



CAIM

Issue no 31
Winter 2004

The Northumbria Community Newsletter

Centring



Prayer

This is a simple but proven method of entering into contemplative prayer, the Prayer of Quiet. The name apparently is inspired by Thomas Merton who often stressed in his writings that the only way to come into contact with the living God is to go to one's centre and from there pass into God. Drawn from the ancient prayer practises of the Desert Fathers and the monastic *Lectio Divina*, it is the method taught by St John of the Cross, St Teresa of Avila and the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* and which re-emerged in the 1970's largely due to three Trappist monks from St Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts. Thomas Keating, Basil Pennington and William Menninger who wanted to bring this monastic practise to ordinary Christians in everyday life.

Posture

This is a big deal for some and some of the Eastern methods require the skills of a contortionist and unless long practised are not generally helpful and in fact can be a hindrance. The best posture is one that is relatively comfortable and supportive which makes the body relaxed, so as not to be constantly thinking about it. In other words, a good comfortable chair. The Cloud says 'simply sit relaxed and quiet...'

When Jesus said in Matt 11:28 'Come to me all who labour under heavy burdens and I will refresh you and give you rest' he meant the whole person, body, soul and spirit. The body can't be refreshed if it is tense physically.

Settling down in the chair, letting go and letting the chair take all the weight of our body is symbolic of what is taking place in our prayer. In centring prayer we settle in God, let ourselves go, casting all our cares upon him and let him support and take the weight of our selves so that he can bring us rest and refresh us. The chair becomes sacramental.

We find a quiet place, try to eliminate outside distractions and begin by closing our eyes. When we do this half the world disappears because we think most of what we see. Slowly let go of all your preoccupations. If you can find a corner of a room with a candle, icon, open Bible as a shrine dedicated to God, it can be a great help.



Three Rules

1] Be in faith and love to God who dwells at the centre of your being.

At the beginning of the prayer we take a moment or two to quieten our hearts before God. Then in silence we move in faith to God who dwells in the depths of our inner being. As the Cloud puts it 'Centre all your attention and desire on Him and let this be the sole concern of your mind and heart.'

We are moving in faith, hope and love to the centre where we are 'filled with all the fullness of God, where 'Christ dwells in our hearts by faith', turning ourselves over to God in simply 'being there.' This is the sum of this simple method of prayer – to

(Continued on page 2)



Inside this issue:

| | |
|--|----|
| Leftovers or Firstfruits?... A personal reflection on tithing by Andy Raine | 2 |
| Other Holy Islands... A challenge to find God "on the edges" | 3 |
| By Mynedd Anelog... St Patrick and a walk in Wales inspire a poem | 4 |
| IN:sight... An opportunity to get to know the leaders and trustees of Community a bit better | 4 |
| Update on Estate Matters... Fire alarm, the tower and moving house | 6 |
| Encouraging Spiritual Formation... "Living what we teach, teaching what we live" | 6 |
| An Increased and Stable Support Base... Can you help fulfil this dream? | 7 |
| How Then Shall We Live - experiences of a dispersed Community... Comings and goings between Nether Springs and Netherlands | 8 |
| Book Reviews... A Churchless Faith and Journeying in Faith, by Alan Jamieson Read, think, pray, live by Tony Jones | 11 |
| Bits and Pieces... Dates, resources, things to do... | 12 |

(Continued from page 1)

enable us to rest and be refreshed by contact with the Source at the Centre.

2] Take a love word and let it be gently present, supporting your being to God in faith filled love.

After resting quietly in 'being there', we take up a single, simple word that expresses for us our response to God and begin to let it repeat itself within. This slows down the normal flow of thoughts. This word is very important and we need to choose a word that is meaningful for us, which means it will be different for each person. It will be a word that effortlessly enables us to rest in faith in God's presence. The Cloud says 'gather all your desire into one simple word... fix it in your mind so that it will remain there, come what may... let this little word represent to you God in all His fullness and nothing less ...let nothing but God hold sway in your mind and heart' It can be Father, Jesus, peace, love, grace, hope, maranatha. The secret is in the effortless, nothing forced. We are quite passive. It is God within summoning our response to His love and grace. 'The word will be your defence in conflict and in peace.'

3] Whenever you become aware of anything, simply and gently return to the Lord with the use of the prayer word.

Whenever in the course of the prayer we become aware of anything else, we simply, gently return to the prayer word. We will do this continually, especially as we begin this method because we are not able to flick a switch and turn off our minds and imaginations in an instance. Daily cares, current problems are a constant distraction. We are trying to go deeper than the thoughts and images offered by the mind and the imagination. But at times they muscle in on us, attach themselves to our emotions. It is when we become aware of these things, that we are dwelling on them, preoccupied with them that we must gently, simply return to our prayer word which is associated with 'being there' for God alone. For this reason we must not constantly change the word.

The root of prayer is interior silence, solitude, going to your cell. Evagrius said 'prayer is the laying aside of thoughts' not absence of thoughts but detachment from them. We let go whatever is there, we do not deny or repress what is in our consciousness, we accept it, acknowledge it but go beyond it by deliberately letting go. 'Prayer is the raising of our mind and heart to God' but it is not 'we' who do the raising, it is the work of the Spirit. Rom 8:26. In centring prayer we offer ourselves, who we are, what we are, to God. Contemplative prayer is more of intention than attention.

