

# NEWSLETTER 28 : Jan Feb Mar 2011

Monastery of St. Barnabas the Encourager.

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## 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.

February 27<sup>th</sup> - March 20<sup>th</sup> - April 10<sup>th</sup> - May 8<sup>th</sup> - June 12<sup>th</sup>

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## UPDATE:

It seems hard to believe that it is over a year since we last sent out news to you all.

What have been the significant things through these months for the life of the Monastery?

Most significantly, with Rob and Joanna settling so well into the life here at the Monastery, we have become as a family together. A small community is being built in which we feel comfortable with one and other, able to share our hopes and struggles and our living together. Practically this means that we share most meals together, are in chapel together, make decisions together that affect our shared life, and share the various responsibilities of the life we have here. We have enjoyed a few days out together to the coast and to Pennant Melangell. The Monastery has gained a greater sense of being home into which guests and visitors are welcomed. This is most obvious when guests and visitors join us for meals, help out with the work of the place or relax with us in the parlour.

The knock on affect of all this is that Dorothy and Bryan feel immensely relieved and find that they are no longer weighed down by all the day to day needs that exist. Rob and Joanna now do most of the practical and manual work around the place freeing Bryan and Dorothy to continue to be involved in other areas of responsibility.

Bryan continues his responsibilities for the chapel and chapel precincts, his pastoral work both locally and further afield and his development of the Monastery as part of the ecumenical life within the churches in the locality. He belongs to the local council of churches, Cytun, attending services in different churches and joint meetings. Bryan's passion for cycling is undiminished and is enjoying having a new cycle workshop at the top of the garden.



Dorothy is still teaching two water colour classes a week and continues to be involved with the church at Llanmerewig in a number of different ways. Last year she was able to block out some time to concentrate more on painting; a pleasure for all of us and for many of our guests and visitors. The year ended with a Christmas exhibition in Montgomery.

Joanna and Rob remain active members of the Northumbria Community. They are also in touch with some folks who are exploring what it means to open their homes to others in different situations. This, along with visiting family and friends, means that they are occasionally away from the monastery. Joanna is enjoying learning to spin and is now a member of the local Spinners, Weavers and Dyers Guild. Rob is enjoying his photography in a new setting.

We have had a steady stream of guests and visitors, many of whom have found a link with us this last year through Joanna and Rob and their involvement in the Northumbria Community. Others find us by word of mouth and through the web site. Guests continue to welcome joining us for meals though some still choose to cater for themselves some or all of the time.

There have been a few other practical changes around the place. A second new shed has been built to house Rob's motorbike. There has also been quite a bit of work done around the garden that meant that we were able to once again have a little kitchen garden. We hope to continue with this in the coming year.

Thank you for your ongoing support, prayer and interest in the life here.

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### **FR. BRYAN'S LETTER JANUARY 2011.**

As most of our readers know having a monastery here was inspired by my attending the Monastery of St. Elias at New Mills and discovering that the monastery had various links throughout the Severn Valley in this area. Father Barnabas, the resident monk, introduced me to this particular aspect of monasticism that I follow now. i.e. being a prayer facility in a given area between churches of all denominations; for instance, Father Barnabas was very active at Harvest Festivals as he was asked to preach at various chapels and churches within this area, and anyone of any denomination who wanted to attend the services in his chapel could do so. In his case the restraint, if any, was that he was part of the Greek Orthodox Church within the UK. I feel, and it has been pointed out by others, that I have taken up the baton, so to speak, and I am continuing to provide that facility across the various denominations in this area. (Being under the directive of an Anglican Bishop I have a greater flexibility to move around other denominations than Father Barnabas had, who was restricted by the understanding of ecumenism of the Orthodox Church.

It can be seen that small monasteries of our kind can be regarded as spiritual beacons within various geographical areas. It is customary practice within traditional monasteries to have at least four services a day which, taking into account the different time scales around the world, effectively amounts to a continual prayer chain throughout the world. Monasteries have been described as spiritual lighthouses wherever they are located.



*Fr. Bryan*



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