Welcome

... to new Friends
Ellen Ruddick Sale, UK
Alison Chester Harrow, London
Barbara Dunnet Western Australia
Ken Hughes Ohio, USA

... new Explorers
Ian and Joy Copeman Sudbury, Suffolk
Barbara Hughes Bradley Stoke, South Glos
Marie Bell and Mavis Poole, both from Darlington

... new Voyagers
Jan Lokkeborg 7th Sept on St Cuthbert’s Island while staying at Open Gate.
Gilly Stevens 13th Sept at Buckfast Abbey during the Explorer’s Retreat.
Janet Wainscott expects to take her vows on 26th Nov.

... Changes of address etc
Pam Bailey has moved to Little Gringley, Retford
Ed Mitchell moves to Lothersdale, Keighly, N. Yorks on 18th October.

Front Cover Photo: Altar with portrait of Hilda sent by Rev Chris Collison of St Hilda’s Hartlepool
Congratulations to Naomi and Peter!

Naomi Ackland is centre manager of the Open Gate Retreat Centre. She was married to Peter Zwaal at Lindisfarne Parish Church on 8 October 2011

Please send copy for the February 2012 Aidan Way to Simon by 2nd January 2012
Dear Ones,

I was reading a biography recently and the writer was encouraging me to believe that if all was well, I was content and I was not experiencing persecution then I was probably not doing the right things for God. Sometimes I hear Christians say that someone suffering from mental breakdown of some sort is under attack by the devil. So, if you are not being attacked you are not pleasing God, and if you are being attacked then Satan’s got you! Doesn’t sound like there’s a comfortable way out of this one!

Well, no, there isn’t a comfortable way out. A bishop recently described to me the longing he has for us to rediscover awe; awe in realising just what we are doing when we worship, awe from again realising what we are doing when we break bread together, awe in being in silent wonder. There we may find overwhelming joy, there we may glimpse love that brings us to our knees, and there we find the almost unbearable pain of all that separates us from Love. Perhaps that is the discomfort we should feel, or the discontent that will grow as we discover more and more of Love.

Re-discovering joy frees us to be happy, to enjoy what we are doing, and to celebrate the people and creation around us. I think of that beautiful Celtic image of Jesus bounding down the hillside to us with arms outstretched, a picture of love and delight. He loves me as I am; he loves what he has made. What is it that you love most? Is that really something you need to suppress to be a true disciple of Jesus? I remember Martin and I both being afraid that our love for one another would somehow get in the way of our love for God. What joy it was to realise that God enjoys our love for each other as much as we do! What makes you buzz? Make sure you really celebrate that - and include God in the party!

I believe that this is where we can miss being open to the Spirit. We have pre-conceptions or misconceptions about what being a disciple is all about. Let’s start with growing more fully into who God has made us to be, let’s enjoy loving what or who God has made us to love.

Here is the discontent we should feel: we discover that as love grows, so does the pain. How much more do I feel sorrow now over those who struggle through life without knowing Love. How much more do I find myself now in sorrow before God because I have failed him again; words spoken to me about my failings that once I hotly denied, now I find God gently revealing the truth of them to me and it hurts so badly because I so want to love like God does. If we are in truth growing in God, we will not be growing in complacency.

The Celtic way is a way of freedom, not of rules and conformity. The wild goose flies free, the Trinity flow in love and joy and welcome us in in hospitality.

And finally a quote from the late Steve Jobs from Apple, ‘keep hungry and keep foolish’.

Penny Warren
I can’t quite imagine what it would be like to pray all night standing in the sea, as Cuthbert once did, but at the start of September I took part in twenty-four hours of prayer and it was a truly amazing experience. Feeling the need to pray for our riot-shaken community and to seek God’s renewing energy in our weary church, we turned the lounge area of our building into a dedicated prayer space with candles, music, and pictures and invited people to sign up for a minimum of one hour between 6pm Friday and 6pm Saturday.

Very few people in our church are confident pray-ers, which makes the comments they wrote in a Reflections book even more remarkable. “The hour went quickly. I could have done with another one really. It was so easy to pray.” “11.55pm. An hour that absolutely rushed by – and I don’t think I had finished all the prayers I intended to say.” “3am – on with thanks and praise now . . . I find it’s nearly 4am already.” “A special short hour where time seems to stop so you can thank God for everything and pray for the less fortunate.”

I found myself covering part of the night shift. The darkness and solitude brought both an immediacy of God’s presence but also a sense of the powers of darkness against whom we’re called to pray. There was something very symbolically powerful about hearing the first bird song of a new day, suddenly seeing first light beyond the windows, and then seeing a magnificent sunrise (Son Rise?) over West London. It felt like a corner had been turned, and it had been. In the weeks since I’ve been aware of God at work in ways that simply weren’t happening before that weekend of prayer.

I wrote the following down during a period of intercession for our church’s impact on the wider world, which had seemed so frustratingly ineffective in the last year: “The ultimate prayer isn’t what I want. It isn’t what we want. It’s what you want.” “Your will be done” is either the biggest cop-out or the biggest prayer. It’s a cop-out if we pray it shrugging our shoulders and giving up on the struggle over whatever isn’t as it should be. It’s a huge prayer when we stay the distance with it, asking God again and again what he wants to do, being prepared to put aside our preconceptions and agendas for how he ought to answer our prayer, and listening for his answer so we can pray it into being.