So when we speak of centring prayer, we're not just speaking about centring our attention but centring on God within, at the centre of our being, in faith, leaving behind the mass of surface attention. We seek to develop spiritual attentiveness. **Trevor Miller**

LEFTOVERS OR FIRST FRUITS? ...a personal reflection



Everything we have comes from God, and when we lay aside the first fruits of it and yield them back to Him we are acknowledging our dependency on Him for all of it.

'It would be a poor labourer indeed that did not wish to offer back amidst all that broken gold a tithe or even a hundredth into the hands that formed the original fecund dust.' (George Mackay Brown, "Magnus")



Tithing is simply to give the first 10% of all our income to God in token that it is His by right, and the rest is also at His disposal if required. To withhold that 10% is to cheat or steal! Some say 'I can't afford to tithe', but those who have trusted in God over the years will often say 'I can't afford not to tithe.'

The Israelites were to bring first fruits of each harvest to God and an ongoing tenth of all they brought in was set aside, too. It may be objected that tithing is an Old Testament commandment and should not be binding on us as believers. But the New Testament principles would be even more stringent. Not to withhold what we have if our brother is in need or even to stop each Sunday and see what increase there is since last week, then give all the surplus! (Some weeks that would be a surplus of bills, admittedly!)

How should that giving be apportioned or where should a tithe be directed?

Some allocate it unhesitatingly for the upkeep of their church and its staff, others to the support of missionaries or relief-agencies. Regular giving can sometimes be increased in practice too by covenanting or Gift Aid. We have found it helpful to reserve at least a proportion of our tithed income as 'floating tithe' to be given when directed whenever an appeal is made to us or God highlights a need or destination. Sometimes it has

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)



opportunity to accumulate into substantial sums by then (already laid aside as "God's money"). A labelled jam jar for cash and a designated bank account may be helpful in administrating this.

It is a great encouragement to hear that the sum you send someone is exactly what they needed or that it arrived at just the right time.

This is NOT a plea for everyone to start tithing to the Community, as the cynics amongst us may suspect, but a challenge to consider giving at least that first 10% back to GOD wherever He directs its allocation, and to watch the blessings multiply. **Andy Raine**

I Corinthians 16: 1-2, 1 John 3: 17-22, Malachi 3:6-10, Leviticus 23:22, Numbers 18:21-29

OTHER HOLY ISLANDS

I imagine most of us are familiar (even if we have never actually visited it) with the Holy Island of Lindisfarne. But did you know that this is not the only Holy Island in Britain? There is also one in Scotland (off the east coast of the isle of Arran – it has been taken over as a Peace Centre by Tibetan Buddhists!) and another in Wales (the island forming the western part of Anglesey where Holyhead is situated). So Lindisfarne was not the only island that Celtic monks made into a base for their mission work – close to the people, but where they could easily withdraw to be apart.

I am one of the fortunate people who can look out from their garden and see right over one of these 'holy islands' (Lindisfarne in my case). Sometimes, sitting in my summer house enjoying the evening light playing over the island, it almost feels as though one can expect to see Aidan or Cuthbert, or another of the monks, walking over the fields on their way from their base to preach and talk to the Northumbrians.



In the summer of 2003 our family spent a week in the Orkney islands – partly because that's where our family originates from and we had long wanted to explore our roots all together. We spent a day on the island of Rousay, where our forebears had lived and farmed until 150 years ago. In the area where they lived there is a 5000 year old Neolithic burial chamber 100ft long; an iron age broch (fortified house) with thick round walls still standing about 9ft high; a Pictish and Viking burial site in which was found rich grave goods (boat burials and Celtic brooches from Ireland); the foundations of a medieval banqueting hall, indicating that a substantial manor stood there once; the ruins of a 16th-century church and farmhouses; and a modern farm. How long had my forebears lived in this place?

As we looked out over the Sound of Rousay, from where my family had worked the land, towards the Mainland of Orkney we found ourselves looking at a peaceful uninhabited island called Eynhallow. Imagine our delight and surprise when we realised from the guidebook that Eynhallow in Old Norse means 'Holy Island'. On this island stands a derelict farmhouse that was discovered to be built from the walls of a 12th century monastery. In all likelihood, that monastery building stands on the site of an earlier foundation – perhaps by Celtic monks as they worked among the Picts who inhabited the islands before the arrival of the Vikings, whose raids and settlement began about the beginning of the 9th century.



There are not a lot of hard facts about how Christianity came to the Northern Isles, but it was clearly well-established by the time of the Vikings. Adomnan's *Life of Columba* records a journey Columba made to visit Bridei, King of the Picts, near Inverness about the year 555; and monks from Iona must have been active throughout the Pictish world. Given the existence of Christian monastic and church sites on small islands and 'broughs' (headlands cut off from the mainland except at low tide) all around the Orkneys (Birsay, Deerness, Papa Westray, Papa Stronsay, etc), the likelihood is that they were first established by Celtic monks.

There seem to have been links with Northumbria too. St Boniface (not the same one as Boniface of Crediton who carried Christianity to Germany) is believed to have been sent to the Picts from Northumbria by Abbot Ceolfrith in the 8th century and established 150 churches (one of which is on Papa Westray in Orkney).

