

Follow the Example

In EXPLORATION OF A VISION

***A range of activities for exploring the
Brendan Liturgy***



Northumbria
COMMUNITY

Introduction:

The Easter Workshop gatherings have always been important annual events in the life of the Northumbria Community. At these 'schools of creativity', we have been able to express our togetherness and to listen to and learn from each other. The Community's expansion across continents presents us with both amazing opportunities and challenges. How do we foster a sense of togetherness? How do we learn from and listen to each other across cultures and miles? How do we provide a means to hear all the voices? How do we express both the privilege and responsibility of being in Community together? What does availability and intentional vulnerability look like at a whole Community level?

This booklet is the second in a series based on some of our existing liturgies, in particular those in the 'Follow the example' section of Celtic Daily Prayer. The idea is not that we try to imitate any particular Saint or to attain to some unrealistic image of a saint! Rather, that by reflecting on these liturgies inspired by their lives and witness, we may learn something more of Christ and reflect him in our own lives, alone and together. In this booklet, our focus is St. Brendan.

As we embark on this journey together, our prayer is that it will help us to consider how we can better express and develop our togetherness, and strengthen the common heart and vision of our Community.

We would value hearing from you about how you used the booklet, any ideas and creativity it may have inspired, and any constructive feedback on the activities themselves. It would be really encouraging if you were willing to write a brief summary for Caim too!

We hope you enjoy journeying with Brendan this Easter, and beyond, and look forward to hearing back from you.

How to use this resource:

This booklet includes a wide range of activities to choose from, suitable for different ages and learning preferences. The activities can be done individually or in groups. These are offered as starting points so please feel free to amend and adapt as appropriate.

Apart from the introductory section, '*Journeying with Brendan*', the booklet is structured around the sixteen parts of the Brendan liturgy, and encourages discussion and reflection on the questions posed explicitly and implicitly in the text. The opening activity introduces these key questions, and the themes they highlight are explored more fully in the subsequent sections of the resource.

There are over 60 suggested activities in this booklet. The aim is not that you try and attempt all in one short period! Rather it is intended that individuals or groups select those questions and themes which they feel are most pertinent to their own context. However, it is hoped that whichever activities you choose initially, you will be inspired to continue using the booklet and to create your own ideas as you journey with Brendan.

CONTENTS:

The booklet is divided into the following sections:

1. **Journeying with Brendan** - introducing the key questions and themes.
2. **Christ of the mysteries, can I trust you on the sea?** – reflecting upon God’s purposes for our lives and our ability to trust Him.
3. **Have I the faith to leave old ways and break fresh ground with God?** -openness to God and our fellow Companions.
4. **Do I assume that the storms will be stronger than me?** - seeking God in the storms and monotony of life.
5. **Do I long for the glory of Heaven to waken me?** - being attuned to God’s presence in the world.
6. **Will I share God’s might with others?** - encouragements and questions of faith.
7. **Will I say ‘Yes’ to risky living?** - examining our attitudes to risk and adventure, with reference to our Rule for Living.
8. **Can I let God comfort me?** - dealing with guilt and regret.
9. **Can I trust that God will provide?** - living simply and trusting in God’s faithfulness.
10. **Can I trust God’s timing?** - searching for God in times of darkness.
11. **Am I prepared to tell the story?** – being God’s story in our communities.
12. **On what is my mind set?** – developing wisdom and mindfulness.
13. **What task has God blessed me with?** – doing God’s will.
14. **Am I surprised by the evil I sometimes encounter in myself or in others?** - forgiveness and community life.
15. **Is Heaven’s music real to me?** - the place of music and silence in worship
16. **Do I fear the final journey?** - facing death.
17. **Lord, I trust in You** – final reflections.

Journeying with BRENDAN

Aim:

- To think about the key themes in the Brendan liturgy and to consider which of these are of particular importance to us at the moment

Resources:

- Access to internet
- Printed copies of the Brendan Liturgy
- Highlighter pens/pencils

Introductory Activity

- Watch the short YouTube video outlining the key events in the life of St. Brendan:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Hx1P_gKrqY
- Pray the Brendan liturgy, if possible with others. Allow space for the words to settle.
- Re-read the words slowly and thoughtfully, asking God to draw to your attention particular words and phrases that are important for you to think more about. Which questions in the text strike you most?
- Highlight or circle these words and phrases on a print out of the liturgy.
- Reflect on these phrases. What are the main themes that they express?
- Sit quietly and offer these thoughts to God, asking that His Spirit may guide you as you begin this journey of reflection with Brendan.
- Pray for all those who are journeying with Brendan across the Community that we may give space for God to speak, and that our hearts may be open to receive and respond.

Preparatory Notes

- A journey following a vision. Seeking the Promised Land with no plan or purpose beyond that, or sense of what was to happen beyond that. Leaving behind the familiar. Truly a journey without maps. Following a dream with only hints and old travellers' tales to guide.
- Such an extreme call may not be for everyone but there are lessons in Brendan's life journey that we may reflect on and perhaps learn from. The journey is long frustrating and dangerous; full of marvels and miracles but also the support and kindness of others. In the '*Navigatio*' (the ancient Latin account) the voyage follows the cycle of the Roman liturgical year through seven cycles before Brendan and his companions reach the Promised Land.
- Eventually the goal of their journey is reached only to receive the command to return to where they came from. Brendan's legacy is the work he did after his return. The vision wasn't the destination but the route by which he was being prepared for his service.

Despite all he has experienced and learnt he still seeks the guidance of others.

BRENDAN – IN EXPLORATION OF A VISION

BRENDAN THE NAVIGATOR (c. 486 – 575)

A Call to Risky Living

Brendan is one of the best-loved of all the Celtic saints. The story of his sea-voyages has held a special fascination for every generation.

In the accounts that have been handed down to us the distinction between actual events and interior vision and experiences is not always clear. The hauntingly vivid images of the tree full of angels (see Part IV) and the vision of Judas (Part VII) are good examples. Yet real voyages were undertaken, and Tim Severin's *Brendan Voyage* makes interesting reading, as time and again Severin and his crew found they were replicating experiences, described so poetically in the Brendan accounts, that others had dismissed as fantasy. The voyage of adventure is an appropriate analogy of the spiritual journey each of us is challenged to undertake.

This liturgy follows some of the incidents of Brendan's life as a series of meditations. They may be used:

- *on Brendan's day (May 16)*
- *on pilgrimage to Clonfert, or any other of Brendan's foundations*
- *by an individual as a springboard for prayer*
- *as the basis for a retreat*
- *by a group reading a section at a time with pauses for silent prayer or shared reflection*
- *on a coracle-making course*

Part I

Brendan's companions notice his heart has been stirred. He is caught by a vision. A place beyond his present shores is calling to his yearning spirit. Does he know with a certainty that he must go? We will go with you, they say. We will journey where you journey. Your God is our God – for life or death, we follow. Brendan climbs the mountain alone, searches his heart to test the truth of what he feels.

And this was

Brendan's mountain prayer:

Shall I abandon the comforts and benefits of my home,
seeking the island of promise our fathers knew long ago,
sail on the face of the deep where no riches or fame
or weapons protect you, and nobody honours your name?

Shall I take leave of my friends
and my beautiful native land,
tears in my eyes
as my knees mark my final prayer in the sand?
King of the mysteries, will You set watch over me?
Christ of the mysteries, can I trust You on the sea?

Christ of the Heavens,
and Christ of the ravenous ocean wave,
I will hold fast to my course
through the dangers I must brave.
King of the mysteries, angels will watch over me,
Christ of the mysteries, when I trust You on the sea.

Brendan's example speaks to us each:

Have I the courage to leave the familiar
and journey into the unknown?
to journey beyond the way I have prayed,
the life I have lived, the sensible and the secure?
to trust God to take me beyond these familiar shores?

Christ of the mysteries, can I trust You on the sea?

Part II

O Lord, I pray that in You,
I'll break ground both fresh and new.
As a student let me stand.

Break the hardness of the land
with Your forgiving Father-hand.

In his generation new territories open to God;
all he has learnt will prepare him for challenges now.
His own disciples have followed as he obeyed God.
Barriers crumbled, and heathen before Jesus bow.

Brendan will go in adventure with God on the seas.
With care he will choose who his closest companions will be.
All that he learns he will teach those who wait for his word.
This risky enterprise will be preparing a way.

Prepare the way! Prepare the way!
Prepare a way for the Lord.

Have I the faith to leave old ways
and break fresh ground with God?

Part III

They sailed over the loud-voiced waves of the rough-crested
sea and over the billows of the greenish tide, and over the abysses
of the wonderful, terrible relentless ocean.

I beseech the Father through the Son,
I beseech the Son through the Father,
I beseech the Holy Spirit through the Father and the Son

and through every creature that praises the Lord,
that all vice may be removed from me
and that every saintly virtue may take root in my soul.

It is enough, O mighty sea,
that you should drown me;
but let these others escape in safety.

