

*FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE*

*IN THE POWER  
OF THE SPIRIT*



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

## INTRODUCTION:

As a dispersed and diverse Community, we aspire to embody the core values expressed in our Rule of Life. Covenanted together, our individual stories are woven together into God's greater story as we respond to his call upon our lives. Alone, we each endeavour to seek God for His own sake as 'the one thing necessary', to embrace a rhythm of prayer through the Daily Office, and to serve God where we are, as we are, in the midst of a rapidly changing and uncertain world. Together, we share a commitment to our Rule of Life, to be available and intentionally vulnerable to God and to others.

Over recent years, our Easter workshops and regional gatherings have explored different aspects of our Community Rule, using our liturgies as a catalyst for creativity, meditation, discussion and action. In particular, the 'Follow the Example' sections of Celtic Daily Prayer, and the stories of the saints that inspired them, have provided a useful framework as we consider what it means to live out our common calling alone, together.

In this booklet, through engaging with the Aidan liturgy and the stories recounted about his life, we will reflect upon our core purposes as a Community and the virtues we seek to foster. Praised by Bede as someone *who 'lived as they taught'*, Aidan continually studied the Gospels, taking care to live out their teachings and to encourage others to do the same. He was loved for his many virtues:

- an authentic man who reached out to all and who was truly himself with everyone, irrespective of their social status;
- a courageous man, unafraid to speak truth to power, yet always in a spirit of peace, humility and love;
- a patient man who persevered with those among whom he lived and to whom he ministered;
- a selfless man, who brought hope to the poor and oppressed;
- a creative man, willing to take risks for the sake of Christ and his gospel.

In our contemporary world, we have much to learn from Aidan. May we be inspired to follow his example. Do consider sharing your experiences of using the activities in this booklet to encourage others across the Community, perhaps by contributing an article to our newsletter, *Caim*.

God bless your journeying with Aidan.

## 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.

Following an introductory section entitled '*Journeying with Aidan*', this booklet is structured around five sections of the Aidan liturgy, with a concluding section to aid reflection. Each section is linked to an extract from St. Aidan's life as recounted in Bede's '*A History of the English Church and People*'. Each section will have as its focus a core purpose of the Northumbria Community and a corresponding virtue that we aspire to develop. Through engaging with the various craft activities, scripture readings, discussion starters, images, songs and stories, the intention is that we, like Aidan, are inspired to be more attuned to the voice of God and more willing to respond to his call.

There are over 30 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 sections 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 Aidan.

## CONTENTS:

The booklet is divided into the following sections:

1. **Journeying with Aidan** - introducing the key questions and themes.
2. **Perseverance** – living out our Community Rule in everyday life.
3. **Hope** – inspiring others by the way we choose to live.
4. **Authenticity** – inspiring each other to be our unique, God-designed selves.
5. **Courage** – understanding how our personal, inner life connects with and impacts upon our corporate community life.
6. **Creativity** – discerning what it means to live the questions and follow the Rule in our own context.
7. **Alone Together** – final reflections.

## JOURNEYING WITH AIDAN

**Aim:**

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

**Resources:**

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

### Introductory Activity

1. Find out about St. Aidan's life story. What virtues did Aidan demonstrate throughout his life? You may wish to:
  - read the introduction to the Aidan liturgy on the next page.
  - read a summary of St. Aidan's life story by Rev Canon Kate Tristram. See:  
<https://www.lindisfarne.org.uk/general/aidan.htm>
2. Prayerfully read the Aidan 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. What strikes you most?
  - Highlight or circle these words and phrases on a print out of the liturgy.
  - Reflect on these words and 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 Aidan.
  - Pray for all those across the Community who are journeying with Aidan that we may give space for God to speak, and that our hearts may be open to receive and respond.

## AIDAN – IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

AIDAN OF LINDISFARNE (? – 651)

### **A Call to Mission**

Long ago, on the island of Iona, a meeting had been called. An angry brother spoke about his failure, telling of the hardness of heart in the kingdom of Northumbria, a land of darkness refusing the life-giving light, inhabited by a stubborn, unreachable people. And one man heard, and his heart was stirred with compassion for that land and its people. To open his heart to this could cost him everything: leaving the island he loved, the companionship of his brothers, their prayer and work. Were there not others still to reach much closer to home? If he stayed seated among his brothers no one would notice him, no one would know what he had heard in his heart: the cry of the desert, 'Come over to Northumbria and help us.'

