



# CAIM

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

*Spiritual Formation is an important aspect of the Community's life; we've asked Roy Searle to unpack this theme for us in forthcoming Caim articles, and here's his introduction to the series:*



**A New Year presents us with opportunities for resolutions. What might this mean for us as a Community as we continue to explore our 'new monastic' vocation this year? Our calling is one of intentional living. We aspire to embrace Availability and Vulnerability as a Way for Living - and this opens up the vital issue of Spiritual Formation which I want to explore with you.**

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**What is Spiritual Formation?** To be formed is to be shaped, established, and developed.

Spiritual formation is about being formed by Christ and being transformed by his grace and power. It's an ongoing Way for Living, leading

us toward *imitatio Christus*, the imitation of Christ, (see Galatians. 4:19, Romans. 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18). Spiritual formation is formation into Christlikeness. It's a way of life that intentionally roots us in Christ and expresses itself in discipleship. Spiritual Formation is *intentional* formation; we *intentionally* seek formation of a particular

**Spiritual formation is formation into Christlikeness. It's a way of life that intentionally roots us in Christ and expresses itself in discipleship.**



kind, which leads us in a particular direction, toward Christlikeness, e.g. love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, etc (see Galatians. 5:22-23).

**So how does Spiritual Formation find expression within the Northumbria Community?**

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*Norman Cumming is a man with his finger on the pulse, so we asked him to summarise for us the details of:*

## **Easter Workshop 2007**

### **'The Alternative Story'**

**Join together in the south-west of England before Easter, or in the north after Easter, for this year's Easter Workshop, exploring the theme: "The Alternative Story".**

Ivan Illich was once asked what is the most revolutionary way to change society – is it violent revolution or is it gradual reform? He replied: Neither. If you want to change, you need an alternative story.

In our Way For Living we have an alternative story. Easter Workshop gives us an annual opportunity to celebrate that story and to share new chapters which are being written. As we gather this year, we will be wrestling particularly with what it means to live as Christians in the public domain, turning the spotlight on one of our big three questions – 'How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?' - and underlining that part of our Rule which calls us to live as 'Church Without Walls.'

The workshop will include teaching, worship, creativity, sharing, praying and eating together. Above all it's a great opportunity simply to be community together – sharing one another's joys and sorrows as companions on the journey.

#### **IN THE SOUTH WEST OF ENGLAND**

**EXETER: Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> March**

**VENUE:** South Street Baptist Church, Exeter

**COST:** Donation

#### **IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND**

**HUDDERSFIELD:**

**Friday 13<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> April**

**VENUE:** The Westwood Christian Centre, near Huddersfield.

**ADVANCE BOOKING ESSENTIAL:** It is vital to book if you are planning to attend the Northern Workshop because places are limited by the size of the venue. This is essential even if you are sorting out your own accommodation or intending to join us as a day visitor!

**COST:** Suggested donation on application.

**ACCOMMODATION:** There is some accommodation available at the Westwood Christian Centre (details on application) or you can make your own arrangements.

Send an email to

**office@northumbriacommunity.org**

clearly indicating which Easter Workshop you're interested in, and Ellen will put you in touch with the right person!

There will, of course, be opportunity for renewal of vows on Holy Island on Easter Sunday, 8th April.

#### **Welcome.... to the Winter edition of Caim!**

Thanks to all those who took time to respond to the questions we posed about Caim, in the last edition. The clear message is that we like Caim pretty much the way it is! Thanks for the encouragement - it was really good to hear how important Caim is in keeping us 'in touch'.

There's a lot of thinking and planning around this theme of **communication** just now in Community. It's a vital part of our life 'together', and we're excited about some of the ideas for making Caim more effective in that area. Watch this space!

As this new year gets underway, we bring you sincere best wishes, that you may know the assurance and nearness of Christ - whether this section of the path you're on be bright, or difficult.

*Ian Corsie was inspired to tell us about this year's*  
**ADVENT ANTIPHON WALK TO  
HOLY ISLAND**

**I wonder how many Caim readers are aware of the 'Advent Antiphons'? This is a liturgy based around the different verses of the Advent hymn 'O come, O come, Immanuel'; you can find it in the Advent section of the Times and Seasons chapter in Celtic Daily Prayer.**

These are actually ancient prayers used in the days between December 17 and 23: powerful invocations of God as 'Wisdom', 'Adonai and leader of Israel', 'Stock of Jesse', 'Key of David and sceptre of Israel', 'Rising Sun', 'King' and 'Immanuel', inviting Him to come to save, deliver and lighten the darkness.