Brendan prayed, and as the vehemence of the storm increased

his friends watched closely for the firmness of his face against
the blackness of the deep, its sickening currents that would threaten oft to drown them.

We were alone on the wide watery waste –
nought broke its bright monotony of blue,
save where the breeze the flying billows chased,
or where the clouds their purple shadows threw.

We were alone – the pilgrims of the sea –
one boundless azure desert round us spread;
no hope, no trust, no strength except in Thee,
Father, who once the pilgrim people led.

We breathed aloud the Christian's filial prayer,
which makes us brothers even with the Lord:
'Our Father', cried we, in the midnight air,
'in heaven and earth be Thy great name adored;
may Thy bright kingdom where the angels are
replace this fleeting world, so dark and dim.'

We ceased from toil and humbly knelt to pray;
the tranquil hour we hailed with vesper hymn.

Do I assume that the storms will be stronger than me?
Christ of the mysteries, can I trust You on the sea?

Part IV

The whole of earth and heaven waits
to see the sons of courage rise.
Imprisoned spirits sing God's praise
and glimpse His glory through the skies.

White flocks of birds and far-off islands
in psalms lament captivity.
Their antiphon to heaven rises
with groans that new life long to see.

The travail of redemption chorused,
Christ's resurrection brings us here,

the Bird of Heaven still awaiting,
the Paraclete our ship to steer.

Psalms of the Scripture, telling landscapes of the heart!
Am I unsatisfied, longing for heaven to break through my darkness?
longing for glory of heaven to waken in me?

Part V

After years on this adventure,
Brendan sails in sight of home,
not the home he yearned and sought for,
but familiar sights and people,
those who held and hold him dear.
He is questioned – why the journey?
what its profit? what adventures?
will he stay and share his blessing?

Emptiness now metes out fullness,
days despairing bringing joy,
as bodies healed, belief enkindled
and tortured ones deliverance finding,
prove the power of faithful journeying.
Stormy seas make weathered sea-men,
those who proved God in the deep.

Will I share God's might with others?
show the care He's shown to me?

Part VI

After this season of blessing and usefulness, Brendan continues his journey.
The journey should never be undertaken begrudgingly, but with love and thankfulness.

I thank You for this, my God,
I am a traveller and stranger
in the world,

like so many of Your people
before me.

There is a sense of adventure,
of openness to possibilities,
abandonment to God
and expectation
of fulfilling His will.

I accept the responsibility,
I'll hear and obey,
and trust it is Your voice I hear,
the call of the Spirit,
the cry of the Bird of Heaven.

It is a Yes to risky living...

The sea takes me;
where I do not know,
but I gladly go.

And I can only trust
every word You say,
and obey.

Brendan and his brothers visit other communities. One of his companions is called to leave them,
and remain in a place they visit.

The voyage continues through corridors of wonder; vast walls of silent ice hem them in on either
side.

Then, as suddenly, their path through the seas draws them close to an island that burns with
volcanic heat. Fearfully they pass it by, continuing in safety.

Through the unknown, help me, Lord,
I will trust, and obey!

Part VII

In vision before them, a sorry figure clings to sea-drenched rocks:

Judas Iscariot who in all his weakness
betrayed God

Tortured in hell,
but tortured much more by regret.

I need not live with regrets
if the Lord made me free.
Am I like Judas, or can I let God
comfort me?

Part VIII

All along their journey,
Brendan and his friends find those who understand;
food is provided,
and needful encouragement to trust God.
Sometimes in silence the Lord will restore
and strengthen them,
sometimes return them to one who can guide them
and be their friend.

Slight explanation surrounds all these happenings in the deep.
Was Brendan's voyage just vivid imaginings in his sleep?
He and his friends were gone;
then they returned to testify
God had gone with them,
and shown them His faithfulness again.

If I am obedient can I trust that God Himself will provide?

Part IX

Year after year
they continue in circles over the waves.
Psalms mark the hours
as sunrise and darkness edge their days.

Ever the land they seek
somewhere across the deep
whispers its promise, but holds itself hidden from their gaze.

Then as they journey exactly the way they had before,
waiting a glimpse of its beautiful, still far-distant-shore,
darkness intensifies until before their eyes
the land of promise they saw.

I trust in Thee, O Lord.
I say, Thou art my God.
My times are in Thy hand,
my times are in Thy hand.

Blessed be the Lord
for He has wondrously shown
His steadfast love to me,
His steadfast love to me.

Can I believe God would hide His goodness from me?
and in His time would open my eyes so I can see?

Part X

So Brendan found the place he was seeking,
the promise fulfilled, and the day without night.
It seemed a place that had no end or boundary
until they reached a river broad, perhaps unpassable.
The land continued rich and fertile on the other side.
Then came a messenger who spoke to them by name, explaining:

Yes, they have found this place, but only for a time.
People of Ireland and other lands will hear the story
of their adventure, and be baffled or inspired.

He said:

Return, your mission now is over.

God who did call you here, now bids you go.
Return in peace, then, to your native shore
and tell the mighty secrets that you know.
Seek your own isle – Christ's newly-bought domain
which nature with an emerald pencil paints.
Such as it is, long long shall it remain,
the school of truth, the college of the saints,
the student's bower, the hermit's calm retreat,
the stranger's home, the hospitable hearth,
the shrine to which shall wander pilgrim feet
from all the neighbouring nations of the earth.

Now they move on to tell the story
of what has been and is, but also is to come.
God in the now prepares us for the future;
the end is not yet – with Him it's just begun.

Part XI

After all his adventures, Brendan's wisdom still was not perfected.
There was plenty God had to teach him,
and many others whose example he could learn by.
It is said it was the overheard exchange between two sea-monsters
which sent Brendan searching for Brigid of Kildare.

Eager to know, he consulted her wisdom
and asked her the reason the monsters revered her
who spoke of the power of her fervent prayer.
'For myself', he said, 'since I came to live devoutly,
I cannot go seven steps without my mind being set on God.'

'That is good', smiled Brigid, 'but, if I should answer truly,
I'd say that since the hour I first set my mind on God
never for one moment have I taken it away.'

Brendan laughed. 'It seems the monsters of the deep spoke truly –
the Son of Mary-virgin found a welcome in your heart;
and His power and your thought of Him are rooted both in love.'

O Jesu Christ, focus my attention on You.
O Son of Mary, be cradled in my heart.
O Most Holy, fix my mind and my heart's gaze
upon You.

Part XII

Brendan returned to his earlier task
of the founding of monasteries,
schools for the gospel, support for the faithful.
Still he would follow the flight of the wild goose,
the call of the Spirit to seek God's adventures;
and so for ten years around Britain he travelled,
engaging in mission and visiting others
to strengthen in service and learn from their wisdom;
and then he returned to his early foundations.
Ardfert was one of these, and Bright Gleam Kilmore.

But after the time of his famous sea-voyage,
offerings were brought him, supporting the houses;
and men and women sought religious life.
Inis (or island) da-dromand was in Shannon river;
there a community flourished and grew.
All in all, three thousand were monastics under Brendan's rule.
But when he founded Clonfert, he said, in words of scripture,
'Here is my rest for ever, here will I dwell.'
Strengthened in faith, may my work be Yours.
Give me Your task, Your blessing,
and establish what my hands can do.

Part XIII

Life in community is not easy.
Sharing life with others
makes holiness hard to find.
Brendan would not be surprised
at difficulty between

five monks he sent
to Inis-da-dromand
to live together there.

Some of them came to him,
telling their trouble.

Strife had developed
between them; and one
had an axe in the head
from behind, and died.

'Return,' Brendan said,
'to your brother, and tell him to wake.
I would speak with him here.'
They returned, and the dead man arose
and went to meet Brendan, the weapon,
with which he was wounded,
still lodged in his head.

Brendan remembered how on his sea-voyage he often
had brought peace to souls,
who then had speeded God-ward.
So now he asked this brother the question,
'Would you now rather remain in this life
or go to Christ in heaven?'
He chose for home and gladly died.

Am I surprised by the evil
I sometimes encounter
in me or in others?
Help me to live as one glad to die.
Teach me to live with eternity in view.

Part XIV

Once a student came and visited Clonfert,
and played his harp at mid-day in refectory.
The brothers blessed and welcomed all his music;

and he only then expressed regret
that Brendan was not present.

'He would not allow you to play for him,' they said.
'At least he would not hear, since
for seven years or so he's carried balls of wax around
to stick inside his ears whenever music sounds.'

The student followed Brendan into church
and begged the abbot there to let him play.
The harp was ready - and the balls of wax.
The student remonstrated, and insisted
Brendan listened while he played two or three tunes.

For his insistence he won Brendan's blessing,
but also explanation for the little balls of wax;
for seven years previously, as Brendan prayed there
the angel Michael came, as if a tiny bird
to bring God's blessing, and make music for his Lord.

The bird placed its beak under the shadow of the wing
and sang and sang heaven's tune.
All music after that had seemed discordant,
but silence sometimes harmony can hold.

And so,
is Heaven's music real to me?
causing my spirit to be stirred
and to put off its weariness?