'O Lord', he prayed, 'give me springs and I will water this land. I will go, Lord. I will hold this people in my heart.' A moment later it was his own voice, the voice of Aidan, that broke the awkward silence. 'Perhaps, my brother, if you had spoken with more gentleness, and of the love of Christ, giving them the gospel to nourish them like milk is given to a tiny baby, then you would have won them and remained among them.'

*This form of prayer may be used:*

- *on Aidan's day (August 31)*
- *on pilgrimage to Holy Island or Bamburgh*
- *for sending out anyone going away on mission*
- *by any mission team while they are away*

*All who wish may read in turn. \* Indicates a change of reader. With a large group, split into two halves and read alternately. All say together sections in bold type.*

### **Part A:**

\* Then I heard a voice in heaven saying,  
'Whom shall I send?  
and who will go for us?'  
Then said I,  
'Here am I; send me.'

\* I will go, Lord, if You lead me:  
I will hold Your people in my heart.

\* Deeper in my heart I will hear Your call;  
I will cry for the desert  
until my eyes run with tears because  
people do not obey Your laws.

### **Part B:**

\* If I open my eyes to the world around me,  
if I open my heart to the people that surround me,  
then I feel pain and brokenness,  
I see suffering and injustice.

\* Lord, see what evil the prince of this world is devising.  
Let the wind of Your Spirit blow  
and reverse the works of darkness:  
and Your fire will cover the earth.

**Deliver us, Lord, from every evil  
and grant us peace in our day.  
In your mercy, Lord, keep us free from sin,  
and protect us from all anxiety  
as we wait in joyful hope  
for the coming of our saviour, Jesus Christ.  
Let Your kingdom come, Lord, in me.**

#### **Part C:**

**I pray the protection of Christ to clothe me,  
Christ to enfold me,  
to surround me and guard me  
this day and every day,  
surrounding me and my companions,  
enfolding me and every friend.**

\* We pray for ourselves,  
for the gift of friendship and of faithfulness;  
and that we would be freed from selfishness.

**We will journey with the kind-hearted Saviour.  
If we have fed the hungry from our own table  
God will feed us with all good gifts.**

\* We will keep before us  
the deepening and strengthening  
of our companions' faith,  
assisting each other in meditation and prayer.

#### **Part D:**

\* May we protect each other's times for silence.  
Give us the courage to say:

**Leave me alone with God as much as may be.**

**As the tide draws the waters  
close in upon the shore,  
make me an island, set apart,  
alone with You, God,  
holy to You.**

**Then with the turning of the tide,  
prepare me to carry Your presence  
to the busy world beyond,  
the world that rushes in on me,  
till the waters come again  
and fold me back to You.**

*Pause for reflection*

**Part E:**

\* Lord, give us the desire to love goodness,  
to passionately love goodness;  
teach us moderation in all things;  
teach us to love wisdom,  
and to greatly love Your law.

\* So often we hold too lightly to our belief.  
May we plant the faith patiently,  
calmly and untiringly  
in the good ground of hungry hearts.

**God and the angels guard us!**  
**May He bring us home rejoicing!**

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## PERSEVERANCE

### **Aim:**

To think about our willingness to commit to living out our Community Rule in everyday life.

### **Resources:**

- Aidan Liturgy – Part A
- Community Rule (Appendix 1)
- *The Very Busy Spider* children's story by Eric Carle
- 'Aidan and Corman' extract, from Bede's History (Appendix 2)
- Bible
- Paper, card, pens and art materials including wool/string for the spider web
- Examples of illustrated manuscripts (Book of Kells, Lindisfarne Gospels)

