



Touching Place

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Issue No. 13, January 2008

Keeping Christian Communities in touch.

Welcome. Happy New Year! We hope your Christmas was peaceful and joyful. Our Community Focus this quarter is the Aylesford Friary, a Carmelite Monastery in Kent, popularly known as The Friars. Our selected 'Place' this time is the Monastery of Our Lady of Hying, one of two Bernardine Cistercian monasteries in England. If you would like your community to be the focus or 'Place' in a forthcoming issue or if you have events you'd like to publicise please write, email or phone us. Pilsdon at Malling celebrated Christmas with our usual large quantities of food - a four course dinner with pheasant and turkey and followed with punch (or more accurately mulled tea!) Father Christmas called, having been held up in Scunthorpe (apparently), and gave out presents to all the members of the Community. We are now finding new and more creative ways to eat leftovers! We are looking forward to our Candlemas service on Sunday 3rd February at 6pm. to which all are welcome.

Please email us if you do have any difficulties and we will do our best to resolve them or if you have missed an issue we can send you one. If you wish to unsubscribe from this newsletter then please email us at touchingplace@googlemail.com or write to the address below.

Community Focus

The River Medway meanders through the heart of Kent and then into the Thames Estuary. For many centuries the Medway was a great centre of naval activity and often the scene of forays by French and Dutch warships. A softer and more enduring aspect of the River Medway can be found in its religious connections. Separated by some six or seven miles on its east bank are two great centres of prayer, Aylesford Priory and Rochester Cathedral. The close geographical links are reinforced by historical ties and present day ecumenical friendship.

Rochester Cathedral was founded in 604 when a stone church, dedicated to St Andrew, was built. That tiny church has all but disappeared and the present Cathedral owes much to the work of Gundulf, who was bishop just after the Norman Conquest. During this time of growth and development at Rochester in the thirteenth century a group of hermits came from the Holy Land and were given some land just to the north of Aylesford village by Richard de Grey. These strangers who built their simple wooden huts on this marshy land by the River Medway were the brothers of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The hermits, strangers, were viewed with some suspicion, with the local clergy unhappy at their presence. However help came

when the Bishop of Rochester, gave the hermits permission to build a church. In 1248 the bishop came to bless the Church at the time when the hermits were joining the movement of mendicant friars. Soon the Carmelite or Whitefriars had some 39 priories in England, becoming part of the life of the Church. However in those early, uncertain days the willingness of the Bishop of Rochester to come to their support must have been an important endorsement. The community at Aylesford flourished with some 20 friars. The priory would have been a place of hospitality, prayer and a centre from which the friars would have gone out to evangelise. The Rochester records indicate a close link between the friars and the community in North Kent – a sign of the pastoral activity that was a hallmark of the community.

Aylesford Priory suffered the fate of all religious houses – its end coming in 1538 when the Bishop of Dover received the priory into the King's hands. By a lovely contrast the present Bishop of Dover is a great supporter of Aylesford, valuing it as a place of prayer now for all the churches.

The Reformation did not leave Rochester Cathedral unscathed. The Benedictine community was no more and two bishops died for their beliefs. During the next hundred years the Cathedral suffered, especially during the Civil War when frescoes, murals and statues were vandalised. Happily hints of past glories have been restored.

For four hundred years Aylesford Priory was a private house and while the fifteenth century church was demolished most of the conventual buildings survived. 1949 saw a realisation of long held hopes when the Carmelites returned to their former home. Under the charismatic guidance of the Prior, Fr Malachy Lynch, restoration and rebuilding grew apace. Along with material renewal the Priory began to flourish as a place of pilgrimage. Fr Malachy also contributed with his vision of the Priory as an open door welcoming people of every faith and none. This can now be seen as the foundation of the ecumenical activity that is an essential part of Aylesford Priory.

A creative element in this ecumenical thrust has been a renewal of links with Rochester Cathedral and the Diocese. More recently the North Barn was restored and Bishop Michael Nazir Ali was a patron of the Restoration Appeal that enabled this work to go ahead. The North Barn is now a welcome centre. The Friars continues to be a place of welcome regardless of creed, race or colour.

Geography links Aylesford Priory and Rochester Cathedral, history brings many bonds but in the twenty-first century friendship enables the energies of two holy places to work powerfully for God's Kingdom.

Fr Wilfrid McGreal O Carm

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Events



Guy Chester Centre,
London

Events at Turvey Abbey

Friday to Sunday 8 - 10 February

Enneagram? What's that?

Begins 3.30pm Contact Sr. Lucy

A basic introductory weekend. - The Enneagram is a powerful spiritual tool for growing in compassion and understanding of self and others.

**Life
AND
Peace**

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Saturday 16 February

Lent Retreat Day

Contact Sister Johanna

A **silent** day of prayer and reflection using the themes of the season of Lent.