We can thank the 24-7 Prayer Movement for rediscovering the Celtic prayer vigil and teaching us how to do it in 21st century ways. Our Way of Life encourages “all kinds of praying.” We’re going to practice this one at our Voyagers’ Gathering in January. Try asking God how he wants you to pray where you are and see what happens.

Simon Reed
“You’re late” said Frodo as he stood at the edge of the hill folding his arms towards the cart passing by. The driver, an old man in a pointy blue-grey hat, grey cloak and a long white beard, slowly turned his head towards the young hobbit and spoke. “A Wizard is never late, Frodo Baggins, neither is he early. He arrives precisely when he means to.”

Long have I been a fan of ‘The Lord of the Rings’. The above scene comes from the beginning of the Peter Jackson movie version of ‘The Fellowship of the Ring’ (although you won’t find it there in the book). It speaks of Gandalf, the wizard, teaching Frodo that although Frodo may think Gandalf ‘late’, that there is a greater sense of timing going on through the universe, and that a wizard is attuned to it and lives accordingly. Or it could just be a convenient excuse for being late!

Whatever is behind this statement it makes me wonder. Often in our lives we struggle to get things done on time, or be places on time. Sometimes this can be because of bad time management, sometimes because we are trying to fit too much into our lives, or sometimes it can be because what we are trying to push is just not meant to be yet, because there is a greater sense of timing.

One of the things I try to keep in mind when walking with God is that he recommends we ‘keep in step with the Spirit’ (Galatians 5v25). To me this speaks not only of how we live, but also about the timing in which we live. God has a pace. Our world moves at an incredibly fast pace. We are conditioned from being young to believe the more you can fit into your life the better a person you are. We begin to think that we are not as good as others who seem to be able to do more than we do, or do it faster. We have to be the fastest and get the most done. But it doesn’t take long to realise that the longer we do this the worse we feel inside. But we just keep going, with the help of energy drinks and caffeine pills when our own energy levels wane.

There is a wonderful story I heard of some Western businessmen who travelled to the African jungle to set up a camp. They used some locals to help negotiate the jungle and carry their equipment. They pushed and pushed to get to their desired place faster, probably moving at the pace they were used to. But there came a point where the locals sat down and wouldn’t move. When asked why, the translator said ‘translating as best I can, they say that they have been moving so fast all day
that they have to wait for their souls to catch up.’

What a wonderful thought! Maybe that is why we feel so empty when we move too fast, and so ‘full’ when we take time to stop, because our souls just can’t keep up!

As modern people we do, and do, and do, our whole lives, and yet, just as Gandalf seemed to allude to, there is something more going on than our own timing, a timing which has purpose for everything, where Divine cosmic plans unfold before us. Perhaps the world would be a better place, perhaps your own world would be a better place, if each of us allowed things to ‘flow’ more, if we moved more in line with the timing of God’s clock and not our own. After all, as Creator he knows when the best time for things to happen is. He also knows that all things need rest, that’s why his world moves in cycles which include not only Spring and Summer, but Autumn and Winter, not only dawn and light, but dusk and night, and why he taught that we too should move in rhythms which include a period of rest, which is often known as a ‘Sabbath’.

One of the invitations of Jesus for those who found themselves weighed down with the struggles and pressures of the world was to come to him, and he would give them/you rest for your soul. In ‘The Message’ version of the bible Jesus says it like this: “Come to me. Get away with me, and you will recover your life. I’ll show you how to take real rest. Walk with me, work with me, watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace…Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” (Matthew 11v28-30).

I believe that the world has a natural flow, not just physically, but spiritually and emotionally. I believe that God created us to live within that natural rhythm which includes taking rest as well as working (but not over working), stillness with God as well as active mission, and I also believe that true rest can only be found when it is taken through God.

Do you feel that your life is moving too fast? Do you feel that your life is in detriment because of it? If there was something you could do about it wouldn’t it be worth trying? What if you could ‘recover your life?’ What if you were able to ‘take real rest’, to ‘live freely and lightly’? Why not take an inquisitive step and try coming to Jesus for it and just see what happens!?!?

As a retreat leader and one who practices Christian meditation I have found this sense of flow, rhythm, and Divine timing invaluable, and have experienced all these things which Jesus here offers, and most days live in them. If you would like to know more about Christian meditation and/or relaxation techniques, or more about how to gain the things Jesus promises here, I would be happy to help, just ask.

As the world begins to slow in the coming season of Winter, may you come to know real rest for your soul. May you know the ease of God’s timing as you step into the flow of his Spirit. And may you receive everything you need, in the Divine time and plan of your Creator.

Love and Peace
David, Explorer Guide
I live on the North Downs in Kent and my painting studio windows open onto wheat fields and the view of the undulating hills beyond. This sacred space feels like Holy Ground, a place of encounter with the divine. As the brush touches the paper with vibrant colours from the palette, painting becomes the medium that makes the connection between the beauty of creation and the transcendent, the tangible and the intangible. The visible expression of Art and the audible manifestation of Music speak the language of heaven too deep for words – the outpouring of both the temporal and the spiritual revelation of the divine in a hymn of praise…….in Him we live and move and have our being ...Acts 17:28.