### **Read:**

- Aidan Liturgy – Part A

### **Activities**

1. Read *The Very Busy Spider*, by Eric Carle. In this short children's story, some farm animals try to divert a busy spider from spinning her web, but she persists and creates something both beautiful and useful. Discuss:
  - What distractions did the spider have to deal with? What things tend to distract you?
  - What strategy did the spider adopt to maintain her focus? What strategies do you find helpful to stay on task?
2. Create a colourful web using wool or string. Design a 'spider of perseverance' to represent a spiritual discipline that you wish to give more attention to. Add it to the web. Identify 'flies of distraction' that often lead you to give up or avoid addressing this aspect of spiritual growth. Symbolically bind these 'flies' with wool or string and attach to the web. Ask God to help you overcome the distractions and develop a greater attentiveness to his voice.
3. Part A of the Aidan liturgy describes a willingness to respond to God's call. How can we hear the call of God '*deeper in [our] hearts*'? What might help to deepen our attentiveness and sharpen our response?
4. Read the 'Aidan and Corman' extract from Bede's history comparing how they set about introducing the Northumbrian people to the gospel (Appendix 2). How did their approaches differ? Why did Corman give up? Why do you think Aidan was more 'successful'? How did Aidan live out availability and intentional vulnerability in his response to go to Northumbria?

5. Revisit the Community Rule (Appendix 1). What spiritual disciplines are required to live out our Rule for Life? Which aspects do you find most challenging?
6. The word '*perseverance*' comes from the Latin '*per severus*', meaning to go through something very strict or challenging. Read 1 Cor. 9: 24-27. To what does Paul liken the perseverance required to stay true to our Christian calling? What makes it a challenge? What is the prize?
7. Create an acrostic prayer on the word 'Persevere'. You may wish to illuminate each letter of the word, as in the Lindisfarne Gospels or Book of Kells. Use this exercise to reflect on the spiritual disciplines outlined in the Rule, and pray that God would strengthen your desire to be available and intentionally vulnerable to him and to others.

#### PART A:

\* THEN I HEARD A VOICE IN HEAVEN SAYING,  
'WHOM SHALL I SEND?  
AND WHO WILL GO FOR US?'  
THEN SAID I,  
'HERE AM I; SEND ME.'

\* I WILL GO, LORD, IF YOU LEAD ME:  
I WILL HOLD YOUR PEOPLE IN MY HEART.

\* DEEPER IN MY HEART I WILL HEAR YOUR CALL;  
I WILL CRY FOR THE DESERT  
UNTIL MY EYES RUN WITH TEARS BECAUSE  
PEOPLE DO NOT OBEY YOUR LAWS.

## H O P E

### **Aim:**

To think about how we can inspire others and be a prophetic sign by the way we choose to live.

### **Resources:**

- Aidan Liturgy – Part B
- Community Rule (Appendix 1)
- Paper, card, pens and art materials
- Highway Code/examples of national road signs
- ‘Aidan and Oswald’ extract, from Bede’s History (Appendix 2)
- Bible
- Access to the internet

### **Read:**

- Aidan Liturgy – Part B

### **Activities**

1. A core purpose of the Community is to live prophetically, to be a sign of hope that another way of living is possible. In the current global climate, what should such a way of living:
  - resist or challenge? RED
  - warn about or be prepared for? AMBER
  - embrace? GREEN
  - Display your reflections as a typical traffic light signal – red, amber, green. Ask God for his wisdom to be a sign of hope where He has placed you.
2. Highway codes generally include 3 main types of road sign: commands, hazard warnings and direction/information. With reference to the Community Rule (Appendix 1), what are the key imperatives (commands), potential pitfalls (hazards) and guidance (direction) that we need to take note of? Illustrate these by creating a ‘Community Highway Code’. You may wish to give alternative interpretations to existing road signs or design some new ones of your own!
3. Part B of the Aidan liturgy expresses the desire to be more open to the world and a plea for God’s intervention and protection. How do we maintain an openness that feels *‘pain and brokenness’* and *‘suffering and injustice’* without giving in to despair? Given so much disturbing daily news, how can we remain *‘free from sin’*, *‘protected from all anxiety’* and expectant *‘in joyful hope’*?

4. Read the 'Aidan and Oswald' extract from Bede's history describing how Aidan blessed Oswald's hand for his generosity to the poor (Appendix 2). In what sense were the actions of both Oswald and Aidan signs of hope to those who witnessed them?
5. Read Job 17:11-16 describing Job's loss of hope. What can cause us to lose hope? Now read Romans 5:1-5. According to Paul, what gives us hope despite the suffering we may face?
6. Read the BBC news report about a Greek grandmother who welcomes Syrian refugees into her home. In what sense is her life a prophetic sign?  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-36127051>  
Share stories that have inspired hope. Create your own 'Good News' newspaper and include some hope-full headlines.

