

# The Lindisfarne Community

*A “new monastic,” apostolic network,  
with a heart for spiritual renewal  
and service*



*Celtic, egalitarian, inclusive, charismatic, contemplative, sacramental, service-oriented, relational . . . A new way of being church.*

**T**here is the beginning of a renewal of the way we look at church. It is a renewal which has a high regard once again for the one holy catholic apostolic church, undivided into sects and denominations. It is a renewal of an understanding of church as community — small face-to-face fellowship of passionate followers of Jesus Christ. It is a renewal which longs to know the presence and leading of Holy Spirit in a deeply spiritual discipleship. It is a renewal which is flexible and open to new possibilities.

Many are beginning to take a fresh look at monasticism and seeing within its understandings the possibility of a renewal of the church in our time. It is not the monasticism of the high middle ages when the movement had all but ossified; but rather the movement in its beginnings in the desert, its taking root and growing in Celtic Northern and Western Britain and Ireland, and its later renewal under the likes of Francis of Assisi.

For over a decade we have been exploring this tantalizing idea. We are not alone. Many followers of Christ around the world are drinking again from the ancient wells. We join with all who are on a similar quest, adding our prayers to theirs for a new monastic renewal in our time.

We seek to engage in the practices of prayer, meditation, study and service in the midst of busy family and work lives. We seek a radical discipleship in finding Christ in the very heart of twenty-first century life — the breaking down of sacred and secular.

If you like what you read in this booklet why not contact us by E-mail at [icm@icmi.org](mailto:icm@icmi.org). Let's share the journey

In the Three of Surpassing Love,

Abess + Jane  
Abbot + Andrew  
Pentecost 2003

## The New Monasticism

*The renewal of the church will come from a new type of monasticism, which has only in common with the old an uncompromising allegiance to the sermon on the mount. It is high time men and women banded together to do this.*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

**D**ietrich Bonhoeffer is most widely known for the way he died—executed by the Nazis for his part in a plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler. Less well known is that in the turbulent 1930s Bonhoeffer, a member of the Confessing Church (those who stood resolutely against the Nazis), organized an under-

ground seminary. Young men, called by God into ministry in the radical, alternative church lived secretly in community under Bonhoeffer's direction. It was during this period that he wrote *Life Together* and *The Cost of Discipleship*. His vision was a new way of being the church, based upon monastic ideals, but in a way suited to the culture in which he found himself. Sadly, he was never able truly to bring his vision to living expression. Nonetheless, his embryonic ideas have intrigued many people. In the resurgence of interest in the monastic spirit—in all of its expressions—Bonhoeffer's incomplete quest has given pause for thought.

For ourselves, since the late-1980s, when we were part of a small group exploring ideas relating to Celtic spirituality, we have been seeking the mind and heart of God on what a new monasticism may be—what it might look like, how it may be practiced and how relevant it might be in contemporary culture. Our journey, since 1994, has been an exploration of the practice of home-based Christian community, informed and shaped by anabaptist and monastic emphases. In this paper we share understandings of our journey to date with the hope that it may find an echo in the hearts and minds of others who are walking a similar path. We offer this paper, then, as an invitation to conversation with others exploring analogous themes.

### Groups Exploring the New Monasticism

Some of these resemble “third order” societies—whose members have a primary church commitment outside of the order, but who live according to the order's *Rule*. Others function as primary church groups—ie. the community functions in all respects as a church, including pastoral care, the ministry of word and sacrament etc. Some are now well established and others comparatively new. There is variety and diversity, not unlike in the type of monasticism present in Celtic Ireland and Britain.

**The Lindisfarne Community** (broadly ecumenical in intercommunion with the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches, CEEC)

[www.lindisfarnecommunity.org](http://www.lindisfarnecommunity.org)

**The Iona Community** (Ecumenical with Presbyterian roots)

[www.ionacommunity.org.uk/](http://www.ionacommunity.org.uk/)

**The Northumbria Community** (with Anglican, Baptist and Catholic leaders)

[www.northumbriacommunity.org/](http://www.northumbriacommunity.org/)

[www.northumbriacommunity.com](http://www.northumbriacommunity.com)

**The Community of Aidan and Hilda** (Ecumenical)

[www.aidan.ndo.co.uk/](http://www.aidan.ndo.co.uk/)

[www.aidantrust.org/](http://www.aidantrust.org/)

**The Taizé Community** (Protestant and ecumenical)

[www.taize.fr/](http://www.taize.fr/)

**The Franciscan Order of Céli Dé, FOCD, and Sisters of Brigid and Clare, SBC** (Anglican and ecumenical)

[www.geocities.com/celi\\_de/index.html](http://www.geocities.com/celi_de/index.html)

## Why Monasticism?

**W**hat made Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and others since, look to monasticism for a renewal of the church today?

Essentially, monasticism has been, from its inception, a vision for a different way of living, a “life-style” against the grain of society. Monastic communities were to be signs and symbols of the realm of God. In its earliest and most primitive forms monasticism was a life focused on prayer and service. It offered the unadorned clarity of a disciplined life, radically following Jesus.

It began in the deserts of Egypt in

the third century as a diverse movement of hermits who sought a solitary life of holiness and spirituality (termed eremitic monasticism). It soon developed into a different form where likeminded believers gathered in loose communities led by a mature leader who acted as spiritual guide (termed cenobitic monasticism). In its communal form it spread to the western churches and became more settled.

Significantly for those interested in home-based expressions of the church, monasticism in its European guise was based initially in the homes of wealthy patrons both in the cities and in the countryside.

It saw itself, in its formative simplicity, as sharing the same spirit as Elijah, John the Baptist and the early Christians — ascetic, prophetic and counter-cultural. Yet at the same time monastic emphases were profoundly relevant, dealing with the abiding issues of the human heart. In other words, monasticism was at the same time both counter-cultural and culturally relevant.

We are particularly interested in Celtic monasticism. Celtic Christians brought their own cultural identity to the monastic vision. Theirs was less hierarchical, was inclusive of women and men at all levels, developed a creation spirituality as well as a redemption spirituality. Celtic Christianity was profoundly evangelistic and charismatic.