As I have grown older I have become more aware that the spiritual journey is revealed in natural symbols, walking through the wilderness, climbing the mountain, sailing across stormy waters. The story of our inner journey is mirrored to us in creation giving fresh insight and enabling us to encounter the immanence of Christ at the centre of our being, the community and the world. This gives us courage to persevere on our pilgrimage in the midst of adversity, and hope for what is to come; the consummation of all that is in Christ absorbed into the love of God.

The natural world reveals the outward vestiges of God as we reach out to Him.... like stretching out a hand to touch the hem of His garment. Awesome wonder, as we gaze upon the beauty of creation, reveals the first step on the journey to a deeper encounter with the immanence of God and union with Him. God is present in all things.

The Cosmic Christ, the very Agent of Creation, became incarnate for us, healing the split between matter and spirit and opening the way for the reconciliation of every living thing to God through the outpouring of Himself upon the cross. As we engage with God through Art and Music, as we care for creation and reach out to one another in love, our acts of worship become incarnational. We then become part of the redemptive process of restoration and healing for our suffering world.

Our congregation in Canterbury gathers in a beautiful building filled with natural light. The sounds of music, the fragrance of the flowers, the taste of bread and wine permeate us in body mind and spirit. The stimulation of the five senses enables us to engage more intimately with God who reveals Himself in the surrounding beauty of creation, and worship Him.

By Heather Macdonald
In September a small group of explorers went to Buckfast Abbey for the annual Explorer’s retreat led by David Cole (Explorer Guide) and Penny Warren (Members Guardian).

We had a wonderful time together and looked at what it meant to live out the Way of Life, and not see it as a burden of something we have to do.

Not only were the surroundings beautiful, but the teaching was helpful to each who heard what God was saying. With times of open sharing all were able to help each other grow in their walk with God and also in living out the Way of Life. We had some wonderful quiet times of prayer and resting in God’s presence (especially once we worked out how to get the incense going!), and some very good discussions and questions (thank you Tom for many of them!).

Although the small number made for a close intimate relational retreat, it was unfortunate that there were so few of us there, as some Explorers seemed to be under the impression that the retreat was there only for those who were struggling with living out the Way of Life, when in actuality it is there for the encouragement of all who walk this way of life irrespective of whether they are ‘good’ at it or not. In fact, perhaps those who find it easier than others would have been better to come and encourage those who struggle. Let’s hope that next year more Explorers see the retreat as it is actually is, as an opportunity to gather with others from the Community to grow with one another in God focusing on our chosen way to live out our faith in him.

Whilst we were there at Buckfast Abbey Gilly Stevens took her vows to become a Voyager!

Down in a secluded spot by the river that was special to Gilly we joined her in this very special time. In the quiet of the breeze in the trees watching the river flow past, and those with keen eye saw a kingfisher or two, Penny led Gilly through her First Voyage.

It was a very special moment for Gilly, and it was a privilege for others to be a part of it in such a wonderful place.

We hope to see you at the 2012 Explorer’s Retreat!

NEW ADDRESS

If you would like to write to David, his new address is:
The Waymark, Amara, Hamilton Road, Hythe, Hampshire SO45 3PB
Dragon One was getting there, of course (its fierceness depended on where you started from, of course – potential for parable?). Tenby is the ferry base for Caldey Island and isn't the most accessible place on earth but for me that was part of the fun side of retreat (I only live about 140 miles away but the train takes 7½ hours). The last blast of Dragon One's breath was the strongest – getting the only boat that ran on our first day, over a distinctly rough sea. But I'm getting ahead of things.

Fourteen of us met in Tenby on the Monday evening, B&B having been well organised by Martin Warren. First call was St. Teilo's church in Penally, where we prayed together briefly, met Bishop Dominic Walker and ate in a nearby restaurant. Then to St Julian's chapel in Tenby harbour, dark and rainswept now. Bishop Dominic talked of the important (and re-emerging) role of solitaries in the church and reminded us of the vital part played by such people in the early days of Christianity in Britain – pre-Roman or Celtic Christianity. Thus prepared, we slept, knowing that the weather was already changing our programme and that we might not get to Caldey at all. Well, we did – but only on the supply boat at 8.45 am, missing half a day in St David's in favour of not missing the only boat of the day.

It's tempting to get into a detailed description of the activities of the retreat, so I'll go for bullet points instead.
• Dampness of weather and warmth of welcome – Brother Gildas of the monastery, and Dawn & Peter of St Philomena's guest house.

• Total, total darkness at night.

• The monastery overlooking us, and its bell summoning us to prayer.

• Vigils at 3.30 am – normal rising for the monks.

• Brother Gildas' encyclopaedic knowledge of early Christian and pre-Christian places and people, and their interconnectedness.

• Ducks, chickens, dogs, Erwin Schroedinger the cat, all living in harmony (mostly).

• Really good food, all prepared from fresh stuff.

• Thinking and praying about dragons – the frightening and destructive things in ourselves and the culture we inhabit.

• Learning to live with dragons, knowing that they can't all be put to death in our time...

• Fourteen people unknown to each other at the start, opening up to each other and forming bonds.

• Praying for Wales and for each other, alone and together.