A tradition has emerged for an Antiphon Walk to take place across the Pilgrim Causeway to Holy Island on 17 December each year; and this year, because of the timing of the tides, it was necessary to begin the walk at 8 am. An intrepid group of early birds braved the cold morning and were rewarded with a spectacular walk as the sun rose in a blaze over Bamburgh Castle, scattering the darkness as we walked, prayed, sang, talked and meditated.

The Pilgrim Causeway is nearly 3 miles long and takes you straight across the sands. It is marked by poles and the long line is punctuated by two refuge boxes for anybody foolish enough to be cut off by the rising tide.



Parts of the way are firm sand; but there is a section of rather slimy mud in the middle; it is not a Sunday afternoon stroll! But the constantly-changing views and light, the immensity of the land and seascape, and the plaintive calls of the seabirds and waders all around are simply exhilarating.

The profound and eternal significance of the words, combined with the awareness of those who have trod this path before, seep deep into your bones and soul as an unforgettable curtain-raiser to the mystery of Christmas. Will you be there on 17 Dec next year?

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*I'm hoping that Caim can be distributed in time for this to be a very timely reminder:*

**Durham Gathering  
Saturday Jan 13th 2007**

**St. Oswald's Institute,  
Church St, Durham DH1 3DQ.**

The Gathering is a great opportunity to meet together for prayer and worship, to hear about current hot topics and reflect on them, and to get creative! Do try to be there if you live within striking distance.

We gather from 10.30am and will close at 4.00pm. Drinks provided, bring a packed lunch.

*And whilst we're on the subject of Gatherings...*

**A series of Community Gatherings** has been planned for 2007—and beyond! Exact details will be available later, but for now make sure you put the relevant dates in your diary! Here's the schedule:

**2007**

Jan 13<sup>th</sup> - Durham

May 12<sup>th</sup> - Sedburgh (Cumbria, just off the M6)

June 30<sup>th</sup> - Little Gidding (Cams)

Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup> - Birmingham

Dec 15<sup>th</sup> - Ireland

**2008**

January 12<sup>th</sup> - perhaps York?

March (date tbc) - London

*Continued from Page 1*

Well, it's one of the primary reasons for being who we are! It's linked to our *raison d'être* - our calling to seek God, to sing his song in a strange land and to explore what it means to live as believers in a changing culture.

It is important to us because it enables us to respond to Jesus' commandment, *to love the Lord our God with heart, soul, mind and strength and to love our neighbours as we love ourselves*, (Mark 12:30). Every time we say or sing the words of Morning Office, we are reminding ourselves of the monastic, *One Thing Necessary* ~ seeking God, with heart, soul, mind and strength. It's the first call upon our lives and a reminder that our desire or seeking God should govern and inform all other desires and seeking.



Spiritual Formation requires us to embrace the cell, that place of aloneness with God, that desert experience of exposure and encounter with God and self. It's a call to an inner journey, to survey the landscape of the heart (see Proverbs 4:23), to self awareness, emotional intelligence, facing our monsters, realising our passions, understanding what motivates, wounds, energises, gives life or damages us and others. It's the place of solitude, that *deep furnace of the soul* where it's tough but which produces in us the fruit of his Spirit which enables us to be the people God wants us to be, bearing the marks of his work in our lives in transforming our hearts and minds out of which comes grace, generosity, goodness, beauty and all that leads to the building not only of our relationship with God but with ourselves and others.

Spiritual Formation relates to our Community's Way for Living. It's a call to embrace a new monasticism, responding to that call of God which is realised in a lifestyle that resonates with Availability and Vulnerability, our intentional Rule of Life.

Spiritual Formation is about a journey that involves both being Alone and Together, the

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balance between solitude and community; a journey that continues to call us to seek God, to return to our first love of him; to repent of our waywardness, when like the Prodigal we've been in a 'far country' with its distractions, activism, prescribed and formulaic patterns of life; to renounce the clutter and the disorder of things that lead us away from the depth and simplicity of life that is to be found in God; to deliver us from the dominant influences of consumerism that saps life, damages relationships, deadens the soul and anaesthetises us from life's deeper realities; a way of living that shows us how to live with the values of the Kingdom of God.