Part XV

One day as Brendan sailed by coracle across Dingle Bay
a man shouted to him from headland of Valentia Isle.
He turned his craft to shore, and followed
until the stranger brought him
to two men about to die.
Waters of baptism, bread and body, wine and blood.

He almost heard the trumpet of the angel
as he watched them leave this life.

And now his time was coming.
Carefully he gathered chosen friends
to be around him, went to visit, last of all, his sister Bryg.
There in safety at her convent
Brendan leaves detailed instructions of his burial,
for his body must be taken to Clonfert.
Even in death this focus gives direction -
firm foundations will be laid
for generations yet to come.

Nothing must interfere with this,
his body be placed quietly in a wagon,
in charge of only one brother, unnoticed.

But heaven notices.

And as Brendan, unafraid through great adventures,
for a moment now has fear of passing all alone,
leaving his friends behind him,
upon his darksome journey
to the presence of the King,
in far Iona good Columba
calls to Dermot, 'Hurry, now we celebrate:
this is the day of birth for blessed Brendan
and I see the heavens open, angel choirs
hasten now to greet his soul, and bear him
to the throne of God Himself.
They shout. God stoops, and Brendan cries ...

The mist returns. The land of promise fades from view.
Our work awaits, and bread and wine.'

Part XVI

Lord, I will trust You,

help me to journey beyond the familiar
and into the unknown.

Give me the faith to leave old ways
and break fresh ground with You.

Christ of the mysteries, can I trust You
to be stronger than each storm in me?

Do I still yearn for Your glory to lighten on me?

I will show others the care You've given me.

I determine amidst all uncertainty always to trust.

I choose to live beyond regret,
and let You recreate my life.

I believe You will make a way for me
and provide for me,
if only I trust You and obey.

I will trust in the darkness and know
that my times are still in Your hand.

I will believe You for my future,
chapter by chapter, until all the story is written.

Focus my mind and my heart upon You,
my attention always on You without alteration.

Strengthen me with Your blessing
and appoint to me the task.

Teach me to live with eternity in view.
Tune my spirit to the music of heaven.
Feed me,
and, somehow,

Christ of the Mysteries, can I trust you on the sea?

Aim:

To think about God's vision for our lives and whether we trust Him with our life journeys.

Resources:

- Brendan Liturgy – Part I
- Bible
- Paper and pens
- Suitcase/travel bag

Read:

Brendan Liturgy – Part I

Activities

Vision

Brendan was *'caught by a vision'*. Visions are not necessarily dramatic or vivid revelations. They may be hunches, gut feelings, fleeting glimpses, whispers, or stirrings of the heart.

- Is there a vision or dream for me to follow? How would I describe it?
- Does it excite or scare me? Or both?
- How do I *'test the truth'* of what I sense? Who can help me discern it?

Journeying

1. Think of your spiritual journey life as a sea crossing. Consider:
 - What journey am I taking/do I need to take?
 - Where am I now? In the safety of the harbour? Out on the open sea? In a tempest or in the doldrums? At risk of falling overboard?
 - What is the vessel? What is the 'deep' we cast ourselves onto?
 - Draw an image to represent your current position, and think about why you are where you are.
 - If possible, share your image with others and pray for each other's needs at this point of your journey.

2. Read Genesis 12:1-9.
 - What would it mean for Abram and his household to leave his country? How did he respond to God's call?
 - How is the motif of journeying beyond familiar shores/borders helpful to our understanding of faith?

- Pray for those forced to leave their homes through war, persecution, famine, poverty and natural disaster.
3. Brendan's mountain prayer asks God for the courage to leave the familiar and journey into the unknown. Place an empty case or bag in front of you. Think of the luggage you take on a journey. Reflect:
- What '*comforts and benefits of home*' (physical / psychological / spiritual) might I need to leave behind? What am I afraid to let go of / leave behind?
 - Write a short prayer expressing any fears and concerns, and your desire to trust God with your journey into the unknown. Place in the case or bag.

Part I:

Brendan's companions notice his heart has been stirred. He is caught by a vision. A place beyond his present shores is calling to his yearning spirit. Does he know with a certainty that he must go? We will go with you, they say. We will journey where you journey. Your God is our God – for life or death, we follow. Brendan climbs the mountain alone, searches his heart to test the truth of what he feels.

And this was

Brendan's mountain prayer:

Shall I abandon the comforts and benefits of my home,
seeking the island of promise our fathers knew long ago,
sail on the face of the deep where no riches or fame
or weapons protect you, and nobody honours your name?

Shall I take leave of my friends
and my beautiful native land,
tears in my eyes
as my knees mark my final prayer in the sand?
King of the mysteries, will You set watch over me?
Christ of the mysteries, can I trust You on the sea?

Christ of the Heavens,
and Christ of the ravenous ocean wave,
I will hold fast to my course
through the dangers I must brave.
King of the mysteries, angels will watch over me,
Christ of the mysteries, when I trust You on the sea.

Brendan's example speaks to us each:

Have I the courage to leave the familiar
and journey into the unknown?
to journey beyond the way I have prayed,
the life I have lived, the sensible and the secure?
to trust God to take me beyond these familiar shores?

Christ of the mysteries, can I trust You on the sea?

Have I the faith to leave old ways and break fresh ground with God?

Aim:

To think about our openness to Christ and his call, and to others who are called to journey with us.

Resources:

- Brendan Liturgy – Part II
- Bible
- Seeds to plant, a prepared flowerpot or patch of garden
- Seed trays containing different soil types
- Small crosses (made from card, cocktail sticks etc.)
- Lyrics for *'Brother, Sister, let me serve you'* (Appendix 1)

Read:

Brendan Liturgy – Part II

Activities

Preparing the way

1. Brendan prays that, in God's strength, he is able to *'break ground fresh and new'*. Consider:
 - What ground needs breaking in my life? What old ways do I need to leave behind?
 - Prepare an area of garden or a flowerpot to plant some seeds. As a symbol of your openness to God's call upon your life, and your desire to be fruitful for Him, plant the seeds praying: *'O Lord, I pray that in You, I'll break ground both fresh and new.'*
2. The parable of the Sower (Luke 8:1-15) presents a range of soil types that affect the growth and productivity of the seed of God's kingdom.
 - How do these describe the prevalent attitudes in our society today towards Christ and his message?
 - Prepare trays of different soils: sandy, stony, hard clay, weedy, topsoil etc. Make small crosses and plant them in each soil type asking for Jesus' life to be manifest in the particular situations that these soils represent.

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Companions | <p>Read the lyrics to '<i>Brother, Sister, let me serve you</i>'. (Appendix 1). Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a Community, what does it mean to be '<i>companions on the road</i>'? • Sing the song to underscore your commitment to be available as a Companion to others on the journey. |
|-------------------|--|

[Part II](#)

O Lord, I pray that in You,
I'll break ground both fresh and new.
As a student let me stand.
Break the hardness of the land
with Your forgiving Father-hand.

In his generation new territories open to God;
all he has learnt will prepare him for challenges now.
His own disciples have followed as he obeyed God.
Barriers crumbled, and heathen before Jesus bow.

Brendan will go in adventure with God on the seas.
With care he will choose who his closest companions will be.
All that he learns he will teach those who wait for his word.
This risky enterprise will be preparing a way.

Prepare the way! Prepare the way!
Prepare a way for the Lord.

Have I the faith to leave old ways
and break fresh ground with God?

Do I assume that the storms will be stronger than me?

Aim:

To think about our need to seek God amidst the storms and the monotony of life.

Resources:

- Brendan Liturgy – Part III
- Brendan artwork by Lynda Owen-Hussey (Appendix 2)
- Music* CDs, e.g. Nick & Anita Haigh's '*Brendan's Prayer*' from *Celtic Roots & Rhythms: Homecoming*, or Iona's '*Beyond these Shores.*'
- Bible
- '*Walking on Water*' script by Rob Holden (Appendix 3)
- Strands of wool/ribbons

Read:

Brendan Liturgy – Part III

Activities

Stormy Waters

1. Brendan and his Companions faced '*loud-voiced waves*' and the '*bright monotony of blue*' as they journeyed. Reflect:
 - What loud voices threaten to overwhelm?
 - What feels monotonous and relentless in life at the moment?
 - How can we hold on to God and know his presence when we feel alone on the sea?
2. Meditate on Lynda Owen-Hussey's paintings of Brendan on the stormy sea. (Appendix 2). You may wish to listen to some music* as you do so.
 - Recall Jesus with his disciples on the stormy waters (Matt. 8:23-27)
 - Invite Him to journey with you and ask for faith to trust Him amidst the stormy waters of life.
3. Read Rob Holden's '*Walking on Water*' based on Matt. 14:22-33.