Such an approach to Christianity has often found an echo in the hearts of people looking for authentic spiritual renewal. A renewed monasticism provides the same for people today. As such it has much to offer us in our contemporary situation (see inset, Listening to the Scholars). It meets our deepest spiritual needs whilst presenting a radical challenge to those saturated in a consumerist and all too readily violent culture.



## The Understandings of

**1.** As a Christian community we seek above all else • to be Christlike — to be as Christ to those we meet; to find Christ within them. Over the years we have deepened our understanding of what that means to us. Our understandings are those things we aspire toward as we follow Christ and seek to keep the community Rule. They are at the core of who we are and seek to become. They are not a list of dos and don'ts; nor are they a list of self-congratulations, "look at us we've made it!" At their heart they are our prayer. We see these understandings in the life of Jesus; shining, precious gems, winsome, lovely, drawing us out of ourselves and towards Christ.

**2.** We know too, that our community must be for • "sinners" and not "saints." We are ordinary people struggling with the realities of day to day life in an imperfect world. We are aware, therefore, that our way of living will always be incomplete. When people join the Lindisfarne Community, as any other intentional community, natural illusions and idealism about community will quickly be shattered. However, disillusionment leads towards reality. Discovering Christ among us is the beginning of true community.

**3.** Love is to be at the heart • of the Lindisfarne Community. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart,

mind, soul and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. Love your enemies." The immensity of the task makes it naturally impossible! Yet we are called to be a community of love. We need to remember, it is God's love, not ours; perfect, eternal, constant. With God's love there are no strings attached, no conditions to be met. Yet it is not sentimental nor romantic, for love is not merely a feeling, it is an act of will; the "naked intent" of the heart to love God, neighbor and enemy. There is the deepest of all joy in the love of God. We seek to learn to love, to walk in love, to exult in love, to make love our highest aim, to let God's love fill us completely. Our desire is to be free within the love of our heavenly Father-Mother — to know God's passionate love for us and to live our lives from within God's acceptance of us. This love of God is reflected in our love for all, even those who are considered our enemies. It is a reconciling love; a love that seeks peace. It is a love for the whole of creation.

**4.** Our spirituality is at the level • of being. It is who we are in our truest selves. Our spirituality is developed by seeking to follow the Rule of the community; by pursuing Jesus in spiritual intimacy; by developing a secret history with God. We encourage the reading of the great adepts of spirituality in the Christian tradition. We are a charismatic community and encourage members to seek spiritual gifts; the Holy Spirit is generous in distribution. In the Celtic Christian tradition the Spirit was depicted as the "wild goose." In the

Lindisfarne Community, we seek to follow the wild goose, wherever she may lead us.

**5.** Such a life must be character- • ized by humility. We aspire to be honest, real and down-to-earth. Humility is opposed to the arrogance, isolation and deception that pride brings. We accept our spiritual poverty, our limitations and dependency and also accept responsibility for the use of our gifts and strengths for the service of God. The humble are willing to receive as well as to give. Humility respects and esteems others. It is a form of the love that does not seek its own way. We seek to be a grace-filled community as we "wash one another's feet."

**6.** In this we are seeking to • be authentic people, so that there is nothing false about us. We refuse to wear masks, seeing our lives whole and entire, being utterly honest with ourselves. Integrity toward others flows out of fearless personal honesty. There is a need to break down the difference between the sacred and the secular; to be the same on Monday as Sunday; to be the same at work as at home; to be the same with our family as with our friends and colleagues.

**7.** We are challenged by a call to • simplicity. Our deepest need is to grow in our knowledge and love of God, not the accumulation of more material things. There is a beauty in space, in openness,

## the Lindisfarne Community

in solitude. We seek to enjoy beauty without owning or possessing; to stay focused, single minded, with purity of desire.

**8.** To be faithful, as God is faithful, requires a community where faithfulness can be learned. In our calling to become community, our faithfulness will be tested. We should not resist the test, but, rather embrace it. Like “gold tried seven times” we will be all the stronger; the community will be more real. In the testing of faithfulness we learn to rejoice together and to suffer together.

**9.** In the Lindisfarne Community gender, age, race or class are not barriers to service and function. We believe that both men and women may be called by God to the offices of bishop, priest/presbyter and deacon. In God’s sight we are all equal. In the story of the garden, God gave to Adam and Eve an equal dignity, an equal calling, an equal responsibility and an equal blessing. Yet, at the same time we are called to radical subordination, preferring the other above our self. In this we seek to allow the Spirit to dig deep into our unconscious to remove hidden prejudices; that our attitudes, speech and actions may be free of discrimination.

**10.** We value the freedom given to us by the Spirit of God. Yet true freedom is not license, to do as we please, to satisfy every whim of desire. Freedom is the liberty to be all God wants us to be; liberty to love and be loved; liberty to serve and be served. To maintain freedom we

need to check our hearts often for traces of legalism toward ourselves and toward others. True freedom means the absence of the need to control others, to dominate them. It means the absence of the need to self-justify, to prove ourselves in the sight of others.

**11.** We are an ecumenical community. In sacred history, God has allowed many different streams. They are all refreshing in different ways. So we reject party spirit in any of its forms, secure in who we are and where God has us; refusing to mold others to our own understanding of truth. Other people do not have to be the same as us. We are developing a theology which is comfortable in difference. In the freedom that a desire for unity brings, the walls are coming down between separated sisters and brothers across denominational boundaries.

**12.** We are called toward a generous, self-giving lifestyle. In order for that to happen, we try not to hoard our time, talents, money or gifts; developing the habit of giving things away. In the Lindisfarne Community we encourage members not to be limited by the tithe, to be more expansive in our thinking about generosity; listening for the gentle promptings of the Spirit. We are often surprised how giving God wants us to be. We seek, too, to be generous with the faults and mistakes of others. Forgiveness is seventy times seven — in truth there is no end to it.