### PART B:

\* IF I OPEN MY EYES TO THE WORLD AROUND ME,  
IF I OPEN MY HEART TO THE PEOPLE  
THAT SURROUND ME,  
THEN I FEEL PAIN AND BROKENNESS,  
I SEE SUFFERING AND INJUSTICE.

\* LORD, SEE WHAT EVIL THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD IS DEVISING.  
LET THE WIND OF YOUR SPIRIT BLOW  
AND REVERSE THE WORKS OF DARKNESS:  
AND YOUR FIRE WILL COVER THE EARTH.

DELIVER US, LORD, FROM EVERY EVIL  
AND GRANT US PEACE IN OUR DAY.  
IN YOUR MERCY, LORD, KEEP US FREE FROM SIN,  
AND PROTECT US FROM ALL ANXIETY  
AS WE WAIT IN JOYFUL HOPE  
FOR THE COMING OF OUR SAVIOUR, JESUS CHRIST.  
LET YOUR KINGDOM COME, LORD, IN ME.

## AUTHENTICITY

### **Aim:**

To think about how we can help each other to be true to ourselves and live authentically.

### **Resources:**

- Aidan Liturgy – Part C
- Display of personal bookshelf photos or collections of personal objects
- Paper, card, pens and art materials, including clear glass jars and glass paints
- ‘Aidan and Oswin’ extract, from Bede’s History (Appendix 2)
- Bible
- ‘The Velveteen Rabbit’ extract (Appendix 3)
- CD or download of Cyndi Lauper’s song, ‘*True Colours*’ (Appendix 4 for lyrics)

### **Read:**

- Aidan Liturgy – Part C

### **Activities**

1. Take a ‘*shelfie*’ – a photo of a bookshelf in your home. If with others, create a display and see if you can tell to whom each *shelfie* belongs. Share your interests and how these are reflected in your photos. Consider how well your *shelfie* reflects who you are. (You could use a selection of objects instead of a photo.)
2. Collect everyone’s signatures. Use the same colour ink and paper of identical size and colour. Re-distribute these and ask everyone to copy the anonymous signature. Again, ensure the same size and colour of paper is used. Mix the forgeries with the originals.
  - What does signing a document with our name signify?
  - How easy is it to spot which signatures are forgeries?
  - What can tempt us to fake it or not be true to ourselves? How does this impact on our relationships with others?
3. Part C of the Aidan liturgy asks for ‘*the gift of friendship and of faithfulness*’ and to ‘*be freed from selfishness*’. Why does true friendship and loyalty require us to be authentic? In what sense is pretence a form of selfishness? How does being authentic relate to being ‘intentionally vulnerable’ as described in our Community Rule?
4. Read the ‘Aidan and Oswin’ extract from Bede’s history describing how Aidan challenged King Oswin for criticising his decision to give away the gift of a royal horse to a beggar (Appendix 2). How does Aidan’s gentle rebuke and Oswin’s response demonstrate authenticity? How does this event illustrate what the Rule describes as the ‘heretical imperative’?

5. Read 2 Timothy 1:5-14. Note down the key words and phrases that exemplify what it means to live authentically as a follower of Christ. Draw a body outline and use your list to create a colourful word collage to fill the outline. Pray for each other for grace to live out the words and phrases you have identified.
6. Read the extract from *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams (Appendix 3).
  - According to the Skin Horse, what does it take to become Real?
  - What experiences have shaped you and made you more real?
  - Reflect on the statement: “... *once you are Real you can't be ugly...*” Pray for those who suffer with self-image issues, especially our young people.
7. Listen to the song ‘True Colours’ by Cyndi Lauper. Reflect on the lyrics (Appendix 4). Decorate a glass jar using different colour paints. Put a votive candle inside and light it. Pray for courage to let your light shine so that others see your true colours (Matt. 5:16) and glorify God.

### PART C:

I PRAY THE PROTECTION OF CHRIST TO CLOTHE ME,  
CHRIST TO ENFOLD ME,  
TO SURROUND ME AND GUARD ME  
THIS DAY AND EVERY DAY,  
SURROUNDING ME AND MY COMPANIONS,  
ENFOLDING ME AND EVERY FRIEND.