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| | <p>(Appendix 3) You may like to do this as a dramatic reading with others. Imagine you were in the boat with Peter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you have felt/reacted when you saw the figure walking towards you across the turbulent waves? • How would you have felt/reacted when Peter stepped out of the boat? • What questions would you want to ask of Jesus? Of Peter? Of yourself? |
| <p>Prayer</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus on the words: <i>'I beseech ... that all vice may be removed from me and that every saintly virtue may take root in my soul.'</i> Be still before God. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which vices create an internal storm? Name them. Seek God's forgiveness and ask Him to cast them into the depths of the sea. • Which virtues would you like to develop? Name them. Allow the Spirit to settle on you and ask for grace to nurture these. 2. Create a plait from three different strands of wool or ribbon. As you plait, pray for those you know, who are caught in life's storms, and whose circumstances seem overwhelming. If possible, join your plait with those of others as a symbol of your prayerful solidarity. Pray: <i>'Christ of the mysteries, we trust you on the sea with these dear ones.'</i> |

Part III

They sailed over the loud-voiced waves of the rough-crested
sea and over the billows of the greenish tide, and over the abysses
of the wonderful, terrible relentless ocean.

I beseech the Father through the Son,
I beseech the Son through the Father,
I beseech the Holy Spirit through the Father and the Son

and through every creature that praises the Lord,
that all vice may be removed from me
and that every saintly virtue may take root in my soul.

It is enough, O mighty sea,
that you should drown me;
but let these others escape in safety.

Brendan prayed, and as the vehemence of the storm increased
his friends watched closely for the firmness of his face against
the blackness of the deep, its sickening currents that would threaten oft to drown them.

We were alone on the wide watery waste –
nought broke its bright monotony of blue,
save where the breeze the flying billows chased,
or where the clouds their purple shadows threw.

We were alone – the pilgrims of the sea –
one boundless azure desert round us spread;
no hope, no trust, no strength except in Thee,
Father, who once the pilgrim people led.

We breathed aloud the Christian's filial prayer,
 which makes us brothers even with the Lord:
 'Our Father', cried we, in the midnight air,
 'in heaven and earth be Thy great name adored;
 may Thy bright kingdom where the angels are
 replace this fleeting world, so dark and dim.'
 We ceased from toil and humbly knelt to pray;
 the tranquil hour we hailed with vesper hymn.

Do I assume that the storms will be stronger than me?
 Christ of the mysteries, can I trust You on the sea?

Do I long for the glory of Heaven to waken me?

Aim:

To think about how attuned we are to God's presence in His world

Resources:

- Brendan Liturgy – Part IV
- Bible
- Collection of natural materials: stones, bark, twigs, seeds, flowers, moss etc.
- Paper & pens
- Camera/magazines

Read:

Brendan Liturgy – Part IV

Activities

Glimpses of Glory

1. Take a walk outside and tune all your senses to the sights, sounds and scents around you.
 - What can you hear? See? Smell? Taste? Feel? What do you notice, perhaps for the first time?
 - Read Psalm 148. How does God reveal himself to us through the natural world? What '*glimpses of glory*' have you experienced?
 - Write your own psalm of praise for the wonder of God's creation.
2. Create a '3-D Psalm' using bark and/or leaf rubbings, flower pressings and other natural materials to express praise for the wonder of creation. Alternatively, take photos/use images from magazines to illustrate Psalm

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| | 148. |
| Creation's travail | <p>1. Brendan's' vision of an island where creation cried out in longing for the 'sons of courage' to rise echoes Paul's words in Romans 8:18-25. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What vision regarding the whole of creation does Paul express? • Is Brendan's vision fanciful or do we need to recapture a sense of the wonder of creation as a means of divine revelation? • Is our understanding of the scope of God's redemption too narrow? <p>2. The birds in Brendan's vision lament their captivity, and that of all creation. The Psalms include laments, revealing '<i>landscapes of the heart</i>'. Do you feel that such laments are an important aspect of our spiritual journey? Why?</p> |

[Part IV](#)

The whole of earth and heaven waits
to see the sons of courage rise.
Imprisoned spirits sing God's praise
and glimpse His glory through the skies.

White flocks of birds and far-off islands
in psalms lament captivity.
Their antiphon to heaven rises
with groans that new life long to see.

The travail of redemption chorused,
Christ's resurrection brings us here,
the Bird of Heaven still awaiting,
the Paraclete our ship to steer.

Psalms of the Scripture, telling landscapes of the heart!
Am I unsatisfied, longing for heaven to break through my darkness?
longing for glory of heaven to waken in me?

Will I share God's might with others?

Aim:

To think about the questions and encouragements arising from our journeys of faith

Resources:

- Brendan Liturgy – Part V
- Bible
- Sheets of paper & pens
- Prayer box or basket

Read:

Brendan Liturgy – Part V

Activities

Quests and Questions

1. Like Brendan, we can often set off on a journey in search of answers, only to end up with more questions! Some questions are stirred from within; others from people around us. Reflect:
 - What internal questions am I facing at this stage of my spiritual journey?
 - What questions and/or challenges am I facing from others about my spiritual journey?
 - Which questions concern me most? Why?
2. Create a question box/basket. Write down some questions of faith that concern you currently and place in the box/basket.

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If alone, offer these questions to God and consider who you might be able to talk with about them • If with others, re-distribute the questions. Spend some time in prayerful silence and then discuss in pairs. Feedback some ideas to encourage one another. <p><i>NB: Sensitivity is needed both in the choice of questions people submit, and in any discussions in response. The idea is not to offer simple solutions or quick fixes, but to encourage one another to continue the journeys to which we have been called.</i></p> <p>3. Choose a Gospel. What questions are asked of Jesus by his disciples, his opponents, and the undecided? Does Jesus always give an answer?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which of these questions resonate at the moment? • Is there a danger in wanting to arrive at answers too quickly when faced with questions of faith? |
| <p>Sharing stories</p> | <p>Brendan and his companions return home briefly and find that though they have not yet found their promised land, their experience on the journey has already changed them and given riches which they can share with others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What riches have we already gained on our journey? Give thanks for them. • How can sharing our experiences benefit us, and those with whom we share? |

Part V

After years on this adventure,
 Brendan sails in sight of home,
 not the home he yearned and sought for,
 but familiar sights and people,
 those who held and hold him dear.
 He is questioned – why the journey?

what its profit? what adventures?
 will he stay and share his blessing?

Emptiness now metes out fullness,
 days despairing bringing joy,
 as bodies healed, belief enkindled
 and tortured ones deliverance finding,
 prove the power of faithful journeying.
 Stormy seas make weathered sea-men,
 those who proved God in the deep.

Will I share God's might with others?
 show the care He's shown to me?

| Will I say 'Yes' to risky living? | |
|--|---|
| Aim: | |
| To think about our attitudes to risk and adventure. | |
| Resources: | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brendan Liturgy – Part VI • Community Rule (Appendix 4) • Blindfold/obstacles for trust game • Bible • Letters/clues for trail | |
| Read: | |
| Brendan Liturgy – Part VI | |
| Activities | |
| Risk | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you understand by risk? Which words do you associate with it? Make a list. Do you see it mainly in a positive or negative light? 2. Our Community Rule states: <i>'We are called to intentional, deliberate VULNERABILITY.'</i> (Appendix 4) What do you understand by this phrase? In what sense is this a call to risky living? |

| | |
|------------------|--|
| | <p>3. Play a trust game that involves guiding a blindfolded person around various obstacles to reach a reward, eg: chocolate! Ensure the person does not see the obstacle course in advance. Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were the risks? What were the unknowns? • What was necessary for the task to be completed? • In what sense are our journeys of faith like this trust game? |
| Adventure | <p>1. Set up a trail of letters that, when ordered correctly, spell ADVENTURE. Create some simple clues to help people find the letters, without giving away the answer! Once completed, discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was needed in order to solve the puzzle? As individuals? As a group? • How did people feel about dealing with the unknown? • In what sense is our walk with Jesus an adventure? Are we open to see the clues of where He is at work? • What might cause/has caused us to lose our '<i>sense of adventure</i>', of expectation and excitement in following Jesus? <p>2. Read Luke 2:41-52. Jesus travels with his parents to Jerusalem and goes missing. Note the conversation after he is found! Jesus' parents did not understand his response when rebuked for causing them such anxiety.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What things cause us anxiety as we walk with Jesus? • Do we, like Mary and Joseph, try to control or possess Jesus as we travel with Him? What are our expectations of Jesus based on? • Jesus 'went missing' for 3 days. What can cause us to 'lose' Jesus? • Mary 'kept all these things in her heart'. What do we need to hold in our own hearts at this moment? |

Part VI

After this season of blessing and usefulness, Brendan continues his journey.

The journey should never be undertaken begrudgingly, but with love and thankfulness.

I thank You for this, my God,
I am a traveller and stranger
in the world,
like so many of Your people before me.

There is a sense of adventure,
of openness to possibilities,
abandonment to God
and expectation
of fulfilling His will.

I accept the responsibility,
I'll hear and obey,
and trust it is Your voice I hear,
the call of the Spirit,
the cry of the Bird of Heaven.

It is a Yes to risky living...

The sea takes me;
where I do not know,
but I gladly go.

And I can only trust
every word You say,
and obey.

Brendan and his brothers visit other communities. One of his companions is called to leave them, and remain in a place they visit.