Each of us will have taken away different things. For me, Caldey symbolises the way in which so many threads weave together – the early Celtic saints like David and Samson (who used Caldey as a mission base); our dependence on the earth and the weather; the 19th century return of Anglican monasticism; the current ministry of the Roman Catholic monks on Caldey; the ministry of hospitality; the call to pilgrimage and times of retreat – all these as essential and adapting signs of God's love reaching out to his world, using his people to do it. Many thanks to Martin for organising it and to Penny and Ray for their parts.

Richard Adams
Sunday evening, 14 August 2011, saw the start of the 12th Celtic Christian Retreat held at Carmel just outside George in South Africa. Led by Bishop Eric, it has become an annual event and greatly anticipated by all who attend. This year, with around 54 pilgrims embarking on the spiritual journey, it was the largest group in all those 12 years.

As folk arrived from far flung places such as New Zealand and Germany, and various parts of South Africa, it was with all the excitement of meeting old friends and the joy of welcoming new pilgrims, first time travellers on this amazing faith journey. Although the retreat is held in mid-winter, with crisp, cold mornings and evenings, the days were beautifully still and sunny and Carmel lived up to its reputation of being a ‘little bit of Heaven on earth’, with flowering gardens and prolific bird life.

The well-loved discipline of gathering in the Chapel before dawn for morning prayer, saw us all, daily, marvelling at the beauty of God’s creation in the early rays of the sun rising in splendour over Victoria Bay. If it is possible to be carried in mind and spirit to an age, centuries ago, we were transported expertly through the words and stories that Bishop Eric brought to us. We realized the need to dig deeper into the spiritual & physical lifestyle of the Celtic Christians for our own times. And who better to give a good understanding of Celtic Christian Spirituality than Bishop Eric who, himself, humbly speaks with his life.

The worship sessions every morning, led by Revd Robert Penrith of Port Elizabeth, were eagerly awaited as times when, through the Celtic style of music & song, as well as Taize music, God ‘broke through’ and the Chapel was a very special ‘thin place’. Through ministry, times of stillness and through testimonies of God’s miracles today, we were reminded, that God is still powerfully at work among His people.

An exciting dimension for us in South Africa was to be made aware of some of the parallels between the spirituality of the traditional rural African people and that of the Celtic Christian people – both living close
to the land and in many ways dependent on creation and the Creator. All the teachings were interesting from a knowledge perspective, but what really makes the week so special for each pilgrim, is the actual experience, through those teachings and guidance, of God’s presence, His love and power and peace. Our eyes were opened to God’s presence through nature walks – some quite strenuous – but always rewarding. One of the walks to Victoria Bay ended with the distinct pleasure of seeing whales, God’s huge sea creatures, sporting almost playfully in the water.

The experience of Celtic Christian Spirituality wouldn’t have been complete without the encouragement to develop creative arts in handwork and writing. The Banner group, under the expert tutelage of Joyce Pike produced beautiful banners, once again, in the Celtic style. Evenings saw all the pilgrims – of varying skills - gather together for hand craft sessions. People were amazed at what they were able to produce in beadwork crosses, making Christmas bells and collages of whatever had been collected around the gardens. Who would have thought that God could have deposited so many gifts that had lain dormant in many for all their lives!

The retreat closed with a very moving dawn Eucharist. It was sad to leave not only a place of such beauty and peace, but also the many people who had become part of the Celtic Christian family. Each one took with them, in their hearts, a new understanding, through the Holy Spirit, of our Creator God and His love for us, through Jesus, and a real desire and commitment to live out the Celtic Christian Way of Life – simply, humbly, sharing and caring, seeing beyond the obvious, to the hand of God in our lives and in the world.

Silent, separate
Meeting with God,
Feeling His heartbeat
Hearing His voice.

Love of God, circle
Spirit of God, defend
Blood of Son, cover
Family and friend.
By the time you read this article, this wonderful exhibition at the British Museum will be over. If you have not seen it, you will have missed something very special. I spent nearly three hours going round this exhibition and it could easily have been longer! When you start walking round the exhibits, you have to adopt a different mindset. You need to step back in time and try and get rid of your preconceptions of what “orthodox” theology is supposed to be like.

What on earth are modern-day Christians to make of relics? Why were they so important to Christians in the medieval period? The “relics”, in fact, encompassed quite a wide range of objects – anything from tiny trinkets to huge, elaborately carved coffins, complete with amazing sculptures of scenes from the bible. I assume that only the wealthiest sections of society could have afforded a coffin like this.

Relics were so important to the people of this period that when Byzantium was sacked at one stage, the soldiers looted large amounts of relics to take back with them – presumably to sell on to people for large amounts of money. Relics were also used as diplomatic gifts – though there was usually a hidden agenda when the gifts were made. This could be an inducement to mount yet another crusade to capture, or recapture, Jerusalem - a major preoccupation for Christian nations at this time.

No expense was spared with the making of some of these relics. Small statues made with gold, silver and other expensive metals were used. It seems that the wealthier you were, the more inclined you were to spend your excess cash on this kind of thing.

Another aspect of relics was that by touching the hair (or whatever it was) of a saint, you would hope to be healed of something. How does this fit into our modern-day theology? If we are evangelicals (and quite a few of the members of our Community are), do we instantly write this kind of thing off as superstitious, or do we accept that God, in his graciousness, did actually heal people sometimes in this way? It is impossible to answer to answer this question with any degree of certainty.

