wilson of the Community writes... November saw a Community team in Cheshire working in a unique church and local community context. Months of preparation went into the planning, following a visit in February when as a Community we were involved in launching a Lenten series of house groups, meeting throughout the town to study Richard Foster's 'Streams of Living Water'. Several Companions and Friends traveled from near and far to work with all seven churches in Poynton for nine days. Seeking God, prayer and creativity, building relationships, helping people to explore differing streams of spirituality and new expressions of their faith, listening to God's heart for his world, embracing a commitment to live openly among unbelievers, seeking the Kingdom of God in the Streets were all themes explored throughout the week which drew many people through the doors of the varied venues throughout the village.

Worship, use of the daily Office, a liturgy for Poynton, retreats, establishing of a prayer garden and labyrinth, teaching, prayer walking, workshops on intercession, dance, storytelling, art and drama all featured in the programme.

It was a great privilege to serve in a context that was genuinely exploring *church without walls* and the friends made, the touches of God evidenced were a joy to witness as God met with people often in the ordinary and everyday experiences of life which was the theme of the week's teaching seminars.

Of the many stories, some of which were recorded in the Poynton Church Memory Book that we created on the final Sunday's gathering, is the experience of a man who awakened to the call of God in the story of Aidan's call and felt that he too must follow his heart. Throwing caution to the wind: faith, risk and adventure led him within the week to book the last seat available on a flight out to New York from Manchester on the eve of Christmas to visit, pray and be with the people at Ground Zero, the sight of devastation following the collapse of the World Trade centre on September 11th. Pray for Michael as he journeys alone and uncertain of where he'll stay, who he'll meet but sure in the knowledge that as he follows his heart in obedience to God's inner call, that provision, purpose and peace will accompany him.

Another notable memory was that of the final night when everyone gathered as *the Church in Poynton* and welcomed, affirmed one another, worshipped, prayed, ministered to one another and partook so freely of the different environment and worship experience in healing, prayer, intercession, memory, intention and reconciliation zones were created in the parish church by the Community team now numbering several Poynton folk who had become good friends through the week. Memories of disillusioned believers returning to faith, unbelievers being a part of the week's activities all evidenced a breaking down of the walls between the church and the local community.

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As a team we left, many exhausted but encouraged, to travel back to our homes, some through the night hours, leaving behind a 'community' of believers conscious of the Lord's grace and goodness as they witnessed the building of His kingdom in and through His people.

Reflections from the inside ...

Carolyn, who together with Claire and Jean coordinated the week, writes...

Poynton has a rich heritage of different streams of Christian spirituality and life for which we thank God. For some time we have felt the Lord really bringing together and refreshing these within the Church in Poynton. Our desire is to see the streams come together in a river of God's love, truth and light pouring out through the streets of Poynton and way beyond. We have been working towards that aim for some time and the visit of the Northumbria Community came at a significant time. The visit has helped us on the road of understanding and made visible the truth that we are all one in Christ, but in that marvelous, mysterious way that only Christ can do, to be one in a way that gives us the freedom to maintain and develop our own uniqueness and identity. People were challenged and helped both in their own personal faith and journey with the Lord and together as part of His Body here in Poynton. Some received healing, calling, understanding, encouragement, refreshment, insight and challenge.

Please pray for us as we need to press

on into deeper relationships and that greater sense of belonging to one another. To truly "be" rather than to just "do" things together.

For us there is an immediate challenge. Last week 1000 people were made redundant from British Aerospace, many from Poynton. We need to respond with both compassion and wisdom. Thank you for all that you shared and contributed. We hope that we were able to share something of value with you too.

St. Cuthbert's Centre

Jeff Sutherland of North Sunderland

We continue to ponder the possibilities for the former St. Cuthbert's church building in North Sunderland (Seahouses), which is available to us to develop into some kind of Arts or Education centre. Community Council members spent a morning there during a recent Council weekend, to see the possibilities for themselves, and many found that the visit stirred in them feelings of anticipation....

We are planning a weekend at Nether Springs next year, when anyone who has any degree of interest, excitement or even mild curiosity about the potential development of St Cuthbert's can come together for a weekend of brainstorming, talking, thinking and praying – so that we might begin to pull different ideas together and plot a way forward.

The weekend is planned for **Fri – Sun 19th – 21st April 2002**. If you would like to come, please book yourself in through the Community office. There will also be plenty of time to walk, rest and generally chill out!

X f!i bwf!dpnflup!X pstijq!! jn!



Di sjtu!ui f!ofx!cpso!L joh!

The Telling Place looks to the future

- and gets on with telling and hearing the stories

Susie Minto of Hetton Lodge

In the last week of November, the Telling Place full time staff based at the Nether Springs and at Bible Society's HQ in Swindon barely had time to catch their breath because of two important events back to back. One was a forum for people who have been closely connected with the initiative since its inception to share their dreams and ideas for the future, to help shape the Telling Place for years to come. The second was the annual gathering which gives people from the network a chance to meet each other and to continue to learn about storytelling.