So what can we learn from all this? (Apart from the fact that I, like my forebears, look out over a Holy Island!).

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

I believe it helps us to understand better the commitment and courage of those who brought the Christian faith to the furthest parts of our land, establishing bases in places that were often inhospitable, but which allowed the right balance between action and contemplation. The part of that work in Northumbria, which we relate to so easily as a Community because of our geographical location, is, if we are prepared to look carefully, only a part of a much broader picture.

Today, the 'furthest parts of our land' are more likely to be within our teeming cities rather than on the edge of the Atlantic. How can we play our part in establishing more Holy Islands in the places where today they are most needed? **Ian Corsie**

By Mynedd Anelog *

I walk over the crest of the hill and suddenly – there it is!

The seething sea seizes at my emotions.
Churning, boiling, jostling, crashing waves
Doing violence to the old eternal rocks below.
Oh Holy Spirit, seethe in me I pray!
Like Patrick, let me not settle for the easy life.
Disturb me, flush me out of comfort,
Like the peregrine squawking from it's nest.
Blow on me Spirit of God like this battering wind
Sounding a thunderous drum beat in my ears.
Seethe, flush, blow and out with the old man –
Rush in with the new, with life and power!

David Pott

* Mynedd Anelog is a hill on the coast of the Llŷn Peninsular, in Wales, on the "Edge of Wales Walk". It is a good spot from which to view Bardsey Island (Ynys Enlli).

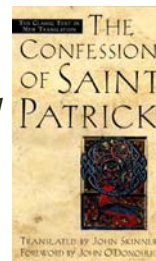


David writes:

Just before I wrote this poem, I had been reading about St Patrick and how, when he was looking after the sheep as a slave in Ireland, the Holy Spirit seethed in him.

"After I had arrived in Erie, I found myself pasturing flocks daily, and I times each day. love and fear of faith grew and my until I was praying every day - and in often. So that I the woods and on frost, and rain, first light. And I was I in any way

I now realize, the Spirit was seething within me." St. Patrick (from his Confession)



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



When Roy suggested that we run a series in Caim featuring either interviews or life stories of leaders and trustees I thought it'd be quite a quick job to cobble together a quick life précis. I was wrong! As I started to map out significant times and events I realised that it couldn't possibly be a short article – apart from the fact that I enjoy waffling on paper (a trait that may be dawning on you already), but that I've been journaling since I was 11 and the full collection is starting to look like a set of Encyclopaedia Britannica. So I sat, head in hands thinking where do I begin?

At this point I was inspired. "I'll pray about it, asking God what I should include and what to miss out."

As I looked up I saw the words of a song that Dave had written for me back in 2002 and a theme with which to narrow my story down was settled.

*"Constant as the mighty sea
you still believe in me."*

I was born in a suburb of Manchester in 1965. My family were not Christians though when I was four I was sent out with my brother to Sunday school every Sunday morning. Retrospectively, I believe we were not sent with our spiritual well being in mind! This Sunday school gave out books as rewards for attendance and I was given a version of the Christmas story that I still have today. I loved this book, and regularly and earnestly used the prayer at the back of it before I went to sleep at night. It was actually the words of a well-known carol,

*"Be near me Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay
close by me forever and love me I pray."*

(Continued on page 5)

As I spiral towards the big 40 next year I can look back and see how faithful God has been in answering that prayer in my un-churched upbringing, in my evangelical charismatic late teens and early 20s and my questioning, thinking transition into a person who loves God and does not have the answers. To illustrate my assuredness of Gods faithful answer to that childhood prayer I will tell you one significant time in each of those three life stages where I knew God was close by.

When I was thirteen I was a bit of a self-righteous misfit at school. I could see how my classmates needed to change, and work to improve themselves, and I was not afraid to give them my suggestions. I became isolated and the in "put down" amongst my year group was to call someone a "Wendy". In the end I became so despairing that I decided to kill myself after school and before my Mum got home from work. I set to on the paracetamol, and had my Dads whisky ready to wash them down with. However, I was up to about six pills when I was interrupted. The strange thing was that my dog, Gus had come upstairs and into my bedroom. Normally, if I wanted him upstairs I had to drag him, tail between his legs because he knew if my Dad caught him he'd be kicked downstairs. He never came up of his own free will, till this day. As he walked in, sat beside and put his head on my lap I melted. I could not abandon him and I promised him I would not kill myself till after he was gone. Gus saved my life – and I'm certain that God was involved with that.

At sixteen I entered my evangelical charismatic stage, and retrospectively I can see that my Mum was not being nasty when she said I had become obnoxious, just honest. This stage lasted till I was about 28 when I significantly mellowed, with black and white issues becoming grey, unhelpful doubts became faith building questions. This was brought into focus as I worked in one of the most deprived estates in Manchester with young people. The glib answers of my middle class faith were meaningless here, the cultural baggage of my faith actively alienated this group of people and I knew that since Jesus came for everyone, including these people there had to be another way of being church. This was why it was such a relief when I was introduced to the Northumbria Community in 1993. It was one of those "coming home moments". I was very conscious of God's involvement in those years, even though he felt far away at the same time.