The Reformers were none too happy with relics, as is well known and many were smashed to pieces. My guess is that most Christians today, of whatever theological persuasion, would be reluctant to join in this destruction. My hunch is that we would take a more neutral, nuanced approach. Perhaps our sense of beauty would win over against our theological reservations. Adrian Plass recently told a group of us how he and the late David Watson were visiting a dignitary in England somewhere. The man gave David Watson a relic, saying it came from Padre Pia (I think). David Watson (a good sound evangelical), replied, “Really?” I wonder what our reaction would be?
Some words on my vision of churches open for prayer in our diocese - I have attached a picture of Bishop Olav Skjevesland opening a church door. Both he and the council of Agder diocese have approved a paper which recommends the local churches to open the doors for prayer. We have a slogan in Church of Norway: “The Norwegian church is an open, missionary and serving church.” The word "open" it means literally that the church is open for all people, but also can have the meaning of having high tolerance for liberal theological and ethical attitudes. I think that we have not fully taken the word "open" seriously in its literal meaning: unlocking the doors at let the church be the house of prayer Jesus meant it to be. We therefore preach this challenge to risk open doors and thereby risk the good blessing of letting people find a place for prayer or spiritual development.

This is my vision. This I will dedicate my life to. Deo Volente.
Tom
The earliest record of the use of the dragon to symbolise the Welsh (that is pre-English Britons) is Nennius’ *History of Britain* written about 830. This describes a struggle between two serpents deep underground. King Vortigern decided he could not build his stronghold above such uncertain ground. This story was later adapted into a prophecy made by the wizard Merlin of a long fight between a red dragon and a white dragon. According to the legend, this victory would be brought about by a Welsh messianic figure. A version of the tale is also told in the *Mabinogion*, a collection of eleven prose stories collated from medieval Welsh manuscripts, and is re-hashed by Geoffrey of Monmouth.

The red dragon is popularly believed to have been the battle standard of King Arthur and other ancient Celtic/Romano-British leaders. It is particularly associated in Welsh poetry with Cadwalader king of Gwynedd from c.655 to 682. It is now on Wales’ national flag.

According to the prophecy, the white dragon, representing the Saxons, would at first dominate but eventually the red dragon, symbolising the Celts, would be victorious and recapture Lloegr (meaning the Border or England). According to the legend, this victory would be brought about by a Welsh messianic figure. A version of the tale is also told in the *Mabinogion*, a collection of eleven prose stories collated from medieval Welsh manuscripts, and is re-hashed by Geoffrey of Monmouth.

In China dragons are celebrated as symbols of energy. The Book of Revelation equates the dragon with ‘that ancient serpent the devil’ (Revelation 12:9). On TV *The Dragon’s Den* combines opposites: Budding entrepreneurs fear
the dragons, but they also hope to harness their enterprise and become partners.

The story of the English and the Welsh fighting like dragons underground so that the king could build nothing lasting above ground reminds me of Jesus’ parable of two houses, one built on shifting sand and the other on solid rock (Matthew 7:24-27).

Both Wales and England are called to build on rock, that is sustainable, firm societies. Conflict makes this impossible. The answer is not to fight until the other is eliminated: that would be to build upon ashes. The answer is to transform the other dragon until they use their energies in partnership.

This is what we mean by ‘healing the land’. England did horrible things to the Welsh. It belittled and banned its freedom of religion and its language. However, it has now put those things right, and Wales’ National Assembly has increasing powers. The learning of lessons by some English people from Welsh saints can be seen as a kind of repentance, or at least humility. If English people honour and support Wales’ glowing faith tradition, and cease to occupy Welsh space without sensitivity, something glorious and from God can be given to the world which reflects the unity in diversity of the Triune God.

If the moral of the story of two fighting dragons is that we need healing of the land, what is the moral of the story of a Welsh messiah who will return to vanquish the English? The Old Testament has varied stories of messianic figures. Isaiah has four songs about a messiah. One of these suggests that ‘the messiah’ could be a the people as a whole (Isaiah 49:3); another suggests he could be a representative minority (49:5) and another depicts the messiah as a servant who eschews military force and who transforms people through suffering (53:3ff).

Could there today be an uprising of the saints who live in Wales who learn the language, not only of Wales, but of the Christ-like messiah who turns Welsh dragon enemies into friends, inspires the noblest heroism, and fosters a land of saints and scholars, songsters and soul friends?

Ray Simpson. Based on a talk Ray gave during the Community’s pilgrimage to Caldey Island, off the Pembrokeshire coast, when pilgrims ascended a Calvary and prayed over Wales.
Last February Jane and I attended the excellent retreat at the Open Gate for participants in the Igniting the Flame course. This is a great resource to help us to develop a Way of Life. Ironically, the first thing that we did when we got back was to enrol at a local meeting of Weightwatchers!

We gather every Saturday morning at 9.00am and form an orderly queue to be weighed. Some folk have to leave straight away, but the majority get a drink, look at the small stall, and sit in a horseshoe for a short address. We usually finish by 10.00am.

It is heartening to meet with folk who share a common interest, and who encourage each other to pursue their individual goals. We have much in common, but each do things in our own way. Some use paper and pencil to keep a record of what they eat; others go online, and some use their iphones. We share recipes and tips, and compare notes about exercise programmes. We each seek to craft a way of living that helps us to flourish while at the same time not becoming a bore or too antisocial to those around us.