**13.** We are committed to hospitality, receiving others as they are; who they are in Christ. Our service is through our homes, with common meals, caring hospitality, as we extend family and friendship. In the breaking of bread, sharing our food, we recognize Jesus amongst us; in entertaining strangers we welcome angels.

**14.** In the Lindisfarne Community, we are willing to be out on a limb, to be vulnerable. In doing so we always run the risk of being rejected, which is at times an intense form of suffering. Nonetheless, to that we have been called. Jesus was the most vulnerable on the cross and in our discipleship we willingly embrace the cross — to be vulnerable, to be out of control, knowing the freedom that vulnerability brings.

**15.** We see through a glass only darkly and know our understandings to be merely provisional. We hold our convictions (which are few) without wavering, but hold our opinions (which are many) lightly. Therefore, there must be a great willingness to change — being slow to judge, never condemning, quick to acknowledge mistakes and move on. There is yet more light and truth for us to become aware of, to assimilate and so to be transformed.

## Why New?

**W**hy are we speaking of a “new” monasticism? Are we implying that there was something wrong with the older forms?

We are borrowing the term from Bonhoeffer, for whom it most likely meant “new to him.” Scholars have suggested that Bonhoeffer, like many Lutherans of his generation, did not have a good grasp of the broad catholic tradition. Historically, it was Martin Luther who had begun the suppression of the monasteries at the time of the Reformation in the early sixteenth century. Bonhoeffer’s brief experience of monastic communities came from contact with the newer Anglican religious houses during his stay in England. Like Bonhoeffer, many in the new monasticism have come from a tradition in which monasticism was not highly valued.

Nonetheless, those seeking spiritual renewal from the Protestant tradition may lay claim to the monastic movement as part of their spiritual heritage. Scholars have begun to suggest that a number of renewal movements since the Reformation have shared the same “monastic spirit.” In other words, the same spirit which energized the early

monastics also energized the anabaptist renewal in the sixteenth century, the puritan renewal of the seventeenth, the Wesleyan movement of the eighteenth, the pietist/holiness movement of the nineteenth and the charismatic movement of the twentieth.

We are not, then, using new in the sense, so beloved of commercials “new and improved.” Anyone who seriously studies the different monastic traditions must surely be



awed at the deep sense of God and profound wisdom to be found there. It would be arrogant, not to say, foolish, to think we could improve on the centuries’ old understandings. Clearly, there is much we have yet to learn from the “old paths.”

Yet, as with all religious movements, monasticism routinized and departed from its original genius. Like all movements in the history of the church, monasticism has been mixed. It has had both high and

low points. We would, for example, want to distance ourselves from the military orders of monks who played a large part in the crusades. Their zeal in taking up the “sword” in Christ’s name was a far cry from the early renunciation of the world. In that sense the anabaptists who practiced a radical pacifism in the way of Christ were more in tune with the early genius of monasticism. Nor would we find common cause with the lavish life-style of later monastic houses. But these excesses have been criticized from within monasticism itself and over the centuries there have been many internal renewal movements. The most famous were those led by the Irish Céli Dé (Friends of God movement) in the eighth century and by Francis and Dominic in the thirteenth century. These renewal movements called the various communities back to rediscover their roots.

Indeed, it is possible to say that monasticism often has been a renewal movement within the church at large. It seeks to challenge and change those areas wherein the church has ceased to follow the way of Christ. The monastic spirit, then, is profoundly renewing. As in the past, we are seeking the breath of God’s Spirit to bring life to our present discipleship.

The new monasticism, as far as we understand it, is the gleaning from all these earlier movements a monasticism for today.

## A Focus on Prayer and the Spiritual Disciplines

**T**here is an increasing sense in the church at large that God is calling us again to prayer and a vibrant inner life. In an age of relentless activity, the call to prayer, contemplation and the charismatic experience of God is profoundly counter-cultural. The new monasticism offers just such an invitation.

Of course, all Christians pay at least lip-service to the necessity of prayer. In new monastic communities people take seriously the call to prayer as a daily spiritual discipline.

Richard Foster, through his various writings has helped the church immensely in refocusing on the classical disciplines which make for a godly life—prayer, fasting, meditation, celebration etc. The new monasticism is committed to a life centered in the disciplines and Foster's work provides a wonderful introduction and guide.

The monastic life has always been considered a disciplined life and in its inception was vigorously ascetic, treating the body harshly for the sake of purity. Early excesses gave way to more of a balance. In the Rule of St. Benedict moderation is considered virtuous.

The new monasticism will take spiritual discipline seriously, while avoiding the extremes. It will provide a balanced life which includes a commitment to prayer, study, work and rest.

sibilities find those practices too strict, not to say psychologically damaging. Nonetheless, the notion of spiritual parenting remains valid if reinterpreted through the lens of our modern social construction of the parental task: unconditional love and care, setting an example, creating boundaries in which to exercise freedom, a wise and gentle correction when necessary.

Abbots and Abbesses in their turn, were in relationship with bishops who acted as spiritual advisers to the monastic community. This practice of mutual accountability is much needed as a counter to contemporary radical individualism.

Other key elements in the Celtic monastic tradition in the functioning of communities were soul friendship—the anamchara—and “fostering.” These relationships involved friendship at a deep level, concern for the spirituality of the other and guidance in spiritual matters. New monastic communities are rediscovering this valid spiritual practice.

In our community our desire is that all will both be mentored and mentor others. In this way we are encouraging the greatest use of spiritual gifts and building the practice of Christian friendship.

## Leadership and Spiritual Parenting

**L**eadership in monastic communities was traditionally by the Abbot or Abbess (in the desert tradition Abba and Amma), meaning father or mother. In other words, leadership was seen to be of a familial relationship rather than, say, the hierarchy of military order or, as we would have it today, the bureaucratic efficiency of the modern business corporation. Monastic

community is more akin to an extended family with parental care and oversight.