The enormous growth in interest in the Telling Place – now nearing the end of its fourth year – was the spur for the forum. A lot has been achieved in a few years by a small team of paid staff – a lot more could be achieved in the future by empowering the many gifted people who have found that storytelling is an important part of their life, work and expression.

It was felt at the outset that the aims of the initiative need to be reviewed as a first step towards thinking about the future. Also, listening to the story of how the Scottish Storytelling Centre has grown up – it is 10 years older than our initiative – provided some good seed for thought about how the Telling Place might meet the demands for training and support.

It was more of a time for questions than answers but there was a refreshing sense of interest and involvement from the group and it was agreed that they should meet again in January to continue the process of discussion and brainstorming.

There are now 700 people associated with the Telling Place, ranging from general interest to those pursuing specific storytelling development, and what is seen as crucial for the future is to lift as many as want to from being a name on a database to being an active participant in a thriving network with as many expressions of itself as people in it.

Well, there was hardly time for the car engines to cool down between getting back to Nether Springs at the end of the Forum and – hardly a couple of hours later – heading on to Ford Castle armed with books for sale, folders full of notes for guests and an ample supply of lanterns and materials to get the castle ready for the beginning of the gathering.

For the second year, the imposing 13th century Ford Castle – just a short drive from Nether Springs – was the location for a get-

together of people from the Telling Place network. Each time, the event has been given the name 'Winter Lanterns' and so the theme of the decorated castle and grounds has been one of light – with candles, flares, special lighting effects and this year 'invisible angels' welcoming people into each room.

This time the programme was adult only with a theme of 'going deeper'. We invited master biblical storyteller Dennis Dewey from the US to be the main teacher over the weekend whilst the programme was shared also by Shonaleigh, a traditional Jewish storyteller who lives in Sheffield. The two tellers complemented well each other's style and all 70 guests felt enriched from the experience.

The Daily Office of the Community are always part of any Telling Place event and throughout the weekend we had the use of a beautiful little Anglican church at edge of the castle grounds. At the other end of the musical spectrum, we enjoyed the richness of a traditional Scottish dance band for an evening of reels and jigs to dance off the effects of big meals and hours of sitting listening to stories.

The gathering marked the end of a fairly busy programme during 2001 which has also seen two week-long schools for beginners to storytelling, a variety of workshops around the country – some as stand-alone and others in collaboration with conferences and festivals - and our own attendance at mainstream storytelling festivals as well as some courses and training. As with the growing interest in the Community in general due to continued involvement in Spring Harvest, the Telling Place has been reaping a following from there too – packed out workshops have stirred people's imaginations about the uses of storytelling and resulted in a demand for information, books, training, experience, events to go to...

There is no doubt that the wave of interest in storytelling is still growing in this country and the Telling Place's contribution is at a very early stage. There are many, many areas in which the network could become involved but the decisions for the future will require a sensitive listening to God and to the voices of those from the network who have a heart for our growth, so that we make good decisions about what we can do and that we let go of the things that we cannot do, for whatever reason.

Thinking Creatively

Jonathan Roe of Hull

Speaking to some Community people recently we discussed the possibility of setting up a way of talking, praying and acting about issues raised by an understanding of God as creator. Celtic spirituality has implicitly, some would say culturally, an understanding of God as creator, humans as creatures and the rest of creation being a icon through which we see God. Following on from this are myriad questions about how we pray using the creation, and how we live in the Creator's world.

I am keen to network anyone with similar interests who would like to be part of an enquiry group via email. If you want to enter the discussion then please email Jonathan Roe at johnty@roe.karoo.co.uk.

Wisdom to live by

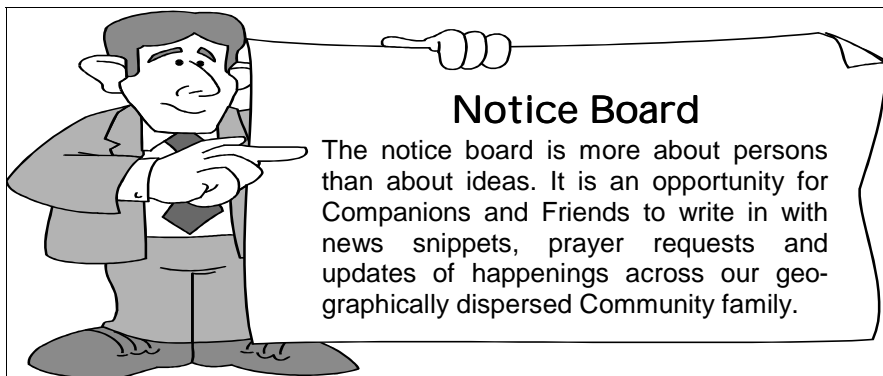
The Water Carrier and His Pots

Every day the water carrier filled two pots with water and then walked along the path to the village. The pot on the right side, as the Indian fable goes, was shiny and new. The pot on the left was old and cracked.

On the way, the damaged pot on the left side always leaked. By the time the water carrier got to the village, so much water had leaked out that it was hard to balance the load. This made the old pot very sad.

Day after day, the water carrier filled both pots and walked to the village. He always struggled a bit at the end with the uneven weight across his shoulders. Finally the damaged pot said to the water carrier, "Why do you continue to use me? I'm cracked and dented. I lose half of the water before you get to the village. I am worthless!"