The journey must embrace the cell and *aloneness*, but also *togetherness*, where we are encouraged to *fan into flame* the life God has given, to facilitate spiritual formation, to resource and model the life that God has called us to. It's a call to a Way of Life that is rooted in reality, allowing us to make mistakes and learn from them, and which values heart aspiration and intention more than image and marketing. There is value in mutual encouragement and accountability in our journeying together as fellow Companions and Friends, in Community Groups and at Gatherings. As an Overseer of the Community I long to see more Spiritual Formation at the heart of what we do in such contexts.

Spiritual formation is also a journey that requires *knowledge*. A key to vocational growth and development is **training**, and we are called to be *athleto deo*, God's athletes. Just as an athlete must train in order to run a race, so we who are seeking God and embracing Availability and Vulnerability must exercise and embrace the spiritual disciplines, (e.g. solitude and silence,



prayer, Scripture, retreat, confession, worship etc) in order to grow and develop. By drawing from the wells of spirituality, godly influences, life experiences and firm foundations gifted to the church and the Community, we have the means by which we can grow in our knowledge and love of God. There are no other means by which we can *train ourselves in godliness*, (1 Tim. 4:7). Without these Spiritual Disciplines there will be no Spiritual Formation, no growing in Availability and Vulnerability, no growth in Christlikeness.

It is *how we apply these disciplines* to our lives that we will be exploring in this forthcoming series of articles.



May our resolutions be focused on growing in our vocation, and may each Companion and Friend be transformed by the grace and love of God throughout this coming year.

*Netta Gibbs writes:*

**During an informal conversation at a recent Chapter weekend, we were thinking about possibilities for mission at music festivals, County shows and suchlike.**

We want to start by chatting with people who've already got a bit of experience, so if you have been involved in this sort of work, - whether by yourself, in a church group, Community group or whatever, - we'd like to get in touch.

Please contact me, Netta Gibbs, You can send a pm on the Community's forum, e-mail me [nettag@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:nettag@tiscali.co.uk), or write to me:

Netta Gibbs,  
13 Cottonmill Crescent,  
St Albans,  
Herts, AL1 1HW.

### **New from Cloisters**

**BLUE PENINSULA** by Madge McKeithen

Andy Raine's poem 'Walking with Grief' (included in 'In the Shadow of Death' section of Celtic Daily Prayer) has been an inspiration to many people far and wide who are going through the mill of sadness and loss. One of those it touched deeply was Madge McKeithen, a mother in America struggling with the pain of her son's mysterious degenerative illness. The poem began for her a quest for other poetry that might help her deal with the inexplicable - not

platitudes, but words that speak deep into the soul. Out of that quest has come this remarkable (hardback) book of the poetry she has collected and her meditations on what they mean to her. Here's a sample of her writing:  
*'Those Who Mean Well. Well-wishers. People in pain are often handed platitudes alongside the best intentions. In the face of searing pain and gaping loss, much can seem flat, stale. How much I need someone to know that the well is deep, that its substance is grief, that the water we drink is black, that when I am down there, I cannot breathe, and that I am*

*screaming, screaming that I had wanted something else. A well springs from groundwater. Groundwater connects in the water cycle to rain, dew, the sea. At the bottom of the well is connection. The wishes of the well-wishers, incomplete and imperfect, come from deep springs. They strain upward through layers of many-hued emotions and motivations. Each is an ultimately human expression, flawed, inadequate, incomplete. The groundwater, our commonality, may be in the wishing.'*  
This is a very appropriate book to give to a sensitive person struggling with loss and change.  
**ORDERCODE: BP £12.00**

*Trevor & Roy have been doing some thinking about the model of Leadership which can best serve us in Community. Even though it's still 'a work in progress' we asked Trev to share it more widely with us here:*

## What's in a name?



Shakespeare introduces us - through Juliet - to the familiar quote; 'What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet'. This was in relation to Romeo, whose family name and line meant their love for each other was doomed.

Juliet tells Romeo that a name is an artificial invention and she loves the person, not the name. We need to keep this principle in mind as we seek to describe the new Leadership framework for our Community! It is not so much the description as the reality being described that matters.

In earlier years we often used the terms 'Rag, tag and Bobtail' in house to describe Abbot, Bishop and Prior. Nowadays it would possibly be Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa and Maggie! The point being that it is the essence rather than the many expressions that matters, especially as this is still a 'work in progress'. We've tried hard to be true to our vocational expression and to reflect in the names our calling to embrace 'a new monasticism' as a Way of Life. This is why we are using monastic terms echoing our monastic heart as a Community.