The voyage continues through corridors of wonder; vast walls of silent ice hem them in on either side.

Then, as suddenly, their path through the seas draws them close to an island that burns with volcanic heat. Fearfully they pass it by, continuing in safety.

Through the unknown, help me, Lord,
I will trust, and obey!

Can I let God comfort me?

Aim:

- To think about guilt and regret and how we deal with it

Resources:

- Brendan Liturgy – Part VII
- Bible (various translations)
- Old magazines/newspapers
- Highlighter pens/felt tips
- The Comfortable Words, Common Worship, Main Volume, p.273 (Appendix 5)

Read:

- Brendan Liturgy – Part VII

Activities

Regret or repentance

- Display the words: regret, remorse and repentance.
 - How would you define them? In what ways are they different? Ask people to add sticky notes to each word with their ideas. Feedback.
 - Which of the words focus on feelings and which on action?
 - Why are we called to repentance rather than regret?
- Read Matt. 26:69-75; 27:1-5. Compare Judas' and Peter's betrayals of Jesus. The latter's name is now synonymous with betrayal, while the former is seen as central to the founding and growth of the Church.
 - Was Judas' betrayal any greater than Peter's? What made the difference?
 - What can we learn from this when we feel we have failed God?

God's Comfort

- Using old magazines/newspapers, cut out words and images that you associate with the idea of comfort. If with others, create a group collage.
- Compare and share ideas.
 - Read John 14:16-17. What word is used to describe the Holy Spirit whom Jesus will send? (It is useful to consult a range of translations).
 - The Amplified Bible gives a range of words to help us understand the Holy Spirit's role – counsellor, advocate, intercessor, helper, standby, strengthener, comforter. 'Comfort' comes from the Latin '*com fortis*' –

meaning 'with strength'. In the light of this, how does God comfort us?

Why might we sometimes resist?

- Create a symbol as a reminder of God's comfort.
3. Look at *'The Comfortable Words'* from one of the Anglican Eucharistic liturgies (Appendix 5) These words are read by the presiding minister just before the congregation make their Confession together.
- Highlight the key words. Why are these words 'comfortable'?
 - How do they inform our view of God's mercy when we have failed?

Part VII

In vision before them, a sorry figure clings to sea-drenched rocks:

Judas Iscariot who in all his weakness
betrayed God

Tortured in hell,
but tortured much more by regret.

I need not live with regrets
if the Lord made me free.

Am I like Judas, or can I let God
comfort me?

Can I trust that God will provide?

Aim:

To think about God's faithfulness and the challenge of simple living

Resources:

- Brendan Liturgy – Part VIII
- Bible
- Coloured paper for paper chains, scissors
- Community Rule (Appendix 3)

Read:

Brendan Liturgy – Part VIII

Activities

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Faithful friends | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The provision for Brendan and his companions was sometimes miraculous, sometimes very human and practical. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who has been our strength and support on the journey so far? • Make a colourful paper chain of figures to represent these people and give thanks for their faithfulness and love. • What could you do/have you done to show appreciation for their care? 2. In what ways, as a Community, do we offer each other '<i>needful encouragement to trust God</i>'? Sit for a while in silence and ask God to bring to mind any in need of encouragement at this moment. Resolve to take positive action to encourage them. |
| Living Simply | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Brendan's journey required him to learn to trust God to provide for his needs, and for those of his companions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you consider as 'needs', the essentials for living? • How might material affluence affect our ability to journey with Christ beyond the familiar, and trust him with our needs? 2. Read Luke 10:1-11. Jesus sends out seventy disciples with strict |

instructions to travel lightly without purse, bag or sandals.

- Why do you think Jesus gave these instructions?
 - How does this relate to our call to intentional vulnerability? (Appendix 3)
 - What might it say about our attitude to those we seek to reach with the good news? Is it only us with something to give?
3. Reflect on your own attitudes to needs and wants.
- Set yourself the challenge of living more simply: spend less, recycle, re-use, repair.
 - Perhaps consider the 'Live below The Line' campaign, aimed at changing the way people think about poverty, by challenging everyday people to live on the equivalent of the extreme poverty line for 5 days. See more at: <https://www.livebelowtheline.com/#sthash.ebJ81edj.dpuf>

Part VIII

All along their journey,
Brendan and his friends find those who understand;
food is provided,
and needful encouragement to trust God.
Sometimes in silence the Lord will restore
and strengthen them,
sometimes return them to one who can guide them
and be their friend.

Slight explanation surrounds all these happenings in the deep.
Was Brendan's voyage just vivid imaginings in his sleep?
He and his friends were gone;
then they returned to testify
God had gone with them,
and shown them His faithfulness again.

If I am obedient can I trust that God Himself will provide?

Can I trust God's timing?

Aim:

- To think about our experiences of searching for God in times of darkness.

Resources:

- Brendan Liturgy – Part IX
- Bible
- Song lyrics, 'What do I do' (Appendix 6)
- Large card or paper, pens, old newspapers/magazines, glue, scissors

Read:

Brendan Liturgy – Part IX

Activities

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Searching in the dark | <p>1. Brendan comes upon the Promised Land in the darkness when travelling a way he had already come. After years of wandering he suddenly arrives. The arriving is a gift given at the right time, God's perfect time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recall any difficult times in your life, any periods of darkness. What have you learnt from these experiences? How have they shaped your faith and developed your relationships with God and others? • Recall any moments of revelation, any epiphanies, when you have glimpsed God's glory. How have these impacted on your journey of faith? <p>2. Listen to/read the lyrics of the song 'What do I do' (Appendix 6), taken from the CD, Celtic Roots and Rhythms 2 – Homecoming.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which phrases resonate with your own experiences? • Write your own poem, song or letter to God to offer Him your feelings about these experiences. Pray for strength to hold on in the darkness. |
| My times are in Your hands. | <p>We read in this section, '<i>Psalms mark the hours...</i>'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw a large clock face on a large sheet of paper/card. Create some large clock hands that bear the words from Psalm 31:14-15, "I trust in you, O |

Lord...my times are in your hands."

- Add to the clock face images and words to represent those areas of life that you find difficult to entrust to God.
- Use this to aid your prayers, ending with the words from Psalm 31, "*I trust in you, O Lord...my times are in your hands.*"

Part IX

Year after year
they continue in circles over the waves.
Psalms mark the hours
as sunrise and darkness edge their days.
Ever the land they seek
somewhere across the deep
whispers its promise, but holds itself hidden from their gaze.

Then as they journey exactly the way they had before,
waiting a glimpse of its beautiful, still far-distant-shore,
darkness intensifies until before their eyes
the land of promise they saw.

I trust in Thee, O Lord.
I say, Thou art my God.
My times are in Thy hand,
my times are in Thy hand.

Blessed be the Lord
for He has wondrously shown
His steadfast love to me,
His steadfast love to me.

Can I believe God would hide His goodness from me?
and in His time would open my eyes so I can see?

Am I prepared to tell the story?

Aim:

To think about our readiness to tell/be God's story in our own homes and communities

Resources:

- Brendan Liturgy – Part X
- Bible
- Sheets of paper & pens
- Sticky notes
- Community Rule (Appendix 3)

Read:

Brendan Liturgy – Part X

Activities

Going home

1. Having finally reached the Promised Land, Brendan is told to return to the land he left behind and to continue his work there. The vision, the journey, and the experience of the Promised Land were all to prepare him for service back in his own country. What journeys have you undertaken that have helped to prepare you for where you are now?

2. Read the Parable of the Prodigal Sons. (Luke Ch. 15)
 - Which of the brothers left home? Is it possible to leave home without going away? Is it possible to return home without coming back?
 - Have you ever attempted to 'run away' from yourself, others or God? What did you learn from this?

Being the Good News

1. Why is it often harder to *'tell the mighty secrets'* back in our own homes and communities?

2. Brendan's homeland is described in this section as: '*...the school of truth, the college of saints, the student's bower, the hermit's calm retreat, the stranger's home, the hospitable hearth, the shrine to which shall wander pilgrim feet...*'

- Display each of these descriptions on a separate piece of card. What might each of these look like in our own homes? As an intentional Community? Write your thoughts on sticky notes and place on the appropriate description. Share and compare these.
- How do these descriptions relate to our commitment to be available and intentionally vulnerable as outlined in our Rule for Living? (Appendix 3)

Part X

So Brendan found the place he was seeking,
the promise fulfilled, and the day without night.
It seemed a place that had no end or boundary
until they reached a river broad, perhaps unpassable.
The land continued rich and fertile on the other side.
Then came a messenger who spoke to them by name, explaining:

Yes, they have found this place, but only for a time.
People of Ireland and other lands will hear the story
of their adventure, and be baffled or inspired.

He said:

Return, your mission now is over.
God who did call you here, now bids you go.
Return in peace, then, to your native shore
and tell the mighty secrets that you know.
Seek your own isle – Christ's newly-bought domain
which nature with an emerald pencil paints.
Such as it is, long long shall it remain,
the school of truth, the college of the saints,
the student's bower, the hermit's calm retreat,
the stranger's home, the hospitable hearth,
the shrine to which shall wander pilgrim feet
from all the neighbouring nations of the earth.