Please bring a packed lunch with you on all day events. Hot drinks are provided.

Friday to Sunday 22-24 February

By desert paths

Contact Sister Judith.

Lenten Retreat Weekend. - A **silent** weekend that explores Lenten themes through participation in the Divine Office and the practice of Lectio Divina.

To find out more about these events or to request a program please visit: www.turveyabbey.org.uk **or write to** Priory of Our Lady of Peace, Turvey Abbey, Beds., MK43 8DE **or you can phone** 01234 881432.



Couple looking for a therapeutic Community.

We are a couple, 30, both counsellors who are interested in joining or helping to set up a therapeutic /healing Community or Community off shoot. Anyone who might share this vision please contact Linda or George on 07848475015 or email Linda-and-george@hotmail.co.uk

Saturday 2nd February

Toolbox for Life & Church

- Small is beautiful

10am - 4pm Fees: £50

A day to discover how to grow groups in your church and locality. Ideal for house group leaders.

Leader: Graham Horsley is a keen windsurfer as well as being the Methodist Church's Connexional Secretary for Evangelism & Church Planting

For more information on any of these events, or the work of the Guy Chester Centre please contact a member of the team here in the Programme Office on 020 8883 8204, email admin@chestercentre.org.uk or take a look at our website www.chestercentre.org.uk



The Sisters of St. Andrew
'The Centre'

Friday 9th February
Touching the Sand

10am - 4pm Suggested Donation £15-20

A Lent Quiet Day led by Sr. Sigrun Gross RSA, Rev. Susanne Carlsson and the Team.

Friday to Sunday 7- 16 March
8-Day Individual Guided Retreat

Suggested Donation £370

Personal accompaniment by the Team. Each day you will be meeting with your own retreat guide, who is a member of the team at The Centre, to share what concerns you most deeply at the point of your journey with God.

To find out more about these events or to request a program please visit: www.sisters-of-st-andrew.com **or write to** Sisters of St. Andrew, 'Eden Hall', Stick Hill, Edenbridge, Kent, TN8 5NN **or you can phone** 01342 850388 **or email** thecentre@sisters-of-st-andrew.com

Events at The
Northumbria Community



Friday to Sunday 1-3rd February
A Still Point In a Turning World

Fees: £70

Monday to Thursday 4-7th February
Seeking God

£120

An individually guided retreat.



Events cont'd.

Monday to Thursday 11-14 February Re-habiting the Church

Fees: £120

If the renewal of the church is to come through a new type of monasticism what would it look like? What are the challenges, changes and consequences in such a movement and what would the church and communities model and express in the 21st century?

Friday to Sunday 15-17 February He Restores my Soul

Fees: £80

Monday to Thursday 18-21 February Seeking God

Fees: £120

An individually guided retreat.

Monday to Thursday 25-28 February Our Crisis or God's Opportunity

Fees: £120

This retreat will take us on a journey of exploration of ourselves and others, using the Myers Briggs Type Indicator®, which will identify and emphasise our natural, individual preferences. It has been crafted as a tool to foster understanding and co-operation and will be led by a Myers Briggs practitioner.

To find out more about these events or to request a program please visit:

www.northumbriacommunity.org or write to Northumbria Community, Nether Springs, Chatton, Northumberland, NE66 5SD or you can phone 01289 388235 or email office@northumbriacommunity.org

An Easter Retreat led by Dilly Baker. Dilly is a member of the Scargill Community with much experience of leading retreats. She has also spent ten years in church ministry and taught pastoral theology to those in training for church ministry. Her book, *A Place at the Table*, is due to be published in November 2007. This retreat is a journey from Maundy Thursday to Easter Day, drawing on the gospel narratives, the Hebrew scriptures and inspirational contemporary stories from around the world. Together we will uncover the timeless truths the story offers us and find fresh impetus for our own discipleship. This is for all who want to reconnect with, and be challenged by, the truths at the heart of the Christian gospel. The retreat will begin with an evening meal on the first day and conclude after lunch on Easter Sunday.

Monday to Thursday 24-27 March Easter Explored through the Creative Arts

Fees: £195

How and where might the resurrection stories of the gospels intersect with your life? Using the media of art, music, words and silence, dare to dream how the resurrection might help your faith take wings. Carrie Griffiths is an Anglican priest with a passion for using the creative arts to help people express their spirituality (even when they didn't know they had one). This retreat is for those seeking the courage to fly and who suspect resurrection might have more to do with a passionate thrust toward life, than they'd so far dared believe.

Monday to Friday 24-28 March Making the Most of your Digital Camera

Fees: £240

If you've been sold on the idea of the convenience of digital photography but have yet to see it in action, this is for you. Taking the basics of photography with a digital camera in easy to understand steps, you will gain confidence while enjoying practical exercises that give you visible results every day. Steve Rayner is an experienced photographer and lecturer who in addition to a wide range of commercial assignments has been teaching for over ten years and regularly exhibits his fine art prints. This course is for anyone, beginner or otherwise, who wants to get more out of their digital camera.