Further, in a growing network the issues are complex and real. As leadership is a necessary function, we are constantly asking; how do we organise without the organisation becoming

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institutional? How do we accept the need for hierarchy without being hierarchical? How do we give authority without being authoritarian?

One response is to make available a more fluid leadership network of groupings rather than one fixed leadership team. This will provide a helpful combination of stability and continuity on one hand, with flexibility and adaptability on the other.

No one diagram can fully represent all aspects of

**Because our Community is organic and dynamic, it is uncomfortable with purely business and organisational structures.**

an organisation but in essence there are eight core elements and seven groupings – Oversight, Seniors, Provosts, Priors, Provincials, Trustees and General Chapter. Interconnected and interrelated they provide the new leadership framework for our networked Community. Because our Community is organic and dynamic, it is uncomfortable with purely business and organisational structures. This makes it difficult to depict the roles and responsibilities of leadership. George Lings helped us to see the value of 'network' and pointed out to us that body images rather than governmental images could better describe our life. In particular the Anglican term of 'Bishop in Synod' was very helpful. This is to say that we have oversight (Bishop) and this is respected and valued but the oversight is connected to others (in), and the search for togetherness (Synod) is a collective process. Synod = coming together. There is oversight within the togetherness which is a reflection of the Trinity where there is both interdependence and the Father's priority.

**OVERSIGHT** – Describing the function of Abbot and Bishop who are the executive Directors overseeing all aspects of the Community's life. Together they are in a seeing role as in 'episcopate' – over seeing, seeing over the big picture. Guarding the values and vision given to us by God.

At present the Abbot also acts as the *Economus*; the business and financial manager of the monastery and as such is the nearest equivalent to a CEO. This overseeing (supervision) provides a partnership and is a safeguard against individual power. It is a shared authority, with

mutual accountability in complementary roles. Abbot = guarding foundations, history, ethos. Anonymous, contemplative, a homemaker rooted in the monastery. Bishop = Establishing, building the new, an ambassador and apostle; a forager taking monastery on the road.

**SENIORS** – Comprised of Abbot and Bishop plus Provosts and Priors this is the senior management team who meet at least monthly; providing strategic and operational leadership in monastery, mission and community. This is the core hub of the leadership network.

John Ryan in 'Irish Monasticism' writes that 'The term senior is used in the sense that it bears in the Irish tradition (authority and the duty of obedience) and is common to the whole monastic

literature of the West, as may be seen from the works of Cassian, where it appears almost on every page'.

**PROVOSTS** – Describing the function of the Mission Leadership Team who work closely with the Bishop. The term means 'set over, to place in front of', or 'the head of a Cathedral Chapter' in Roman Catholic usage. However Celtic usage was of local but subordinate superiors. Provosts plan, organize and delegate and have authority to carry real leadership responsibilities in all aspects of Mission.

**PRIORS** – Describing the function of the Monastery Leadership Team who work closely with the Abbot. In terms of responsibility the Prior is 'secundus abbas' to serve 'in place of' the Abbot when he is not around. Priors are based at the Nether Springs as the core Monastery team and have authority to carry real leadership

responsibilities in all aspects of Monastery.

**PROVINCIALS** – A collective name describing the various functions of those who have specific areas of responsibility under the respective Seniors. They often carry responsibilities that have a leadership element but are not part of the core hub of Seniors. Historically the term means, 'the superior in charge of a province' and we use this term because we are seeking to describe those responsible for areas of Community life, either territorial or jurisdiction, as in 'prior provincial or bishop provincial'. For example overseeing