One time that stands out to me is the time one of my trainee youth workers had her car stolen. Later some friends told us it was parked outside the house of a lad who had stolen it previously. He was a drug runner and known for carrying guns so we were naturally wary of just popping round and taking it back. Instead we popped to the local police station to see if someone could accompany us to retrieve it and they told us to go and wait near the car and they'd try to send someone along. No one came. Then the thief and his mate came out to get in the car and we knew that we had to get it or lose it. At that moment we shot off an arrow prayer for protection and stepped out from behind the wall into the view of the lads. They were half in the car by this time, but as we walked towards them they looked terrified and bolted. From their reaction we might've been a group of really hard guys, not two small female youth workers quaking in our shoes. To this day we have wondered what they actually saw, because there is no way they would've reacted to us like that. God or his messengers were definitely with us.

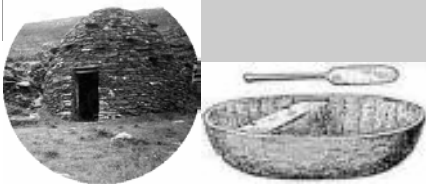
Finally, a more recent example: Me and Dave did not seem able to have a baby, then some friends on a church weekend offered to pray for us about it. This they did and Susannah was born 38 weeks later after a horrible pregnancy. Towards the end I developed pre-eclampsia and was admitted to hospital and prepared for an emergency delivery. Everyone got praying and my symptoms reversed – particularly my blood tests results and the Drs said I didn't have pre-eclampsia after all because it doesn't just go away once it's set in properly, but I think it did the impossible because God is close to me even when he feels far away. This is the fact I have clung onto this past year as I have struggled with post natal depression, and is the reason Dave's song sent me off on this train of thought. **Wendy Ward**

*Here with me I know you'll stay,
'Til the dark of night gives in to day;
In your arms I'll safely lie
'Til morning streaks the sky.*

*My hopes, my fears,
My dreams and plans
May wither, fade and die,
But I press on encouraged by
The love that's in your eyes.*

*When the world is cruel and causes pain,
And my noblest efforts seem in vain,
Constant as the mighty sea
You still believe in me.*

David Ward 2002.



Cell and Coracle

News of Mission and Monastery

Update on Estate matters

As I write towards the end of November, things are happening fast after a further round of negotiations brought a very positive response from Lilburn Estates in relation to all we had asked for in order to proceed to a conclusion. As you are aware this has been going on since a year past July when we first closed the Tower rooms at Nether Springs. It has been a long haul with lots of time and energy expended on its many related matters. It will be good to get it behind us. Relationally it has been good despite having to be firm and resolute over some matters that were initially potential stumbling blocks. As we approach an end to this particular chapter, I would have to say that our Landlord's have been very fair and helpful and in some areas have gone far beyond our expectations.



The Fire Alarm System and Emergency Lighting is now complete. The contractors have commissioned the new system and it has been up and running now for nearly two weeks. We have had no teething problems as yet and have already conducted our first tests of the system. Because of the major upheaval in the Hall that the installation has caused we have had to cancel further retreats but everyone has been helpful and very understanding of our situation. We have taken the opportunity while the upheaval is all around us to refresh and redecorate the Tower ready for re-use. I am very glad to say that the Tower is now re-opened and fully functioning.

I am also glad to report that all the outstanding work on the alternative accommodation offered in place of Hetton Hall Cottages has either been done or is getting done in the immediate future. This includes major work on the Lodge. Moreover, we are in the final processes of signing the new Leases for a] Hetton Hall and the Lodge, and b] Hetton Law and Hetton Steads, the new cottages for Norman and Ingrid and Bryony respectively. Norman and Ingrid and Bryony have already moved to their new homes, which are a huge improvement in size and condition to what they had previously but with no increase in rent.

As you can imagine it has been a traumatic time for all of us at the Hall, what with having a small team, trying to keep the retreat programme going and moving houses in the middle of it all. Yet as previously reported, although we are all knackered, the fact that we are finally working towards a closure of this particular chapter is a good feeling. Rob and Joanna have yet to move to the Lodge but this will be happening very soon. As you will appreciate it is a huge task and those directly involved would greatly appreciate your prayers for a smooth transition at this particular time.

Encouraging Spiritual Formation.

In order to begin to implement a plan for spiritual formation and training in the 'new monasticism' as a way of life, we have set up an important initiative as far as the Nether Springs is concerned. This is the introduction of a more informal programme geared especially to Companions and Friends entitled 'Living what we teach, teaching what we live'.

These retreats will span what would normally be to Thursday and Friday to Sunday of the same Companions to be part of the life and daily Community Companions (in the context of to respond to the prayer of Hild 'Show me the willing heart' and find greater ways of Companions in Community. This would also Companions and Friends to be able to short-term, so as to be 'schooled' in the



two periods of the programme, i.e. combining Monday week so as to provide a longer period for rhythm of our Mother House. In this way residency at the Nether Springs) could be helped right seat; find me the fitting task; give me the embracing and expressing their vocation as make it easier for more volunteers from come and live and work at the Mother House new Monastic way of life.