Now they move on to tell the story
of what has been and is, but also is to come.
God in the now prepares us for the future;
the end is not yet – with Him it's just begun.

On what is my mind set?

Aim:

To think about the how we develop wisdom and mindfulness

Resources:

- Brendan Liturgy – Part XI
- Bible

Read:

Brendan Liturgy – Part XI

Activities

Wisdom

1. Despite his travels, we read that Brendan’s wisdom was not yet perfected.
 - What is wisdom? How is it different from knowledge and understanding?
 - Why is it imperative to faith to develop wisdom alongside knowledge and understanding? How do they inter-relate?

2. Read Proverbs 2:1-15. Note the language of journey that is used: *‘walk blamelessly, ‘paths of justice’, ‘good path’*.
 - What does this language suggest about how wisdom is gained?
 - How might the practice of the Daily Office help us to walk the way of wisdom?

3. Despite all he has seen and learned Brendan is not too proud to seek advice before continuing his work.
 - Who are the mothers and fathers of our faith to whom you would go to seek wisdom and advice?
 - Consider finding a spiritual director, if you haven’t already done so.

Being mindful of God

In his book *‘Lord of Creation: A resource for Creative Celtic Spirituality’*, Brendan O’Malley suggests several walking exercises for helping to engage in the present moment and to be conscious of God’s presence with us. Here is one to try:

- Walk outside very slowly and deliberately, conscious of how and where you place your feet. Be mindful of the earth you tread, that each step connects you with the One who created it.
- Breath in and out slowly, conscious that every breath you take is from

God, without whom we have no life.

- Allow your walking and breathing to unite in rhythm. Be mindful that no journey to God is possible without allowing God to travel with you.

Part XI

After all his adventures, Brendan's wisdom still was not perfected.

There was plenty God had to teach him,
and many others whose example he could learn by.

It is said it was the overheard exchange between two sea-monsters
which sent Brendan searching for Brigid of Kildare.

Eager to know, he consulted her wisdom
and asked her the reason the monsters revered her
who spoke of the power of her fervent prayer.
'For myself, he said, 'since I came to live devoutly,
I cannot go seven steps without my mind being set on God.'

'That is good', smiled Brigid, 'but, if I should answer truly,
I'd say that since the hour I first set my mind on God
never for one moment have I taken it away.'

Brendan laughed. 'It seems the monsters of the deep spoke truly –
the Son of Mary-virgin found a welcome in your heart;
and His power and your thought of Him are rooted both in love.'

O Jesu Christ, focus my attention on You.
O Son of Mary, be cradled in my heart.
O Most Holy, fix my mind and my heart's gaze
upon You.

What task has God blessed me with?

Aim:

To think about the tasks that God has called us to.

Resources:

- Brendan Liturgy – Part XII
- Sticky notes
- Bible
- Paper plates, pens

Read:

Brendan Liturgy – Part XII

Activities

Formation

Brendan had ten years of travelling ministry before ‘settling’ and establishing the monastic houses associated with him to this day. It had been a long apprenticeship. Great works often have deep roots.

- Think of journeys you make – commuting, shopping, going on holiday etc. How much importance do you place on the journey itself, as opposed to the reason for it? What can the journeys themselves teach you?
- Think of the roles and responsibilities you have now? How have your previous experiences prepared you for these? How might your current situation be preparing you for future roles and responsibilities?

Blessing or burden?

1. On sticky notes, write down each role or responsibility that you have currently: in the home, in the wider family, at work or school/college, in church and the local community.
 - Place the notes in order of how much time/energy they take up.
 - Now place them in order of how much of a blessing or a burden you consider them to be. Why is that?
 - Finally, order them as you believe they should be.
 - Pray for wisdom to know what is important rather than urgent, and for grace to do these important tasks cheerfully. You may like to use the

words from this section of the liturgy: *'Give me your task, Your blessing, and establish what my hands can do.'*

2. Meditate on John 4:34: *'My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work.'* On a paper plate, draw and label the things you consider to be God's priorities for you at the moment. Write the verse around the rim and place it somewhere as a reminder for prayer.

Part XII

Brendan returned to his earlier task
of the founding of monasteries,
schools for the gospel, support for the faithful.
Still he would follow the flight of the wild goose,
the call of the Spirit to seek God's adventures;
and so for ten years around Britain he travelled,
engaging in mission and visiting others
to strengthen in service and learn from their wisdom;
and then he returned to his early foundations.
Ardfert was one of these, and Bright Gleam Kilmore.

But after the time of his famous sea-voyage,
offerings were brought him, supporting the houses;
and men and women sought religious life.

Inis (or island) da-dromand was in Shannon river;
there a community flourished and grew.

All in all, three thousand were monastics under Brendan's rule.

But when he founded Clonfert, he said, in words of scripture,

'Here is my rest for ever, here will I dwell.'

Strengthened in faith, may my work be Yours.

Give me Your task, Your blessing,
and establish what my hands can do.

**Am I surprised by the evil I sometimes
encounter in myself or in others?**

Aim:

To think about the challenges of community life, and the importance of forgiveness.

Resources:

- Brendan Liturgy – Part XIII
- Bible
- Shield outlines (Appendix 7)
- Strips of paper, coloured pens, felt tips etc

Read:

Brendan Liturgy – Part XIII

Activities

**Confession
and
forgiveness**

1. Life together is a challenge. Community is a 'terrible place' where we cannot hide from our own and others' weaknesses, anger and passions. Even one of Brendan's fellow monks commits murder! Read Jesus' words in Matt.5: 21-22.
 - Why does Jesus liken angry, vengeful words to murder?
 - In what ways can we 'kill' someone without taking their life?

2. Now read Matt. 5:23-26.
 - Why do you think Jesus makes seeking reconciliation with one another a prerequisite to offering worship?
 - Are we honest with ourselves about the negative things we bring into our relationships? What can we do to address our weaknesses?
 - Are we honest with others about the hurt we feel from them and seek

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| | <p>restoration of relationship? What positive steps can we take to do this?</p> <p>3. Prayerfully call to mind anyone with whom you have not yet been reconciled, who needs your forgiveness, or from whom you need to ask forgiveness. Resolve, with God's help, to offer or ask for forgiveness, even if the person(s) concerned do not wish to accept or give it.</p> |
| <p>Being Community</p> | <p>1. What builds community? Design a Community shield (Appendix 7) to represent the values and qualities that we should seek to develop and model. What would be the Community motto? Write across the ribbon.</p> <p>2. On strips of paper, write the names those listed in the Prayer Guide for the current week. Write down your own name and those of any gathered with you. As a sign of your commitment to your fellow Companions and Friends, link the strips to form a chain. Pray that God may bless each one and enable them to be peace-makers.</p> |

Part XIII

Life in community is not easy.
Sharing life with others
makes holiness hard to find.
Brendan would not be surprised
at difficulty between
five monks he sent
to Inis-da-dromand
to live together there.

Some of them came to him,
telling their trouble.
Strife had developed
between them; and one
had an axe in the head
from behind, and died.

'Return,' Brendan said,
'to your brother, and tell him to wake.
I would speak with him here.'
They returned, and the dead man arose
and went to meet Brendan, the weapon,
with which he was wounded,
still lodged in his head.

Brendan remembered how on his sea-voyage he often
had brought peace to souls,
who then had speeded God-ward.
So now he asked this brother the question,
'Would you now rather remain in this life
or go to Christ in heaven?'
He chose for home and gladly died.

Am I surprised by the evil
I sometimes encounter
in me or in others?
Help me to live as one glad to die.

Teach me to live with eternity in view.

Is Heaven's music real to me?

Aim:

To think about the place of music and silence in our worship of God

Resources:

- Brendan Liturgy – Part XIV
- Bible
- Mobile phone/iPad with facility to record/take pictures
- Access to computer

Read:

Brendan Liturgy – Part XIV

Activities

Heaven's music

1. Think of a piece of music that you find particularly powerful, that moves, inspires, uplifts, or challenges you.
 - What makes the music powerful?
 - While the styles vary, music and song is central to corporate worship across cultures and denominations. Why do you think this is so?
2. A few years ago, a group of Companions walked St. Cuthbert's Way together. Part of each day was spent walking in silence. During these times, we became aware of the most beautiful sounds: a chorus of skylarks, the lament of curlews, the graceful call and response of lapwings, the whisper of wind through pine needles, the rhythmic ebb and flow of the tide. Somehow breaking the silence afterwards seemed invasive and jarring!
 - What brings the music of heaven to you?
 - What have you heard which expresses something of the reality of God's heaven and leaves you unsatisfied with imitations?
3. Using a mobile phone, iPad or similar, create a sound collage of natural sounds – running water, birdsong, wind, rustling leaves. Take some accompanying photos & produce a slideshow.

| | |
|----------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play this as you meditate upon the words of Psalm 19: 1-4, '<i>The heavens are telling the glory of God...</i>'. • Alternatively, you may wish to set these words to music to sing meditatively while you watch a slideshow of aspects of nature. |
| Silence | <p>Read Psalm 62:3-7. Spend a period of time in silence before God with no agenda. If this is not your normal practice, you may wish to start with 5 minutes. You may like to close your eyes, or use a candle or another focal point to help you. Reflect on your experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you notice? What distractions came? How did you feel about the silence? • How easy do you find it to be silent in the company of others? Do you feel tempted to fill the gaps in conversation? • Why do you think silence is an important spiritual discipline? |

Part XIV

Once a student came and visited Clonfert,
and played his harp at mid-day in refectory.
The brothers blessed and welcomed all his music;
and he only then expressed regret
that Brendan was not present.