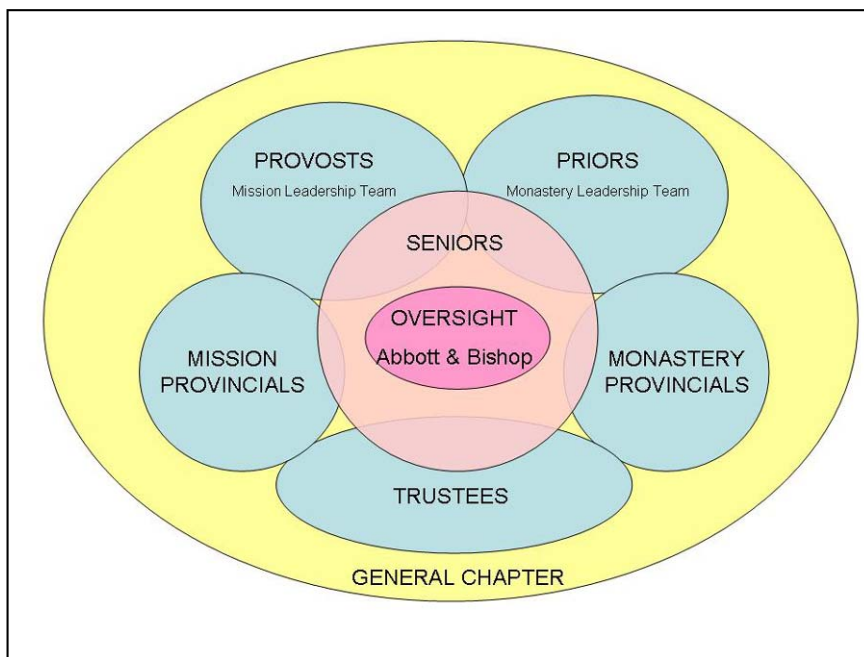
Gatherings or Community Groups or having a full time central ministry as ambassador at large.

**TRUSTEES** – Describing the function of those whose tasks include guarding our charitable objectives and ensuring the legal and financial

obligations are met according to charitable law. They meet Quarterly with the Oversight.

**GENERAL CHAPTER** – This is the collective term describing all the elements in the leadership network who gather quarterly along with a group of Invited Others from the wider Community who are subject proficient in the area under discussion. This gathering is consultative rather than executive as together they explore strategic issues identified by the Seniors.

All these Groupings are leadership in action and are committed to the process of sustaining monastery and supporting mission. All reflect being relational and organic as well as organisational. We need both! A case of varying the form of meeting within the network to suit the different needs of each group so as to enhance effectiveness; it's all about 'right seat, fitting task, willing heart'.





*We asked Diane Sekuloff in Canada to write her reflections on being in UK this past year, for two very different events! Here's her story:*

## **From NC and into all the world!**

**Last Easter season, I had the opportunity, nay privilege, of going over to Hetton Hall, and to work on a team at Spring Harvest in Skegness. It was a bit of a Dickensian experience – the best of times, the worst of times, for I came down with a dreadful cold and flu my third day in.**

I was well cared for – initially, at Hetton, by willing contributors of vitamin C, and meals in bed for a day – and then cared for by Jill and Jeff, and the rest of the team. It struck me that I had come to make myself available, and ended up being very vulnerable! Despite the disappointment of not being able to see my hero, Adrian Plass, speak on the first night of SH (I was shivering under my blanket in our chalet) – my lack of oomph became a blessing in disguise.



Being part of a creative worship team was such a treat. As we set up the venue day by day, I wondered aloud to Anita whether a Canadian audience would participate in some of the activities, as

they were rather inclined to think something was “naff” and run the other direction. Her thoughtful response was that many Brits also would think it was naff, but in creating the space for it, somehow they responded and found treasure in the doing. And so I soaked it all in – the decorations, the acts of symbolic journeying, the music, and most of all, just being in this loving, caring community of fellow travellers, extending hospitality, laughing, praying, and battling the apparently ubiquitous elements at Skegness!

Then there was Easter Workshop. Again, I experienced the accepting love that makes the community a unique family. Again creativity was allowed free rein (Raine?) as we made gardens, and wall hangings and dances, and braided cords, and

knots, prayers and friends. The power of being on Holy Island, worshipping where 1300 years of worship has been witnessed; watching the convergence of the Northern Cross pilgrimages as they entered the church bearing their decorated crosses; and then being part of this new thing which seeks to be faithful to the ways of old, dancing on the beach; baptism in a wet suit; it all spoke of life and health and the richness of the community of all believers. Finally, the ceilidh on Sunday night, where the gifts of young and old brought laughter, and aha’s, and affirmation, and joy. I thought; what a healthy place this is.