The content of these times together would be a healthy mix of the planned and the spontaneous with opportunity in the context of a safe place to pray and work, dialogue and dream, think heretical thoughts, ask questions, as we explore together what it means to be part of a geographically dispersed Community. We have scheduled five such weeks in the new programme and will be on a first come first served basis. The dates are all in 2005 and are as follows - January 3rd-9th, February 14th-20th, April 4th-10th, May 16th-22nd, and July 11th-17th. Please consider sharing in these times, as we believe they will make a major contribution to our understanding of being Alone/Together.



As from early January 2005 there is an urgent need for Companions and Friends to help with the practical day-to-day running of the Nether Springs. Can you help us for a weekend, a week, a fortnight or longer as the resident Team is now so small that we will be unable to maintain the continuous programme of retreats without such help.

We also require those who are able to explore an extended time as a Volunteer, perhaps joining the Monastery Team. The only requirement is a heart for God and a genuine desire to explore the 'new monastic' way which is at the heart of the Nether Springs. **If you are interested then contact the Community Office for more details.**

Needed – An Increased and Stable Support Base

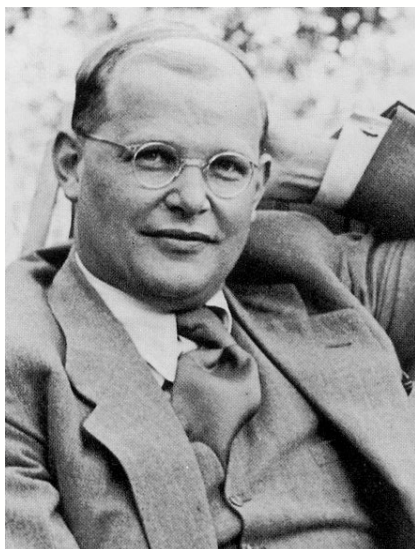
Since reporting in recent editions of CAIM the need for a greater sense of ownership especially among Community Companions and those friends who seek to support us, we are glad to be able to further report that the financial situation has continued to be maintained.

We are however, very aware that we are now in the leaner winter months that stretch to the end of February, when income from our Mother House is limited. We are so thankful and extremely grateful for those who have recently given one-off gifts, which have helped the current situation enormously, but we still need more Companions to translate their Yes to Community into regular giving month on month.

This would take the pressure off the Mother House of having the need to only focus on 'keeping food on the table for the many and a roof over our heads', which is a real distraction from our dream of it becoming more and more a 'school for the Lord's service', a training facility in the new monastic way of heart, home and hospitality. To be freed from this constant anxiety would enable us, for example, to radically adjust our programme to facilitate a more informal 'sharing the story, living the life' training in the 'new monasticism' as a way of life. We also want to be generous ourselves and reflect the heart of God in every aspect of our lives including finance and an increased and stable support base will be a very real help in enabling us to do this more freely.

A further example of this would be the opportunity to begin a bursary scheme so as to subsidise those Companions who find that the cost of coming to the Nether Springs is often prohibitive. As was reported in the last edition of CAIM, the vision of more and more Companions and Friends realising the 'our' of ownership and the 'we' of belonging is ever before us. It is, after all, our Community, our Mother House, and our Reason to Be.

We are covenanted together; we follow our Rule of Life, we are Companions in Community, alone and together. To see many more respond to our shared ownership and belonging is our hope and prayer. Can you help fulfil this dream?



"The renewal of the church will come from a new type of monasticism which only has in common with the old an uncompromising allegiance to the Sermon on the Mount. It is high time men and women banded together to do this."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

From a letter to his brother, Karl-Freidrich



HOW THEN SHALL WE LIVE

...experiences of a dispersed Community.



Comings and goings between Nether Springs and Netherlands...

We've recently been building a good relationship with a Community that run a Retreat House called De Spil (The Axis) in the Netherlands. Several members of De Spil have spent time at the Nether Springs, and some of us have been over there...



Home from Home! Reflections on a Dutch retreat

Three varieties of green beans, in three piles – a hot summers afternoon – a pleasant garden, chickens, and the Kapel (chapel).

I left the others to finish top and tailing the beans to blanch and cool those already done for the freezer. "Was this my pottering" or "work time"? I asked myself as I continued. Anke another guest raced off to get freezer bags and we were well away. In typical "Hetton" style bridges are built in the ordinary, as she and I shared some of our stories.

The Kapel at De Spil is situated at the far end of the garden. Inside, the wood floor is welcoming to your bare feet; prayerful music, plain interior, unusual cross depicting the feeding of the 5000, white walls, most of all a quiet sense of God. Victor and Tonny lead worship morning and evening. Lunch time is soup, "Mmh!" Hetton eat your heart out we've got competition. It had little meatballs in it too! The meal closed with reading a passage from a variety of Henri Nouwen books and a pause for thought – and then the washing up.

Brenda and I had no difficulty filling our time in: lounging in the warmth, reading (well Brenda was!) some heavy stuff on post "whatever" whilst I tried to discuss it intelligently with her, strolling by endless waterways, enjoying other people's colourful gardens, sunflowers some as tall as lampposts – yes, we did get to see the paintings in Amsterdam and travel the canals, but I should be telling you about De Spil (the Axis) retreat centre. We had a warm welcome, and the food was good, if a little different.