To find out more about these events or to request a program please visit: www.scargillhouse.co.uk

or write to Scargill House, Kettlewell, Skipton, North Yorkshire, BD23 5HU, **or you can phone** 01756 760234 **or email** info@scargillhouse.co.uk



Scargill Community Events

Tuesday to Friday 11-14 March Soundings in Spirituality

Fees: £260

When the Christian story immerses itself in contemporary culture, entering into dialogue and wrestling with its context, what emerges? What are some of the present-day expressions of faith that are being born out of this dynamic engagement? 'Environmental', 'womancentred', 'interfaith', 'present day Franciscan' are just some of the spiritualities that will be explored. Contributors include: Ruth Harvey, who is editor of *Coracle*, the magazine of the Iona Community; Barbara Butler, Director of Christians Aware; and John Bennett, a Methodist minister with a particular interest in the world church. This is for all of an enquiring mind. It's of no concern how much you know already, but come prepared to engage, debate, share your experiences and be open to new ones.

Thursday to Saturday 20-23 March Roll Back The Stone

Fees: £195

Events cont'd.

Little Gidding

From January 2008 the poetry evenings will be followed by a day of prayer on the 14th of the month. These will last from 10am. to 4pm. The themes will be

Thursday 14 February

Valentine's Day: households - couples, families and single people

Friday 14 March

Asylum Seekers and refugees

Monday 14 April

The homeless

Wednesday 14 May

People in Debt

On the second Sunday of each month we shall be having an informal service at 3pm. in the Eliot Room. The pattern of the service will usually be as follows: a time of singing, a time to give thanks, a time of prayer and lighting of candles, followed by refreshments. After that there will be a time of study leading to discussion.

For further details about any event, to book a place or to book your own event, please contact Tony and Judith Hodgson, Ferrar House, Little Gidding, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, PE28 5RJ **or phone** 01832 293383 **or email** info@ferrarhouse.co.uk **or visit** www.ferrarhouse.co.uk **for more details.**



Contemplative Fire

creating a Community of Christ at the edge.

A Gathering

2nd Sunday of every month

6.30pm

Come and experience Candlelight, symbol and spaciousness, Body prayer and contemplative liturgy and Music and chant from early medieval and Russian Orthodox to Afro-Celtic.

Join us at The New Hall, Abbots Hill School, Bunkers Lane, Hemel Hempstead, HP3 8RP, a small independent school set in 76 acres of lovely grounds.

For more information about Contemplative Fire you can write to Contemplative Fire, The Old Smithy, Hawridge Common, Chesham, HP5 2UQ **or phone** 01494 758878 **or email** info@contemplativefire.org **or visit their website at** www.contemplativefire.org



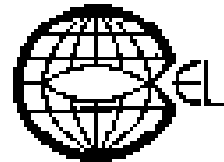
The Friars - Aylesford Friary

Friday 7th March

Tom Hart-Dyke Evening

7pm North Barn. Tickets will cost £15 to include a Ploughman's Supper.

Event advertised by
Christian Ecology Link



Friday 15 February

Clifton Cathedral Bristol

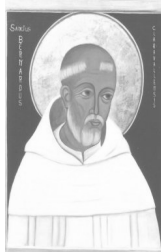
Night Vigil of Reconciliation & Reflection for Creation
Father Chris Boles, Jesuit priest and Vicar Episcopal for Justice and Peace in the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh, leads a unique event in and around Clifton's stunning Cathedral. Monastic music and reflective readings will focus our thoughts and prayers on God's creation. During this multimedia event we'll see TV footage from the BBC's **prestigious Bristol-based Natural History Unit projected onto the Cathedral walls** as we are transported throughout our world's most breathtaking natural landscapes.

Visit www.soundofmanywaters.org **or ring** 01179 738128 **for more details.**

Places

Monastery of Our Lady of Hying

Carnforth, England



'Guests are always welcome in the monastery!'

~ St. Benedict

The original Bernardine communities were established in Flanders in the 12th century. These were dissolved and the sisters dispersed after the French Revolution.

Our monastery is situated on the Lancashire / Cumbria border, in the north west of England. The Community is surrounded by an area renowned for its natural beauty. To the North is the Lake District, to the East lies the more gentle Yorkshire Dales and the north Pennines. To the west is Morecambe Bay, with its infamous sands. However proximity to the M6 and A6 ensures easy access and a 3 mile bus trip from the nearest rail station means that those who do not drive can still visit.

Through our work of hospitality, we welcome those who wish to share the peace and prayerfulness of our monastic guesthouse and garden. The guesthouse is available most of the year to individuals or groups of all denominations wishing to pray, reflect or study in the quiet atmosphere of a monastery.