Of course, in the ancient world obedience to parental authority was a primary requirement and in the ancient Rules were rigorously enforced. Modern sen-



# The Daily Office

Most Christians agree that spiritual life is sustained by a serious approach to prayer and Bible reading. The “Daily Office” has its roots in the early monastic tradition when it was considered the duty, the “officium,” of the monks to pray daily for the whole church.

In time the daily rhythm of prayer developed into seven periods of praying using the Psalms and other scriptures. The Church of England simplified the Office to Morning and Evening Prayer, which became the regular pattern for Sunday worship, though at its inception the idea of morning and evening prayer was for a daily practice not just Sunday.

The liturgical movement of the late 1960s onwards, together with a new interest in monasticism, has prompted the publication of a number of Office books to help the faithful pray in a daily pattern. All the Offices contain prayers for the days of the week in a regular cycle. Most revolve around the church year of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany, Lent, Easter, Ascension and Pentecost. This pattern helps prayer and reading focus on the events of the life of Christ. The Office also gives participants a sense of sharing in the worship life of the whole church throughout the world.

Below is a list of some of the more popular editions of a Daily Office:

*A Way of Living: For a Community of Friends in Renewal* (Ithaca, NY: ICM, Inc, 1998,1999,2001, 2003).  
Contains our *Rule*, daily prayer, lectionary, meditations, complete Psalter, canticles, Eucharist etc.

David Adam, *The Rhythm of Life: Daily Celtic Prayer* (London: SPCK, Harrisburg PA: Morehouse, 1996).  
A useful resource of daily prayer. An excellent complementary book to the above.

*Common Worship: Daily Prayer* (London: Church House Publishing, 2002).

The Church of England’s new Daily Office. This is a provisional publication, being used as a “test drive” by parishioners before a final edition is produced in 2004. The book contains a wealth of resources for use at different periods in the church’s calendar.

*Contemporary Office Book* (New York: Church Hymnal Corp., 1995).

The Episcopal Church USA. This excellent book has the readings in full for the daily lectionary (the same lectionary as in the CFR *A Way of Living*).

*Celebrating Daily Prayer* (London, New York: Mowbray, 1992)

The Office used by the Society of St. Francis. A great resource of saint’s days and festivals.

*The Glenstal Book of Prayer* (Collegeville, Minnesota, 2001).

A simple Celtic/Benedictine Office book.

*Celtic Prayer from Iona* (Mahweh, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997).

The title says it all.

*Celtic Daily Prayer* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1994, 2001).

Daily prayers and meditations from the Northumbria Community. A wonderful source book of Celtic stories and emphases.

## Post-Denominational— Living Connections

**I**n days when denominationalism is becoming less important to people and unity more important, there is much to learn from monasticism as a renewal movement.

Monastic communities have usually had a profound sense of connectedness to the whole church. In this they have differed historically from other renewal movements which have often been dogmatically separatist (eg. the sixteenth century anabaptists and many independent churches today). This connectedness derived from a high theology that there is one church, the one, holy, catholic, apostolic church. Though monasticism called the church to repentance, there was not the sense that “we are the true church, a curse on the rest of you” which has characterized many separatist movements. The strong prophetic call to radical discipleship comes with the awareness that we are all the church. In this sense, we are seeking renewal for ourselves and for the whole church. The new monasticism is, therefore, an “intercessory renewal” — communities which stand in the gap for the whole church of God.

It is for these reasons, that in our exploration of a new monasticism, we have consciously embraced the ancient threefold order of ministry — bishops, presbyter/priests and deacons. The undivided church of the first thousand years shared the orders of ministry in common.

The Celtic Church was, however, more flexible in that the orders were considered less hierarchically than on the Continent. Some monastic communities had a plurality of bishops, most were led by abbots and abbesses who may or may not have been bishops (one legend has Brigid ordained a bishop by bishop Mel).

In July 2001, we gladly submitted to the laying on of hands of Archbishop Wayne Boosahda of the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches. In June 2003 the Lindisfarne Community received the gift of apostolic succession when its abbot and abbess were consecrated bishops by Archbishop Wayne and Archbishop Joseph Grenier of the Celtic Christian Church and Archabbess Charlotte Rogers Buckans of the Anglo-Catholic Communion USA.

Whilst this step has been of important symbolic significance for us, we still, of course, recognize the ministry of those who have not been ordained in apostolic succession. We acknowledge all those called by God, equipped by the Spirit and recognized by God’s church as leaders. It is just that for us we have discov-



ered a deep and powerful symbol in the notion of apostolic succession.

The new monasticism like that of old is, therefore, intentionally connective. In Irish (Celtic) monasticism each monastery formed a loose federation—the *paruchia*—a relational group linked to the founding abbot or abbess, but considered themselves in communion with the whole church.

We are seeking to learn from this Irish pattern in establishing networks of communities which share the same *Rule* and apostolic leadership. Given the possibilities of the internet, the comparative ease of transportation and modern technology a *paruchia* need not be geographically based. Each *paruchia* will see itself as part of the one great church, its leaders linked both historically and relationally to the succession of bishops from the earliest church.

## The Monastic Rule

**H**istorically, communities lived by a *Rule*—an outline statement of the kind of life expected by those committed to the community. There have been many *Rules*, the most famous being those of Augustine and Benedict. These have stood the test of time and many communities are still committed to them.

Included in the *Rule* are often certain vows which are solemnly entered into: eg. poverty, chastity and obedience (Franciscan); and stability, fidelity and obedience (Benedictine). In our pilgrimage we have not felt led by God to insist on vows. We suggest, rather, that those who share our Way of Living make a commitment to live a balanced life of prayer, study, work and rest.

Many monastic *Rules* have been exceedingly detailed, even down to the amounts of food to be eaten each day, number of hours sleep etc. Our *Rule* is focused on the values we espouse, leaving the outworking of the details to the guidance of the Holy Spirit in each person's life. We are a charismatic community and place a high value on the movement and inspiration of the Spirit.

In many respects the *Rule* is akin to the idea of "covenant" favored by independent and radical Protestant groups. It is a sign of serious com-



mitment, not to be taken lightly and which, when voluntarily entered, shapes the whole of life.