- WE PRAY FOR OURSELVES,  
FOR THE GIFT OF FRIENDSHIP AND OF FAITHFULNESS;  
AND THAT WE WOULD BE FREED FROM SELFISHNESS.

WE WILL JOURNEY WITH THE KIND-HEARTED SAVIOUR.  
IF WE HAVE FED THE HUNGRY FROM OUR OWN TABLE  
GOD WILL FEED US WITH ALL GOOD GIFTS.

- WE WILL KEEP BEFORE US  
THE DEEPENING AND STRENGTHENING  
OF OUR COMPANIONS' FAITH,  
ASSISTING EACH OTHER IN MEDITATION AND PRAYER.

## COURAGE

### Aim:

To think about how our personal, inner life connects with and impacts upon our corporate community life.

### Resources:

- Aidan Liturgy – Part D
- Community Rule (Appendix 1)
- Paper, card, pens and art materials
- ‘Aidan and his example’ extract, from Bede’s History (Appendix 2)
- Alone, together quotes (Appendix 5)
- Bible
- Lucas Van Leyden’s painting, *‘The Temptation of St. Anthony’* (Appendix 6)

### Read:

- Aidan Liturgy – Part D

### Activities

1. Read the ‘Alone together’ quotes (Appendix 5). What are the different ways in which the phrase ‘alone together’ is understood? Which do you consider helpful? Problematic? How do you understand the phrase in relation to the Community’s ethos? In what sense is it a paradox?
2. Read through the Community Rule (Appendix 1). Highlight those aspects that relate primarily to: our lives alone; our common life together. How are they connected? With reference to the Rule, creatively illustrate (through art, poetry, dance, music) how *‘solitude and community belong together ... as do the centre and circumference of a circle.’* (Jean Vanier)
3. Part D of the Aidan liturgy speaks of the desire to be *‘an island set apart’*. What is the difference between solitude and isolation? How can times of silence and solitude help to prepare us for *‘the busy world beyond’*? Why do we need courage to be *‘left alone with God’*?
4. Draw an island outline on a large piece of paper. Inside the outline, use words and images to illustrate those things that help us to *‘be available to God in the cell of our own heart’* (Community Rule). In the ‘waters’ surrounding the outline, add words and images describing things that can get in the way. In turn, as each person stands on the island, pray for their times alone with God. You may wish to use the words of Part D of the liturgy.

5. Read the “Aidan and his example’ extract from Bede’s history describing Aidan’s ‘*alone together*’ rhythm for life. How did Aidan give proper attention to the inward, personal journey in order to serve effectively in an outward and corporate capacity? How might such a way for living develop courage?
6. Aidan and his companions learnt and meditated on the scriptures as they walked. Read Psalm 62. Take a walk alone with this psalm. Prayerfully read the words. Allow the sights and sounds around you to help you reflect as you read. Endeavour to memorise the words. You may wish to share your reflections with others who have prayer walked.
7. Study Van Leyden’s painting, ‘*The Temptation of St. Anthony*’ (Appendix 6). In his desert solitude, Anthony enters what Nouwen describes as the ‘furnace of transformation’.
  - What do you think the creatures behind St. Anthony represent?
  - What do you notice about St. Anthony’s posture and focus?
  - Why is the prayerful support of other Christians important as we each make our inner journeys?

#### PART D:

- MAY WE PROTECT EACH OTHER’S TIMES FOR SILENCE.

GIVE US THE COURAGE TO SAY:

LEAVE ME ALONE WITH GOD AS MUCH AS MAY BE.

AS THE TIDE DRAWS THE WATERS  
CLOSE IN UPON THE SHORE,  
MAKE ME AN ISLAND, SET APART,  
ALONE WITH YOU, GOD,  
HOLY TO YOU.

THEN WITH THE TURNING OF THE TIDE,  
PREPARE ME TO CARRY YOUR PRESENCE  
TO THE BUSY WORLD BEYOND,  
THE WORLD THAT RUSHES IN ON ME,  
TILL THE WATERS COME AGAIN  
AND FOLD ME BACK TO YOU.



## CREATIVITY

### **Aim:**

To think about what it means to 'live the questions' and to follow the Rule in our own context.