There are different rhythms - some want to get ready for a holiday, others for a wedding, some to get healthier. There is often a great advance in the first enthusiastic weeks, and then a predictable slow down, with some lapses.

The parallels with the spiritual life have come home to me over the summer. It would not do much good simply to attend the meeting, and even to listen to the talk. What is required is to use the support we receive and give to each other to live during the week, to develop new patterns that help us to live in a simple and healthy manner. Our leader’s mantra is “I can help you and show you the way; you have to do the work.”

Two cautions. When so many are in want, it can seem strange to spend money on ways to eat less! Weight loss is definitely an industry, and we must tread warily to avoid becoming consumers of a different sort. Also, it is possible to become burdened by an obsession and dread to live within the boundaries set for you. The whole thing can take over your life as you mentally count points, feel guilty about unplanned meals, and lose the joy of living. Food is so wonderful, and we have so much to be thankful for.

There are positives. I have a new appreciation of accountability. If we turned up at church each week to be assessed on our spiritual life, I guess we would either try harder – or give up! Also, to have a course leader – or mentor – or anamchara – is a blessing and a help. And I get a text on
Saturday afternoon enquiring how things are if I fail to appear on Saturday morning; is this something vicars should do on Sunday afternoons?

At its best, my weight loss programme liberates me by helping me to have a rhythm and pattern about what, how and when I eat, which gives me energy and direction, and has brought me into a new circle of friends. This mirrors my growing engagement with CA&H, and I am grateful for the path I am being led along.

Other weight loss programmes are available. I have lost 31lb to date.

Bruce Nicole

Janet Tunnicliffe, who was a voyager in CA&H died on 12 October 2011. She had struggled bravely with cancer for several years.

Janet was a prayerful and creative woman. She loved, composed and taught music to children. She also sewed and did cross stitch; some of these were cross stitch icons of Aidan and Hilda for us at the Community.

Janet enjoyed being on Holy Island, getting to know more people and appreciating the beauty of the local area and the birds. She was involved in her local church and was a voluntary member of the hospital chaplaincy team which meant a lot to her.

Janet was always fond of and concerned for her family and we pray for them in their loss. She will be missed very much by her friends and especially by Kath (a fellow voyager). We on Holy Island will miss her visits.

Her funeral was on Friday 21st October.

Carol Few
Retreat & Events this Season

Hilda Tide Retreat 14th – 18th November 2011 at St Oswald’s.
Voyager’s Houseparty 9th – 12th January 2012 (till 13th for Caim) at Shallowford
Red Hill 2012 22nd – 24th June 2012 (Caim starts the day before)
Hilda Tide Retreat 2012 – Fri 16th – Mon 19th November at St Oswald’s.

Detailed programmes are available at the retreats

PILGRIMAGE TITBITS

The Isle of Tiree, whose early Columban monastery, within easy reach of Iona Aidan may well have visited, has a heritage web site: see www.isleoftiree.com/heritage/resources.html useful for modern pilgrims.

... and also news from Paul John Martin
(Guardian, US Community of Aidan and Hilda)

We have had 5 new Explorers in the last 3 months - and some inventive ways to take the vows!

Dave Lundholm, from Grand Island, NE, took his vows at the Boulder Conference on July 16th.
Tim Bonney, from Cedar Falls, IA, took his vows on retreat at Linwood, NE, on St. Aidan’s Day, August 31st.
Mark Allio and Gabriel Crawford, from Pittsburgh, PA, took their vows over fish and chips and Guinness in an Irish bar on September 2nd! Yes, they are very serious, and have a lot to contribute.
Betsy Yavits, from Ithaca, NY, took her vows via Skype on September 18th, so she could be in the presence of her soulfriend, who lives 1,000 miles away.

We also had 2 resignations.
Explorer Dave Jenkins, of Brunswick, GA. He joined the Kilbrannan Community, a much more self-consciously Celtic group
Pilgrim Joan Stiles, of Baltimore, MD.
(Written during a night of prayer)

I sit in darkness,
a capsule of light against the ravening hordes
of the world
which snarl and rage
against my windows.
And I am so tiny and my craft
is so frail,
and I'm calling out, calling out
and -
light all around,
twelve legions of angels.
O Lord, let me see in the day
the things I can see in the night.
Write this, write this,
says the Spirit.
Open my eyes, open my eyes
to see your glory
in the place I need to see it:
in the dullness of the day.

Simon Reed
Ray Simpson gives a resume of some books recently added to our Celtic Christian Studies Library

_Saints and Stones: a Guide to the Pilgrim Ways of Pembrokeshire_ by Davies and Eastham (Gomer 2002). This attractive guide provides pilgrim routes, information about thirty sites or churches worth a visit, attractive photos and brief snapshots of saints who are honoured in the region. Anne Eastham, an environmental archaeologist, is co-chair of the Saints and Stones group in Pembrokeshire.

_Caldey Island: the story of a holy island_ by Christopher Howells, photographs by Ross Grieve (Graffeg 2010). This was a gift to our Lindisfarne Library from Brother Gildas and the monks of Caldey Island. The last part describe their life as Cistercian monks. The first part tells the story of the early Celtic monks who temporarily lived there, included Dubricius, Samson, Illtyd and David.