'He would not allow you to play for him,' they said.
'At least he would not hear, since
for seven years or so he's carried balls of wax around
to stick inside his ears whenever music sounds.'

The student followed Brendan into church
and begged the abbot there to let him play.
The harp was ready - and the balls of wax.
The student remonstrated, and insisted
Brendan listened while he played two or three tunes.

For his insistence he won Brendan's blessing,
but also explanation for the little balls of wax;
for seven years previously, as Brendan prayed there
the angel Michael came, as if a tiny bird
to bring God's blessing, and make music for his Lord.

The bird placed its beak under the shadow of the wing
and sang and sang heaven's tune.
All music after that had seemed discordant,
but silence sometimes harmony can hold.

And so,
is Heaven's music real to me?
causing my spirit to be stirred
and to put off its weariness?

Do I fear the final journey?

Aim:

To think about how we face death, and what legacy we will leave for others

Resources:

- Brendan Liturgy – Part XV
- Paper & pens
- Quotes about death (Appendix 8)

Read:

Brendan Liturgy – Part XV

Activities

Legacy

1. Brendan gave instructions concerning his burial. He desired to be *‘placed quietly in a wagon in the charge of only one brother, unnoticed.’* He didn’t want a fuss, a funeral that put the focus on himself. Yet he left a legacy for future generations. We read that heaven noticed.
 - If you could write your own epitaph, what would it say?
 - What would others write about your life, your legacy?
 - Design your tombstone! What might be written on it?

2. Call to mind a loved one who has died.
 - What is their legacy to you? What have you learnt from them?
 - Thank God for all they mean to you and entrust them to His care.
 - Pray, that in your turn, you may leave a legacy for others that will help them to encounter God and to know His love.

Facing death

1. Read the quotes about death (Appendix 8).
 - Which do you like most? Why? Which challenges you most? Why?
 - Why do you think it is often such a taboo subject?

2. Have you, like Brendan, ever given thought to your own funeral? What would you wish to happen? How would like others to say goodbye? Do you think this is a morbid or a healthy approach to take?

3. Watch the YouTube slideshow featuring Loreena McKennitt’s song

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>'<i>Skellig</i>'. It tells of St. Columbanus' final words with a fellow brother as he approaches death. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9zE3oAZnsuc What would you want your final words to be?</p> |
|--|--|

Part XV

One day as Brendan sailed by coracle across Dingle Bay
a man shouted to him from headland of Valentia Isle.
He turned his craft to shore, and followed
until the stranger brought him
to two men about to die.
Waters of baptism, bread and body, wine and blood.
He almost heard the trumpet of the angel
as he watched them leave this life.

And now his time was coming.
Carefully he gathered chosen friends
to be around him, went to visit, last of all, his sister Bryg.
There in safety at her convent
Brendan leaves detailed instructions of his burial,
for his body must be taken to Clonfert.
Even in death this focus gives direction -
firm foundations will be laid
for generations yet to come.

Nothing must interfere with this,
his body be placed quietly in a wagon,
in charge of only one brother, unnoticed.

But heaven notices.

And as Brendan, unafraid through great adventures,
for a moment now has fear of passing all alone,
leaving his friends behind him,
upon his darksome journey
to the presence of the King,
in far Iona good Columba
calls to Dermot, 'Hurry, now we celebrate:
this is the day of birth for blessed Brendan
and I see the heavens open, angel choirs
hasten now to greet his soul, and bear him
to the throne of God Himself.

They shout. God stoops, and Brendan cries ...

The mist returns. The land of promise fades from view.

Our work awaits, and bread and wine.'

Lord, I will trust you

Aim:

To reflect upon what God has been saying to us individually and/or corporately through this journey with Brendan.

Resources:

- Brendan Liturgy – Part XVI
- Any resources used and created throughout this journey with Brendan

Read:

Brendan Liturgy – Part XVI

Closing Activity

- Make a gallery of any artwork, writing, objects, music etc. that you have created or used to explore the Brendan liturgy.
- Prayerfully and quietly re-visit these stages of your journey with the Brendan liturgy and consider which aspects of the journey are particularly significant for you at the moment.
- Pause where you feel prompted and ask God to help you over the coming days and weeks to develop a deeper sense of what this means for your journey personally, and/or as part of the Community.
- You may like to refer back to the Introductory activity and the stanzas and phrases of the liturgy that you highlighted then. Has the journey with Brendan confirmed or altered your focus?
- The final section of the liturgy, Part XVI, is a summary of all the themes and questions we have explored. Pray this last section slowly and mindfully, not just for yourself, but for and with others across the Community who are making this journey as well. Allow God's Spirit to guide your prayers.
- Close by thanking God for the journey you have made and are still making. You may like to end with the words: 'Lord, I will trust you.'

Part XVI

Lord, I will trust You,
help me to journey beyond the familiar
and into the unknown.

Give me the faith to leave old ways
and break fresh ground with You.

Christ of the mysteries, can I trust You
to be stronger than each storm in me?

Do I still yearn for Your glory to lighten on me?

I will show others the care You've given me.

I determine amidst all uncertainty always to trust.

I choose to live beyond regret,
and let You recreate my life.

I believe You will make a way for me
and provide for me,
if only I trust You and obey.

I will trust in the darkness and know
that my times are still in Your hand.

I will believe You for my future,
chapter by chapter, until all the story is written.

Focus my mind and my heart upon You,
my attention always on You without alteration.

Strengthen me with Your blessing
and appoint to me the task.

Teach me to live with eternity in view.

Tune my spirit to the music of heaven.

Feed me,

and, somehow,

make my obedience count for You.

Appendix 1

Brother, sister let me serve you,
Let me be as Christ to you
Pray that I may have the grace to
Let you be my servant, too.

We are pilgrims on a journey
We're companions on the road
We are here to help each other
Walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
In the night time of your fear
I will hold my hand out to you
Speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping
When you laugh I'll laugh with you
I will share your joy and sorrow
Till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven
We shall find such harmony
Born of all we've known together
Of Christ's love and agony.

Appendix 2



© Brendan Artwork by Lynda Owen-Hussey



© Brendan Artwork by Lynda Owen-Hussey

Appendix 3

Walking on Water.

It had been a long day.

As Jeshua went to pray alone, we set off from shore - still buzzing with the excitement of what we had seen.

As we rowed we talked - just the way we would at the end of a days fishing - but this was not an ordinary day.

5000 people - fed with a small boy's snack.

It was unbelievable but when Jeshua did it it seemed the most natural thing in the world.

'You feed them.'

'What do you have?'

'Tell the people to sit down'

'Give it to them'

and there it was.....everyone had enough.....more than enough.

In the boat the talk gradually faded away and we fell silent. I wish I could say it was with awe and wonder but a stiff breeze had come up while we were talking and the rowing was getting harder. If we had been paying attention we might have seen it coming and pulled back into shore but by now we were right out in the middle of the lake. Better to keep our head into the waves than to risk turning and running before them. Our boat was sound and we knew if we didn't let up on the oars we would get there.

Andrew and I were on the aft bench, sharing an oar as we had done so many times before when - what was that? I thought I saw something moving out on the water. It was hard to be sure. The light was poor by now and spray was flying whipped up by the wind. But there it was again....What was it? a water spout? a freak wave? Something had risen up on the surface of the lake and was coming towards us.....moving against the direction of the wind.

That just wasn't natural.

I could see by the look on Andrew's face that he had seen it as well. We didn't say a word for fear of what might happen. Folk say we fishermen are superstitious but when you live your life at the mercy of the weather and have lost friends and family to these waters you don't take anything for granted. We pulled harder on our oar and prayed for the wind to ease.

Suddenly Andrew stopped rowing.

I turned and yelled

'What are you doing? We'll lose our heading and get swamped!' But the look on his face cut me dead.

'It's a man', he said in a voice cold as death.

I followed his gaze and sure enough, there couldn't be any doubt. It was the figure of a man coming towards us across the water; leaping from wave top to wave top.

'In the name of our father Abraham, ROW, row for your lives', I shouted and we all set to the oars again. But it was no good, whatever it was - ghost or spirit or demon from the pit was gaining on us - its robes whipping and cracking in the wind like the very flames of hell. As it drew nearer we heard a sound ringing above the noise of the wind and the waves -it was.... laughing?