So, from that, how does one return home to Canada, and share such richness of experience? I belong to a small church community that was begun as a church plant, and



then laid waste by the machinations of the Anglican dilemma in Canada. Those who have stayed in our community love the Lord and desire to see our worship be real, and our witness be lively and faithful, but it often seems otherwise. So, I began in my fellowship group, involving them in looking at the readings for the Sunday, and finding creative ways of giving focus to the sanctuary. It has led to ladders and fishnets, rocks and shells, rivers, artwork, and even painting as part of the liturgy, and from other fellowship groups! With my music partner, I introduced some of the music from NC to our community, and found there was a real appreciation for some of the rhythms and melodies, as well as the meaningful words of the new tunes. Nick and Anita’s Kyrie has become a standard favourite – the first week we sang it, our priest, at the end said, “Well, I’ve had church today – let’s just go home now!” We have spent more time planning our music to really listen to God’s word for the community, and to seek for ways to gather in, succour our woundedness, revive our spirits, and send us forth ready to be the church in the world. And most important, we’ve begun to engage more with the world beyond our walls – befriending, encouraging, and loving in the spirit of God, and then, perhaps, speaking the story to hungry hearts.



*There's a distinctly European flavour to this page!  
First, there's more information about the*

## **Northumbrian Week in Prague**

**Sunday 11th to Sunday 18th March, 2007**



**A rich and significant partnership is developing with IBTS** (International Baptist Theological Seminary) in Prague. Just a few weeks ago, we welcomed four members of staff from the Seminary to Nether Springs, (see Lina's

comments on Page 11!) and we were able to do some planning for the 'Northumbrian Week' which Keith Jones, the Rector of the Seminary, has asked us to lead.

This will be a great opportunity for Companions and Friends to deepen the partnership, and experience a sharing of hearts and minds in another culture. The

week will consist of lectures, seminars and workshops with Roy, Trevor and others, together with input from the staff and students at IBTS. The pattern of each day will be built around the monastic rhythm with Offices, teaching and sharing, together with lots of time to relax and explore the delights of the beautiful city of Prague.

This is a great opportunity and we encourage you to join with us and the "Community" in Prague. Options and (per-person) costs for full-board accommodation in Hotel Jeneralka (part of the seminary complex) are:

**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> March (7 nights)**

twin or double room £300 / single £350

**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> to Friday 16<sup>th</sup> March (5 nights)**

twin or double room £210 / single £250

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> March (2 nights)**

twin or double room £90 / single £110

*(Please note these are the corrected prices!)*

Booked in advance there are some very cheap flights from several UK airports.

Email: [jean.watson@northumbriacommunity.org](mailto:jean.watson@northumbriacommunity.org) or call the office.

See you in The Czech Republic!

*Then there's news of something which our friends in Holland are hosting:*

**Retreat at De Spil in Holland from Friday 13<sup>th</sup> April to Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2007** called 'Brothers In Arms'. Led by Roy & Trevor. The cost will be £50 for the weekend, and it will be possible for folk to stay on at an additional cost of £25 per day.

*And then Ireland - well, that's in Europe too, isn't it?*

**'Work and Pray' Community Team,** Please do join us at Ballydugan in Northern Ireland to be part of 'Work and Pray' from **Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> January to Monday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2007.** The week will be hosted by Gordon & Margaret Joice, and the work will be supervised by Roy & Shirley Searle!

The programme will be a mixture of House Blessing (on St. Brigid's day!), work on gardens and grounds, a 'New Monasticism' workshop, and a Community Group meeting! The cost will be £70 to cover meals, accommodation in the beautiful cottages at Ballydugan, and transport in Ireland.

For further information, travel details, or to book a place on either trip, contact

**[jean.watson@northumbriacommunity.org](mailto:jean.watson@northumbriacommunity.org)** or

*The European theme continues over the page too...*

*Whilst we're doing this 'upcoming dates' thing, I'm reminded to let you know about this too:*

**Creative Arts Retreat** to be held at Ballydugan Cottages from **12<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> August, 2007** hosted by Nick & Anita Haigh. Again, more details from Jean!

Nancy Hammond and Jean Watson at  
**The Cuddy Duck**

have asked me to send a very big 'thank-you' to everyone who has helped and encouraged them in the early days of getting the shop up and running.

They've had all kinds of support from Community folk, and they have been really encouraged by the reception they have received from local people in Wooler at the opening of the shop.