_Caldey: An Island of the Saints_ by the Rev. William Done Bushell (reprinted by Lewis Printers, Carmarthen in 1991) is based on a paper in _ARCHAEOLOGIA CAMBRENSIS_ and provides a detailed description of the ancient Celtic sites and of the island’s early saints.

_St Winifrede, Her Holy Well and the Jesuit Mission, c.650-1930_ by T.W.Pritchard (Bridge Books 2009). This substantial hardback of over 400 pages includes an English translation of the 12th c Latin _Anonymous Life of St. Winifrede_, extracts from Robert’s _Life_ and a translation from the relevant chapter of the Welsh _Life of Beuno, The Buchedd Beuno_. Beuno, who is thought by many to be North Wales’ pre-eminent saint, was Winifrede’s uncle. It gives a history of this Roman Catholic shrine at Holywell, Flintshire, N E Wales, which unusually remained in constant use throughout the period when Roman Catholics were penalised for their practices.

_Aanwezig onderweg: Keltish-christelijke spiritualiteit voor vandaag_ by Gerke van Hiele (editor) (Kok, Kampen 2007)

This is another gift from the author, a Mennonite teacher and pastor in the Netherlands, who recently stayed at The Open Gate. It includes a chapter on the soul friend and another on the Iona Community.
The Early Church in Wales and the West edited by Nancy Edwards and Alan Lane. (Oxbow Monograph 16 1992). Eminent scholars in the fields of archaeology, language and history contribute learned papers The extensive bibliography provides a minefield of source materials. Wendy Davies' argument that there was never a single Celtic Church seems to knock an Aunt Sally that few people ever believed in. Professor Charles Thomas sums up by noting the explosion of fieldwork, which enables us to have a much more accurate picture of early church sites. This monograph helps to make up for the years of neglect of Celtic Christianity in Wales.

The Arthur of the Welsh: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval Welsh Literature edited by Rachel Bromwich, A.O.H.Jarman and Brynley F. Roberts (University of Wales Press 1991). This collection of papers by well-known academics has little to do with history or with our Way of Life. It does help us understand how the imagination of people worked during the period when classic books of myth, such as Taliesin, were written. Perhaps it may held us re-furnish imaginations now.


Essays in this volume include contributions from theologians in Wales such as Oliver Davies, Jonathan Wooding and A. M. Allchin, and from Mary Low on the natural world in early Irish Christianity. Mark Atherton writes about the Seafarer and the Irish tradition, and D. Densil Morgan explores the incarnational spirituality of the Welsh poet D. Gwenallt Jones.

In the Shadow of Saint Piran: the history of the saint and his foundations at Perranzabuloe by Eileen Carter (Lodenek Press 2001). The author kindly donated a copy of her book through Penny Warren, and also of The Excavation of St. Piran's Church Perranzabuloe (Cornwall County Council 2007). Eileen Cartertells what is known of Saint Piran and describes early Celtic foundations. She then traces the ups and downs of the sites through rebellions, invasions, sea incursions up to the present day. The good news is that the oratory remains are to be re-excavated and made accessible to the ever increasing number of pilgrims.

Portmahomack: Monastery of the Picts by Martin Carver (Edinburgh University Press 2008) We have for so long wanted to know more about the early Christian monasteries among the Picts: so little has been written down. Now, with the help of modern techniques, archaeologists have discovered on the far north east coast of Scotland a mine of information about the monastery founded by St. Colman. They have identified nine churches, the first dating from the 8th century, with some earlier Christian cemetery finds. They have been able to lay out a likely plan of an early monastery rath. This is technical stuff, yet the travel writer William Dalrymple calls it ‘a gripping tale of rediscovery and detection at once accessible and scholarly.’
UK Regional Group Events

Co-ordinators

**Birmingham & Midlands**: Geoff and Joy Holt—0121 7736063 gjholt@ukonline.co.uk

**Devon & SW England**: Martin Warren — 01409 281424 martin.warren@homecall.co.uk

**E. Anglia**: Gill Peake — gillpeake@tiscali.co.uk 01493 748528

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**Merseyside**: Godfrey Butland— gof@blueyonder.co.uk

& Janet Bissex—revjanet@yahoo.co.uk 0151 9227916

**NE England**:  
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- **Wear & Tees**: Richard Deimel— 01388602861 escombvic@virginmedia.com

**Southern England (Hants, Dorset, Wilts & W. Sussex) & Channel Islands**:  
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**Scotland**: Gill Davidson—0131 453381 gill@iangill.plus.com

**South Pennines**: David Simcock - quarry3@talktalk.net 01782 533545

Rosemary Scholes e-mail@rscholes.plus.com

**Yorkshire**: David Bissenden—01757 705951

*Please contact them for info and news about events*

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The Yorkshire Group meets four times a year to pray, reflect and discuss our Way of Life and related areas of interest, with an element that looks outwards. All welcome.

Our next meeting will be on Saturday 19 November 2011 at Daphne and Graham's home:

7 Stubbings Close  
Mytholmroyd  
Hebden Bridge

**Future Meetings**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>10 March 2012</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 May 2012</td>
<td>19 May 2012 at Sheffield</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 September 2012</td>
<td>8 September 2012 at Bingley</td>
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South Pennines

On 26th November 2011 PENNY WARREN, our Co-Guardian will be taking the meeting, which will also be the occasion of Janet Wainscott's First Voyage.