### *No to Legalism, Yes to Discipline*

In the best monastic tradition a careful distinction is made between legalism and discipline. Legalism is the following of forms and rules for their own sake, and without a reliance on the grace and Spirit of God.

Discipline, on the other hand, is universally attested as essential for the spiritual life. Monastics have always realized that human nature will tend toward laziness, prevari-

ation and ease. A vibrant spiritual life requires an element of discipline in the keeping of certain spiritual practices: among which are reading, prayer, regular worship, meditation etc. A community *Rule* is a voluntary commitment to certain practices which will help spiritual growth and development.

As we seek to live according to the *Rule* we look for the grace of God to do all that God places before us; the inspiration and filling of the Holy Spirit as our divine enabler.

# The Rule of the Lindisfarne Community: A Way of Living for a Community of Friends in Renewal

In the Lindisfarne Community we seek to follow the way of the new monasticism as expressed in our *Rule for a Community of Friends in Renewal*. We are committed to:

**1. A balanced life of Prayer, Study, Work and Rest.**

**2. The Understandings of the Lindisfarne Community** — to make them our own and to live according to them.

**3. The Practices of the New Monasticism:**

- **Eucharist.**  
Eucharist as frequently as possible and usually not less than once each week.
- **Daily Office.**  
Daily prayer and Bible reading. (the Lindisfarne Community has its own edition of the Daily Office, based on the Anglican and Celtic traditions.)
- **Meditation.**  
Daily periods of personal meditation and stillness; resting in the presence of God.
- **Mindfulness.**  
The practice of finding God in all things and being thankful; becoming aware of the creation as we live in the light of God over all and in all.
- **Study.**  
Joining the head and the heart, seeing no conflict between a deep spirituality and academic pursuits.
- **Service.**  
Service in the church or the world as a regular commitment.

**4. Soul Friendship.**

The Celtic idea of the *anamchara*. A Christian friend, lay or ordained, of maturity and wisdom, from within or without the Lindisfarne Community, to help guide spiritual life

# Monasticism as Community

*A life profoundly contemplative and thoroughly communal.*

Thomas Moore

**T**o be a monastic community does not necessarily mean living together under the same roof. Monasticism has taken many forms, from single dwellings loosely associated with an abbot in the desert, to private homes with less than a dozen community members living together, to large “monastic cities” in the high medieval period. In reformed monasticism (Dominican) community was based on a “community of persons” rather than on a particular place. In other words, there is an intentionality about a shared commitment to a common way of life. Furthermore,

third order monasticism has usually been practised by those who do not share a single dwelling.

In the new monasticism it is likely that most will not live in the same house. Rather, what makes for community is a common commitment to live according to a community Rule; to share a way of living with others.

Abba Joseph [one of the desert fathers in the early centuries] presents wisdom from the desert tradition when he says with regard to Psalm 133:

*This should be understood not in terms of place but spiritually. For it profits nothing if those who disagree about behavior and chosen orientation are*

*together in one dwelling, nor is it a drawback to those who are of like virtue to be separated by distance. With God it is the common behavior rather than a common location that joins brothers [sisters] in a single dwelling, and the fullness of peace cannot be maintained where there is a difference of wills.*

In other words, the friendship of community depends on a common commitment to the same Rule, the same chosen life orientation, the same virtues.

In “post-industrial society” we are learning new ways of becoming community, using new technologies like the internet. Such technologies become a valuable tool in networking and in forging new ways of being community.

## Where Are We Now?

**P**resently there are around twenty-five members in the Lindisfarne Community Mother House at Ithaca (including children), communities, churches and groups in formation in Canandaigua, NY, Ithaca College, NY, Chicago, IL, Hexham Northumberland, inquiries from Germany and Kenya, two other communities with leaders trained and ordained by us and several friends in the U.S.A. and U.K. who share our Way of Living. In the *paruchia* we have several ministries including strategic intercession and networking, prison ministry, college campus work, a singles ministry, counselling and two chaplains in elder-care facilities. We have two bishops, four priests and four deacons in the community. In Spring 2003 there were 23 in the School of Theology and Christian leadership.

We are looking to grow as others join the community, who will bring their gifts, experience and vision, receive training and ordination and will be affirmed and sent forth in the name of Christ.

# The Lindisfarne School of Theology and Christian Leadership

**A**s part of our commitment to recognize, train, and ordain leaders for the church we began a school of theology in 1998.

The School of Theology and Christian Leadership is patterned after the ancient practice of the “bishop’s” or “abbot’s” schools. In the early medieval period, before general education, universities and seminaries, leaders of Christian communities trained others for ministry to the diaconate and presbyterate/priesthood in a local setting.

We have renewed the vision which allows people to train within their local churches and to receive a high quality, academically demanding and professional instruction in ministry.

Required commitment is high and will be at least ten to fifteen hours each week for study and ministry beside regular work, family and devotional/church commitments.

Training for ordination requires eight 15 week semesters (Sep-Dec, Feb-June); six before ordination to the diaconate and two after ordination. During the eight semesters the School covers the main elements of Christian theology:

- *Doctrinal Theology* — Trinity, Christology, Holy Spirit, Feminist Theology
- *Spiritual Theology* — Prayer, Mysticism, the Disciplines

- *Sacramental Theology* — Liturgy and Worship, Baptism, Marriage etc.

- *Ecclesial Theology* — The Church, Monasticism, Orders of Ministry

- *Biblical Theology* — Hermeneutics, Jewish Scriptures and New Testament

- *Moral Theology* — Personal and Social Ethics, Gender, Peace

- *Historical Theology* — Jewish and Christian History

- *Pastoral Theology* — Pastoral Care, Grief, Sickness

The School operates a “rolling program” policy and students may commence at the beginning of any semester.

## *First Element: Eight semesters of the school*

- Completion of all reading
- Ithaca based students: Attendance at the weekly Thursday evening School at Lindisfarne. (No more than three sessions of the school missed in any one semester)
- Distance students: A weekly writing assignment (response, reflection upon reading) by e-mail. (Not more than three missed in a semester).