If you'd like to receive the regular newsletter they are putting together, then send an email to:

**[thecuddyduck@btinternet.com](mailto:thecuddyduck@btinternet.com)** or write to them at 10 High St, Wooler, Northumberland NE71 6BY

*Here's more on that European theme...with news from Jane Perkins*

## **Easter Plans en France...**

**Just as the Mader-Graysons are catering for those South of the Tyne the Humber, the Trent and the Cam, (see last issue) so Jane and Andrew at L'Abri à Suvigny will be offering an opportunity for those South of the Thames, or even the Channel!**

In our first exploration of a Programme in Normandy this year, we anticipate a Tenebrae Service on Good Friday evening, some sort of meditational 'Stations of the Cross' type walk on the Saturday, and renewing of vows on Mont St Michel on Easter Sunday. The weekend will be grounded in the usual rhythm of the day, similar to Hetton Hall, with time for sight-seeing,

relaxing and FOOD! Accommodation can be rough (bring your own tent plus hottie and arctic fleece!), semi-rough (inside semi-renovated house with heaters), or civilised (in the local Hotel Relais de la Poste who doesn't charge over the odds, but INSISTS you have his breakfast – hostage style!)

We are happy for anyone to come and go as they please. For more details (or if you have any wonderful ideas to suggest) please email us: [a.perkins@ntlworld.com](mailto:a.perkins@ntlworld.com) or via the office.

## **Community Weekend**

Something else planned for around that time, is the visit of Roy Searle and Trevor Miller to L'Abri à Suvigny, when they will be conducting a Community Weekend Programme (but during the week rather than actually over a weekend!) This is to take place between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> April.

*Rosemary Burke, a Companion who lives in London, spent some time at Hetton this year. We asked her to tell us something about her journey...*

**2006 has been a year of transition for me. I started it working in London for the steel company, Corus, but with a strong sense that what I wanted to do was to work in the Third World. I finish it making preparations to go to Ethiopia for 6 months.**

In between has been "an adult gap year", which has been a time for spiritual reflection as well as investigating the possibilities for the rest of my life. In this the Community has played a surprisingly (to me) prominent role. Its images of journeying and adventure both in a geographical and spiritual

sense have been both challenging and supportive. In particular the Hild liturgy, that asks for the right place, the fitting task and the willing heart; and the Brendan material - "Have I the courage to leave the familiar and journey into the unknown? Christ of the mysteries can I trust you on the sea?"

In addition, I spent July and August on the House Team at the Nether Springs. And what a summer to spend there! Instead of suffocating in the London heat wave I could enjoy the wonderful scenery so often obscured by cloud and rain on previous visits. It gave me a very different perspective on the work required to run the house and to support those on retreat and gave me much needed practice on how to fit a spiritual rhythm into a working day. The constant flow of

people through the house was demanding but meant that



there were always some interesting characters about. It was good to meet members of the Community who had only been names up until now.

My plans after August 2007 are non-existent. I feel that I will come back from Ethiopia a different person and can only really return and reflect before deciding where to go and what to do next. Let the future commence!

Lina Andronoviene writes, on behalf of the IBTS staff who visited Hetton recently:

**At IBTS (International Baptist Theological Seminary), we have been enjoying building friendship with Northumbria Community now already for several years, always happy to welcome Northumbrian Friends and Companions at our campus in Prague.**

Sensing the next steps for developing our partnership, it was decided that four of us from IBTS would come to visit the Mother House before the Northumbrian Week in Prague (see page 9). Autumn generally is a very busy season for us at IBTS, but as a window of opportunity opened, off we went! And what a wonderful respite it turned out to be, those four days.



We reached the Mother House in the evening of November 1<sup>st</sup>, when it was already dark. As we got out of the car the door of the House opened, and folk started coming out to greet us. We found out later that they were going to the Chapel - it was evening Compline time - but that was a good feeling anyway! We joined in the prayers and embraced the welcoming peace of the Nether Springs.

The memories are warm and many, but among the most vivid ones perhaps is the fellowship of the kitchen, as it much connects with the significance of the fellowship of the table as we understand it at IBTS. We also much enjoyed the opportunity to be part of the retreat which was taking place at the Nether Springs that weekend. This enabled us to learn something about the life of the regional groups that relate to the Mother House.

We had a wonderful time on Holy Island. We were glad to assist the Community by transporting St Aidan from his home in Lindisfarne to his new home at the Nether Springs! We enjoyed the fun of the Bonfire Night, though the two non-Brits of our party thought it somewhat strange to go round the fire in celebration of the burning of Catholics!

A final memory to share with you is that of getting into the car to head to the airport. As we started to move slowly, those who were at the Mother House that Sunday morning started singing, to us, "May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you..." May that same peace meet you when you come to Prague, friends!