### **Resources:**

- Aidan Liturgy – Part E
- Community Rule (Appendix 1)
- Bible
- Paper, pens and art materials
- Gardening tools, containers, compost and seasonal flowers
- 'Aidan and Utta' extract, from Bede's History (Appendix 2)
- Access to the internet

### **Read:**

- Aidan Liturgy – Part E

### **Activities**

1. Play 20 questions. One person identifies an object visible to all. Everyone else tries to work out what it is by asking up to 20 questions that can be answered 'yes' or 'no'.
  - How does the knowledge that the objects are visible help with phrasing questions and finding answers?
  - What sorts of thoughts and feelings do the 'big' questions of life and faith provoke, where there are no visible clues to the answer and no apparent explanation? (eg: why does God allow innocent children to suffer? Why is God silent? )
  - How can we encourage each other to 'live the questions' whilst being real about the challenges they raise?
2. Prayer and intercession are important aspects of our Rule of Availability (see Appendix 1). In what sense is intercessory prayer an example of how we can 'live the questions'?
3. Prayerfully read John 13:36 – 14:17. What questions troubled the disciples? What questions of faith trouble you? How does Jesus reassure the disciples? Pray for a deeper knowledge of the abiding presence of God's Spirit (14:16-17) in the midst of the questions you face.
4. Read Part E of the Aidan liturgy. In your own context, what situations and issues need God's wisdom? How might you demonstrate God's goodness in the midst of these? Prepare a flower border (or container) and plant it with seasonal flowers and plants. As you work, pray that you may '*plant the faith patiently, calmly and untiringly*' in the situations where God has placed you.

5. Read the 'Aidan and Utta' extract from Bede's history describing how Aidan foretells a coming storm. Aidan does not advise Utta, the priest, to avoid the sea and return by land; rather, he instructs Utta on what to do in the midst of the storm.
  - How do you think Aidan's advice served to create opportunities for the gospel?
  - What 'stormy' challenges are you facing currently? How can they become creative opportunities for God?
  - Make a homemade lava lamp using oil, water, food colouring and Alka-Seltzer tablets! As you watch the coloured bubbles rise and fall, ask God to help you know his peace in the midst of challenges, and to see the opportunities they present.
 See: <https://www.homesciencetools.com/a/homemade-lava-lamp-project>
  
6. Read the inspiring true story of the Lampedusa Cross: Francesco Tuccio, a Sicilian carpenter, used his creative skills to bring hope to multitudes of migrants who had survived a treacherous sea crossing to escape war and famine. His artwork is now in the British Museum along with the story of faith that inspired it.
   
See: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-35360682>
  - What skills could you use creatively to bring hope to those struggling with questions or circumstances?

## PART 6:

- LORD, GIVE US THE DESIRE TO LOVE GOODNESS,  
TO PASSIONATELY LOVE GOODNESS;  
TEACH US MODERATION IN ALL THINGS;  
TEACH US TO LOVE WISDOM,  
AND TO GREATLY LOVE YOUR LAW.
  
- SO OFTEN WE HOLD TOO LIGHTLY TO OUR BELIEF.  
MAY WE PLANT THE FAITH PATIENTLY,  
CALMLY AND UNTIRINGLY  
IN THE GOOD GROUND OF HUNGRY HEARTS.
  
- GOD AND THE ANGELS GUARD US!  
MAY HE BRING US HOME REJOICING

## ALONE, TOGETHER

### Aim:

To reflect on what God has been saying to us individually and corporately through this journey with Aidan.

### Resources:

- Aidan Liturgy
- Any resources used and created throughout this journey with Aidan
- Image of St. Aidan's statue, Lindisfarne (Appendix 7)
- Craft materials to make flaming torches
- Words and music for Jill Sutheran's song '*Kindle the Flame*' (Waymarks CD)