*Second Element: Biweekly mentoring* (by the School’s directors and other ordained ministers) during semesters for both Ithaca and distance students (by phone, e-mail, AOL IM etc)

*Third Element: Practical ministry during training* (in consultation with the School’s directors)

- An existing ministry
- A new ministry
- A ministry placement
- Not only “pastors” but other ministry functions: prison, college, hospital, elderly care chaplaincy; intercessory ministry; music and worship; evangelism etc.

*Fourth Element: 75-100 open book examination* in final semester

Leading to: Ordination in the apostolic succession in conjunction with the local church/ministry of the candidate.

The School is open to two types of student:

- Those who desire to further their personal growth and development
- Those who are on an “ordination track.”

Students may begin a course for personal growth and change to the ordination track at a later date.

If you are interested in attending the school, if you are seeking the call of God in your life, if you want to seriously study theology, contact us at [icm@icmi.org](mailto:icm@icmi.org)

## A Typical Meeting of the Community

**S**o what does our community look like? Well, it's better to experience it than tell about it! In brief, it is a blend of loving fellowship and support, charismatic worship and prayer all focused on the sacramental act of the Eucharist. Being home-based we are flexible so no two meetings are exactly the same, but here is a flavor . . . a "typical" community meeting.

The table is laid with a cloth in liturgical color, bread, wine, cross, candles, offertory and oil adorn the table. We dress informally, the celebrant wearing a Eucharistic stole over casual clothing. We begin around 10:15 am. The home is prepared beforehand, coffee brewed, the kettle boiled for tea. As folk arrive there is a hubbub of fellowship as news is shared and people "catch up" with each other. When we are all gathered we begin to worship, accompanied by guitar and piano. In our worship we seek to be Spirit-led. We may only sing one or two songs, interspersed with Bible readings, prophecy, singing in the Spirit and spontaneous song. The singing may last for three quarters of an hour or so. Then follows a time of sharing when people bring news, express their concerns and ask for prayer. We try to include the whole of our lives—breaking down the division between sacred and secular—and no subject is "out of bounds." There will frequently be prayer for each other at this time, depending on needs, with the laying on of hands and anointing with oil. After sharing we move to the Eucharist, central to our being together as we recognize Christ among us. Our liturgy is based loosely on the Church of England's latest publication. We encourage our children to believe through belonging and so welcome them at the Lord's table. After communion we take a break for refreshments (tea, coffee, cake etc) and then the children leave us to be taught in their own environment, with activities suited to their ages. The adults share the scriptures, the "sermon" being interactive and discussion based, though carefully prepared and led by Abbess Jane. All are encouraged to take part and all points of view thankfully received. Normally we finish around 1:15 pm. All in all, we are usually well-satisfied. The blend of charismatic, spontaneous worship and prayer, living sacrament, loving fellowship and the sharing of scriptures make for a well-rounded meeting of the community—a contemporary version of the Acts pattern of prayer, breaking bread, fellowship and the apostles' teaching.

## A Heart for Service

**C**ontemplation and action. Presence and practice. Spiritual renewal and service. Monasticism has always had an understanding of rhythm and balance. We pray in order that we may serve. We take the inward journey that we may journey with our friends, colleagues and families.

Service is a key element in discipleship for the Lindisfarne Community. We believe that all Christians are called to be ministers, servants of Christ, though not all are called to the ordained ministry. We encourage all to discover and develop their God-given gifts in the service of others. If you are sensing God's call, and the following is true of you, contact us, we may be able to help in your journey.

- A personal sense that God is calling you into ordained ministry.
- Embryonic gifts in the area to which you feel called. You will, most likely, already be beginning to function in your area of ministry.
- A recognition of the same by your church and its leaders.
- If you are married, the support of your spouse.
- A willingness to undergo extensive training, study and mentoring.

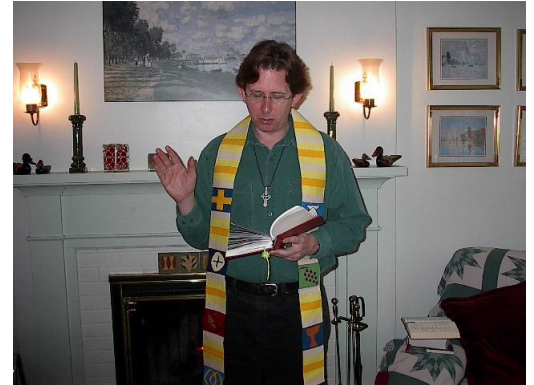
## Monastic Distinctives in the Lindisfarne Community

**A**s God has led us forward we believe the Lindisfarne Community has the following emphases to offer the church as a whole:

- *Radically egalitarian.* We demonstrate leadership by an Abbess and Abbot together. The modeling of equality in all aspects of the church's life is important to us. It is a sign and symbol of all God wants to do in the lives of women and men as heirs together of the grace of life.
- *A conjoining of monastic, anabaptist and home church emphases about community.* We are developing a monastic community both gathered and scattered. For some, our community functions as a

primary church. Members of other churches are connected through a commitment to the Rule and the reading of the Daily Office.

- *Ecumenical.* We refuse to be sectarian and are willing to find God's truth in all and from wherever it comes. We are linked to new charismatic networks (Partners in Harvest, PIH) and to the ancient church through the apostolic succession (the CEEC). We hope to develop more links in the future.
- *Charismatic and contemplative monasticism.* We are open to the leading of the "Wild Goose," the Celtic way of speaking of the Holy Spirit. Our desire is to be as flexible as is the Spirit of God.