*We saw Helen Bone reading 'A New Kind of Christian' - and asked her to write a review of it for us!*

**Brian McLaren sets out in this book to explore three questions: 'Why am I not the same kind of Christian as I used to be?', 'What might a new kind of Christian be like?' and 'How might one become a new kind of Christian if one is so inclined?'**

In order to explore these questions he creates a fictional character called Dan, who is a pastor, struggling with many things he had always taken for granted about God, faith and the church. Dan meets Neo, who is trying to become a 'new kind of Christian'. The book follows their conversations and

friendship as they discuss such issues as ways of understanding the Bible; the relationship of Christianity to other religions; cultural change from modernity to post-modernity (explained in an extraordinarily accessible way); how we understand mission; spiritual formation in the church and many more.

I was sceptical at first about the use of fictional characters in a book which sets out to explore such ambitious and widely ranging topics. This scepticism soon evaporated as I found myself drawn in to the discussion between Dan and Neo. The debates were given context by the presence of people, albeit fictional

ones. The way the book is written both engaged me as a reader and remained consistent with the idea, expressed in the book, that there is no meaning without context. The presence of Dan and Neo removed the ideas being discussed from the realm of the abstract and highlighted their applicability today.

In this book McLaren challenges the status quo and invites the reader to imaginatively and positively embrace the future. I cannot recommend it highly enough - read it, discuss it with people, continue the conversation...

McLaren, Brian D. (2001) *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. ISBN: 0-7879-5599-X



*Sheena Hewitt writes about a recent trip to Hetton: Four of us from St Barnabas in Rowlands Gill came up to Hetton at the beginning of October to be on the Motivations Weekend. From the start, we regarded it as a bit of a girls' weekend away, and packed accordingly! But more of that later!*

After a breathtaking drive over Rothbury Moor, we arrived in time for a quick cuppa and a whistle-stop tour of the house before dinner. But that was OK, as we weren't travel weary, having only come from South of the Tyne.

I had been on a Motivations weekend before, and Linda had had a 'taster' session at a PCC Away Day. But she was keen to know more, and I was happy to do a 'refresher' and spend time with friends. Two more from the church, Agnes and Irene, completed the band.

**Motivations isn't a formula, it doesn't put you in a box and define you. Rather, it opens things up and can be quite freeing. Motivations gives a clue to the 'why' we do things...**

Our group was small and intimate, and Roy Searle led it in a very relaxed way, and there was plenty of thinking and reflecting time. We were fortunate being a small group because Roy was able to give as much time to each individual as was needed.

Although I knew my motivation from the previous weekend course, I was struck anew what a change understanding motivations can make. On a good day, we can just about believe that God knows us thoroughly and loves us deeply, and that He accepts us because of, and not in spite of, who we are. But, it takes an extraordinarily good day to believe that our friends can and do. And, as for accepting yourself.....well.....! or is that just a problem for my motivation?

Motivations isn't a formula, it doesn't put you in a

box and define you. Rather, it opens things up and can be quite freeing. Motivations gives a clue to the 'why' we do things, why we find them easy or difficult, why some people are our best friends and others we find difficult to understand. It showed me why I get frustrated with some of the things I do, and why other things 'give me life' and thrill me.

Understanding my motivation helps me to try to work with myself, doing what I have a natural motivation for, rather than force myself to do things that I feel I ought, but which I'm basically not suited for.



Of course, life isn't always that easy, and there still obligations that I have to fulfil, which I'm basically not very good at doing, but I can still learn to say 'good

enough is good enough', and is the best I can do in this task.

In an ideal world, or an ideal church, we would all find our place where we could give 100% and give it well, and that I guess is a good aim – identifying what your motivation is, and the motivations of those around you, to create a dream team. To appreciate the gifting of others, and not to push others into areas that make them too uncomfortable, or which set them up to fail. The reality is, we live in an imperfect world! But Motivations really does help us to understand much more why people are so different!

In case you think this is all very worthy and serious, remember the girls' weekend away I mentioned at the beginning? Well, we packed quite a lot of liquid refreshment and a truck load of chocolate for the evenings, and managed to have afternoon tea in Berwick on Saturday and morning coffee on Holy Island on the Sunday, on top of all the regular meals! What with worship in the chapel and friendship around the dining table, it was an excellent weekend, and I would recommend it to anyone!

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