We climbed up an old twisty staircase to find ourselves on a landing with rooms off small corridors, (we made our own beds up) linen provided! What else can I say? Heart – home- hospitality it was all there, home from home. **Lorna Fisher**

De Spil (Dutch for spindle or axle) is for those people (young and old) who are looking for God, searching for themselves and looking for a way to live. People who are prepared to be stretched, to grow, to have their horizons expanded. Explorers. There's a saying in Dutch: "Niet-zoekers hebben hier niets te zoeken." A very free paraphrase might be: "Ostriches won't find anything to look for here." And that goes for Christian ostriches, too! It's something to think about.

You will find De Spil in the village of Giessenburg, not far from Rotterdam and Utrecht in the west of Holland. De Spil is a Christian centre, thoroughly ecumenical. It is a place of reflection where there is room to explore the big questions of life and faith. The centre has been established in an old "boerderij" – a typical Dutch farmhouse set in the midst of open polderland. We especially welcome midweek bookings from those coming from outside the Netherlands. With no fixed programme on offer, you are free to fill the days with your own activities. Or you might prefer to put together a planned programme of your own. (In that case you would need to come with a group of eight or more.) De Spil is not a monastic community but we do reserve regular times during the day for prayer. Our guests come for peace and quiet, to get their breath back. Some structure is provided by mealtimes, coffee breaks and morning and evening worship.

De Spil sleeps up to 15. There are bikes to borrow, and a boat to explore the waters of the Giessen.

Cost: under 25s: 20 Euros per person per day. Over 25s: 25 Euros per person per day

"De Spil is a real tonic for many visitors. For instance, many claim that they go away with a stronger sense of Christ's presence. But also that they can put to direct use whatever they have 'learned'. At De Spil we are keen to maintain the link between spirituality and action. Once again we would emphasise that during the midweek there is no requirement to make a retreat. Nothing is compulsory. There's scope for creative pursuits. Or why not take a cycle ride alongside the canal and seek out the little villages strung between the dykes?"

You can book by phoning or faxing:

Phone (00)31 184 652895 Fax (00)31 184 654619 E-mail: despil@retraitecentrum.nl Website: www.retraitecentrum.nl
Address: De Spil, Peursumseweg 57, 3381 KT Giessenburg, Holland



We've also been visited by Floor Vogelaar, who works with Youth With A Mission in The Netherlands...

EasyJet really helps to become a 'pilgrim'

Over the last year I have often wondered why I feel so much at home in the ethos and spiritual climate of the Northumbria Community. Has it something to do with history, with the place where I was born? That was in Dokkum, a small city in Friesland, in the North of Holland, where in 755 Boniface was martyred. It was him and Willibrord, the other great English missionary, who brought the Gospel to the Netherlands.



My first direct contact with people from the NC was in November 2003 in Bradford, during a Renovare conference. I was there with my son and some other Dutch friends. After the conference we went together to a Pakistani restaurant where we had a great time together with good food and good fellowship. I shared my heart with Roy Searle, Gayle-Anne Drury and others of the community. It's difficult to explain, but it was there, in that restaurant, that my heart connected on a deep level with the vision and spirituality of the NC. I realised that it was through vulnerable people and having time together. Yes, availability and vulnerability were the keys.

Let me tell something about myself. Since 1980 my wife Ada and I are working with Youth with a Mission (YWAM), mostly in the Netherlands (www.jmeo-arnhem.nl). During these years we have travelled with YWAM outreach teams to many places in the world. The last 12 years I also worked as a TV-producer for the Dutch Evangelical Broadcast (part of the public broadcast system), and made TV programs with a message. Right now we live in Arnhem, in the middle of the country. I give discipleship training and teaching in local churches, student groups and retreats (www.fvogelaar.nl). Yes, you are right, I'm a busy person.

And yet: with all these 'spiritual' activities there was always that question in my heart: 'How do I communicate the Gospel to people of other cultures and in an pagan society, in such a way that they will see Christ in me.'

In Bradford I bought Celtic Daily Prayer and began to use it in my daily time with the Lord. The focus on the balance between the 'cell' (the quietness, rhythm and reflection) and the 'coracle' (the outgoing, mission aspect) really touched me and put many things in another perspective. My starting point became more: 'My soul's desire is to see the face of God and rest in His House'. This principle from Psalm 27 has been the main theme of my preaching and teaching this year.

In June 2004 I went for the first time to the Nether Springs for a 'Quiet Waters' retreat and a Community Weekend. The rhythm of the prayer times, the peacefulness of the place and a growing understanding of the monastic vision of the NC, mostly through the talks by Trevor, connected me stronger to the NC. In September I flew again to Edinburgh, took the train to Berwick where Norman picked me up at the station. Through different circumstances he became that weekend my personal 'anam cara', a sort of spiritual guide. We had some very good times together, sharing from the depths of our heart.

Travelling to the Nether Springs is not always easy, but my way home wasn't easy either. At the airport in Edinburgh it became clear that somewhere in the EasyJet schedule a flight was cancelled. So I was stuck for many hours at that airport. And when I finally arrived at London Stansted, my connecting RyanAir flight was gone. So I 'slept' on a bench at the airport terminal and took the first flight out the next morning to mainland Europe.