- *A commitment to rigorous academic training.* Our desire is to "join the head and the heart," taking our cue from the ancient description of Ireland as the "isle of saints and scholars." For those seeking ordination as priests and deacons it means a willingness to study seriously and with purpose. Our School of Theology and Christian Leadership (based on the ancient idea of the "bishop's school") promotes an in-depth study of theology and the scriptures. We are seeking to hold in dynamic tension spirituality and learning; contemplation and study.
- *A monastic practice open to married, single, single again.* With regard to sexuality we encourage fidelity to the calling we have, rather than celibacy for all. Marriage is an "honorable estate" for those called to it by God; a proving ground for faithfulness, as God is faithful. Nonetheless, we do recognize that celibacy is an equally valid calling and to be encouraged. Celibacy stands as a sign and symbol that sexuality is not to rule the lives of God's children. We seek to be an inclusive community.

**I**n a frenetically active society, communities which seek a contemplative life will present an alternative voice.

In a world which solves its problems by resorting to violence, communities of peace will be counter-cultural.

In a culture still dominated by power relationships—the marginalization of the poor, the victimization of people of color and the objectivation of women—a new, radically egalitarian monasticism will run against the grain.

In a society characterized as "a collection of strangers," face-to-face communities of loving concern, affirmation and accountability will be simply different, yet desperately needed.

Through this type of radical discipleship—raising up a different spirit—the new monasticism will be proleptic of the coming Realm of God.

## Cultural Relevance

**E**ach era faces particular challenges. Drawing on the writings of social commentators, there are a number of areas where the new monasticism makes valid intersections with modern culture.

- **Experience.** Contemporary society, according to the scholars, has shifted to a primary focus on experience. Historically, monasticism was based in the daily experience of God through prayer and a disciplined reading of the scriptures, especially the Psalms. (See inset, the Daily Office). It was never content merely with a theoretical approach to life. A living, daily encounter with God was at the heart of the movement. The new monasticism will be centered on a vibrant charismatic and contemplative experience conjoined with the spiritual disciplines.

- **Participatory.** Postmodern people look for that which includes them as active participants. The egalitarianism of the new monastic communities is explicitly interactive. To be part of a small face-to-face community of friends who share the same way of living and commitment to virtue is in its nature participatory. There are no spectators. The new monasticism will often and most naturally be experienced in face-to-face groups. Where the new monasticism is considered primary church, it will most likely be home-church.

- **Visual.** Contemporary society is saturated with the visual. It presents a duality in which people live vicariously through the images of others. At the same time a focus on image points to a deep desire for the transcendent. That desire is unlikely to be satisfied in the slickly packaged product of an increasingly commercialized Christianity. Monastic emphases, in so far as they are sacramental, provide image through liturgy, color, sign and symbol pointing beyond the temporal and to the eternal. There is the mystery of the divine in contemplation. The new monasticism will be deeply and profoundly sacramental.



- **Connectedness.** With the loss of extended families and increasing mobility, through job changes and the breakdown of traditional community structures, contemporary people express a need to be connected. New monastic communities provide a connectedness in loving support, shared values and commitments and accountability which are missing in much of the wider society. The new monasticism is concerned with creating community.

## Listening to the Scholars on Modern Culture

**Philosophers** have spoken, for some time, about a major shift in our society. It is the movement from industrial to informational, from a unified society with a common social vision to a deeply divided society with no center. The certainties of modernity have given way to the uncertainties of post-modernity. Philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre in the mid-80s began to speak of a new dark ages. He likened contemporary culture to the period when the Roman Empire began to disintegrate from the third century CE onwards. In a phrase, MacIntyre characterizes contemporary society as a “collection of strangers.” He suggests that it was small communities of virtue—monastic communities—in which civility was maintained and through which Western civilization was saved from barbarity. He suggests further that it is small communities of virtue who will have the most powerful effect on our present society.

**Futurists** (for example, Alvin Toffler, Leonard Sweet) have likewise painted a picture of society which is experiencing, and will continue to experience, massive changes. Of course, society has always changed; what we are experiencing now is the *increasing rate* of change, the sheer speed of changes, driven mostly by technology. It is a truism to say that the speed of such changes has provided and will continue to provide our culture with unprecedented uncertainties.

**Psychologists** (for example, Larry Crabb) have begun to question whether the therapeutic society (of the last 40 years of the twentieth century) has actually done as well as older cultural forms—that is, those based on connectedness rather than counseling. In other words, the deeper human needs are better met by simple human relationships of love, trust, care and accountability. It is the loss of those kinds of relationships which have produced the many neuroses and pathologies of Western society.

**Sociologists:** At the same time, there has been a reawakening of spiritual consciousness. In the 1960s social thinkers were predicting the demise of religion. It became clear in the last quarter of the twentieth century that, far from dying, religion was revitalized. All around the world (except Western Europe, by and large) religion has had an important resurgence. It has taken many forms, from various fundamentalisms to renewal movements to new religions. Religion is here to stay. But the content and expression of religion is changing (see, for example, the work of sociologists Peter Berger of Boston University, Robert Wuthnow of Princeton). People are now less content with formal, unchanging denominational allegiance and more willing to change, to experiment. Religion is now more experience-based, more felt than thought about. People are longing for the *mystery* of religion and less taken in by the slick commercial presentation.

**Theologians:** Robert Webber, amongst others, has urged the church to regain the ancient paths, those walked in the first 500 years of the church’s history. It was in this period that monasticism was shaped to be a vibrant spiritual movement which both preserved civilization and remained a counter-cultural challenge to society. John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas have written urging the church to truly become the church; presenting to the world church as an alternate social reality shaped by the life of Jesus and characterized by enemy love, servanthood and forgiveness.

The New Monasticism in which we are engaged is a Spirit-led movement to serve God and meet the needs of our contemporary generations.

# The Constitution of the Lindisfarne Community

## 1. Emphases

The Lindisfarne Community is a “new monastic,” apostolic network with a heart for spiritual renewal and service. The emphases of the community are drawn from a number of historical Christian traditions — the desert mothers and fathers, the early and renewal monastic movements, the Celtic Christian communities of fourth to ninth centuries in Britain and Ireland, the anabaptist radicals of the sixteenth century, the charismatic, home church and Christian feminist movements of the twentieth century.