### Activities

1. Prayerfully and quietly re-visit the different stages of your journey with the Aidan liturgy. You may wish to review any artwork, writing, objects, music etc. that you have created.
  - 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.
  - Look back to the introductory activity and the stanzas and phrases of the liturgy that you highlighted then. Has the journey with Aidan confirmed or altered your focus?
2. Look at the picture of St. Aidan's statue on Holy Island (Appendix 7). It portrays him holding a flaming torch, symbolic of the gospel of Christ. Interestingly, Aidan is the Anglicised form of the original Old Irish Aodhán, meaning '*little fiery one*'.
  - Make a flaming torch using craft materials. Several children's craft websites give instructions for making these, including:  
<https://www.activityvillage.co.uk/make-an-olympic-torch>
  - Symbolically pass round your torches, praying that each person may faithfully live out their vocation 'alone together', and bear Christ's light wherever God leads them.
3. Gather round a campfire and sing Jill Sutheran's '*Kindle the Flame*' (from the Waymarks CD) to reaffirm our shared commitment to be available and intentionally vulnerable as outlined in our Rule for Life.
4. Pray for God's blessing on our Community as we seek to model radical discipleship expressed through availability and intentional vulnerability to God and to others. Thank God for the journey you have made and are still making, alone and together.

## Appendix 1

### 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, recognizing 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.

## Appendix 2

### Extracts from Bede: *A History of the English Church and People*

#### Aidan and Cormac (p.149)

It is said that when King Oswald originally asked the Scots to send a bishop to teach the Faith of Christ to himself and his people, they sent him another man of a more austere disposition. After some time, meeting with no success in his preaching to the English, who refused to listen to him, he returned home and reported to his superiors that he had been unable to achieve anything to the nation to whom they had sent him because they were an ungovernable people of an obstinate and barbarous temperament.

The Scots Fathers therefore held a great conference to decide on the wisest course of action; for while they regretted that the preacher whom they had sent had not been acceptable to the English, they still wished to meet their desire for salvation. Then Aidan, who was present at the conference, said to the priest whose efforts had been unsuccessful: *'Brother, it seems to me that you were too severe on your ignorant hearers. You should have followed the practice of the Apostles, and begun by giving them the milk of simpler teaching, and gradually nourished them with the word of God until they were capable of greater perfection and able to follow the loftier precepts of Christ.'*

At this the faces and eyes of all who were at the conference were turned towards him; and they paid close attention to all he said, and realised that here was a fit person to be made bishop and sent to instruct the ignorant and unbelieving, since he was particularly endowed with the gift of discretion, the mother of virtues. They therefore consecrated him bishop and sent him to preach. Time was to show that Aidan was remarkable not only for discretion, but for other virtues as well.

#### Aidan and Oswald (p.150)

The story is told how on the feast of Easter one year, Oswald sat down to dine with Bishop Aidan. A silver dish of rich food was set before him, and they were on the point of raising their hands to bless the food, when the servant who was appointed to relieve the needs of the poor came in suddenly and informed the king that a great crowd of needy folk were sitting in the road outside begging alms of the king. Oswald at once ordered his own food to be taken out to the poor, and the silver dish to be broken up and distributed among them. The bishop, who was sitting beside him, was deeply moved to see such generosity, and taking hold of the king's right hand, exclaimed: *'May this hand never wither with age.'*

Later events proved that his prayer was heard; for when Oswald was killed in battle, his hand and arm were severed from his body, and they remain uncorrupted to this day.

#### Aidan and Oswin (p.164-5)

He [King Oswin] had given Bishop Aidan a very fine horse, in order that he could ride whenever he had to cross a river or undertake any difficult or urgent journey, although the bishop ordinarily travelled on foot. Not long afterwards, when a poor man met the bishop and asked for alms, the bishop immediately dismounted and ordered the horse with all its royal trappings to be given to the beggar; for he was most compassionate, a protector of the poor and a father to the wretched.

When this action came to the king's ears, he asked the bishop as they were going in to dine: *'My lord bishop, why did you give away the royal horse which was necessary for your own use? Have we not many less valuable horses or other belongings which would have been good enough for beggars, without giving away a horse that I had specially selected for your personal use?'*

The bishop at once answered: *'What are you saying, Your Majesty? Is this child of a mare more valuable to you than a child of God?'*

As he stood by the fire, the king turned over in his mind what the bishop had said; then suddenly, unbuckling his sword and handing it to a servant, he impulsively knelt at the bishop's feet, begged his forgiveness, saying: *'I will not refer to this matter again, nor will I enquire how much of our bounty you give away to God's children.'*

The bishop was deeply moved, and immediately stood up and raised him to his feet, assuring him of his high regard and begging him to sit down to his food with no regrets.