Do you want to become a pilgrim?

Well, join the Northumbria Community and you will get firsthand experience. **Floor Vogelaar**
info@fvogelaar.nl



THE AXIS (Jesus is the pivot around which everything turns)

The 'Axis', or in Dutch 'De Spil', is a community house where we (Roy, Gayle-Anne and I) spent a few days in October at the invitation of a group of Dutch Christians.

Victor, Floor and Hans had first met the community in Bradford at the Renovaré conference in November 2003. They then visited Hetton to develop these relationships, inviting Roy to come and meet with Dutch church leaders and speak at a Renovaré conference in the small village of Giessenburg, Holland.

Roy and I had arranged to travel by ferry and car. Gale-Anne, already in Holland with family, had arranged to meet us at De Spil.

The ferry journey was rough. Nearly four hours with force 7/ 8 gales on the North Sea, from Harwich to the Hook of Holland. While sturdy seamen tucked into a good fry up, others kept their 'eyes on the horizon'. That and the Quells made for a fairly uneventful crossing, apart from the wonder of ship engineering in the form of the SS Stener, a huge twin hulled vessel which rode the storm without too much rolling. Despite the journey we all arrived safely on Monday evening to a hospitable welcome.

Victor van Heusden, with his wife Tonny, run De Spil as a retreat house, they are supported by a group of Christians from many different traditions – Reformed, Dutch reformed, Catholic, (PKN)Protestant Churches of the Netherlands, Baptist – mostly church leaders all with a heart for deepening the faith within their country.

Victor has been inspirational in Holland working with Youth for Christ in arranging youth conferences. He now seeks a more contemplative life, encouraging other Christians and seekers to deepen their relationship with Christ through spiritual growth.

A rhythm of life has developed at De Spil, where prayers are said and sung in the chapel in both the morning and evening – using Taizé chants to focus hearts and minds. There are many similarities to our own community life and rhythm here, including questions about community and Victor's sense of calling to form community at De Spil. The chapel is a place of peace at the bottom of Victor's garden. He leaves the door unlocked at all times and encourages his neighbours to visit and pray whenever they can (there is a bell over the door surrounded by Celtic knotwork carvings).

On Tuesday we met with church leaders in an informal gathering, sharing our stories and listening to some of the struggles of church leadership in Holland. That strange sense of how small the world is became very real as we shared, with many similar frustrations. One pastor explained that the question mostly asked in churches was not 'how many baptisms' but 'how are you getting on with Rick Warren's *40 Days of Purpose*? This was emphasised again the next day when we prayed in the local church and at the front were the shoe boxes all ready for the 'Christmas Child' operation.

There is a great deal of searching going on, it seems, for spiritual growth in churches and individuals. The folk from De Spil have been greatly encouraged from their visit to Bradford and Hetton to explore the principles of Renovaré, particularly how they could be translated and implemented into Dutch culture.

While we were there we witnessed the launch of a new Bible translation – this received major media coverage on TV with one whole evening on a major network concentrating on the launch, with the Prime Minister, TV, sports and radio celebrities all reading from the Bible, as well as the Queen herself. Quite amazing!

During the sharing, the format of the conference the next day was discussed. It was decided that Floor would need to translate as Roy spoke about Renovaré. As it turned out, the translating worked well, Roy's message was delivered a little slower to enable Floor to translate and to enable some of the stories to be appreciated and the jokes to sink in. The thing about the Dutch language, being a Germanic based language, is that it is sort of understood 'backwards', so Floor had to wait for the punch line before translating the joke – the laughs are the same though!

The conference was attended by folk from other regions in Holland together with the church leaders. The discussions focused on how to apply Renovaré to Dutch culture and churches, after many questions, the conference agreed to explore the Renovaré vision and to use the spiritual formation workbook as a model for helping to deepen and develop the faith in Holland.

Was it somehow prophetic that in a land where there are physical 'streams of living water' everywhere we had been asked to come and talk about the 'spiritual streams' needed to water this country? **Paul Moore**

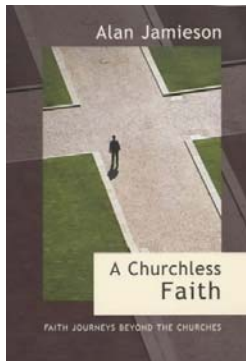


Book Reviews



***A Churchless Faith* and *Journeying in Faith* – Alan Jamieson. SPCK**

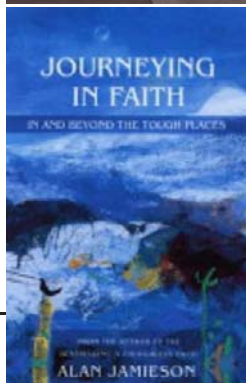
I cannot recommend these two books highly enough. Indeed I would say that they are a Godsend to us as they explain in a way I have not come across before a foremost part of the context for our 'Reason to Be' as a Community.



Here is an author with a very positive outlook, with no axe to grind and no need to be negatively critical but with a deep love for the Church, addressing the issues related to the many who now find themselves on a real journey of faith discovery but who are not attached to a local church expression for whatever reason. Hence the sub-title of the first book being, 'Faith journeys beyond the Churches'.