## 2. Chartering

Since its beginning in 1993, the community has been in a process of evolution and development. In July 2001, the community was chartered as a jurisdiction in the one holy catholic and apostolic church by the Most Rev. Wayne Boosahda, Archbishop of the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches, Bishop of the Archdiocese of St. Patrick, USA.

## 3. Community

To be a community means that we share a common way of living. In the Christian tradition God is understood as Trinity — Father (Source of all being), Son (Eternal Word), and Holy Spirit; the lover, the beloved and the love which is between them. At the heart of the God we worship is community; eternal, perfect community of love. It is the relatedness of friendship in its highest and purest form. In its holiest calling the church is to reflect the community which is the life of the Holy Trinity.

## 4. Rule

Christian communities throughout the centuries have adopted a Rule to express their commitment to God and to each other. In the Lindisfarne Community we share *the Rule of a Community of Friends in Renewal*. We encourage those in community to live a balanced life and to make a sincere commitment to follow the Rule.

## 5. Leadership.

The Lindisfarne Community is led by an Abbess and/or Abbot, the Board of the Community, and the Council of Elders.

The community’s founders and leaders since 1993, the Rt. Revs. Jane Hall Fitz-Gibbon and Andrew Fitz-Gibbon were appointed Abbess and Abbot, apostolic overseers of the community, by the Most Rev. Wayne Boosahda when the community was formally chartered in July 2001. They received the gift of apostolic succession for the community on June 22, 2003 when they were consecrated bishops.

It is the intention of the community that the founding Abbess and Abbot will lead the community for as long as they are able. When they are unable to continue as leaders of the community, a new leader(s) will be appointed by consensus of the Professed members of the community.

The Abbess/Abbot act as spiritual parents and soul friends to the community. It is not an hierarchical position but a position based on maturity and experience, learning and wisdom.

The legal board of the Lindisfarne Community is composed of the Abbess, Abbot, Community Warden and Prior/Prioress.

The Council of Elders is composed of the Board and all ordained presbyters.

## 6. Membership of the community

Membership is open to women and men, lay and ordained. They may be married, single or single again. We affirm both celibacy and life long commitment to a partner as valid callings from God.

## 7. Joining the community

- a. Those who want to join the community must make application to the Abbess/Abbot (or their delegate) and become an “Inquirer” for a period of at least three months. After which time, if it is mutually agreeable between the candidate and Abbess/Abbot (or their delegate) there is a preliminary commitment of a year as a “Novice.”
- b. At the end of that year, again with mutual agreement, the candidate may become “Professed.” Profession signifies a firm commitment to following the Rule of CFR. This stage of commitment must only be taken with the utmost seriousness, and after much reflection, prayer, fasting and consultation. Professed members may include the initials CFR after their name.
- d. All members are encouraged to visit *Lindisfarne*, the mother house of the community in Ithaca NY at least once each year, if at all possible.
- e. Members may leave the community at any time, with the prayer and blessing of the community. Those who are Professed will only do so with the same care and attention with which they made their profession.



## 8. Expressing Commitment

There are three ways of expressing commitment for Noviced and Professed members:

- a. As a member of a Lindisfarne Eucharistic community
- b. As a member of another church
- c. As a solitary

## 9. Membership of a Lindisfarne Eucharistic community

Lindisfarne Eucharistic communities function as local churches, meeting, most likely, on Sunday. Lindisfarne Eucharistic communities are church in every way; including Eucharist, fellowship, teaching, prayer, baptism, a regular financial commitment, pastoral care etc. These communities are open in exercising hospitality and welcoming guests to community meetings. They may well include regular attenders who have not as yet made a formal commitment within the Lindisfarne Community. Children are to be welcomed at community meetings in ways appropriate to their age and development.

## 10. Forming a Eucharistic community.

- a. Application is made to the Abbot/ Abbess.
- b. Upon acceptance, the community is considered "in formation" until the following are all true of it:
  - There are at least three Professed members.
  - There is at least one ordained priest.
  - The community has been in existence for at least a year
- c. When the above is complete there is a service of recognition and dedication of the new Eucharistic community.
- d. At least one member, male or female, of such communities should seek to follow a course of study and mentoring leading to ordination to the diaconate and priesthood.
- e. Lindisfarne Eucharistic communities are usually home based and should grow no larger than can adequately meet in the home.
- e. The name of a Lindisfarne Eucharistic community will be chosen by the new community. Here are some suggestions :
  - a place name such as the Lindisfarne Community at Ithaca

- a saint's name "St. Aidan's Christian Fellowship (The Lindisfarne Community)" . . . short form "St. Aidan's"
- some other meaningful prefix, such as "Living Water Community (The Lindisfarne Community)"

## 11. Individual Members From Other Churches

Individual Noviced and Professed members of the Lindisfarne Community may be members of other churches of any denomination. These members of the Lindisfarne Community will seek to be in good standing with their churches and exercise the responsibilities and commitment of church membership as required by that church.

## 12. Solitaries

Some Noviced and Professed members of the Lindisfarne Community may be called to the solitary life. We recognize such a calling from God, but also know that such a calling is rare and demands a great deal of maturity and wisdom.

## 13. Habit

Noviced and Professed members of the community may wear the community cross. For services, personal meditation, gatherings of the community or on retreat community members may wear the community habit. The habit consists of a simple flax colored cassock/ alb and a black rope cincture, knotted three times. When the habit is worn it is a sign of commitment to the new monastic way and as a sign of humility. It must not be worn as a sign of achievement or ostentation.

## *The Lindisfarne Community*

PO Box 4973, Ithaca NY, 14852.

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The Rt. Rev. Andrew Abbot Fitz-Gibbon, PhD, CFR .  
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*The Lindisfarne Community*

### **A New Monasticism for All**

Indeed, monasticism provides a prototype for Christian secular society, a pattern which finally emerged fully in ascetic Protestantism, where “every person became a monk” but lived out their “monastic” commitments in secular callings in this world.

Sociologist Talcott Parsons in the Introduction to  
Max Weber *The Sociology of Religion*.