Then....

'Don't be afraid, it's me', he cried.

'Lord?'

'Yes, Peter, it's me. Were you expecting someone else?'

'Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you across the water.'

'Okay, come on then!' he cried, laughing and hopping from wave to wave.

So without a second's thought I was over the side of the boat, walking towards Jeshua. Who else could it have been? It had to be him. He had called me and I was on my way. It was like I had forgotten that I couldn't walk on water. Everything I thought I knew about the sea was left behind as I followed the call of my Lord and friend to come and dance with him on the waves.

I took three steps

- then I thought 'hang on, this is impossible' and I, Peter, the Rock, sank like a stone.

I cried out. I've no idea what I said. It was just a roar of fear and impotence directed at Him. As I sank I was aware of two things ; the water closing over my head and his hand grabbing mine. With a grip as firm as a vice but gentle as a mother's caress he lifted me into the boat - and the wind died to a whisper.

And was he concerned? Not a bit! He was still laughing as I stood there bedraggled and dripping like a dog pulled out of a well.

'Why did you doubt?' he asked - as if the answer wasn't obvious.

I had failed, I sank, I nearly drowned, I needed Jeshua to haul me out of the deep water.

But I know I would rather have taken those three steps and then sunk than have stayed in the boat and still be wondering to this day what might have been.

By Rob Holden

Appendix 4

The Rule of the Northumbria Community

This is the Rule we embrace.

This is the Rule we will keep: we say YES to AVAILABILITY; we say YES to VULNERABILITY.

We are called to be AVAILABLE to God and to others:

Firstly to be available to God in the cell of our own heart when we can be turned towards Him, and seek His face;

then to be available to others in a call to exercise hospitality, recognising that in welcoming others we honour and welcome the Christ Himself;

then to be available to others through participation in His care and concern for them, by praying and interceding for their situations in the power of the Holy Spirit;

then to be available for participation in mission of various kinds according to the calling and initiatives of the Spirit.

We are called to intentional, deliberate VULNERABILITY:

We embrace the vulnerability of being teachable expressed in:

a discipline of prayer;

in exposure to Scripture;

a willingness to be accountable to others in ordering our ways and our heart in order to effect change.

We embrace the responsibility of taking the heretical imperative:

by speaking out when necessary or asking awkward questions that will often upset the status quo;

by making relationships the priority, and not reputation.

We embrace the challenge to live as church without walls, living openly amongst unbelievers and other believers in a way that the life of God in ours can be seen, challenged or questioned. This will involve us building friendships outside our Christian ghettos or club-mentality, not with ulterior evangelistic motives, but because we genuinely care.

Source: <http://www.northumbriacommunity.org/who-we-are/the-rule-deeper>

Appendix 5

The Comfortable Words, Common Worship, Main Volume, p.273)

Hear the words of comfort our Saviour Christ says
to all who truly turn to him:

Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest. **Matthew 11.28**

God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son,
that whoever believes in him should not perish
but have eternal life. **John 3.16**

Hear what Saint Paul says:

This saying is true, and worthy of full acceptance,
that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. **1 Timothy 1.15**

Hear what Saint John says:

If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father,
Jesus Christ the righteous;
and he is the propitiation for our sins. **1 John 2.1,2**

Source: <http://www.churchofengland.org/media/41130/mvcommunion154-335.pdf>

Appendix 6

What do I do when you are silent
And the heavens seem like brass?
What do I do when I can't find you
And my faith caves in like shattered glass?
Speak – or I die
My hope is running dry
You know that I need your words of life.

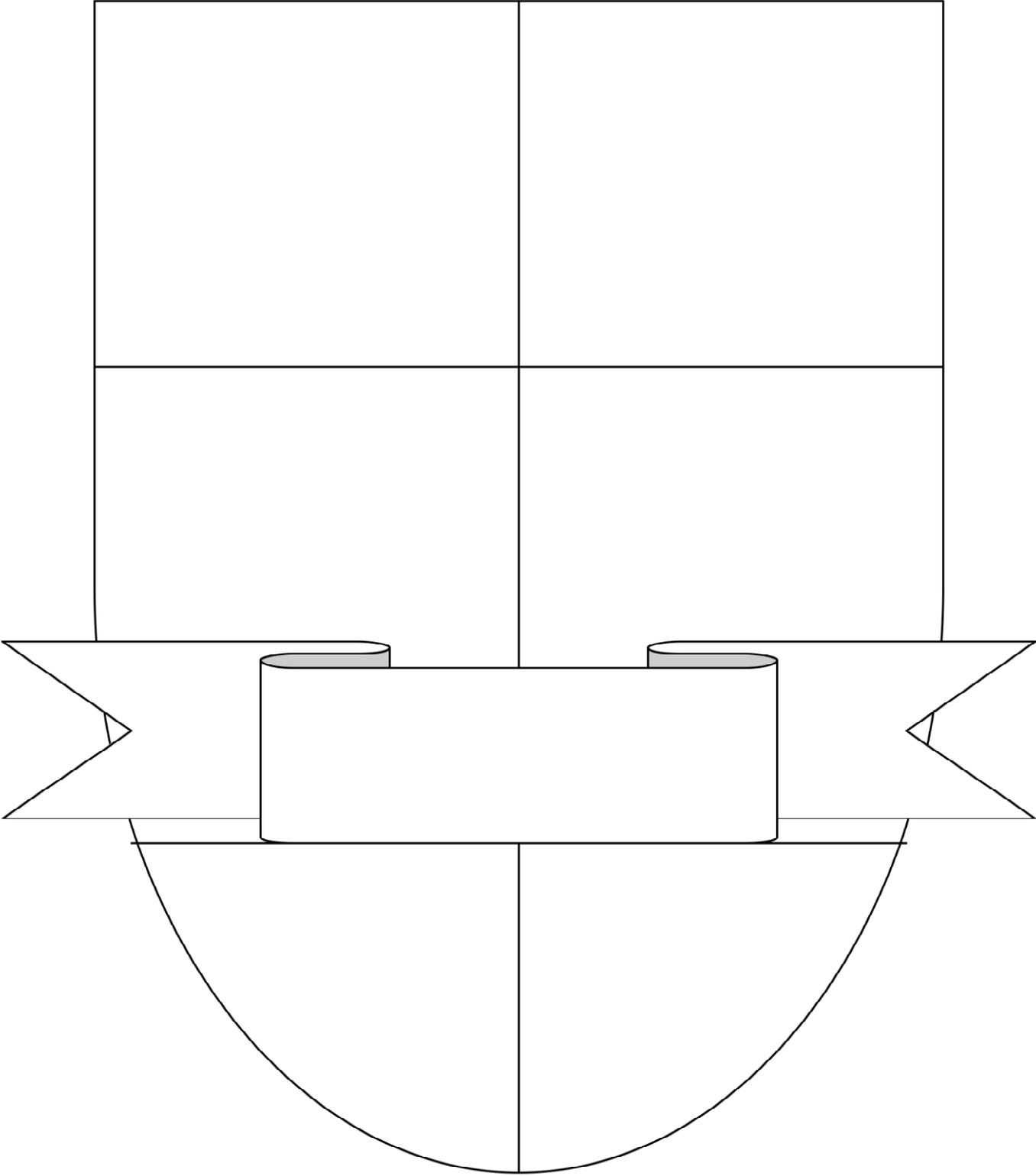
What do I do when you don't answer
And my prayers stick in my throat?
What do I do when I feel God-forsaken
Tell me, did I miss the holy boat?
Speak – or I die
My hope is running dry
You know that I need your words of life

I keep on shouting but all I hear are echoes
I keep on looking but memories are all I see
Speak – or I die
My hope is running dry
You know that I need your words of life

What do I do when vision starts to wither
And darkness settles on my soul?
What do I do when I'm weary of trying
Just how much farther must I fall?
Speak – or I die
My hope is running dry
You know that I need your words of life

*Nick and Anita Haigh,
Celtic Roots & Rhythms 2 – Homecoming,
© 2002 Break of Day Music/Daybreak Music*

Appendix 7



Appendix 8

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>A man who won't die for something is not fit to live.</p> <p><i>Martin Luther King</i></p> | <p>While I thought that I was learning how to live, I have been learning how to die.</p> <p><i>Leonardo Da Vinci</i></p> | <p>No one can confidently say that he will still be living tomorrow.</p> <p><i>Euripides</i></p> |
| <p>I am not afraid of death, I just don't want to be there when it happens.</p> <p><i>Woody Allen</i></p> | <p>He who doesn't fear death dies only once.</p> <p><i>Giovanni Flacone</i></p> | <p>Some people are so afraid do die that they never begin to live.</p> <p><i>Henry Van Dyke</i></p> |
| <p>Death may be the King of terrors... but Jesus is the King of kings!</p> <p><i>Dwight L. Moody</i></p> | <p>I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live.</p> <p><i>Jesus (John.11: 25)</i></p> | <p>Death is no more than passing from one room into another.</p> <p><i>Helen Keller</i></p> |