His assessment of the situation, using the real stories of real people who are allowed to speak for themselves makes fascinating and challenging reading. He is sympathetic, brutally honest and yet helpfully offers valid practical responses to how we can connect in Community, Alone and Together.

The second book, which takes up the themes in 'A Churchless Faith' is entitled 'Journeying in Faith', and like its predecessor is a must read for all who are interested in gaining a deeper understanding of the context of our 'Reason to Be' as a Community.



Taking the major themes of the Christian Faith he takes us on a journey 'in and beyond the tough places'. These include the experience of the desert and darkness, the understanding of Bible and Myth, the role of evangelism and Church and with pastoral sensitivity and great insight captures the essence of what we mean by 'building the new on foundations of old.' Neither of these books is an easy read but both will provide great reward for those who take the time to read and reflect on the vital issues raised. **Trevor Miller**

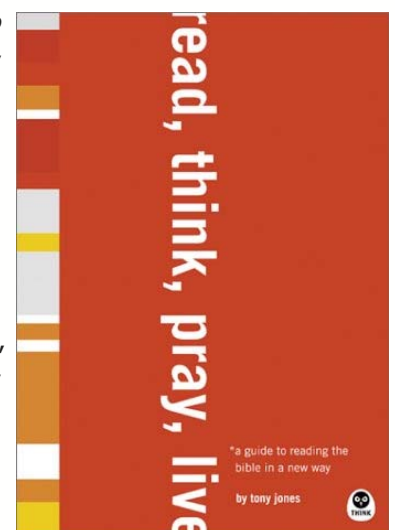
***read, think, pray, live* – Tony Jones. THINK Books an imprint of NavPress**

This is a simple book ("Ah, we see why you like it." I hear you say) about **Lectio Divina**, an ancient way of praying the scriptures. It's written, not by a monastic, vicar or saint, but by an American youth worker, who discovered that young people readily relate to this way of reading and praying the Bible.

A lot of the people I work with lead busy lives and don't have time to read weighty tomes...this book is a modest 154 pages, with some 25 pages given up to sample Lectio exercises. They also come from a church background much more like that of the author, which means they are less likely to allow prejudice to deter them from learning something from an ancient tradition.

The book leads us through the stages of the "Ladder with Four Rungs" (Guigo II, a Carthusian monk, writing about 1150): which Jones calls **read** (lectio in Latin), **think** (meditatio), **pray** (oratio) and **live** (contemplatio). He then journals examples of using Lectio Divina in his personal prayer and with two different groups of young people.

If you've never tried Lectio, why not have a go...I find it's a very helpful way of prayer that works for me...I've yet to try it with a group of young people. And if you want something a bit more "adult" on the subject, an internet search will throw up lots of possible books by authors like Michael Casey, Thelma Hall, Thomas Keating and Basil Pennington. However, if you're like me, **read, think, pray, live** is a good place to begin. **Dave Ward**





Bits And Pieces

Intercessors

If you wish to know more about how you can be part of this vital ministry, please telephone: **Norma Wise** of Newton Aycliffe on: 01325 312930.

Community Groups

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

Norma Charlton

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

Easter Workshop 2005

Thursday 24th
to Sunday 27th March

Easter Workshop will be held in Northumberland this year.

Keep the dates free...more details will be sent later.



The editors would like to thank all those who have contributed to this edition of CAIM. We apologise to anyone who's contribution has been missed due to lack of space.

**Issue 32
Spring 2005
The copy date
for this edition is
28th February 2005**

Pray on St. Patricks Day

Thursday 17th March 2005

I don't know if you've seen this new website www.prayonstpatricksday.com but if you haven't please do so, because there is a lot of good material there, especially on St Patrick himself and on places associated with him. **David Pott**



www.prayonstpatricksday.com



We are going to Ireland for the month of February, back early March, to the Saul area, staying at Ballydugan. We will be spending time with the folks there, "just being".

We will be grateful for prayer support, not only for our travel & physical well-being, but also for our discernment about what God is quietly bringing into being there - the situation is very delicate, & we want to be careful that we do not go "where angels fear to tread".

Gordon and Margaret Joice

Northern Cross 2005

Walk the paths trod by Aidan and Cuthbert next Easter.

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

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

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

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

www.northerncross.co.uk

or contact me, Chris Cobbold

by email: chris Cobbold72@hotmail.com

or phone: 0118 966 7355.



walk with northern cross

New Programme

The new programme of retreats for the Nether Springs covering the period of October 2004 through to July 2005 is now available from the Community Office.

One to highlight is the Community Group Leaders weekend from February 11th-13th. This is an important gathering for all Community Group Leaders, potential and actual. It is our hope that every group will be able to be represented as this will be an opportunity for radical re-evaluation in this important area of our Community life.

© CAIM is the official newsletter of the Northumbria Community.
Northumbria Community Trust, No: 1099503, a Registered Charity in England and Wales.

Nether Springs, Hetton Hall, Chatton, Northumberland NE66 5SD
Tel: 01289 388235 Fax: 01289 388510 email: office@northumbriacommunity.org

**Editors:
David & Wendy
Ward**

david.ward@northumbriacommunity.org

0161 442 7506