"I know your imperfections," the water carrier said gently to the damaged pot. "But I can use you just the way you are." "Have you noticed the left side of the pathway to the village?" the water carrier continued. "Do you see all the beautiful flowers blooming there? Every day I use the leaking water from your cracks to water those flowers on the side of the path. Everyone who visits the village remarks on the lovely flowers. From your imperfections I have made something wonderful. Even with your imperfections I can use you."



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 geographically dispersed Community family.

The **Prayer Guide** Team meet together in January to compile the next issue. Please send in your requests for inclusion to **Celia McNicholas** by email: mac@barst.demon.co.uk or to the Community Office by Wednesday 16th January.

Building Bridges We have recently agreed to being involved in the next exploratory stage of the Building Bridges Initiative details of which will be reported on in the next edition of *CAIM*.

Community Trust in America Trustees have been appointed and an application has been submitted to the American authorities to enable Companions and Friends in the States to support the life and work of the Community.

Pursuing God, Mainstream Leaders Conference, Monday 14-Wednesday 16th January at Swanwick. Both Roy and Trevor are speaking at this year's conference. Primarily for Baptists, it is open to all who are in church leadership and who would value exploring the theme of seeking God.

Spring Harvest Once again there will be a Community team leading the worship for weeks 2 and 3 at Skegness, Thursday 28th March – Sunday 7th April.

Continue to pray and remember **Roy Searle** who is undergoing extensive treatment to alleviate the problems that have arisen as a result of a damaged joint in his back. The long-term sports injury has caught up with him and caused considerable problems for him throughout this year.

Remember also **Roger Green** of Bedlington and **Miriam Sayer** of Hobart who are battling with cancer, and both **Sheila Leonard** and **Theo Clementson** from Newton Aycliffe have recently suffered heart abnormalities. Sheila is on a waiting list for surgery.

Mindful of the tragic death of Clare Grimley earlier this year let's remember particularly her family at this time as they face a Christmas still grieving her loss. Several others in the Community have lost loved ones this year and we hold them in our hearts as they grieve.

Congratulations and our prayers of blessing upon **Ben Searle** and his fiancé **Judith Smyth** who are getting married on Saturday 22nd December in Belfast. *May the saints and Saviour watch over you.*

Congratulations to **Toddy and Liz Hoare** [nee Culling] and the birth of their first born son Felix. Also to **Jonathan and Jan Sambrook** on the birth of Megan Elsa who weighed in at 7lb 15ozs on 4th November.

Neil Crosbie moves on from his leadership of Bible Society this month and takes up his new appointment as General Secretary of the United Bible Societies in February. Pray for him, Chris and the family in the new chapter they are about to embark upon.

Louise Knight of Brockley is off to Australia early in January. Please keep her in your prayers. And writing from Lakes Entrance in Australia **Bill and Louise Whitfield** send these greetings to the Community: Our dear friends. Our hearts and minds are very much with you from across the other side of the world. As the years pass this heart connection becomes even more precious and real. So we send our love and best wishes for a great celebration this Christmas. May the warmth and wildness of God's love be with you all.

Jonathan Roe of Hull is leaving teaching to take up a creative post working for Hull Diocese in Faith and Education in January.

Congratulations to **Norman and Norma Charlton** of Gateshead who have become proud grandparents as their daughter Catherine has recently given birth to a baby girl, Emily Jane.

Amund and Pamela Karner have recently moved from Aberdeen. Their new address is Hillside Cottage, Waughton Place, Johnshaven, near Montrose DD10 0HH

To the ends of the earth...

Work has started on a new Community CD, which we hope will be available in the Spring next year. We are exploring the importance of PLACE in the life and development of our Community, and so it will include songs, music, readings, prayers and liturgies inspired by particular places. The list is still being developed, so if there is a place you'd like to

Building the new on Foundations of Old - Easter Workshop 2002

This is to be the theme of the annual gathering of Community Companions and Friends at Easter workshop this coming year. Based at the Nether Springs it will be held from Maundy Thursday March 28th to Easter Monday April 1st 2002 inclusive. Accommodation at the Nether Springs is limited and therefore will be on a first come first served basis, already people have booked in, so if you planning to attend and wish to stay at the Nether Springs, you will need to book early and so avoid disappointment. Subsidised costs are £75 per person full board for the five days and four nights. Children under 12 free.

Programme around the monastic day:-
Building the new on Foundations of Old

Maundy Thursday 28th March

Arrive after 4pm for Dinner at 6pm
Introduction/Eucharist/Foot washing

Good Friday 29th March

Teaching/Pilgrimage/Shabbat meal

Easter Saturday 30th March

Teaching/Pilgrimage/Easter Vigil

Easter Sunday 31st March

Holy Island/High Praises/Informal Concert

Easter Monday 1st April

Breakfast/tidy up/depart before lunch

Further details will be included in the next edition of *CAIM*.



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The Northumbria Community Trust Ltd IPS no 28305R - an exempt Charity Reg. in England & Wales

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DESIGN & LAYOUT
Really Naff Productions