#### Aidan and his example (p. 148)

Among other evidences of holy life, he [Aidan] gave his clergy an inspiring example of self-discipline and continence, and the highest recommendation of his teaching to all was that he and his followers lived as they taught. He never sought or cared for any worldly possessions, and loved to give away to the poor who chanced to meet him whatever he received from kings or wealthy folk. Whether in town or country, he always travelled on foot unless compelled by necessity to ride; and whatever people he met on his walks, whether high or low, he stopped and spoke to them. If they were heathen, he urged them to be baptized; and if they were Christians, he strengthened their faith and inspired them by word and deed to live a good life and to be generous to others.

His life is in marked contrast to the apathy of our own times, for all who walked with him, whether monks or lay-folk, were required to meditate, that is, either to read the scriptures or to learn the Psalms. This was their daily occupation wherever they went.

#### Aidan and Utta (p.166)

A priest named Utta, a truthful and serious man, who on that account was generally respected by all, even by worldly princes, was sent to Kent to bring back Eanfled as a wife for King Oswy: she was the daughter of King Edwin and had been taken to Kent when her father was killed. Intending to make the outward journey by land and return with the princess by sea, he went to Bishop Aidan and asked him to pray for him and his companions as they set out on their long journey.

When Aidan had blessed them and commended them to God, he gave them some holy oil, saying: *'When you set sail, you will encounter a storm and contrary winds. Remember then to pour the oil that I am giving you on to the sea, and the wind will immediately drop, giving you a pleasant, calm voyage and a safe return home.'*

Everything happened as the bishop foretold. In a rising gale, the sailors dropped anchor hoping to ride out the storm. This proved impossible; for the roaring seas broke into the ship from every side, and it began to fill. Everyone felt that his last hour had come, when at last the priest remembered the bishop's words. He took out the flask of oil and poured some of it over the sea, which immediately ceased its raging as Aidan had foretold. So it came about that the man of God through the spirit of prophecy both foretold the storm and, although absent, calmed its fury.

*Translated by Leo Sherley-Price*

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### Appendix 3

#### Extract from *The Velveteen Rabbit*

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes," said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt."

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up," he asked, "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once," said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand."

*Margery Williams*

### Appendix 4

#### Refrain from *True Colours* by Cyndi Lauper

But I see your true colours  
Shining through  
I see your true colours  
And that's why I love you  
So don't be afraid to let them show  
Your true colours  
True colours are beautiful  
Like a rainbow

*Songwriters: Billy Steinberg / Tom Kelly  
True Colors lyrics © Sony/ATV Music Publishing LLC*



## Appendix 5

### Alone Together Quotes

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.	<i>Helen Keller</i>
Monastic spiritual seekers come together into community to be alone, together. The strength and support of community life are balanced with nourishment, solace and prayerful response which flow from an authentic experience of solitude in God's presence.	<i>Esther de Waal The Spiritual Journey</i>
We expect more from technology and less from each other. We create technology to provide the illusion of companionship without the demands of friendship.	<i>Sherry Turkle Alone Together</i>
Solitude and Community belong together; each requires the other, as do the centre and circumference of a circle. Solitude without Community leads to loneliness and despair, but Community without solitude hurls us into a void of words and feelings.	<i>Jean Vanier Community and Growth</i>
If you want to go fast, go alone; If you want to go far, go together.	<i>African proverb</i>
To me, religion is a deeply personal thing in which man and God go it alone together without the witch doctor in the middle...	<i>Frank Sinatra</i>
Loneliness is painful; solitude is peaceful. Loneliness makes us cling to others in desperation; solitude allows us to respect others in their uniqueness and create community.	<i>Henri Nouwen Bread for the Journey</i>
Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone, even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music.	<i>Kahil Gibran The Prophet</i>
I'm outside the door, invite me in So we can go back and play pretend I'm on deck, yeah, I'm up next Tonight I'm high as a private jet. Let's be alone together ...	<i>Fall Out Boys Alone Together lyrics</i>

## Appendix 6

### Lucas Van Leyden's painting, 'The Temptation of St. Anthony'

See: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bd/Lucas\\_van\\_Leyden\\_-\\_The\\_Temptation\\_of\\_St\\_Anthony\\_-\\_WGA12935.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/bd/Lucas_van_Leyden_-_The_Temptation_of_St_Anthony_-_WGA12935.jpg)



## Appendix 7

### St. Aidan's Statue, Holy Island of Lindisfarne

