

NEWSLETTER 26 : Jan-Feb-Mar 2009

Monastery of St. Barnabas the Encourager.

DIARY DATES

The Eucharist (Communion) will be celebrated on the third Sunday of each month and will be followed by Communion breakfast in the main kitchen.

MONASTERY REPORT



I am writing this near to Christmas and so far we have had a steady flow of guests and visitors during this last quarter.

The major event has been the arrival of William and

Alexandra to spend about two months with us at the Monastery. For the last twelve years they have been travelling as Troubadour Pilgrims touring Europe with two bicycles, a tent and a guitar.

Perhaps all those who come to the monastery are pilgrims by Bunyan's definition but the pilgrimage of William and Alexandra is both physical and spiritual.

Their long stay with us has given us the opportunity to experience communal living. William and Alexander are occupying the upstairs floor of the house which we have always called the wardens flat, in happy anticipation of that day when the right person or persons might come to join us. This space, of course, also includes the meeting room.

We have had no open events during the autumn which meant that the top of the house

was available at just the right time. This actually was the function first envisaged for this part of the building.

Until this time we have maintained the whole operation here with the support of the Friends of the Monastery and especially our Core Group. Now we are having a new experience. Living in community involves sharing the community kitchen and the household tasks, sharing main meals together as well as providing for guests in the Guest facilities. This has often made breakfast together a bit of a planning session.

Those who have read the Resident Wardens Articles will know that we have written about the function of the Monastery in the community. This quarter we attended the Autumn Meeting of Council of Churches and it was exciting to pray together for and with the churches in the town. We continue to maintain our links with the community around us and William and Alexandra are also sharing in some aspects of this. They have visited a Mother's Union Group as well as taking part in services at our local church.

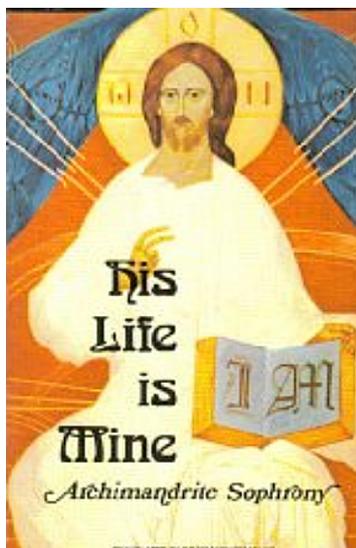
They plan to leave us in January and we shall miss sharing with them all that the work here demands of us.

WARDENS LETTER

As I kneel in chapel each morning my eye focuses on our central Icon, which is above the altar and illuminated by the sanctuary light. It is made from a photocopy of the front cover of a book entitled 'His Life is Mine'. On these dark mornings this Icon is even more noticeable than usual. The picture shows the seated figure of Christ in the centre of the Icon. He is represented holding an open book, which, I assume to be an open Bible. On this open book is written one statement: 'I AM'. The Icon also carries the title of the book. 'His Life is Mine' the title in itself resonates with anyone who has personally accepted Jesus into their lives and experienced the

presence of Jesus with them. When we printed our prayer books for use in the chapel we used this same image for the front cover.

The book's title 'His life is Mine' is an incredibly reassuring title to reflect upon and I have been doing that over these last few months. I have been drawn to the words on the open Bible in the left hand of Jesus 'I AM'. It conveyed to me God coming through Jesus, God being in Jesus and being given to us through Jesus. His right hand is shown imparting a Blessing. Nearly everyone knows the story in the book of Exodus chapter 3. in which God calls out to Moses from a burning bush. Moses answers 'Here I am'. Then God gives Moses instructions to rescue the people of Israel



from Egypt. But Moses wants to know God's name. At that point God says to Moses that His name is "I AM". When we read the book of Genesis we see that Moses, like all human beings, was made in the image of God, so he had responded to God's call by saying "Here I Am". The I AM which is God is also within us, inspiring us to manifest the attributes of God.

In the Gospel of John, chapter 14 we read that the disciples of Jesus tried to get him to explain his identity. His answer was that when they had seen him they had seen the Father for He and his father are one, this title I AM was also the name of Jesus.

Many people, even today, picture God as a demanding creator, pronouncing strict laws and full of wrath against wrong doers. But Jesus, who said 'When you have seen me you have seen the Father', manifests God as a caring, providing Father. Jesus is seen as the suffering servant spending his life teaching and healing and having immense patience with people. This is a man with whom we can have a relationship; Jesus is man and God.

What about us? In my reflections I saw that we are microcosms of the I AM. We use "I am...." In conversation: When we meet strangers we ask their name and they reply "I am". (giving their name and possibly their occupation: "I am" a this that or the other.) They could say 'I am' made in the image of God and unique.'

In the Icon Jesus is represented blessing us with his right hand. As my meditations have continued I have seen the connection between God identifying himself to Moses from the burning bush with this same name I AM and the I AM the word made flesh. This all seemed summed up for me in this Icon showing Jesus holding the words 'I AM' in His left hand – and blessing from our Heavenly Father in his right hand.



The Chapel at Bryn Mawr
(St Barnabas the Encourager)

LIGHT IS COME

Inspired by a stay at St John the Baptist,
Orthodox Monastery, Essex
.... by *William & Alexandre Riggins*.

Chorus:

Light is come

Life is come

Love is come in the form of a man

Light is come

Life is come

Love has come and His name is I AM.