North East

The North-East group was due to meet at Beb Davies’s new home in Whitby on 20th Oct.

East Anglia

East Anglia group meet on 12th Nov at Beeches Stable, Strumpshaw for a quiet day which is titled ‘Living with our memories, Being in the present’. For more details email Gill Peake (gillpeake@tiscali.co.uk).

Merseyside

Merseyside group meets at Janet and Ray Bissex’s home in Bootle on 26th Nov. (email revjanetb@yahoo.co.uk)
St Cuthman's Retreat Centre, Coolham, nr Horsham, UK

5 - 8 January 2012

EPIPHANY RETREAT

Silence and talks on ‘New Dawnings’ in Scripture, Celtic saints, and spiritual seekers today. Led by Ray Simpson

For more information and bookings please contact http://www.dabnet.org/stcuthmans/stcuthmansevets

The Bookings Secretary, St Cuthman's
Cowfold Road
Coolham
West Sussex RH13 8QL
Tel 01403 741220 (Mon - Fri 9.45am-6.00pm)
Email: stcuthmans@dabnet.org

Launde Abbey,

Lent Retreat 20 - 24 February 2012

JOURNEY TOWARDS THE CROSS

The gentle embrace of silence and knowing. Led by Ray Simpson

Against the background of extended periods of silence, the Eucharist, Celtic prayer patterns and the peace of the house and grounds, this retreat welcomes you to a gentle journey away from false and frenzied pressures into spaces of divine reading, inner voice and Celtic inspiration. There will be time for personal reflection or writing and spiritual direction if requested.

Further details and bookings from www.launde.org.uk email: tim@launde.org.uk Tel: 01572 718807

Launde Abbey,
East Norton,
Leicester, LE7 9XB
The House of Retreat, Pleshey, Essex UK

16-18 November 2012

SAINT HILDA – REDISCOVERING CELTIC AND WISDOM TRADITIONS TODAY

Led by Ray Simpson

Further details and bookings from

www.retreathousepleshey.com
Sheila-warden.pleshey@virgin.net

Chelmsford Diocesan House of Retreat
The Street
Pleshey
Chelmsford
Essex
CM3 1HA

Sneaton Castle, Whitby, Yorks UK

ADVENT RETREAT

Led by Ray Simpson
3rd – 6th Dec 2012

For further details and bookings:

www.sneatoncastle.co.uk

The Centre Manager
Sneaton Castle Centre
Whitby YO21 3QN

Telephone: 01947 600051
Email: reception@sneatoncastle.co.uk
Radical Love in a Broken World is the forthcoming new book by Canadian Explorer, Ron Nikkel. Published by Christian Focus (ISBN 978-1-84550-702-2), the book tells how Ron, like many in Prison Fellowship International, stepped out from his comfort zone to share the message that God cares even in places of conflict, pain and guilt. He seeks to present the message that Jesus had also gone through intense, severe, undeserved suffering yet did not retaliate. With short chapters and numerous brief encounters with prisoners all around the world, he paints a poignant picture of how broken this world can be, and how radical, Christian love can make a difference in amazing and powerful ways.

Ron says, “In more recent years I had taken a small risk of faith by becoming involved with Prison Fellowship International, and for some reason I found myself increasingly captivated by the examples of men and women who, even amid extreme difficulty and danger, followed Jesus in the way of justice, mercy, and truth regardless of personal cost and threat of opposition. That’s why I am here, I remembered. The people I had come to see were daily risking their lives reaching out to petty criminals and terrorists and helping their families in the name of Jesus.”
Wild Goose Publications have published a beautiful book by Explorer Annie Heppenstall. The book is called 'the Healer's Tree, a Bible-based resource on ecology, peace and justice' (inspired by a line from the Dream of the Rood poem), and is a short illustrated book of 28 reflections, Biblical comments/references and prayers on aspects of nature and humanity based on our journey back to the garden - trees, animals, the river of life, some Celtic saints (including Aidan, Melangell, Caedmon, Kevin, Columbanus...) and more. It carries this endorsement from Ray Simpson: “The time has come to re-imagine Christianity, for the church has become disconnected from the earth. With compelling beauty the story-teller's whispers and poem prayers evoke a response from deep in our souls.’

Iona's Wild Goose have also published these previous books by Annie:

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Community of Aidan & Hilda

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**Yorkshire:** Brenda Lofthouse 01274 771476

**Merseyside, Cheshire, Lancashire, Lake District:** Jo Busby 01925 764274

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UK Community Facebook:
Enter your Facebook and search for ‘Community of Aidan & Hilda’ or ‘google’ facebook to enrol yourself free of charge.

E-Studies Course Email: e-studies@aidanandhilda.org.uk

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St Aidan Press
Managed by Graham Booth c/o The Open Gate (as above)
grahamandruthbooth@btinternet.com  01289 389222

To order books/resources
* Send a cheque (sterling, payable to St Aidan Press) to Graham at The Open Gate
* Use Paypal (any currency) as above and inform Carol of your payment order.

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Editor: Simon Reed      Production: Bruce Nicole
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